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**Party lines: Political parties and mass media in Argentine
election campaigns, 1983–1989**

Waisbord, Silvio Ricardo, Ph.D.

University of California, San Diego, 1993

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Party Lines: Political Parties and Mass Media
in Argentine Election Campaigns, 1983-1989

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology
by

Silvio Ricardo Waisbord

Committee in charge:
Professor Michael Schudson, Chair
Professor Daniel Hallin
Professor Chandra Mukerji
Professor Peter Smith
Professor Carlos Waisman

1993

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iii

A mis viejos Lázaro y Sara

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Vita, Publications & Fields of Study.....	xi
Abstract.....	xiii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I The Fragile Bases of Party Communication: The Historical Development of Political Parties and the Mass Media in Modern Argentina	21
Chapter II Parties as Sponsors: Nomination Politics.....	57
Chapter III Parties as Strategists: Campaign Mandarins, Factionalism and (Dis)Organization.	126
Chapter IV Streets, Plazas and Walls: The Sites of Party Communication.....	171
Chapter V Party Magazines, Polls and Public Opinion: Revealing and Estimating "The Picture Inside Argentines' Heads".....	224
Chapter VI Tango for Two: Political Parties and Newspapers.....	261
Chapter VII Boxing Politics: The Coming of Televisual Campaigns.....	329
Chapter VIII Conclusion.....	405
Appendix.....	427
References.....	438

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Political Ads published in <u>Clarín</u>	299
Table 2 <u>Solicitadas</u> published in <u>Clarín</u>	301
Table 3 Circulation of non-Buenos Aires newspapers.....	318
Table 4 Media Allocation of Advertising Funds.....	397

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Party Lines: Political Parties and Mass Media
in Argentine Election Campaigns, 1983-1989

by

Silvio Ricardo Waisbord

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, San Diego, 1993

Professor Michael Schudson, Chair

This dissertation analyzes the evolution of the making of election campaigns in Argentina during the 1980s. The goals of this work are to understand better the processes shaping the characteristics of electioneering, and to examine the role of political parties and the mass media in communicating politics in contemporary Argentina.

The central argument is that electioneering styles result from both institutional dynamics and cultural frameworks. The organizational dynamics of political parties and mass media coupled with existing worldviews among political activists (candidates, campaign aides, party militants) frame the context and the decision-making process of election campaigning. It is argued that institutional constraints and actors' beliefs are crucial to comprehend the characteristics of stumping activities as well as the more general dynamics of

political communication in a given democracy.

The evolution of Argentine election campaigns during the 1980s speaks of important changes at both the institutional and the cultural levels. In this sense, it is suggested that the expansion of the so-called modern styles of campaigning needs to be understood not as a result of the availability of new communication technologies, but rather as a byproduct of developments in communication institutions and political cultures.

The case of Argentine election campaigns challenges the assumption that the coming of modern technologies necessarily entails the fading out of former communication practices and/or the homogenization (the "Americanization") of election campaigns. The persistence of institutional arrangements granting party dynamics the monopoly of nomination politics, partisan loyalties among candidates and campaign headquarters, and intricate relations between political powers and the mass media account for why, despite the massive use of new technologies, Argentine electioneering still displays the whole gamut of traditional styles. The perpetuation of party dynamics, partisan cultures, and the particular arrangements between parties and media organizations fashion Argentine campaigns as a blend of old and new electioneering practices.

INTRODUCTION

In his classic book on the organization of modern political parties, Maurice Duverger states: "A modern electoral campaign might be likened to a concerto for solo instrument and orchestra: the candidate corresponds to the solo instrument, the solo of which tends to be more and more lost in the general din of the orchestra (1954, 366). But diverging from Duverger's spirit-of-the-time claim, the era when political parties were the kingpins of election campaigns, the indispensable machineries for campaign organization and communication, is fading out. So suggest standard academic studies on contemporary electioneering. A vast number of analyses and narrations on both sides of the Atlantic have revealed that the model of mass-based party organizations (which Duverger forecasted to be the dominant model in twentieth-century democracies) no longer dominates the staging of election campaigns. Numerous analyses have challenged Duverger's belief that election campaigns function primarily as party communication, opportunities for parties to grow (Epstein 1986; Pannebianco 1988; Ware 1987). Modern canvassing can hardly be described as party symphonies

stifling solo players or, as Duverger also maintained, occasions for parties to develop their own means of communication. Rather, to follow Duverger's metaphor, parties more often tend to remain in the penumbra, only occasionally stepping into the spotlight, whereas candidates and two relatively new performers, the mass media and political consultants, often take centerstage in the playing out of campaign productions (Agranoff 1972; Garber 1984; Herrnson 1988; Ranney 1983; Sábato 1981; Wattenberg 1984).

Should these prevalent conclusions lead us to assume that all political parties are equally atrophied for choreographing campaigns? The answer is not obvious. Studies mostly agree that the organizational energies of political parties are more exhausted in some countries than in others and at the national more than at the local level. Yet evidence that parties are neither the central nor the only architects of campaigning is wide-ranging. The so-called "Americanization" of campaigning, the label for a process which includes the declining role of political parties, the intensification of the role of mass media (mainly television), and the spread of a variety of new campaign technologies (polls, advertising, direct mail, market research, telephone canvassing) for addressing voters, is not confined to a single country but crosses national boundaries (see Butler and Ranney 1992; Johnson and Elebash; O'Shaughnessy 1990; Skidmore forthcoming). No doubt, the international

borrowing of campaign organizational techniques is not new but goes back to nineteenth-century election campaigns (Lopez Guerra 1977). What is impressive is the magnitude and quickness of this expansion during the last decade. Parallel to the recent wave of democratization in various continents, state-of-the-art recipes for staging highly modernized campaigns are exported, the business of international political consulting booms, techniques for devising slick campaign imageries are widely sold, and television reaches almost every corner of the planet.¹

Does the universal spread of the same campaign technologies and mass media ensure that identical election campaigns will be staged around the globe? Again, the answer seems far from self-evident. Affinities do exist but election campaigns seem to be idiosyncratic. The Madison Avenue-style campaign does not seem to germinate easily everywhere, except, of course, on Madison Avenue; election campaigns, some more than others, seem less prone to adopt a single, ultra-modern, hyper-technologized format. Family resemblances among campaigns are found but individual traits persist (Maisel 1976; O'Neil and Mills). Why do election campaigns offer similar and diverging attractions? How can we account for similarities and differences?

¹. On recent Latin American election campaigns, see Angell, Kinzo and Urbaneja (1992), Lofredo (1988), Martz (1990), O'Connor (1978), and Schmidt (1992).

Existing research offers sketchy explanations for why election campaigns, in different times and places, offer both similar and diverging characteristics. Many fundamental questions related to the organization of electioneering and the role of diverse institutions and forms to communicate politics remain unanswered. Does the decline of political parties as mechanisms for communication necessarily leads to mass-media centered campaigns? What factors generate the spread of modern campaign technologies? Is the so-called "Americanization" of election campaigns a worldwide tendency? Does the development of new communication technologies make traditional campaign structures inevitably obsolete? What happens with heterogeneous party traditions and cultures when campaigns (across parties and geographical boundaries) tend to be more similar given the use of identical technologies? Can television and opinion polls be considered the ultimate and indispensable attractions of all election campaigns?

Despite mountains of research and descriptions of electioneering, we know little about which conditions prepare the soil for different campaign styles and, for that matter, we are in a precarious position to offer definite answers to these questions. Notwithstanding a vast and eclectic array of studies, our knowledge of election campaigning still lacks attempts to build and to advance more general conceptualizations accounting for what processes shape the

structure of campaign activities.² For a more adequate understanding, it is necessary to go beyond mere appearances, namely the homogeneization of global electioneering under the "American" model, and develop a more complex account of the factors shaping campaign styles.

This dissertation takes a step in that direction. The focus of the analysis is the evolution of election campaigns in Argentina during the 1980s, more precisely, the period ranging from the aftermath of the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands military adventure throughout the years of the Alfonsín Administration until the 1989 election.

Two goals inform this study: first, to contribute to the growing literature on comparative political communication

². The lack of well-grounded answers to these and other questions cannot be attributed to the shortage of analyses of election campaigns. Campaigning is perhaps one of the most beloved subjects within many scholarly areas; since election campaigns are an easy-access, frequently-occurring laboratory comprising diverse and simultaneous phenomena, the amount of attention they have received is no surprise (McQuail 1979; Nimmo and Swanson 1990). From sociology to political science, from communication to anthropology, from history to economics, campaigning has drawn the attention of a wide range of disciplines. Research on election campaigns has generated an impressive plethora of sub-themes such as campaign financing, media advertising, polling, new communication technologies, televised debates and media coverage of elections. Although many research areas as well as bodies of theory surround and inform analyses on campaigning, the scarcity of theoretical developments is striking. The study of election campaigns is at the crossroads of several fields such as research and theories on political parties, mass media systems, sociology of culture, advertising, and political mobilization among others. Yet this situation has contributed little toward the advancement of an analytical stockpile.

(Blumler 1983; Butler and Ranney 1992; Kaid, Gerstle and Sanders 1991; McQuail and Siune 1986; Nimmo and Swanson 1990; Semetko, Blumler, and Weaver 1991) and to provide some insights to answer the questions listed above, by bringing the Argentine case into consideration.³ The study of Argentine campaigns can elucidate aspects of ongoing debates about the changing role of political parties and the mass media in contemporary democracies by providing data on a country where the structures of political parties and the mass media offer important differences compared to the two best-analyzed cases: the U.S. and Western Europe.

By doing this, this dissertation sets a second goal: to examine developments in political communication in the transition and consolidation of Argentine democracy by analyzing the role of political parties and the mass media in

³. An increase in comparative research in political communication constitutes a favorable development towards building a comprehensive theoretical framework and overcoming prevailing parochialism and mere description. The field is mostly characterized by studies focused on the development and state of U.S. campaigns but, except for some analyses of the British case and, to a much lesser extent, other Western European countries, we lack basic accounts of different campaigns to inform future comparative research. As Michael Gurevitch and Jay Blumler (1990) have indicated, the lack of research on non-U.S. election campaigns has resulted in a pervasive universalism. Conclusions on U.S. campaigns are often accepted as matter-of-fact certainties valid for all campaigns; it is rarely acknowledged that such conclusions might be specific to that case or could only selectively be extended to campaigning elsewhere. In this regard, a study of the Argentine case might enhance our knowledge of conditions shaping campaign organization and inform future comparative analyses.

the making of election campaigns. A study of these institutions seems fruitful to shed light on the problems of the constitution of institutions for communicating politics in democratic Argentina. The focus on parties and the mass media does not imply that those institutions are believed to have a unique and/or central role in communicating politics in democratic system. The task of articulating the means for debate of public matters, that is the formation of a public sphere, is not a business restricted to parties and the media but also is a concern for other institutions such as interest groups, grass-roots associations, trade unions, universities, church organizations, professional circles, intellectual clubs, and ethnic leagues (Mansbridge 1990). However, as has been indicated (Butler and Ranney 1992), election campaigns primarily involve actions devised by political parties to place candidates in office and the coverage of those activities as reported by the mass media. An analysis focused on Argentine political parties and the mass media will allow us to examine existing conclusions in the literature regarding the role these two institutions play in delineating the characteristics of campaign communication and channeling political debates. Other institutions (e.g. trade unions, social movements) will be incidentally considered, specifically how their association with parties and the media has affected campaigning style and organization.

II

Along these lines, this study aims to contribute to current debates on the consolidation of Latin American democracies by tackling a central though seldom considered question in analyses on processes of democratization in the region: How do political parties and the mass media function as organizations for articulating political communication?

Academic analyses have lately revised both the research subjects and epistemological models which have previously dominated the literature of Latin American politics. Contemporary studies have amplified the debate by stepping away from extreme structuralist readings and incorporating other dimensions into the analysis of the question of democracy in the region. New approaches concerned with the dynamics of the interaction among different political institutions and the strategic choices made by actors in encouraging or hindering the development of democracy have recently emerged. Mainly as a response to the failure of traditional paradigms to understand both the maintenance and the demise of democracy in the region, scholarly interest has recently turned to combining the analysis of structural factors with decision-making processes. These analyses, by making strong cases for integrating structural constraints with collective decisions and actors' choices, have made a significant contribution to the understanding of democracy in

the region through incorporating new approaches and research subjects in the agenda (Karl 1990; Valenzuela 1988). A growing literature on questions of political engineering and on the development of different political institutions manifests this analytical renovation (among others see, Geddes 1990; Hagopian 1990; Linz 1990; Linz and Stepan 1989; Linz and Valenzuela 1990; Mainwaring 1990; O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986; Stepan 1988; and Valenzuela 1990).

Despite these fresh intellectual winds, attention to issues pertaining to the structure of patterns of political communication, namely the evolution and the state of institutions for the formation of public opinion, continues to be scarce. The dearth of analysis on the diverse forms and institutions for political communication and on the communicative dimensions of different political regimes in the region has been consistently remarkable. This deficit, however, does not seem to be solely an attribute of current debates but an extended shortage in the literature. In the past, the lack of interest in issues of political communication in their connection to aspects of political participation resulted from a dominant concern with problems of economic development and the prevalence of structuralist approaches. The dominion of both a structuralist perspective and an overwhelming emphasis on economic development eclipsed political communication (along with other subjects) in understanding the irresolute

and intricate fate of democracy in the region. But, given recent intellectual shifts, the present deficiency cannot be attributed to prevailing economicisms and structuralisms. Truly, the upsurge of studies on issues such as the state of democratic political institutions, the dynamics of power bargaining for the consolidation of democracy and the institutional formulae potentially most successful or best suited for the maintenance of democracy are certainly meaningful contributions illuminating little researched and important questions in the analysis of Latin American democracies. But except for a few recent works (Skidmore forthcoming), an examination of different political institutions in terms of mechanisms for communication is still lacking.

This is precisely the gap this dissertation wants to bridge: bringing attention to the need to examine problems of political communication in current Latin American democracies.⁴ What role do diverse institutions play in the exchange of political information; how and where do citizens communicate and discuss matters of common interest; how do political elites and citizens communicate; I claim these to be important questions to understand contemporary Latin American

⁴. Following Michael Schudson (1989, 151), I understand political communication as "any transmission of messages that has, or is intended to have, an effect on the distribution or use of power in society."

democracies, and specifically the Argentine case, at work. An analysis of election campaigns seems appropriate to shed light on the development of communication institutions in democratic Argentina.

An examination of the evolution in the organization of election campaigns gives us a picture of the state of political parties as communication organizations; campaigns are seismographs of the shifts and realignments parties undergo. Election campaigns are occasions to analyze the communication structure of political parties; they relentlessly reveal the state of parties as institutions for communication. Both internal and external communicative structure and resources that political parties control surface during electioneering. But campaigns speak of various other institutions as well. The structure of the mass media and their relation to political parties and other political institutions; the role of political associations such as social movements and their interaction with political parties; the development of modern technologies to express and mold public opinion (e.g. polling, political advertising); the state of popular and ritualistic modes of communication such as street demonstrations and campaign rallies; this whole spectrum of spaces and practices to communicate politics is reflected in election campaigns. This is precisely the analytical potential a study of election campaigns offers for

exploring matters of Argentine political communication; campaigns reveal an entire string of institutions to communicate politics as they entail the mise en scene of diverse forms of communication.

III

The main claim of this dissertation is that electioneering styles result from both institutional dynamics and cultural dispositions. While the former constrain the organizational scenario for campaigning, the latter favor certain campaign modes and routines over others. Institutions offer settings for communicating politics whereas cultural repertoires act as mindsets casting decisions over what communication mechanisms should be used for campaigning. Institutional dynamics allude to the existing and possible mechanisms conditioning campaign organization; paraphrasing Karl Marx, men (and women) campaign not through institutions they freely choose, but through the ones they find and have access to.

Yet campaign styles are not only simply determined by what institutions are available and accessible to actors but also by political traditions permeating those organizations and their members. "Institutional beliefs," the standard and approved practices within a specific institution, also constrain and enable certain electioneering routines over

others (Powell 1990). Decisions about which institutions and practices are used for campaigning are embedded in cultural frames; to name a few, allegiance to partisan values, visions of party organization, or accepted habits to aggregate public opinion and to address voters, also fashion campaign structures. Campaign styles are informed by what members of diverse institutional settings see as the appropriate political and communication practices. In this sense, this dissertation aims to demonstrate how continuities and changes in the beliefs permeating both party activists (including candidates, the file-and-rank and political consultants) and journalists contributed in shaping and reshaping both the structure and the media coverage of election campaigns.

Similar to the approach taken by other studies on the conditions shaping patterns of political communication (Blumler 1983; Hallin and Mancini 1984; Kaid, Gerstle and Sanders 1991), this analysis will trace the historical evolution of Argentine political parties as "organizations" (Cotter, Gibson, Bibby and Huckshorn 1984; Key 1950; Sorauf and Beck 1988). To understand developments in campaign routines, political parties need to be approached as institutions encompassing specific rules and routines. Yet attention also needs to be directed to prevailing political cultures informing campaign organization. Cultural norms stipulating how politics should be done and communicated;

traditional modes of political participation and communication; popular conceptions on how candidates should relate to voters and viceversa; all these dimensions alluding to customary cultural beliefs and practices need to be taken into account for discerning the habits and rituals of campaign organization.

This dissertation argues that in the Argentine case, the evolution of the 1983-1989 election campaigns towards an increasing "modernization" of electioneering speaks of the changing dynamics of Argentine politics during those years. To elucidate the reasons for those changes, two factors are considered. The first factor is the different political atmospheres prevailing in 1983 and in 1989. The 1983 election took place in very particular circumstances; to use Aristide Zolberg's (1972) phrase, it occurred during the "moment of madness" Argentines experienced after the military defeat in the 1982 South Atlantic war (and subsequent transition to democracy) until the mid-eighties. In 1983, stumping activities evolved amid tremendous political enthusiasm and citizens' exaltation; high democratic hopes expressed the sudden reawakening of the civil society after seven years of military dictatorship. Political parties bustled with activity during the unexpected transition triggered after the war (Colombo 1985; Landi 1988; Nun 1987; Oszlak 1984; Palermo 1986). Other forums for political participation (social

movements, neighborhood and professional associations) did blossom under the heat of surging mobilization but political parties had an unmatched position. Soaring numbers of party registration, local party offices, attendance at party-organized rallies and demonstrations, and party magazines were signs of the increasing vitality of party structures. The vigor of party organizations was especially remarkable compared to the role of the mass media during the transition. Whereas the established press generally kept a cautious attitude vis-a-vis both the military government and reemerging democratic activities, television stations (mostly still in the hands of the authoritarian regime) virtually ignored mounting democratic forces only to recognize them at the very end of the process. Only radio stations offered more room to emerging democratic voices, becoming forceful means for communication during the transition.

The political climate surrounding the 1989 election resembled the one typical of established democracies: lower levels of political participation and distrust of politicians and parties.⁵ In 1989, the promises and dreams of the

⁵. Data from different public opinion firms reveal this tendency. A report from Equas (1983-1991) shows that while almost eighty percent of the population had a favorable image of political parties in 1983, approval dropped to thirty-eight percent in 1986, thirty percent in 1989, and slightly above ten percent in 1991. Figures from IPSA Argentina (1983-1989) reveal a less sharp variation yet a similar trend: legitimacy of parties went from above eighty percent in 1983 to forty-two percent in 1989.

transition, best illustrated in Raul Alfonsín's campaign battlecry "democracy makes it possible to eat, to get educated, to become healthy," seemed to belong to a distant past. Argentine citizens were less confident about the potential of democracy, less attracted to campaign politics, less willing to devote free time and energies to electioneering efforts. Paraphrasing Adam Przeworski's (1991, 94) keen observation, the 1989 election reflected that "the democratic paradise idealized during the transition had turned into everyday life and disenchantment had set in." In less than a decade, Argentina underwent the paradoxical process of intense politicization and later demobilization, involvement and withdrawal, that Alan Wolfe (1977) has described as typical of modern democracies.

Second, the important changes political parties and the mass media experienced during the decade also account for changes in the structure and styles of election campaigns. In this sense, the introduction of new campaign technologies and styles, that is, the spread of "Americanized" stumping formats, needs to be understood as a byproduct of developments political parties and the mass media have undergone during those years. Against exclusive "technology-centered" explanations, this dissertation holds that the arrival and/or the availability of modern communication technologies (advertising, polls, direct mail, television, market research)

does not necessarily cause the decline of previous campaign practices. Undeniably, new means for communicating politics not only prompt cosmetic changes but deeply affect established canvassing routines as well as general forms of political communication. However, the reasons for the permanence or extinction of modes of electioneering should be found in institutional and cultural dynamics rather than in the mere availability of technological developments.

The spread of new campaign styles does not imply that long-lasting traits of Argentine political communication, namely, political parties' lack of mechanisms for articulating communication and their reliance upon both the State and independent mass media for communicating politics, have disappeared. Moreover, the relatively rapid introduction and adoption of modern campaign technologies during the 1980s was facilitated by parties' scarcity of communication resources. As democracy endured, campaigns regularly held and, politicians periodically had to reach voters, the shortage of party means for communication became more noticeable. Simultaneously, the traditional formulae used by political parties to strengthen their communication potential also became evident: namely, attempting to control state resources for developing "partisan" communication or for "appropriating" (or at least building alliances with) existing mass media. These two related characteristics, the scarcity of party

mechanisms and the reliance of politicians upon access to the State for fostering their communication power (whether for getting favorable media coverage and/or for cultivating ties with commercial mass media), are not new but traditional features of the Argentine communication landscape. What political stability did was to make these aspects more visible; throughout Argentine democracy's unstable history, chances for parties to communicate with voters and organize campaign activities were small.⁶

Certainly, Argentine parties are not atypical in lacking means for communication; as mentioned in the outset of this introduction, political parties in other democracies have experienced a progressive deterioration of their communication structures in the last decades as well.⁷ The relevance of this development lies not in its uniqueness but its consequences for understanding patterns of political characteristics of the consolidation of Argentine democracy. Nowadays, other

⁶. In 1989, for the first time in over seventy years a democratically-elected official (Raul Alfonsín) passed the Presidential sash to a politician (Carlos Menem) from a different political party.

⁷. The argument that Latin American political parties "do little to politicize the general population, to organize public opinion, to communicate" (Scott 1966, 364) hardly applies to the Argentine case. Throughout Argentine contemporary history, parties did make significant efforts in trying to influence and organize public opinion and to incorporate mass publics into politics. My point here is that parties tried, yet failed, in maintaining institutionalized mass communication channels. Reasons for this are discussed in the following chapters.

institutions (e.g. the mass media) and instruments (e.g. polls) play an increasingly central role in connecting parties and voters, in shaping the formation of public opinion, and in the playing out of political conflicts and debates in Argentine democracy. The fact that these novel developments are capable of both reshaping traditional communication practices and the dynamics among diverse institutions makes this an important issue in the analysis of democratic consolidation in Argentina.

Notwithstanding persistent problems for constructing and developing their own communication mechanisms, political parties should not be viewed as "weak" institutions, a common conclusion in standard analyses of Argentine politics (Cavarozzi 1983, 1986; Ciria 1964; De Riz 1985; Di Tella 1972; Grossi and Gritti 1989; McDonald and Ruhl 1989; McGuire 1990; Schoultz 1983; Snow 1971). As the concept of weakness might refer to different party activities, a rather unclear point in the literature, it is necessary to indicate what party functions are considered. Besides structuring the vote, recruiting political leaders, organizing government, forming public policy and aggregating interests (King 19), political parties integrate and mobilize mass publics. To play this role, parties need organizational resources for channelling demands from voters, for facilitating the exchange of political ideas (Lawson 1975), for behaving as "communication

brokers." This dissertation claims that transformations in the making of election campaigns in the 1980s show that political parties were unable to become "communication brokers;" they did not develop stable and organized party-centered forms for communication. Yet classifying Argentine parties as "weak" institutions is mistaken. Far from that, as will be discussed later, political parties proved to be strong institutions in other regards, namely, as mechanisms for the nomination of political candidates and the staging of election campaigns. Political parties maintained a central role in campaigning basically as they controlled the selection of candidates and strongly intervened in the organization of stumping activities and strategies, and campaign headquarters remained loyal to campaign methods that privileged traditional party cultures and communication styles. To summarize, the conventional wisdom that Argentine parties are "weak" institutions is misleading, first as it fails to distinguish among the different roles political parties play in democratic systems and, second, as parties can be "strong" in some aspects but "weak" in others. In the context of a study on the conditions shaping electioneering styles, the following pages revise this standard claim aiming to provide a better understanding of Argentine parties as both political and cultural institutions in a newly established democracy.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FRAGILE BASES OF PARTY COMMUNICATION: THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE MASS MEDIA IN ARGENTINA

This chapter traces the development of political parties as institutions for articulating political communication and their relationship vis-a-vis the mass media, focusing on how parties and the mass media functioned during election campaigns prior to the transition to democracy in the early 1980s. This review aims to provide an historical context for understanding institutional and cultural dynamics evident during the campaigns of the 1980s. An historical overview of Argentine electioneering will contribute to framing a major argument of this dissertation: election campaigns during the 1983-1989 years reiterate parties' persistent difficulties for bolstering and consolidating communication outside state institutions. Also, a brief history of both parties and the media offers the reader not familiar with Argentina an overview of the country's key political events.

PARTY COMMUNICATION AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I claim that the problems for political

parties to count on their own communication structures without relying on the State should not be viewed as distinctive of the 1983-1989 period but rather a continuous feature throughout Argentine modern history. I argue that these problems resulted from two processes: the overall tendency of the main political parties to rely on the state for organizing communication (and consequently, they paid scarce attention to creating and nurturing means of communication from below), and continual and forceful state intervention during authoritarian periods to suppress and control all means for political communication. During the 1980s, these tendencies persisted as parties continued to be weakly institutionalized to channel communication in the public sphere while media organizations remained more attentive to cementing and keeping ties with the state than becoming institutions for circulating political debate outside state limits. Argentine parties could not surmount a heavy legacy of continuous reliance upon state intervention and scarcely developed and institutionalized own spaces for communicating politics. That legacy resulted from two processes: a chronic lack of impulse to develop democratic forms for political communication outside state intervention and the lack of steady institutional forms to channel communication and participation. The first was the sin of populismo, the second the vice of golpismo.

The development of both the Argentine public sphere and

different political cultures during the twentieth century cannot be fully understood without considering the heritage of populism. Populism shaped the anatomy of the country's public sphere in its first incarnation (the Radical party during the first decades of the century), but mostly in its later 1940s and 1950s Peronist variant. Extreme verticalism, strong reliance on state apparatuses and heavy paternalism were the central nerves of populism (Tamarin 1982). Populist movements, no doubt, contributed to advancing a democratic agenda as they promoted social rights and broadened political participation. But as their style of mobilization was typically integrative rather than incorporative - that is, the political integration of the lower classes in an heteronomous and vertical way (Mouzelis 1986; Waisman 1982, 1987; also see Stepan 1978, chs. 2-3) - these populist experiences did not seed the soil for the emergence of an institutionalized public sphere. They fostered political participation similar to other Latin American populisms, "register[ing] voters, organiz[ing] local committees, stimulat[ing] rallies, encourag[ing] direct action and g[etting] new voters to the polls (Conniff 1982)." Yet this plethora of techniques for political involvement, most notably in the Peronist case, was not translated into the building of institutionalized party organizations.

The unfolding of two simultaneous processes which were central to the dynamics of the two main political parties (the

Radical and the Peronist), namely, the persistent attempts to create vehicles for political communication from above and the lack of structures nurtured from below, deterred the strengthening of party structures.¹ For populism, the state and not party structures, was the central fomenter and catalyst of political communication.

Yet the difficulty in consolidating a public sphere cannot be solely nor mainly seen as the effects of the institutional arrangement of populist movements. Golpismo, the search for a violent, non-democratic formula to gain power that materialized in the half-dozen coups d'etat since 1930, was mainly responsible for the tenuousness of the Argentine political society. As O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986, 48) put it, "[b]y trivializing citizenship and repressing political identities, authoritarian rule destroys self-organized and autonomously defined political spaces and substitutes for them a state-controlled public arena."

The populists' devotion to state action for shaping public life and the authoritarians' zealous commitment to destroying any sign of public life affected not just the

¹. I am not claiming that the structures of the Radical and the Peronist party were identical; rather, I am trying to indicate populist elements prevented both parties from institutionalizing means for communication without state intervention. An extensive literature has already noted important differences between the structural designs of these two parties (Colombo 1985; Grossi and Gritti 1989; Palermo 1986).

destiny of party mechanisms for political discussion but the mass media as well. It is not that democratic and authoritarian governments treated the mass media identically, but rather, that the combined result of both an extreme reliance on the state to establish and develop any form of communication (in the case of populist and other democratic experiences) and the complete repression and vigilance of the political society (in the case of military governments) was the notable frailty of the mass media to become more independent from the State for channeling democratic communication.

While in populist regimes, most notably the first Peronist experience (1946-1955), means for propaganda and communication were mainly fueled and sponsored by the state, under authoritarian regimes the mass media were firmly controlled and censored. During populist periods (as well as during other democratic governments), newspapers emerged mainly under the auspices of state-originated funds whereas radio and television stations were developed and run either by state officials (that is, within the Executive not the Parliament) or by private capital but under strong state supervision and closely allied to state powers (Alisky 1981; Pierce 1979). Most notably during authoritarian periods, the state tightly controlled some newspapers while closing and suspending others; eliminated rights to speech and

organization; supervised and even directly managed radio and television stations; and exercised different types of controls over the media by manipulating both licenses and the highly desirable and considerable mass of state-advertising monies. In any case, the coming of an authoritarian regime invariably implied the wiping out of whatever forums for political discussion existed that refused to conform to the generals' rules.

To understand how populist and authoritarian experiences molded the structure of political parties and the mass media, I turn next to examine the organization and characteristics of past election campaigns.

THE EARLY RADICAL YEARS

The Radical party was formed in the 1890s and became the strongest voice of a conglomerate of political forces pushing to democratize the then-prevailing elitist political system. At that time, Argentine politics was basically confined to elite groups who, until the turn of the century, faced few challenges from inside or outside the system. That period was the heyday of the oligarchic Republic installed in 1853 after decades of domestic wars; suffrage and policy-making were restricted to the few and wealthy. Pressures for democratic reforms mounted towards the end of the century. Various social and economic processes (immigration, incipient

industrialization and urbanization) resulted in the formation of new classes who, deprived of political and social rights, gradually pressured the up-to-then, neatly functioning political game (Sigal and Gallo 1965). Facing increasing opposition and under constant fear of popular uprisings, the 1912 Saenz Peña law, which extended voting rights to all Argentine males, was implemented. Ruling groups envisioned that through expanding the enfranchisement, basic popular demands were incorporated and, thereby, more dangerous insurrections were prevented (Cantón, Moreno and Ciria 1972).

The Radical party became the main beneficiary of the reforms. It had emerged in the aftermath of the so-called "revolution of 1890," a failed civilian insurrection which, as a contemporary politician phrased it, "dethroned the president but not the regime." Since then, the Radicals carried out a strategy blending voting abstention (as elections were considered fraudulent) and failed revolts (the 1893 and 1905 insurrections). Drawing support basically from the middle classes but also from discontent sectors of the elites, the Radical party won the first presidential elections held in 1916. By that time, the Radicals were indisputably the main political party and, in the eyes of the elite, represented a safe political alternative integrated by respectable gentlemen and urban groups. The radicalized immigrant working classes, who mostly supported Socialist and Anarchist causes, still

remained outside the political system as the Saenz Peña law little changed their situation but fundamentally tried to "open up the political system to the native-born, property-owning middle-class groups and to the minority of workers who had also been born in the country" (Rock 1975, 39).

The advent of Radicalism did not alter a preexisting dynamic of Argentine politics: the central role of party machines for political mobilization. Instead, machine politics was strengthened and became crucial for the functioning of the Radical party (Rock 1972). The years preceding the rise of Radicalism were characterized by the centrality of boss-centered networks. Elite politics was played out basically, not by well-structured political parties, but by individuals leading highly personalistic machines.

There are not political parties as such, conforming to either disciplines or traditions. Rather, [there are] strong personalities valued by their experience in government and civic struggles; [they are] eloquent orators with a romantic Spaniard-styled rethoric which excites the people and addresses feelings and passions more than intelligence and reason. Only they unite and strengthen partisan groups. They attract and organize coreligionarios [co-party members] for giving them a flag and to use them in order to serve the interests of the country and their own interests and passions as well.

So does Miguel A. Cárcano (1963) describes politics in the years after the cease of internal wars and the organization of modern Argentina. Much political activity, both at the local and national level, spun around the personal machines of prominent elite members. Argentine politics was essentially

played out through confrontations, usually violent, among respectable gentlemen of the elites backed by their respective clientele (see Sábato 1992; Spalding 1965).

Election campaigns meant putting into action, to cite the perceptive title of a well-known volume on clientelism, "followers, factions and friends" through party mechanisms.² Campaign organization resembled, according to Tulio Halperín Donghi (1964), war machines. Numerous accounts of election campaigns state that streets, political clubs and cafes were the battlegrounds for intense and feisty encounters among rival machines of patrician politicians (Heras 1954; Sanucci 1959). In one of the few studies on Argentine local politics, historians Sabato and Palti (1990, 423) affirm that

elections in Buenos Aires were organized by political machines which, supported in the state apparatus, produced electoral results in order to guarantee a relatively peaceful resolution of intra-elite conflicts. . . . The porteño [belonging to the city of Buenos Aires] political machines monopolized the electoral game.

Once candidates were acclaimed inside the political clubs and newspapers representing competing factions initiated a true combat of words and accusations, the next task was to assure that the machine was well-organized to guarantee a favorable result. Campaigning, understood as the period for propagating political ideas and persuading voters before election day, was limited to a few, primarily elitist forums. At that time, as

². For a general overview of election campaigns during this period, see Luna (1983).

electoral results were decided typically by mobilizing voters to the ballot boxes and fraud, electoral persuasion was not central to win the election. Assuring an electoral victory was not a matter of swaying public opinion and spreading the message; rather, it usually entailed herding voters, ferrying them to the voting sites, and plotting all possible fraudulent mechanisms (see Botana 1977; Cantón 1973). The menu of crooked activities included every classic of the genre: stuffing or burning ballot boxes, annulling elections, casual display of guns, bringing dead voters back to life, touring voters around provincial towns, making voters to accept pre-sealed voting envelopes and composing voting reports. In times when votes were mostly obtained through deceitful methods, convincing voters about political platforms held little importance.

The Radical party made the criticism of those fraudulent practices a warcry of its struggle. Having neither a very defined ideology nor a clear political program, the Radical creed basically focused on the moralization of the system in order, as a Radical politician and historian said, "to save the soul and the character of the Argentines" (Del Mazo 1952, 35). Radical politicians fancied their organization as "a spiritual school" carrying out a moral crusade against "the regime" (as the predominant statu quo was labeled). Most notably in Leandro Alem, the party's first leader, politics equalled championing moral renovation.

Although civic morality and the extension of the suffrage branded their ideological fight against "the regime," the Radicals made few innovations in the forms of political organization. Rather, they perfectionated existing mobilization patterns under a more inclusionary political system. Historical studies have depicted the Radical party as fundamentally organized around local notables and clientelistic networks (Rock 1975; Walter 1985). Neighborhood comités, or "committees," were central mechanisms to process demands and to deliver goods for local clientele; they constituted the spine of the political machines developed by the Unión Cívica Radical, which, despite differences, "came to have a definite flavor of Tammany Hall" (Rock 1975, 272). Comités were basically conceived as instruments for organizing politics from above to secure the exchange of votes for goods; their existence virtually depended on the electoral strategies of political bosses. As a result, it is not surprising that comités overwhelmingly functioned during electoral periods when caudillos' need to secure the supply of votes in exchange for paternalistic benefits was pressing. More than institutions for channeling participation, they mainly served to activate voting networks. As close connections to the State were indispensable for keeping the patronage system alive, comités hardly functioned as autonomous institutions for political mediation. They provided outlets for channeling

communication from below but did not encourage the development of horizontal mechanisms for political debate. Most fundamentally, comités incarnated existent clientelistic relationships, vertical organization, personal dependence and asymmetric relations of power (see Remmer 1990).

During the Radical Administrations, first under Hipólito Yrigoyen (1916-1922), then Marcelo T. de Alvear (1922-1928) and finally Yrigoyen again until the 1930 military coup, comités were fundamental pieces of the party machinery and worked in an articulate and sound fashion. Voters who before Radicalism remained outside the political system became integrated through these mechanisms. David Rock states: "Much of the contact with the "people" took the form of an exchange of individualized favours between the government and the electorate or what might be called direct incentive participation" (1975). Although the Radical machine could not capture large working-class votes from the Socialists or the Anarchists, it successfully recruited and maintained votes among urban middle-classes.

As massive numbers of citizens entered the political arena, election campaigns diverged from the ones during the elitist republic and offered newer styles. The extension of voting rights transformed election campaigns into effervescent, dramatic phenomena. Leopoldo Lugones, a prominent contemporary, arch-conservative writer, described

the 1916 election campaign as follows: "Since the last months of 1915, the political groups are lined up to fight and the combatants' positions started to take shape. Truly, electoral contests and military maneuvers are similar" (1962, 218). Skirmishes among party activists were common. In the 1928 elections, the National Committee of the Radical party decided to cancel campaign activities two weeks before election day as violence was mounting and the victory of former president Yrigoyen was taken for granted. The campaign scene was no longer restricted to patrician politicians and the mobilization of supporters on election day; recently incorporated multitudes were actively involved throughout the campaign and definitely imprinted the canvassing process. Historian Richard Walter states: "Socialists, Radicals, and Democratic Progressives gave speeches, provided detailed voting information, distributed leaflets, plastered the walls of the city with colorful posters and held large street rallies to present candidates" (Walter 1985, 162). Even in the case of the 1916 and 1928 Radical presidential campaigns, which included Hipólito Yrigoyen, a charismatic leader not fond of public appearances and speeches, the campaigns aroused popular enthusiasm and displayed massive participation. Alen Lascano (1986, 67) recalls:

As the 1928 election was coming, the whole country became devoted to politics. In homes, workplaces, immigrants' associations, the streets and the urban cafes, rural bars and warehouses, people were for or against Yrigoyen, even

though he was neither nominated for president yet nor had announced his intention to run for office.

Fights and emotional displays also took place in the press. Pro- and anti-Radical newspapers vehemently battled the merits of Yrigoyen for president while socialist and anarchist publications regularly condemned both Radical and Conservative candidates.

Despite incremental changes in campaign habits, the nuts and bolts of campaign organization basically continued along the lines of pre-1916 politics. Well-organized local machines, now larger and more populated, remained the central propaganda and mobilization apparatuses.³ Newer campaign styles were introduced given the need to reach a bigger population, most notably, extensive campaigns throughout the country, whistle-stop tours and the national mushrooming of party offices. Yet comités remained fundamental parts for campaign organization. Rock describes: "The committee's activities reached a peak

³. This can be extended to the Socialist party, perhaps, the best organized Argentine party in the early decades of the century. The Socialist party, which developed mainly in coastal areas and urban centers, was arranged similarly to its European counterparts. Party organization consisted of dues-paying members, a widely distributed newspaper La Vanguardia, and an elaborate network of local offices called centros. Election campaigns were conceived as means to augment party forces and to educate the population rather than just mere opportunities to gain access to office; socialist campaigning entailed the mise en scene of a dense apparatus for propaganda diffusion. Socialists are credited with both innovations in campaigning such as screening documentaries on social issues in theatres and open spaces, and having perfected and mastered canvassing techniques such as lectures, pamphleteering and street rallying and advertising (Walter 1985).

during election periods. In addition to the conventional street-corner meetings, the posting of manifestos and the distribution of party pamphlets, they were used as centres for the distribution of charity hand-outs to the voters" (1975, 57).

Even after the 1930 military coup, the first deposition of a democratic government in contemporary Argentina, comités as well as hitherto dominant campaign styles abided. Historian Richard Walter, in his account of politics in the Buenos Aires province in the 1930s, has shown that previous modes for campaigning, both for local and national elections, persisted after the overthrow of Yrigoyen. Local caudillos firmly controlled campaign propaganda (and electoral fraud as well) while comités remained political as well as social institutions. "It was in comité headquarters that actual or prospective party affiliates would meet to converse, eat, drink, and particularly in the province of Buenos Aires, engage in various forms of gambling" (Walter 1985, 8). Comité campaign activities displayed the classic hoopla and rituals of grass-roots, folkloric electioneering; barbecues, dance contests, horse-racing, parades, speeches and popular receptions for candidates on whistle-stop tours were customary attractions. However, as fraud became extensive and police repression against Radical and Socialist opposition was continuous, campaigns gradually lost their popular component

and mainly became occasions for local bosses to mobilize their acolytes and set up ballot-rigging mechanisms to guarantee electoral success. During the conservative administrations of Agustin P. Justo (1932-1938), Roberto M. Ortiz (1938-1941) and Ramon S. Castillo, voting fraud, political persecution and banning of oppositional newspapers were routine (Falcoff and Dolkart 1975).

This was the scenario preceding the emergence of Peronism in the 1940s: weakly institutionalized political parties and mass media, subjected to state intervention and control. Existing political structures were closely allied to local powers as state funds and resources were vital for keeping the machines running, whereas anti-government means for communication suffered constant harassment and, thus, were highly unstable. Dominant institutions promoted, not independent but, heteronomous participation, namely, one-sided, vertical, top-down and controlled communication. Continual electoral fraud, ominous repression and zealous censorship (or, alternatively, severe control) were rampant during the 1930s and early 1940s and became the coup of grace for an already weak public sphere. Before the 1930 military takeover, the public realm, expanded in earlier decades as newer classes came into politics, was loosely structured while many institutions depended heavily on state favoritism for existing. The difficulties for a public sphere to mature

became aggravated as post-1930 coup politics consisted, basically, of a concoction of fraudulent politics, state repression and clientelistic practices. This historical framework was the prelude to the entrance of Peronism into Argentine politics.

THE PERONIST YEARS

If the basis for the growth of state-autonomous political and communication institutions was feebly developed by the mid-forties, Peronism did not improve this situation either, most fundamentally, as the Peronist creed did not champion the expansion of mediating structures outside the state. Several analyses have documented that the party structure was not the organizational backbone of Peronism; rather, the direct relation between the leader and the masses cultivated in mass meetings or through the mass media (particularly radio) and the strengthening of trade union structures through state action were the central communication mechanisms. Peronism hardly encouraged the development of institutionalized and autonomous mediations but, instead, relied on forms for communication clearly located within the orbit of the state (Landi 1981; Palermo 1986).

Party structures were not a priority within the Peronist scheme. The strong belief in the movimiento clearly spelt out the trifling role the party was assigned. Furthermore,

Peronism conceived of the movimiento nacional as an historical formation unifying diverse and previously divided multifarious interests which transcended the narrow limits of political parties; to quote Marcelo Cavarozzi (1989, 321), "the [Peronist] institutional question remained subordinate to the movimientista vision of politics."⁴ The Peronist party was not conceived as an autonomous organization to articulate political organization, but rather it became virtually identified with the State and, in fact, ended up being a creature of the State (Ciria 1983; Luna 1985).⁵ Cavarozzi (1986, 146) claims that

[t]he party's subordination to the state transformed it into a simple mechanism for legitimating public policy. The party therefore served neither to articulate social demands nor to mediate the conflicting interests and values of its members . . . [Statism] became the touchstone of a political culture which conceived of the state as the embodiment of the public good and saw political pluralism as a divisive and sometimes even phenomenon.

Vicente Palermo (1986, 27) aptly summarizes the Peronist conception of the Peronist party as "an administrative, top-

⁴. The Peronist-defined goal of "achieving unity of all Argentine people" envisioned the laying aside of differences, and as, Hodges (1988, 17) puts it, "by ridding society of political parties and their division into opposing factions."

⁵. Perón (1948, 116) stated: "The Peronist movement is not a political party; it does not represent any political group. It is a national movement; this has been the basic conception. We are not, I repeat, a political party; we are a movimiento and as such we do not represent neither sectarian nor party interests; we only represent the national interests. That is our orientation."

down organized tool. The party was neither a channel for popular participation nor a space for competition among internal groups or leaders. It was not a sphere for legitimate representation autonomously from the State."⁶ In the same vein, Liliana de Riz argues that "the state emptied out parties from the political system; in the [Peronist] architecture of power, there was no room for a party system" (1989, 65).

Even Peronists' dearest unidades básicas, or "basic units" as the Peronist neighborhood offices were called, seldom worked as articulated mechanisms for political mediation, not even during the glorious Peronist days of the 1940s and 1950s.⁷ Historian Jose Luis Romero (1984, 74) states

⁶. McDonald and Ruhl indicate that "fundamentally, the organizations were devices of Perón and originally had no existence independent of him" (1989, 152). In a similar vein, Cavarozzi states that "the party almost became an empty shell" (1986, 151). Cordeau and others assess that "when Perón was alive the party was golondrina [seasonal like the swallow]; the party was built six days before the election and was disassembled the next day" (1985, 137).

⁷. Perón (1951, 31) defined unidades básicas as "a primary organism, a cultural center, a little community" for recruiting new members and for proselytizing (see Ciria 1983). Trying to distinguish their own local branches from the Radicals' and the Conservatives' comités, the Socialists' centros and the Communists' celulas, Peronist offices were named unidades básicas. Rechristening local centers attempted to differentiate the role of unidades básicas from other parties' offices; in a speech to the delegates of the Peronist Party, Perón declared: "We do not want comités because they still smell of wine, empanadas [Argentine stuffed pastries] and tabas [a popular game of chance]. Let's leave the comité to those who prostituted its name, so they can use it. We want to convert what was a den of sin into a school of virtues;

that

the unidad básica amplified and expanded preexisting functions but minimized the significance of traditional propellers [local bosses] and were directly tied to the State and the leader. More than cells for political participation, they were channels for connecting the State and society.

Still, as many authors suggest, unidades básicas did not develop as smooth mechanisms for aggregating interest from below either. State-sponsored institutions were privileged as essential forms to structure communication.

Peronist electoral campaigns represented, precisely, the preeminence of state apparatuses at the expense, not only of parties, but of other institutions as well. The scarce interest in party-based channels for campaigning can be traced to Perón's oft-quoted statement "Today's elections are won with the trade unions not with the political parties."⁸ Perón's first presidential campaign in 1946 revealed the unique role that state organizations had within the Peronist communication framework and, for that matter, advanced some characteristics of the communication structure fully developed

that is why we speak of ateneos peronistas [another name for unidades básicas], [places] where to educate the citizen, to inculcate virtues, to teach useful things and not to drive him into vice" (quoted in Luna 1985, 59).

⁸. Perón continued: "You might tell me: 'but you have political parties and the trade unions too'. But, as I am on top of [political] developments, I cannot do without the political parties because they are a prejudice which has not disappeared yet in our evolution" (Perón 1951, 325).

during his 1946-1955 presidential tenure. After Perón's triumphal and firm career during the 1943-1946 military government, first as the head of the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión (Secretariat for Labor and Social Welfare, formerly the Labor Department), then of the Ministerio de Guerra (War Department) and finally as vicepresident, state resources became the main engine of the 1946 Peronist campaign.

The 1946 electoral campaign, unquestionably, occurred during one of the most debated moments of Argentine history. Numerous accounts report that the birth of Peronism, symbolized in the grandiose popular demonstration of October 17, 1945 at Plaza de Mayo demanding the release of General Perón from prison, stirred complex emotions and opinions among vast sectors of the population. Judging by contemporary chronicles and by the huge mass of analysis produced since then, it seems that no Argentine remained indifferent to the eruption of Peronism; adopting a position vis-a-vis the insurgence of this novel political phenomenon was inevitable.⁹ To provide an illustration of the climate of the 1946 campaign:

The spoken, written and mural propaganda, which invaded everything, never stopped and the tone reflected the

⁹. Historian Felix Luna argues that "in the Argentina of 1946, everybody was completely involved in any of the two opposing fields. To be with Perón or with the Unión Democrática was something visceral; propaganda was useless as individual definitions already came from the previous year and were unchangeable" (1971, 367).

surrounding violent climate . . . The "death to" abounded only on one side. On the other side, only on one occasion I found something that could be interpreted similarly; a poster read: "Kill flies. Insecticide Perón in five-liter Tamborinis."¹⁰ Demonstrations of electoral strengths were continuous all over the place, while participants, representing different sides, were numerous. Disturbances were habitual, and according to the chronicles, they were generally provoked by the peronists who counted on police tolerance. In addition, the candidates, accompanied by crowds, travelled the country, gave speeches, and publicized ideas and government plans with the usual promises of happiness. (Carrasco 1947, 372)

Organizationally, the Peronists counted on party structures provided by dissident Radicals who supported Perón's bid for the presidency, the newly formed Partido Laborista, other minor political parties, and the apparatuses of trade unions which were remarkably strengthened during Perón's brief tenure at the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión. The rapid blossoming of neighborhood offices added another, though chaotically arranged, cannon to the Peronist campaign firepower. State-controlled radio became a major tool while privately-owned stations were continuously pressed by the government officials to concede airtime to candidate Perón (Sirvén 1984); though it was used before, radio was officially welcomed to Argentine politics during the 1946 campaign, Perón

¹⁰. Jose Tamborini was the presidential candidate of the Unión Democrática, an eclectic alliance of diverse political parties and interest groups, which confronted Perón in the 1946 elections. In the text, "Tamborini" is a wordgame, playing with tambor, or "drum," alluding to insecticide cans and the candidate.

being an authentic master of radio campaigning.¹¹ Facing a highly antagonistic press, as all traditional newspapers (La Prensa, La Nación, El Mundo, La Razón, Crítica and Noticias Gráficas) and the party press (like the Socialist La Vanguardia) overtly and militantly campaigned against their candidate, the Peronists allied with the revamped La Epoca and got support from the newly founded Democracia, Tribuna, and Política.¹² Unquestionably, the key asset of the Peronist campaign was the control of the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión as well as influence in other state offices. Peronist-dominated state bureaucracies were the brain and heart of campaigning efforts; from these institutions, electioneering strategies were masterminded and campaign funds were pumped. The proximity to government means was the

¹¹. A former Peronist representative and close aide to Perón during the 1946 campaign, recounts that although campaign activities by the Unión Democrática were tolerated by the military regime, Perón benefited from the censorship of his opponents in state-owned radio stations and the lobbying done by the government to exclude adversaries from private stations (Bustos Fierro 1969).

¹². La Epoca, the Radical newspaper which disappeared with the overthrow of the Yrigoyen administration in 1930, was bought by Eduardo Colom, a second-line Radical politician in the late 1930s. While the daily was the foremost Peronist voice during the 1946 elections, La Epoca faced economic and political problems during the Peronist regime and finally was bought by the state in 1951, becoming another acquisition to the varied chain of newspapers and other media the regime progressively knitted.

fundamental resource of the Peronist campaign organization.¹³ State-structures were the driving force behind the intense Peronist campaign which included whistle-stop tours, large rallies and continuous mobilization of voters.

The central role of the state for Peronist campaigning was even more notable during the 1951 elections. By that time, the Peronist administration has mounted a solid communication machinery encompassing over a hundred publications (including weeklies, newspapers and magazines) and ownership of radio stations. The Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), the Peronist-controlled central trade union, together with the state, tailored and organized campaign activities, notably dwarfing the role of the party.¹⁴ Historian Luna (1985, 169)

¹³. The Peronists were not as well-equipped and funded as the Unión Democrática activists. The massive fortunes of the anti-Peronist coalition dwarfed the Peronist resources. Luna writes: "while the Unión Democrática carpeted the country with expensive signs, well-designed propaganda brochures, and numerous flyers, stickers and any kind of written material, Perón's brigades, armed with chalk and charcoal, frantically and massively saturated walls with name of their candidate. Perón's partisans campaigned without having great access to means" (1971, 407). The affluent campaign warchest of the Unión Democrática resulted from the support of most powerful economic organizations as well as other traditional centres of political power behind the anti-Peronist crusade. The Unión Democrática, an unholy alliance of kaleidoscopic forces which, above all, coalesced to prevent the election of Perón, included the Conservative, Radical, Socialist, and Communist parties; the active involvement of the U.S. embassy; and business organizations representing traditional agricultural and financial interests.

¹⁴. The trade unions were key pieces in the propaganda structure of the Peronist regime. As Roberto Carri puts it, "the most important aspect of the financial power of the trade

describes:

It was a strange campaign as it was promoted not by a political party but the trade union movement. The CGT organized rallies in factories and industrial areas; the Peronist party was inactive, waiting for the Consejo Superior [Supreme Council] to define the candidates. The weight of the propaganda was carried out by the Secretaría de Informaciones de la Presidencia de la Nación, carpeting the country with signs proclaiming the government deeds and scattering slogan and phrases in all radio shows.

The campaign kickoff was a revered event in Peronist memory: a CGT-staged, multitudinarios rally to petition Eva Perón to be in the presidential ticket with her husband.¹⁵

It will be mistaken, however, to conceive the 1951 Peronist canvassing drive simply as campaign communication. It was, above all, understood by the regime as continuation of the staunch efforts to politicize the population under the principles and ideals of the Peronist regime. Rather than an occasion to get the vote out, the 1951 campaign represented a mise en scene of the Peronist communication structure

unions during Perón's governments was not so much the amount of funds [invested] but its political significance in political activities supporting the government and its deeds. The unions were one of the most important propagandistic pillars of the Peronist government. Mural propaganda, newspapers, magazines and radio, etc., the union movement took advantage of all means of communication to extol the government's work and to spread [news of] the workers' achievements" (1967, 58).

¹⁵. There Eva Perón declined the offer and the announcement became one her most famous speeches. The reasons why she was not part of the triumphant 1952 Peronist electoral formula have been extensively debated (Luna 1971; Navarro and Fraser 1980; Rock 1987).

progressively erected since the very beginning of the regime. The state-based network of propaganda diffusion, a pillar of the edifice built as early as 1943, was conceived not just as an organization for campaigning and for winning elections, but as the basis for both maintaining permanent connections between the state and the citizenry and for sustaining permanent mass loyalty to the leader.

Peronism defined itself as carrying out an ambitious revolution to reorganize the Argentine culture and to redefine national identity. Such a project, similar to other twentieth-century ambitions for cultural rebuilding and political revolution, entailed staging a tremendous state-centered cultural apparatus. The control over the mass media as well as the permanent and elaborate organization of massive rallies were key, though not the only, foundations of the political-cultural design of Peronism.¹⁶ The escalating dominion of newspapers and radio and the development of a "plaza-mindedness" character expressed the attempt to forge political culture anew and to reinforce political control. In this sense, the 1951 election campaign was seen through this lens: a chance to consolidate the power coalition and to spread the Peronist doctrine, especially given the mounting economic and

¹⁶. For a detailed examination of this topic, see Ciria (1983).

social problems the regime faced at that time.¹⁷

Parallel to multiplying difficulties in several areas, the regime found it increasingly arduous to sustain political allegiances among some social groups. Cracks in the early coalition that supported Perón motivated a progressive intensification of the role of the state in trying to build consensus. The continuous problems between the Peronist regime and its adversaries, which resulted in the exile of opposition leaders, the tightening of civil liberties and the closing of

¹⁷. The elaborate communication complex developed during the 1946-1955 years gave way to frequent and mistaken comparisons of Peronism to totalitarian regimes, more specifically to Fascism. Among other characteristics, the emphasis on public concentrations, especially the May 1 (Labor day) and October 17 (celebrating the birth of Peronism) meetings; the "cult of personality" of both Juan and Eva Perón; the almost absolute control of the mass media; were (and still are) usual reasons for countless analysts and observers to identify Peronism with totalitarian regimes (Galletti 1961). Without getting into this largely debated issue in Argentine history, I want to point out that despite the steady attempts of the Peronist regime to colonize the public sphere under state influence (see Ciria 1983), to equate Peronism with Fascism would be erroneous. David Rock has indicated, "Argentina [under Peronism] was still a long way from the complete absorption of civil society by the state that characterizes totalitarian systems" (1987, 286).

Political opposition existed, clean elections were held and the general conditions for freedom of expression were by large considerably better than in any totalitarian regime. Juan Corradi rightly claims that "the [Peronist] regime lacked most of the distinguishing traits of totalitarianism. They were only halfhearted efforts to establish control of the political process, to institute a program of political socialization, to positively control the media. There were increased repression and police brutality but not ubiquitous terror. The regime became stronger and more rigid as time went by, but it was not totalitarian-clearly not a variant of fascist totalitarianism as it is sometimes depicted" (1985, 68).

newspapers (the expropriation by the government of the prestigious daily La Prensa in 1951 was perhaps the best-known case), manifested the escalating activity of the Peronist state in articulating public communication and in deepening the attempts to consolidate a state-centered communication structure.

Such a structure was violently dismantled by the 1955 coup d'etat which removed General Perón and banned Peronism straightaway. Only the trade unions endured as forceful mechanisms to channel "Peronist" communication. Other ways to organize communication were either silenced, taken away from Peronism (as in the case of newspapers expropriated by the regime and returned to previous owners), or simply disappeared as Peronists no longer had the access to what constituted the organizational backbone of their deposed regime's communication: the state.¹⁸

THE "IMPOSSIBLE GAME" YEARS AND BEYOND

After the removal of Peronism in 1955, the rhythm of the pendulum of civilian and military governments, and permanent

¹⁸. Douglas Chalmers accurately indicates that the Peronists' ability to stage mass demonstrations in confronting various governments after the 1955 coup was basically a result of union activity rather than party activity. Its dependence on "vertical structures and the government itself" explains why the Peronist party "was unable to maintain a high level of direct confrontation with the authorities by means of mass demonstrations" (Chalmers 1977, 415).

economic crisis and social unrest, intensified. Carlos Waisman rightly states that "the overthrow of Perón by a broad military-civilian coalition in 1955 split the Argentine society down the middle" (1989, 80). The Argentine question after Perón became: how to govern the society without Peronism (Snow 1971; Cavarozzi 1983). The answer to this question was the implementation of a formula combining restrictive democracy and military intervention. After the 1955 coup, Peronism was outrightly banned and General Perón went into exile. Peronist candidates were banned from participating in electoral races but, even when they successfully ran under different party labels as in the gubernatorial elections of 1962, elections were annulled and decrees banning Peronism were reinforced. The late 1950s and 1960s displayed a profoundly divided society and the perpetuation of conflicts in all areas; Huntingtonian praetorianism reigned. The mobilization of labor organizations (Peronists and left-wing) and the middle classes was in crescendo; political illegitimacy of both civilian and military regimes was high; and social and political violence mounted.

To steer a seemingly ungovernable country different formulas were tried (Smulovitz 1990). First, an authoritarian regime (the Lonardi and Aramburu presidencies between 1955 and 1958), destined to extirpate Peronism and to establish the "proper" conditions for democracy to flourish, was installed.

This attempt failed as, rather than eliminating or even undermining Peronism, repression and banning fortified the so-called "Peronist resistance" that started to converge around the militant trade unions. The military government, facing increasing difficulties in gaining legitimacy, decided to hold elections in 1958 in which Intransigent Radical Arturo Frondizi, with Peronist support, was elected president. This second alternative was also not successful and the vehemently anti-Peronist Army permanently threatened the Frondizi administration. For the military, Frondizi's connections to the Peronists and his "weak" opposition to mounting labor mobilization were enough reasons to distrust, not just the Frondizi Administration, but democracy as the "viable" way to deal with the Peronist question. Through rebellions and planteos, or "petitions," the military constantly pressured the government to intensify control of Peronist mobilization and the Communist threat, in their view, revived by the Cuban revolution. Finally, Frondizi's refusal to annul the triumphs of the recently legalized Peronist party in the 1962 state elections precipitated a nonviolent coup (Kvaternik 1987). Yet due to several international and domestic reasons, the conditions were not ripe for a military administration to stay in government (Potash 1980; Rouquié 1981); thus democracy, albeit in an extremely fragile state, was reinstalled.

Elections were held in 1963, and Radical candidate Arturo

Illia, with only twenty-five percent of the votes, was elected president. (Peronists decided to abstain from voting and/or to cast blank votes and parties were extremely fragmented). Illia's presidential tenure confronted an even more difficult political scenario than the one the Frondizi administration faced before. Opposition from the Peronist-led unions to the Radical government was present from the very beginning which, in its own way, reinforced military alert and willingness for action. Threats of military intervention remained and became real as another, widely anticipated and advertised coup took place: the 1966 bureaucratic-authoritarian regime (O'Donnell 1973, 1987).

The 1966 junta, under the command of General Onganía, adamantly opposed all forms of political activity, prohibited political parties and strictly censored the mass media under the logic of achieving the old revered military goals of "social peace" and "true democracy." But skyrocketing social unrest made the achievement of the generals' traditional aims impossible. In addition to union opposition (especially by the new breed of left-wing leaders), the instability of the military regime was further shaken as Peronist and different brands of leftist guerrilla movements ripened. Searching for a solution to what appeared to be, for more than a decade, an unsolvable puzzle, and amidst constant economic crisis and mounting political conflicts, General Lanusse (the third

military president since 1966) decided to revoke the banning of political parties. It was only in the early 1970s, when the country seemed irremediably impossible to govern without the open participation of Peronism (and Perón), when elections were announced and what was unimaginable for more than a decade - the lifting of the ban on Peronism - actually took place. A major lesson of the 1955-1972 years was that ignoring Peronism in Argentine politics turned out to be a complicated, violent and risky business. The consequence of this was, in Rock's appropriate words, "a nation in deadlock" not just politically, but in economic and social terms as well.

Yet the comeback of Perón, first to the country in 1972 and then to the presidency in 1973, could not calm a convulsed polity. After eighteen years in exile, the veteran leader's return to the country did not fulfill the expectations of many: the pacification of the country and, for that matter, the resolution of other, especially socioeconomic, problems (De Riz 1981; Di Tella 1983; Landi 1981). Instead, political violence spiraled as the conflict between factions of the Peronist movement became open and dramatically violent while guerrilla attacks and military repression occurred daily. The death of Perón in 1974 and the subsequent fierce dispute for the control of the government and Peronism augmented this already troubled scenario. The military solution, the ever-present "ultimate resort" to untangle Argentine politics, the

"trump card" to win the game, progressively but firmly resurfaced and regained legitimacy.

The consequence was a brutal dictatorship, the 1976-1983 self-baptized Proceso de Reorganización Nacional, which ferociously combated all political opposition and blatantly violated human rights. State terrorism was implemented. All forms of democratic politics were banned; radio and television were censored and controlled; government-identified "subversive" books, magazines and newspapers were burnt or suppressed; thousands of citizens were persecuted, tortured, killed or, if still alive, tightly controlled in a Panopticon-like society (Corradi 1985; Landi 1984; O'Donnell 1984). In an attempt to eliminate all obstacles to a "healthy" and "stable" society, the regime virtually obliterated all means for molding opinion and communicating politics outside the state. These years turned out to be a most dreadful finale to the already muddled historical development of the Argentine public sphere.

As democracy was an exception rather than the norm during the 1955-1983 period, election campaigns were infrequent rather than permanent events. The few campaigns staged during those years evidenced both the country's heated political temperature and the parties' reliance upon typical street forms for mobilization. Given the limited access to the mass media, continual repression and the banning of political

parties, conditions to organize stable means of communication were extremely adverse. This obliged political forces to rely upon other, more spontaneous and subterranean ways to communicate politics such as demonstrations, rallies, and low-cost, ephemeral magazines and newspapers. Despite the sporadic and narrow usage of modern advertising techniques, traditional methods of grass-roots communication remained central for campaigning. In this sense, the agitated 1973 elections best represented the preeminence of old communication rituals over the use of modern electioneering styles during the occasional campaigns.¹⁹

As it goes beyond the limits of this dissertation, this

¹⁹. The campaign kickoff was the massive demonstration organized by the Peronists to salute their exiled leader on his return to the country in 1972. This first campaign activity towards the comeback of Perón to the presidency was suddenly interrupted as shootings among different Peronist factions erupted before Perón's plane landed. Afterwards, both for the March and the September 1973 elections, campaigning was dominated by an intense mobilization and the display of the whole paraphernalia of street communication. In explaining why the old style of electioneering widely dominated across parties, the restrictive political conditions and the tradition of the fervent 1960s should be pointed out. Communication researcher Heriberto Muraro indicates that old campaign rituals were preferred as advertising was profoundly distrusted and considered "a mechanism for the ideological manipulation of the masses utilized by 'imperialism' to promote consume, bourgeois individualism and adhesion to foreign life-styles" (1991, 54-55). In his opinion, the experience of the Nueva Fuerza in the March elections reinforced this conviction as Nueva Fuerza, a right-wing party founded immediately before the elections, got less than two percent of the votes after having invested astronomical monies in an extremely "U.S.-style" (absolutely novel for Argentine standards) campaign.

brief recapitulation of the 1955-1976 years aims not to present an exhaustive account of the development of both Argentine political parties and the mass media during that period but to provide some background to understand why the swing of the pendulum between civilian and authoritarian regimes severely affected the development of stable party structures and forms for communication. Such regime fluctuation was detrimental in two ways. First, the explicit or implicit blessing of authoritarian formulas to resolve what Guillermo O'Donnell (1973) dubbed the "impossible political game" (also see Cavarozzi 1983), discouraged the strengthening of party structures. This affected all political forces but especially the conservative ones; for the latter, the permanent backing of authoritarian solutions frustrated any attempt to develop a conservative party (Rouquié 1982; see Di Tella 1972; O'Donnell 1973; Schoultz 1983; Wynia 1986). Second, the intermittent and prolonged years of repression and banning of democratic politics undermined any intention to consolidate well-organized political parties (Cavarozzi and Garretón 1989) and other means for communication. In sum, the lack of persistent conviction to sustain democratic institutions, plus the severe consequences of the succession of authoritarian regimes which (most particularly in 1976-1983 incarnation) obliterated every non-state form for political communication, were extremely harmful for the development of

a public sphere. The fate of both political parties and the mass media was historically subjected, variably, to both state intervention and virtual disappearance and suppression. Consequently, the chances for political parties and the mass media to develop institutionalized and autonomous spaces away from state intervention for communicating politics have been constantly undermined.²⁰

²⁰. It is important to note that the stronger role of the state vis-a-vis the public sphere in engineering forms for political communication and participation (whether in democratic or authoritarian times) did not translate into a cohesive state apparatus. The permanent political instability precluded it from developing.

CHAPTER TWO

PARTIES AS SPONSORS: NOMINATION POLITICS

I thought I had discovered my desire to be a public man. I was not ashamed to think of being something more than Mayor of Avellaneda. I started to be interested in Argentine history to know how to become president of the Republic. And when I saw Guastavino in the offices of the administración, as he called his comité there I had to begin.

Beatriz Guido, Fin de Fiesta

I think that in the long run all Radicals will play inside [the party]. Do you know how awful it is to stay outside? It is raining outside. It is cold.

Eduardo Angeloz, quoted in Página 12 1989

As indicated in the Introduction, claims that political parties have been historically weak are prevailing in the literature on Argentine politics. In a recent work, McDonald and Ruhl (1989, 153) have argued that "[t]he failure of parties to institutionalize on a national basis - to transcend the issues and leadership of more than one generation - is an important characteristic of the evolution of Argentine party politics." Diverging from this position, this dissertation claims that the conclusion that Argentine parties are "weak" needs to be revised and analyzed in more detail mainly as such label overlooks the different roles played by political

parties. The latter can be "strong" in performing some functions but "weak" in playing other roles. A more precise analysis of this question will not only provide a better understanding of "party functions" but also elements for reconsidering the usual conclusion that Argentines parties are "weak" institutions.

In this regard, this dissertation argues that due to the power of their institutional dynamics, Argentine parties proved to be "strong" mechanisms for campaigning. Control over the nomination and selection process of presidential candidates is one of the reasons accounting why parties kept a central role in campaigning activities. In next chapters I analyze other factors explaining the centrality of parties as campaigning institutions.

What follows is an ethnography of the 1983-1989 election campaigns of the two main political parties, the Unión Cívica Radical and the Partido Justicialista (Peronist), aiming to justify the claim that party organizations retained a central function as recruiters and sponsors of presidential candidates during that period. In order to be elected, potential candidates had to navigate party waters, knit internal alliances with party ranks, and revere party campaign traditions. Even for candidates such as Raúl Alfonsín in 1983 who stressed proselytizing activities outside party limits or Carlos Menem in 1989 whose campaign downplayed traditional

Peronist identities, "walking the party" and cultivating party ties were crucial for securing their nominations.

THE POST-WAR CAMPAIGN: POLITICS IN THE TRANSITION

Scholars agree that the Argentine transition to democracy resulted from the internal collapse of the authoritarian regime after the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war, rather than from an intense mobilization from below (Fontana 1984; Landi 1988; Munck 1990; O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986; Oszlak 1984; Peralta-Ramos and Waisman 1987). The military defeat prompted the absolute loss of legitimacy for the government which, coupled with infights within the Armed Forces over responsibilities in the battleground, precipitated the conditions for the breakdown of the regime. All causes, however, should not be attributed to internal divisions within branches of the military or the breakdown of the consensus within the then-ruling bloc. Although the public sphere started showing important signs of revitalization in the period immediately before the war, the relevance of the first manifestations of "the recomposition of civil society" should not be dismissed. Early symptoms of the reawakening of the public sphere seemed to have been enough of an alert to push the government decision to invade the islands in search of a common cause ("the nation") to unify a mounting resuscitated opposition.

The Malvinas/Falklands fiasco signaled an unexpected end to the 1976 authoritarian regime, shattering intentions to stage a controlled and slow transition to democracy. Not long before the invasion of the Malvinas/Falklands islands, President Leopoldo Galtieri confidently proclaimed that elections were unthinkable in the near future and government spokesmen announced that, in the best case, a gradual process of liberalization through, first parliamentary, and then presidential elections were possible. The surrender of the Argentine troops to the British forces on June 14 brought about a new scenario. Elections, now, seemed feasible. The key pending question was under what conditions the military would leave power.

Disputes over election dates between the government and the political parties immediately ensued. Amidst the hectic and confused post-war days, the military's first proposal to set the election date for 1984 was rejected by almost all parties. Behind the proposal of setting a remote election date was the military's hope of negotiating an ordered exit from power. For the government, the main issue at stake was to find a satisfactory resolution to the "dirty war," namely, to guarantee that the future democratic government would implement an expedient and beneficial policy regarding the state repression of guerrilla movements and the violation of human rights.

The reluctance of the government to schedule elections for 1983 created an uncertain atmosphere. Against the push of the Multipartidaria to move the elections forward and to stage elections for all offices at once, President General Reynaldo Bignone (who replaced General Leopoldo Galtieri) and the members of the post-Malvinas Junta continued to make vague promises of setting the elections for February 1984.¹ Still, this was neither the only nor the main cause of an uncertain political climate. Talks of a presidente concertado, or "concerted president," between the military and the party coalition to carry out a negotiated exit, and rumors of a "civilian coup" (a military coup with a civilian facade) were constant. On November 7, an op-ed article in the prestigious daily La Nación (1982, 8-9) stated:

We have finished another week full of bad omens, alarming hearsay, contradictory information and all kind of uncertainties. Another week in which the magnitude of the crisis and the fragmentation of power evidenced something deeper than the power ambitions of a general, the lack of originality on the part of the political parties and the ups and downs of the dollar exchange rate.

The military government continued to make ambiguous announcements about elections, and rumors of a sudden stop in the transition were frequent. The discovery and opening of

¹. The Multipartidaria was a coalition of the five main political parties (Peronist, Radical, the Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo, Intransigent and Christian Democrats) founded in 1981 and originally conceived as a common front to negotiate a "democratic exit" with the military.

various mass graves added a ghostly and harrowing climate, reinforcing the regime's intention to find a prompt and beneficial solution to the violation of human rights.

Amidst these political conditions, party activities slowly emerged. During the second semester of 1982, political parties focused on rebuilding their structures rather than on campaigning. After years of absence of democratic practices, reorganizing forces, launching a massive process of party registration, and debating potential candidacies were urgent concerns. The focus on party activities weakened the Multipartidaria as a cohesive front; the party coalition remained an organization mainly to compel the government to guarantee elections for 1983. The final major activity of the Multipartidaria was a rally in the historic Plaza de Mayo on December 17, 1982 that had a turbulent end as the police gassed and assailed the crowd. Parties and politicians, confident that elections were to be held not later than 1983, progressively abandoned plans to coordinate activities with other forces. Despite the intention to push elections forward, parties needed time to recreate their structures and renew contacts with the citizenry.²

². Political scientist Oscar Oszlak (Clarín 1983b) describes: "During the governments of the Proceso, parties suffered the attacks of the authoritarian regime. The obliged political "winter" reduced [parties] to mere entities; as their ties with society and the state were broken, parties could not act as links between social demand and public policy. Their existence was incarnated in old leaders whose

Amidst mounting party activity, the campaign of Raul Alfonsín gained visibility. Soon after the war ended, Alfonsín staged an impressive rush as the presidential precandidate of the party faction Renovación y Cambio.³ Alfonsín's urgency to launch his candidacy was due to his position vis-a-vis possible rivals. "Alfonsín faced a double challenge: on the one hand, to end the RyC's minority status and capture his party's nomination, and on the other hand, defeat the Peronists, who despite their problems were still the majority party" (Cavarozzi 1986, 169). The leadership of the Radical party, affiliated with the faction Línea Nacional, was in a complicated situation. Balbín's death in 1981 implied the end to a challenged but durable thirty-year leadership, and disputes over who would succeed Balbín soon developed. In addition, the support of party leaders for the invasion of the Malvinas/ Falklands had backfired, putting them in a bind. Radical leaders, mainly due to their participation in the Multipartidaria (Balbín was credited as the founder) and in dialogues with the regime to initiate the return to democracy, exhibited democratic credentials, while their public support of the military takeover of the islands undermined their credibility.

dubious representativeness was often ignored by the military to discuss "institutional exits."

³. In 1973, Alfonsín lost the Unión Cívica Radical primaries against the party patriarch Ricardo Balbín.

This was not the case of Raul Alfonsín who remained virtually disengaged from the official party line and opposed the war. Though the late Balbín had hinted his preference for Alfonsín to lead the party, leaders of Línea Nacional resisted Alfonsín, and by June 1982, he remained outside the party command. The campaign for the primaries reflected the distance between Alfonsín and the Radical leadership. The Alfonsín headquarters ran the campaign separate from the official party command. Neither Alfonsín nor his campaign advisers held any position in the party directory. Alfonsín took advantage of the bewilderment among Radical leaders after the war and, ignoring the official Línea Nacional, launched his bid for the presidency.

Alfonsín's strategy was to campaign for both the Radical and the national presidency simultaneously. His campaign tours functioned as a way to work directly with state and district offices, cementing caudillo networks and building alliances for the party primaries, as well as opportunities to address the general population. Alfonsín campaigned for both the primaries and the national election, building alliances inside the party and addressing general voters. Even though only party members could vote in the primaries, the Alfonsín campaign aimed, from the very beginning, not exclusively to win the primaries but also to target voters outside the party. Alfonsín later recalled:

I always campaigned at the national level even in the primaries. Those were two years in which I toured every corner of the country with a discourse whose theme was the national campaign and never the dispute over party power (Giussani 1987, 21).

A member of the Alfonsín campaign headquarters explains: "Alfonsín started right off with a message to the society rather than to the party. From the society he built his leadership in the party" (Inchausti 1990). The strategy of cultivating support outside to strengthen Alfonsín's position inside Radicalism and bringing new voters into the party later proved to be extremely wise. Radical insiders reminisce that thousands of new members decided to register just "to vote for Alfonsín in the primaries."

In the aftermath of the war, less than two weeks after General Bignone was inaugurated president, Alfonsín's headquarters organized a rally in a Buenos Aires boxing arena on July 14, drawing approximately 4,000 people. This was not only the official kickoff of Alfonsín's campaign but also "the first legal political rally in more than six years of dictatorship" (New York Times 1982). Alfonsín campaign aides evaluate positively the first campaign activity given the enthusiasm and attendance of the rally amidst the notorious absence of democratic politics; also, the success of the event made evident their intention to take the lead in the campaign race (Gibaja 1990; Inchausti 1990). This rally and subsequent campaign activities had a strong impact both within and

outside the Radical party. The frequency of Alfonsín's appearances and the characteristics of the rallies (newspaper articles compared Alfonsín's rallies to the traditionally feverish and crowded Peronist actos) stood out amidst the relative absence of other campaigns. The themes of this first phase of the campaign were traditional ideas of the Radical repertory, hammered by Alfonsín throughout the campaign: the return to the Constitution and the rule of democratic institutions.

The first stage of the campaign concluded with a rally to proclaim the ticket of Alfonsín-Martínez for the Radical primaries. On December 7, 1982, facing an enthusiastic, crowded arena, the ticket, an alliance of Renovación y Cambio (who counted the backing of the party youth section) and Línea Córdoba (the party faction of the Radical stronghold province of Córdoba) was made official. The dynamism of the Alfonsín campaign contrasted with the lethargy of the party leadership. The divisions within Línea Nacional (mainly over the succession of Balbín) hindered the making of any prompt decisions. This situation clearly favored Alfonsín who practically campaigned without any opposition from the party direction; according to a main member of the Alfonsín campaign, the party leadership "never showed any strong opposition [to Alfonsín's campaign]" (Gibaja 1990).

The debates within the official leadership of the Radical

party paled compared to the deep conflicts inside Peronism. About a dozen factions, somewhat aligned behind different party notables representing the ortodoxia and heterodoxia (or verticalistas and antiverticalistas), surfaced after the war.⁴ Unquestionably, the main problem Peronism faced was the succession to Juan Perón. The 1974 death of the founder and undisputable leader of Peronism gave way to the classic Weberian "problem of succession" of charismatic domination. Yet, after eight years, the Peronist movement's assimilation of Perón's death still remained an open question. The magnitude of the conflicts within the last Peronist administration bared the acute difficulties for succeeding Perón. Then, the March 1976 coup, by prohibiting all political activities, shut off all avenues for resolving the succession and retarded the process. Hence, the beginning of the transition to democracy in 1982 unleashed deep-seated conflicts and unsolved matters silenced for more than six years.

Disputes over replacing Perón's leadership were intrinsically related to fights over the nomination of candidates for the upcoming elections. The first Peronist meeting after the ban on political activities was lifted

⁴. The main divergence between the orthodox (or verticalistas) and the heterodox (or antiverticalistas) factions was the leadership of Isabel Perón. While the former promoted Perón's widow as the only leader of Peronism to replace her husband, the latter opposed it.

presaged some characteristics of the campaign. A raucous rally to commemorate the sacred 17 de Octubre revealed the problems for finding a fast and relatively peaceful solution to replacing Perón's leadership. Old and violent infights erupted after the speakers, the party first vice-president Deolindo Bittel, the secretary of the more anti-military wing of the CGT Saul Ubaldini, and union boss Lorenzo Miguel, addressed the crowd. Mutual accusations among Peronist factions followed.

The authorization of political activities eliminated a main (but not the only) hurdle for solving the twin problems of succession and selection of candidates. Two questions frustrated the possibilities for a rapid selection of candidates and the reorganization of Peronism. First, the position of former Argentine president Isabel Martinez de Perón and the head of party was still unknown. Would Perón's widow come back from her Spanish exile to run for president? What attitude would she take vis-a-vis competing Peronist candidates? These remained, for a long period, unanswered questions. Second, the preferred candidate of the Central General de Trabajadores (CGT) (the powerful central trade union), and particularly by the metalworkers' union leader Lorenzo Miguel and leader of the 62 Organizaciones (the political front of the Peronist unions), to be in the presidential ticket was unknown. Few doubted that, given

Miguel's control of the union apparatus and strong influence among party notables, whoever received his blessing would automatically emerge as a favorite to lead the presidential ticket.

The lack of definite answers to these questions slowed down the organization of the campaign, not only in the aftermath of the war but even after mid-1983. Yet Peronists did not seem anxious to start campaigning. The certitude that the election was already decided, namely that the large majority of the Argentine population would invariably elect a Peronist president, was extensive among leaders and the rank-and-file. As the electoral triumph was seen as inevitable, Peronist leaders virtually neglected the need to campaign outside the movimiento. Potential candidates believed that gathering support inside Peronism and among different factions of the trade unions was the main priority, not only to head the presidential ticket (or for that matter, any other ticket), but to win the election.

THE 1983 CAMPAIGN: EFFERVESCENT TIMES

At the beginning of 1983, while party registration climbed significantly, candidacies emerged more clearly in Peronism and in other parties as well.⁵ In a heavily

⁵. By October 1983, the total amount of party members was 5,270,897, that is, approximately thirty percent of the citizens legally allowed to vote.

advertised and crowded rally, the Radical leadership proclaimed the ticket Fernando de la Rúa (former senator for the city of Buenos Aires and vice-presidential candidate for the 1973 elections) and Carlos Perette (former vicepresident of the 1963-1966 Illia Administration) for the primaries. The candidates and party notables, mainly leaders of the key Buenos Aires province, addressed an exultant crowd; a newsmagazine defined the meeting as the "counterattack" of candidate de la Rúa (Somos 1983a).

A handful of candidates surfaced in the Peronist camp. Three party notables stood out as possible contenders: Angel Robledo (former minister of Defense and Interior of the 1973-1976 Peronist administration, who counted on the support of the moderate CGT-Azopardo), Raul Matera (a renowned neurosurgeon and party figure who, despite not having received explicit support of any party faction or trade union, announced his candidacy) and Antonio Cafiero (former minister of Economics of both the 1952-1955 and 1973-1976 Peronist administrations and one of two leaders of the party faction Movimiento de Unidad, Solidaridad y Organizacion, MUSO). Two other possible candidates, Italo Luder (former majority leader of the Senate and 1975 provisional president) and Deolindo Bittel (the other leader of the MUSO who, given his tenure as the party vice-president and as Peronist representative in the Multipartidaria, acquired great visibility during the

transition) refused to accept any nomination, maintaining a "neutral" but expectant role.

While his potential rivals focused on solving internal party problems, Raul Alfonsín continued his energetic campaign. On April 25, Alfonsín shook the country by denouncing the existence of a pact between the military and members of the trade union leadership. About to travel to Spain to attend a political conference, Alfonsín claimed that union leaders and some generals (among them the chief of the Army, General Cristino Nicolaidis) had an agreement. After his return from Europe, Alfonsín gave the names of the union leaders (among them, Lorenzo Miguel and Herminio Iglesias, the Peronist strongman of the province of Buenos Aires). Alfonsín affirmed that through the pact the military aimed to get from a future Peronist administration

to forget the excesses during the repression of terrorism; to maintain without major variants the continuity of the actual hierarchy of the Army during the beginning of the next constitutional government; to avoid the intervention of the constitutional power in both the reorganization of the Armed Forces and the decisions over military expenditures; and to guarantee not to review the illicit acts committed during the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Clarín 1983a).

In exchange, union leaders obtained the favor of the generals in the government-controlled process of normalization of the activity of the trade unions (meaning, the transferral of the unions back to the workers) and the elimination of their names

from the Actas de Responsabilidad Institucional.⁶ For Alfonsín, the pact signaled the attempt of the top hierarchies of the military and the trade unions to consolidate their power.

The accusation shook Argentine society and generated reactions from all corners of the political spectrum. Alfonsín's accusations echoed both rumors of talks of negotiations between officers and union leaders and news that the government was analyzing the possibility of decreeing a Ley de Amnistía (an Amnesty Law for the violation of human rights). The accused union leaders, backed by all Peronist candidates, plainly rejected all charges; the military denied having had any contacts, and most parties judged Alfonsín's accusation as "an electoral gamble."

Concrete evidence about the pact was never publicly shown. Alfonsín did not claim to have either tapes or documents proving that such an agreement existed. The accusation was an artful strategy to identify Peronism with the military government. Though Alfonsín did not mention Peronism, his denouncement implied that the latter maintained ties with the authoritarian regime by alluding to union leaders largely seen as central in the ongoing politicking inside Peronism. By doing so, Alfonsín continued defining the

⁶. This decree, passed by the military government, announced the names of different figures who were unauthorized to hold public office that included several union leaders.

limits of the electoral debate as the opposition between democracy and authoritarianism, vis-a-vis the passivity of the Peronists and their attention to internal problems. The accusation of the pacto sindical-militar clearly expressed Alfonsín's overall campaign strategy, informed by his perception that what was at stake in 1983 Argentina was the need to stage a democratic crusade against authoritarianism.⁷ In the words of a campaign adviser,

Alfonsín perceived that the society was tired of military governments, the frustration of Malvinas, people feeling tamed by the psychological action of the government [during the war]. He intuited that the people wanted to change this . . . that people were fed up with authoritarianism, and the union gangs (Inchausti 1990).⁸

⁷. This theme continued even after Peronists selected Italo Luder as the presidential candidate. David Ratto, Alfonsín's advertising consultant, comments: "The competitor was not Luder but a conception of life" (Ratto 1990).

⁸. According to many interviewees who participated in the 1983 campaign, the denouncement of the pacto sindical-militar (as the pact became known) was a bold idea of Alfonsín himself right before he actually made it. Others attribute it to a sector of the Alfonsín campaign committee that, differing from the more moderate line inspired by the late Raul Borrás (a close friend of Alfonsín and later his first minister of Defense), advocated a more confrontational and audacious attitude. In part, these two positions resulted from different perceptions of what the electoral results would be. For the more moderate Borrás position, it was necessary to cultivate agreements with the conservative provincial parties as they doubted Alfonsín was going to obtain the majority in the Colegio Electoral. (According to the electoral system, a candidate needs the majority of the votes to be elected president). The other position, for some observers, best incarnated in Dante Caputo (major speechwriter of the campaign who later became Alfonsín's Foreign Affairs minister), was confident of an overwhelming victory and espoused a "campaign of ideas" to attract people rather than the building of political alliances.

Amidst the echoes of Alfonsín's denunciation, Miguel and other union leaders' demands that Alfonsín confirm or retract his accusations, and the reappearance of violence (a wave of kidnappings, death threats to known public figures and censorship of magazines and artistic expressions), parties intensified their activity. Given his tangible success, evidenced in both polls and rally attendances, Alfonsín seemed to be the inevitable candidate to lead the Radical ticket. The main dispute remained whether or not a common list including politicians from both Renovación y Cambio and Línea Nacional was feasible for the party primaries. Difficulties for reaching a satisfactory negotiation for either faction made elections inevitable. Alfonsín, de la Rúa, and Luis León (a caudillo from the northeastern province of Chaco with scattered support in diverse states) vied for the party presidency. By mid-July, a series of landslide victories in various provinces gave Alfonsín sufficient delegates to win the party convention, thereby speeding the selection process and the transferral of party mandate. Expecting a Peronist ticket to be decided shortly and given the categorical results in the primaries, Radical party leaders decided to withdraw the candidacy of de la Rúa.

In contrast, Peronists still debated possible candidacies. Despite Isabel Perón's reluctance to define her position and to give any signs, Italo Luder and Antonio

Cafiero gradually gained credibility to lead the presidential ticket. The leadership of the 62 Organizaciones indicated its support for Luder while Cafiero, encouraged by the backing of the so-called "25" (a key faction of the more anti-military wing of the CGT) and the apparatus of the MUSO, still kept presidential ambitions. Luder and Cafiero toured the country aiming to secure alliances with caudillos and union leaders to guarantee the majority of votes at the convention. Their success and the slow convergence of different Peronist groups around them made other foreseeable candidates abandon their presidential aspirations and hope to procure influential positions in a future Peronist administration.

Towards the end of August, Italo Luder firmly emerged as the presidential candidate. His good contacts with all factions of the diverse Peronist mosaic, disengagement from internal rivalries, and image as an "independent" candidate palatable to the taste of the non-Peronist electorate, paved Luder's way to lead the presidential ticket. Although it was basically agreed on at a summit including Bittel, Miguel, Cafiero, Iglesias and Luder himself, the candidacy had to be approved by the national convention.⁹ Yet obstacles remained

⁹. As Luder firmly emerged, Cafiero switched gears and decided to dispute the candidacy for governor of the province of Buenos Aires against Iglesias. In a chaotic and violent party convention, Iglesias was proclaimed candidate while Cafiero's delegates refrained from voting and abandoned the site claiming lack of guarantees and the violation of rules by Iglesias' supporters. Cafiero's faction petitioned to annul

for officially approving the ticket. The uncertainty over the final results of the Buenos Aires primary delayed the national convention as almost a third of the delegates belonged to the province. Also, the disengagement and silence of Isabel Perón throughout the period coupled with the aspirations of various regional leaders to remove Bittel from his vicepresidential nomination and to be included in the ticket, deadlocked the process.¹⁰ It was only on September 6 when, facing the imminent expiration of the date to officiate candidacies, the convention proclaimed the ticket Luder-Bittel despite the opposition of the ultraverticalista delegates, who tried to delay the nomination until Isabel Perón made any announcements.¹¹ Luder's words, after he accepted the

the election but their protests were virtually neglected by other Peronist leaders, especially Bittel (who hoped to get support from Iglesias' delegates to be the vicepresidential candidate), who accepted the results and backed Iglesias. The process was at an impasse as Cafiero petitioned the intervention of the electoral court to review the process.

¹⁰. The sectors who attempted to remove Bittel and share the ticket with Luder were the so-called ultraverticalistas (who supported the candidacy of the absent and nominal president of the party, Isabel Perón), MUSO (who facing the difficulties for annulling the Buenos Aires convention insisted on putting Cafiero on the ticket, then-candidate for governor of La Rioja Carlos Menem, and Convergencia Peronista (who aimed to include Carlos Grosso) among other regional caudillos.

¹¹. Unquestionably, in what many called a union "putsch," the trade union political apparatus was the major winner of the convention not only as it dominated the nomination but also as Lorenzo Miguel obtained the party first vice-presidency without previous consultation with the absent president Isabel Perón.

nomination, illustrated the party's zeitgeist: "To be the Peronist candidate is the certainty of being president." All along the campaign, Peronists firmly believed that selecting their candidate was, in the words of party leader, "a detail" (Bárbaro 1992).¹²

For Luder and his advisors, the campaign strategy was to cultivate middle-class support as the working-class vote was assumed to be intact. Luder's rationale was that as Peronism already had the working-class vote, it was necessary to campaign among other groups. A political observer commented, "the strategy of Doctor Luder is very simple. He starts from the basis of six million peronist votes and committed himself to get two other million of the independent electorate that, in his opinion, will allow him to win" (Clarín 1983f). Luder recalls:

I attempted to address all social sectors but I admit, and I told the justicialistas, that they had a discourse for the peronistas, believing, naively, that it was

¹². The Peronist ticket was the last one to be made official. In addition to the Peronists and the Radicals, the other competing forces were the MID (a clique of intellectuals and technocrats advancing the candidacy of Rogelio Frigerio, close advisor to 1958-1962 president Arturo Frondizi), the left-leaning Partido Intransigente, the conservative Union de Centro Democrático, Alianza Federal and Alianza Socialdemócrata, the Democracia Cristiana, and the Troskysts' Movimiento al Socialismo and Partido Obrero. The Comunista, Frente de Izquierda Popular and Socialista Popular supported the Peronist presidential ticket while advancing their own candidates for state and local offices. With these nomination decisions, the second week of September, fifty days before election day, signaled the intensification of campaign activities.

enough. I told them that they held a naive triumphalism and it was necessary to talk to people who were not politically engaged" (Luder, Italo 1990).

But most Peronists actually understood the campaign as one to affirm votes rather than to capture new or indecisive ones. For Peronists, knowing what the electorate's expectations and demands were, and addressing these concerns in the campaign was unimportant. The absolute confidence in winning the elections led to practically directing all campaign efforts to party followers. A political commentator observed, "while Luder and his political team claim that the [election campaign] had to mainly encompass the independent sectors, showing a moderate and republican image, union leaders and politicians decided going back to flash the traditional strategy of justicialismo" (Clarín 1983c). Moreover, as a sign of appreciation, a great part of Luder's campaign trail was devoted to visiting districts of caudillos who supported his nomination; to a large extent, his route was decided based on the logic of party dynamics, that is, to reinforce political ties and to satisfy the requirements of local bosses, rather than according to what votes he needed most.¹³

In addition to staging an inner-centered campaign, the exhausting and conflictive nomination process posed two main

¹³. Luder's first campaign activity after the national convention was a tour of the central province of Santiago del Estero, a traditional Peronist bulwark, mainly to acknowledge the early support of candidate for governor Carlos Juárez.

difficulties. First, the delay in the primaries substantially reduced the time for the "external" campaign. The candidate's son and manager of the campaign claims that "it was difficult to design a campaign in forty-five days . . . Alfonsín had campaigned for over a year and had already visited twice or even three times places we went to" (Luder, Ricardo 1990). Italo Luder blitzed the country, touring two or even three provinces a day in a desperate attempt to make up for the lack of time. Justifying the basis of his campaign, Luder explains: "Having been selected as a candidate forty-five days before election day, the only thing I could do was to get in a plane and tour the country. That was my only possibility" (Luder, Italo 1990). A tight schedule, however, was a consequence of the exclusive attention Peronist candidates paid to the party situation; for many, campaigning outside Peronism was unthinkable. By the time the primary was over and candidates realized the need to extend the message beyond party boundaries, the Peronist candidates were pressed for time, and Alfonsín had intensively campaigned and already defined the terms of the electoral debate.

Second, the Peronist campaign was visibly disorganized. Luder campaign headquarters controlled little of the immense Peronist machinery; trade unions and party factions campaigned independently from the supervision of Luder headquarters. The dispersion was mainly due to the reverberations of the intense

conflicts that unfolded during the primaries (which surfaced even after the convention) and the yet unsolved and complex problems for reorganizing Peronism without Perón.¹⁴ Indeed, the lack of a unified command revealed that Peronism spawned a candidate but not a leader. Luder was the candidate but the control of the party structure was in the hands of the trade unions and, to a lesser extent, scattered among various regional leaders. The unions' and local caudillos' power dwarfed Luder's capacity to centralize and, in turn, to organize the campaign.¹⁵ Another factor contributing to the disorganization was that factions and local leaders who did not benefit from the results in the primaries (namely, those who did not secure any important position either in the list of candidates or in the party) showed little enthusiasm to campaign for Luder. Furthermore, the nomination of candidates did not quell the deep-seated hostilities while conflicts surfaced during the campaign. The difficulties in recovering energies and curing the wounds of the primaries delayed the

¹⁴. The Peronist rally on October 17 reiterated the existing tensions among different Peronist factions. Part of the audience booed and hurled stones when Lorenzo Miguel was about to address the crowd. Finally Miguel, among cheers for other leaders, decided not to speak.

¹⁵. Political columnist Joaquín Morales Solá (1990, 75) observes that "Luder was the candidate of a party presided over by Isabel and manipulated by Miguel."

campaign after the nomination.¹⁶

To summarize, the 1983 Peronist campaign faced numerous obstacles. Truly, the negligence in recognizing that Argentine society went through important changes during the 1970s was a major drawback for readjusting the campaign message to new demands. Peronists still believed that old political and cultural identities, values and expectations which had made the movimiento the undisputable favorite of Argentine voters for almost four decades, remained intact. Many Peronists largely believed that the campaign consisted fundamentally in dusting off the Peronist pantheon (the images of Juan and Eva Perón) and repeating until paroxysm the old Peronist dogma.¹⁷ A consultant for the 1983 Peronist campaign recalls: "Peronism did not understand the historical moment. It was preserved in

¹⁶. "Only 25 days before election day, the Peronism of Buenos Aires seems not to have perceived the closeness of that date and is still recovering from the primaries, that proved to be -in various ways- more tiring than what it was originally believed" (Clarín 1983f). Journalist Oscar Cardoso (1983), who followed Luder's campaign trail, evaluated, "the effects of the harsh internal conflicts during the reorganization [of Peronism] delayed the beginning of the campaign."

¹⁷. A Spanish journalist described: "The Peronist campaign abuses the image of the dead caudillo (there is no reference to the widow and president of the party) and centers its electoral offer in the slogan Volvemos ("we return"), as if the Argentine history for the last ten years was a Peronist movie interrupted seven years ago by the military, and now willing to continue" (El País 1983a) "The Peronist campaign is an homage to necrophilia and the past. They openly ask for votes for Perón while his images preside over television advertising (El País 1983b).

a bottle. When the bottle was opened, Peronism confronted a completely unknown world, an unknown youth, an unknown middle class" (Vera 1990). Only a few leaders perceived the need to address new requirements and expectations, mainly, the establishment and guarantee of basic democratic rights, but their opinion was ignored, silenced or simply dismissed. Instead, the Peronist message emphasized the traditional rallying cry "Liberación o Dependencia," charging imperialism and the alliance between the oligarchy and the military as the roots of Argentina's plights. Some leaders even accused Alfonsín of incarnating the "imperialist" option and having received campaign funds from foreign companies.

Besides a faulty diagnosis, major organizational problems troubled the campaign, probably affecting the final result. The obvious difficulties in succeeding Perón's undisputed leadership, the passivity of Isabel Perón (formal president of the party) and the intricate and prolonged process necessary to reorganize the party and select candidates, uniquely shaped a rather disarticulated and erratic campaign. Carlos Grosso (1990), the 1989-1992 mayor of Buenos Aires and leader of the faction Convocatoria Peronista in 1983, claims that "the propaganda and communication design was disastrous, improvised, and disorganized. The [final] rally consolidated that negative image."

The Alfonsín campaign notably faced less controversies

and obstacles. After the conclusive results in the primaries, the Alfonsín campaign continued emphasizing the constant presence of the candidate in rallies and public meetings; informal calculations by Radical observers are that from June 1982 until October 1983 Alfonsín made three full tours around the country. Increasingly crowded rallies became landmarks indicating different stages in the campaign. The second phase of the campaign initiated in December 1982 ended with a crowded rally held in a middle-class Buenos Aires neighborhood. The attendance of 70,000 constituted a record for the campaign and boosted the Radicals' enthusiasm and confidence. A few days later, in what was considered "Alfonsín's stampede" (Somos 1983b) and still amid rumors of a military coup, two packed rallies in the working-class and Peronist stronghold Lanús in Greater Buenos Aires and in populated Córdoba reinforced, among Radicals, the idea that defeating Peronism was possible.

Meanwhile, the Peronists, though worried about Alfonsín's impressive momentum, discarded any possibility of losing. Candidate Luder claimed:

The triumph of the Partido Justicialista is sure . . . One thing is an important rally and something different is the political presence we sense . . . Justicialismo has in the worker movement a sturdy base . . . No political party, not even in other more populated countries, has a massive registration of 3.200.000 members (Clarín 1983c).

Columnist Kirschbaum reported that despite financial problems,

Peronists claimed that even at half-speed the victory was secure (Clarín 1983d). In a massive rally in La Plata (the capital of the Buenos Aires province), the candidate for vice-governor Jose Amerise exultantly claimed: "Peronism has not lost an election in thirty-eight years. We have won with Perón in government, with Perón in exile, with blank votes, with the name justicialista and with other names. On October 30, with Perón dead, we will win again" (Clarín 1983e). Vice-presidential candidate Bittel asserted:

There are some hard [to win] provinces . . . Justicialismo maintains the same mobilization capacity it had in 1973. In addition, a high percentage of youngsters who did not vote in former elections and now will vote for us because they were raised in prolific Peronist homes, needs to be added" (Clarín 1983h).

Sustaining the momentum evident since mid-1982, the Alfonsín campaign kept snowballing and maintained the hitherto prevailing premises and structure, namely, Alfonsín's permanent tours and a simple organization. The campaign was unthinkable without Alfonsín; the whole venture was structured around the candidate more than upon party activities. Although the party mobilized (to an unusual extent for Radical standards) and was in fact a notable contribution to the campaign communication machinery (especially the manpower provided by its youth section), the central campaign events spun around the candidate and his unceasing presence (general accounts estimate that Alfonsín spoke at more than four-hundred rallies throughout the campaign). Moreover, Alfonsín

is credited with some of the hallmarks as well as with key and audacious strategies of the campaign such as timing the denunciation of the pacto militar-sindical, reciting the Preamble of the National Constitution at the end of every rally, improvising the script for the television spots, and deciding to hold the final rally in Buenos Aires streets rather than in a stadium as his advisors suggested. His then-campaign manager states: "Alfonsín made that campaign. He is a brilliant candidate" (Gibaja 1990).

Certainly, and in contrast to the Peronist campaign, the rapid resolution of the primaries and Alfonsín's mounting success contributed to maintaining the campaign organization. After the primaries, the campaign structure persisted almost unmodified as the defeated Radical leaders did not put up any obstacles. Some party caudillos and local notables (astonished by the extraordinary impulse and hopeful that Alfonsín represented the best opportunity to defeat Peronism) decided to join the campaign and jumped on the bandwagon. Other leaders, still ambivalent about Alfonsín's program and electoral chances, showed little enthusiasm. For some party figures Alfonsín was an "outsider" who, though championing Radical ideals of democracy, had too much of a "populist" rhetoric, was too "audacious" with his attacks on the military and the trade unions, and seemed too "leftist" with his emphasis on human rights issues. Yet they did not offer any

resistance and, at the most, maintained a rather skeptical attitude about Alfonsín's possibilities.¹⁸ Alfonsín's team masterminded the campaign but the party structure fulfilled an important role following the initiatives of the presidential campaign headquarters.

The Alfonsín campaign was innovative yet genuinely Radical. Before the primaries, the campaign was run separately from the official party line but permanently sought support within established party networks and from ward bosses; a political columnist comments: "[Raul] Borrás [Alfonsín's main political strategist] had knit efficacious party alliances to confront the [primary] elections" (Morales Solá 1990a, 141). Once Alfonsín secured the presidency of the party, his campaign became, unquestionably, the Radical campaign.

¹⁸. Journalist James Neilson described: "For a large part of the country, Alfonsín represents an alternative not only to Peronism or the Proceso, but to the radicalismo de comité [alluding to politics made through party boss networks]. The consequence is, despite the encouraging words after the primaries, the established Radical leaders show a remarkable lack of enthusiasm about Alfonsín's candidacy. The fervor of the Alfonsinistas, or of some ally parties, could not fill out the hole. Something similar happened in the USA in 1976 with the successful campaign of Jimmy Carter, another intruder not very well perceived by the owners of party machinery . . . But [in contrast to Carter's media strategy], the influence of the media is less than in the USA. Here, the political changes are slower and, consequently, the chances of the lone candidate to get support without the help of a party structure are less. Alfonsín, then, is obliged to try emulating Carter's crusade mainly using the traditional and exhausting methods . . . Alfonsín approaches the end of his epic marathon, visibly tired and without voice. But he cannot take a break because there is no other alfonsinista with enough attraction to replace him (La Semana 1983, 29).

Certainly, Alfonsín's figure and message was emphasized over the party label but the campaign remained loyal to Radical ideals and party mechanisms; he ran as a Radical and permanently built and maintained party traditions and dynamics.

The electoral results were conclusive. The Radical party conclusively won the presidency and the majority in the lower chamber. Having obtained fifty-two percent of the votes, there was no need to elect the president in the Colegio Electoral. This was the first time that Radicalism defeated Peronism in a free and unrestricted election.¹⁹

THE 1988 PRIMARIES

To understand the 1989 presidential election campaigns, it is indispensable to review the 1987 midterm elections. The electoral results stunned Argentine politics. The conclusive defeat of almost all Radical candidates in gubernatorial and local races baffled the Alfonsín administration. Before 1987, encouraged by the favorable results of the 1984 referendum on the southern Beagle channel and the 1985 legislative elections, Radicals envisioned a promising future for the party and launched ambitious political projects including the move of the capital to the Patagonia, the reform of the

¹⁹. Peronism obtained 40.15 percent; Partido Intransigente 2.33; the Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo 1.19; and over fifteen parties splited the rest of the votes.

Constitution and the reelection of President Alfonsín in 1989 (the electoral law forbade him to succeed himself). The 1987 electoral defeats wrecked all these hopes as Radicals lost the majority in the lower house while the wide support for the government and especially for the President (once thought to be secure), had been strongly questioned.

The 1988 Radical Primaries: The Survival of the Fittest

After the elections, the party and the government were in disarray. The debacle prompted all ministers of the Alfonsín administration to resign.²⁰ Neither the heavy financial and infrastructural government support nor the intensive and carefully staged campaign seemed to have been enough to win the elections. Analysts generally agreed that the deepening of the economic crisis and the inability of the Radical government to offer rapid and satisfactory solutions decided the 1987 elections. Standard interpretations argue that while the vindication of democracy and civic liberties in 1983 and the stabilization of the economy in 1985 (the apex of the Plan Austral as the program of economic stabilization was known) were the fundamental reasons explaining the Radicals's stunning victories, by 1987, the government could not meet the

²⁰. The resulting cabinet was a group of true Alfonsinistas rather than a team of Radicals. The two confirmed ministers (Finance minister Juan Sourouille and Foreign Affairs Dante Caputo) as well as the new ones adhered to the President and his leadership within the party.

central expectations for economic improvements. Once demands to guarantee basic rights were institutionalized and respected, economic needs became urgent and central matters. But, in this area, the Alfonsín administration could not exhibit an equally successful record. The failure to initiate an economic recovery dramatically reduced the chances for beating Peronism.

Amidst the backlash of the 1987 defeat, the party was immersed in debating the future; a reevaluation of the economic policies seemed indispensable to have chances for the 1989 presidential election, otherwise, a Peronist victory seemed certain. The results definitely buried the desires of party factions that planned to launch the reelection of President Alfonsín. The way was paved for other potential candidates but almost no one seemed to be in a solid position after September 1987. The defeat damaged the chances of all visible leaders. Besides the triumph in the city of Buenos Aires (a traditional Radical territory where the Radicals got thirty-nine percent of the votes), only Eduardo Angeloz (in Cordoba) and Osvaldo Alvarez Guerrero (in the southern Rio Negro) were elected governors. Not many other Radicals exhibited winning credentials to dispute the party ticket.

Eduardo Angeloz was the first choice. His reelection in the Radical stronghold of Cordoba by a wide margin automatically made him the front runner. Amidst the doubts of

die-hard Alfonsinistas, especially the Junta Coordinadora Nacional for whom Angeloz was too right-leaning, high-ranking Radicals (such as vice-president Victor Martinez and the party president Edison Otero) insinuated that Angeloz was the most likely Radical candidate to lead the presidential ticket (Clarín 1987). In early February 1988, Alfonsín announced his backing for the Angeloz-Casella ticket. Only senator Luis Leon (who was defeated in the 1983 primaries) announced his decision to confront the official ticket in elections. The Junta Coordinadora staged a rally "to win the future and to mobilize the party" while keeping a skeptical attitude towards Angeloz. But the moves to counter his candidacy, more precisely, launching Foreign Affairs minister Caputo for president supported by Alfonsinista groups and members of the Junta Coordinadora, rapidly perished, mainly, given Alfonsín's staunch determination to back Angeloz. Finally, around mid-March all party sectors publicly announced their support for Angeloz-Casella in the primaries. Election day was set for July 3.

Angeloz, convinced that Cafiero would win the Peronist primaries, made the latter his main rival and accused him of offering too facile and simplistic solutions (Cafiero, in his campaign for the Peronist ticket, continuously criticized the Alfonsín administration of following the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and encouraged him to abandon the

IMF policies and to stop payments on the foreign debt). Leon, in contrast, put the emphasis on attacking the Alfonsín entourage, accusing cabinet members of "not being related to the Union Cívica Radical" (Clarín 1988e), especially Juan Sourouille and Rodolfo Terragno (the ministers of Finance and Public Works respectively) who had no tradition in the party. Angeloz and León virtually ignored each other. While Angeloz started delineating a program of privatization and deregulation as the necessary remedies to improve the critical economic situation while admitting having disagreements with the government in these matters, León condemned the Alfonsín administration of having betrayed Radical ideals.²¹

Assured that the backing of the whole Radical structure guaranteed the victory, the 1988 Angeloz team masterminded the campaign as the prelude to the national election. The campaign was envisioned as an opportunity to start building "presidential candidate Angeloz" and to outline the campaign platform. Angeloz patiently toured the country, peddling his economic plan and courting a rather wary party structure. The campaign headquarters included the governor's regular advisors

²¹. Angeloz argued that the main problems of the Alfonsín administration were, first, failing to implement the needed adjustments to have a more successful economic policy, and, second, an excessive self-congratulation after the 1983 and 1985 victories. He rejected the idea that his message and platform resembled the proposals of the UCeDe (the free-market party). Facing the Peronist's option "liberación or dependencia," Angeloz offered "modernización or dependencia" (Clarín 1988i).

plus other Radical politicians who were distant from the official Alfonsinismo. From the early beginning, the Angeloz campaign committee functioned separately from the party.

Three ambitions informed the campaign. First, to position Angeloz in public opinion. Angeloz was known inside the party but had little recognition outside Cordoba; the primary campaign offered an excellent opportunity to make him visible nationwide. Second, Angeloz did not have his own structure within the party. His candidacy resulted not because of controlling or having influence over local and national branches but basically because of his success amidst the catastrophe of the 1987 elections. For Angeloz, it was indispensable to "walk the party," to make himself known to party leaders and to gather support, especially from Alfonsinistas who still remained hesitant about him. His candidacy, primarily, resulted from Alfonsín's decision; for Angeloz, it was time now both to convince the party that he existed autonomously from the party leader and to put the party to work. In this spirit, a victory in the primaries was seen as a way to release himself from the tutelage of Alfonsín that clearly differed from traditional Radical ideas. His emphasis on the reform of the State, privatization and the general modernization of the Argentine economy sounded too "liberal" for classic Radical tenets (in the Argentine lexicon, "liberal" is synonymous with free-market policies).

Angeloz's constant "raids" during the primaries (he visited twenty-two provinces in forty-five days) should be understood as attempts to fulfill these three goals. His final speech at a closing rally in Buenos Aires best illustrates Angeloz's attempt to unite the party behind him, giving signs to the Junta Coordinadora and vindicating Alfonsín's tenure while championing the reform of the State and economic privatization; the daily La Nación (1988d) judged his speech as "An Artful Discourse to Calm Roughnesses Among Internal Groups."

But, out of the three ambitions, the first one was the only achieved. By the end of the primaries, Angeloz was considerably more recognized at the national level than before. Angeloz was no longer just a regional leader but his image and name went beyond Córdoba.²² But Angeloz was less successful in fulfilling the other two goals. After ending his intense campaign trail, Angeloz claimed: "I have seen the party recovered, strong, united and mobilized. Also, the message of modernization and economic growth has been understood" (Clarín 1988g). However, his candidacy did not yet inspire large segments of the party structure controlled by Alfonsinismo. Angeloz's message still ran against the party

²². Advertiser Federico Ortiz who started working for the Angeloz campaign after the primaries recalls: "eleven percent of the electorate did not know who Angeloz was and around thirty percent had heard his name but did not have a clear idea about him" (Mercado Publicitario 1989, 8).

tradition and many leaders had a hard time digesting both his promises of deregulation and state reform and his mild but frequent criticisms of the economic policies of the Alfonsín administration.²³ Despite difficulties in arousing and charming the party, Angeloz unquestionably won the primaries with eighty-nine percent of the votes (twenty-six percent of more than 2,700,000 party members voted). For the Radicals, then, it was just a matter of waiting for Cafiero to be elected the Peronist candidate. But, like large sectors of the public opinion, they were wrong.

The 1988 Peronist Primaries: The Menem Phenomenon

After the 1987 elections, Peronism came out revitalized after winning in almost all states, except for the city of Buenos Aires, the states of Córdoba and Rio Negro (won by Radical candidates) and Corrientes, San Juan y Neuquen (where provincial parties triumphed). The victories consecrated the leaders of the Renovación, a current spawned by the debates after the traumatic 1983 election, comprising party notables who basically agreed on two points: to democratize the structures of the Peronist party by establishing direct

²³. For many party chiefs as well as for the rank and file, Angeloz incarnated the threat of Alvearización, meaning, the turn of Radicalism toward more conservative politics. This tendency was named after Marcelo T. de Alvear, Radical leader in the 1920s and Argentine president (1922-1928) who succeeded President Yrigoyen and is generally seen as having departed from Yrigoyen's populist roots.

elections to choose party officials, and to remove from the party command the trade union bosses and party notables signaled as responsible for the 1983 results - the so-called mariscales de la derrota, or "marshals of the defeat," enlisted in the more orthodox Peronist versions (see Bárbaro 1986; Gordillo and Lavagno 1987; Moncalvillo and Fernández 1986; Unamuno, Bárbaro, Cafiero and others 1984).

After the 1987 elections, Antonio Cafiero and Carlos Menem surged ahead among the leaders of the Renovación to lead the Peronist ticket for the 1989 presidential elections. Boosted by his victory over the Radical Juan Manuel Casella (who was strongly backed by both government machinery and party apparatus) for the governor seat of the key Buenos Aires province, Cafiero (one of the three visible heads of the Renovación) claimed to have enough merits to lead the ticket. Menem, another Renovador leader, who was elected governor of the small northwestern province of La Rioja for the third time and had announced his presidential ambitions as early as 1975, also alleged rights to be the Peronist candidate. Soon after the election, Cafiero was designated president of the Peronist party, Menem the vice-president, while other leaders of the Renovación (like Carlos Grosso from the city of Buenos Aires and Juan Manuel de la Sota from Córdoba) secured high positions in the party leadership.

Yet a major question remained: Who would be the Peronist

candidates for 1989? Neither Cafiero nor Menem wanted to abandon their presidential ambitions while both encouraged each other to accept the candidacy for vice-president. Elections seemed the only way to select the candidates. Shortly thereafter, the most conspicuous leaders of the Renovación, encompassing most of the recently elected Peronist governors, sided with Cafiero, whereas union leaders, high-ranking members of the 62 Organizaciones and anti-Renovación sectors rallied behind Menem. For the first time, in its history, Peronism decided to hold direct elections to select candidates for president. The tentative date was late June 1988.

Convinced that to lead the Peronist ticket he needed the support of party sectors in the province of Buenos Aires (as it comprises thirty-seven percent of the party membership), Menem actively canvassed the province. It was not the first time. Menem had previously toured the province, especially during the 1985 legislative elections in support of the candidates of the Renovación.²⁴ Still trying to seduce an unwilling Cafiero to be his running mate, Menem sought alliances with major chiefs of the state to assure the delivery of votes. Although Menem enjoyed the support of some

²⁴. Journalist Gabriela Cerrutti (1990), who covered the 1989 presidential campaign, comments: "Menem thinks he has been campaigning since 1975 [the first time when he insinuated his presidential ambitions] and that this was the last stage. For all his life he has been waging a campaign."

ward bosses (who adhered to the most traditional wings of the party), the decision by representative Eduardo Duhalde (ex-mayor of a populous city in the Greater Buenos Aires, formerly of Cafiero in the Renovación and, most important, a main boss in the Peronist provincial structure) to back his candidacy provided Menem with a major bridge to party networks in Buenos Aires. Party savants argue that Cafiero's decision not to pick Duhalde to be his vice-governor for the 1987 elections moved the latter to back Menem to lead the presidential ticket in 1988. In early March, Menem announced Duhalde as his running mate.

Cafiero faced problems for choosing his partner as many leaders of the Renovación had ambitions for the position: the main contenders were representative and Peronist leader of the city of Buenos Aires Carlos Grosso (the third main leader of the Renovación), José de la Sota (who despite having lost his bid for governor of Cordoba in 1987 offered strong Renovador credentials and was still popular in a Radical bulwark and populous state) and Jose Maria Vernet (elected in 1987 for governor of Santa Fe and favorite of the union leadership). Cafiero's decision to designate de la Sota produced criticisms, especially from union leaders who expected Cafiero to select Vernet or someone else politically closer to the 62 Organizaciones (and to its boss Lorenzo Miguel). Confident that their control of the party apparatus guaranteed triumph,

Renovación notables adamantly believed that they did not need the unions to win the primaries. Renovación leaders believed that the successful 1987 elections proved that, for Peronist party leaders to count on the backing of the sacred 62 Organizaciones and the union structure was no longer indispensable to win elections. In addition, the Renovadores were convinced that Cafiero had already won not just the primaries but the presidential elections as well.²⁵ The fact that the Cafiero-de la Sota ticket was a fully Renovación alternative spawned the animosity among orthodox party groups and the bulk of the trade union leadership. The metalworkers' union vehemently criticized de la Sota, and conflicts between Cafiero and Miguel came into the open. For union leaders, Cafiero's reluctance to negotiate was a sign of discrimination; for the first time since Perón's death, a party leader overtly dared to bypass the unions for designating candidates. Although the 62 Organizaciones announced the decision not to explicitly support any candidate, many union leaders publicly backed Menem-Duhalde. In a general meeting of the 62 Organizaciones, Menem announced

²⁵. In personal conversations, party insiders admit that though Cafiero was initially willing to share the ticket with Menem or even with Vernet, his resolution to pick a genuine Renovador and to rule out any compromise with the 62 Organizaciones, was a consequence of his entourage's assurance about winning both the 1988 and 1989 elections. During the 1988 campaign, leaders of the Renovación even planned and negotiated future positions in an assured Cafiero administration.

his platform and, amidst pro-Menem cheers, Miguel accused Cafiero of "having mistaken the strategy" (Clarín 1988a).

The campaign for the primaries became aggressive. The Cafiero-de la Sota ticket (endorsed by the body of the party leadership, including the majority of governors, district bosses, senators and representatives) was proclaimed. Cafiero defined his candidacy as "an alternative to the technocratic fatalist [alluding to the Alfonsín administration] and the erratic Messiah-like promises [referring to Menem]" (Clarín 1988d) and depicted Menem as a "pseudo-caudillo, a caricature of Perón" (Clarín 1988b). Attacks on the unions by the Renovadores were frequent. Vice-presidential candidate de la Sota vehemently assaulted the union leadership: [on election] day we choose renovación or patota (literally "gang," a disparaging term for union leaders)" (Clarín 1988h). Cafiero asserted: "I am the true Renovación that allowed the Partido Justicialista to overcome [the 1983 defeat] while Menem preferred to be surrounded by those who, in a way, were responsible for the defeat" (Clarín 1988k). Cafiero alluded to the fact that Menem's bid compiled the support of assorted groups of the Peronist cluster including the union command, right-wing cliques (like Guardia de Hierro and Comando de Organización), former Montoneros (the main Peronist guerrilla group during the 1960s and 1970s) and orthodox caudillos. In addition, Cafiero criticized the economic and social policies

of the Alfonsín administration, making constant references to the Peronist doctrine, promising to declare the suspension of payments on the foreign debt and vindicating liberación nacional against dependency on foreign powers (Clarín 1988h).

Menem accused Cafiero and his followers of "having connections with the international socialdemocracy and socialchristianism" (Clarín 1988c) and "not representing Justicialismo." In addition to championing traditional slogans of the Peronist liturgy, Menem promised to stop making payments on the foreign debt and to launch a social pact among workers, business and government. He accused his rivals of "having abandoned the Peronist doctrine;" Menem said: "I don't mind being called a pseudo-caudillo from the interior. I would mind if they compare me to a doctor of socialdemocracy or of the IMF who betrays his fatherland" (Clarín 1988f). In a rally at a Buenos Aires stadium, staged by the unions and attended by a crowd of 60,000, Menem pledged "to pulverize the party machine controlled by Cafiero" (La Nación 1988b).²⁶

²⁶. A political advertisement paid for by union organizations stated the support for Menem as follows: "Many difficulties we [the Peronist unions] have confronted and we still have to surmount, resulted from the true orphanage caused by the death of our leader General Peron, as his disappearance deprived us form the art of our conductor, capable of generating the harmony of opposite interests and representing the whole movimiento and the Nation against the external powers which condition and humiliate it. We see how, from the depths [entradas] of our most humble people, the prestige of a political figure from the interior, who thinks like us, grows and achieves consensus not only within the organizations but also in the People. That figure is Carlos

The Menem campaign stressed the candidate's direct contact with the electorate through permanent "pump-the-flesh" raids, generally organized by the union apparatus. Campaign strategists claim that financial problems existed despite the full support of the union apparatus (Beliz 1990). The Menem command speculated that a high voter turnout was necessary to win the primaries (voting in party primaries is optional); otherwise, the party machine controlled by Cafiero-de la Sota would be decisive in a low-turnout election. Menem explicitly stressed this point in his public addresses; for example, in a rally in Cordoba (where de la Sota commanded the party machinery), Menem urged: "Don't wait for them to come to pick you up. Go to vote by your own means and take all your friends . . . Don't lose your right to express for yourself in favor of the true Peronism" (La Nación 1988c).

Denunciations of wrongdoing in the party roster delayed the elections until July 9. Rumors of Menem breaking off from the Peronist party gained currency. Political analysts argued that the relations between the unions and Cafiero groups reached a point of no return as their disagreements were irreconcilable. As Menem's defeat was assumed, many anticipated that the unions were going to encourage Menem to run for president separately from the party, borrowing the name of a minor party. Although Menem and his collaborators

Saul Menem. (Clarín 1988j)

vowed to stay in the party regardless of the election result, many expected that if losing, Menem would launch his bid for the presidency under a different party label. He counted on two main resources for staging a campaign outside Peronism: the mobilization structure of the unions and a sufficient number of votes to be a decisive force in the Colegio Electoral. But all these calculations were made on the basis of the certainty of Cafiero's triumph. The electoral outcome, however, jettisoned previous forecasts.

The ticket Menem-Duhalde won the nomination, getting fifty-three percent of the votes and beating Cafiero-de la Sota in almost all districts, including the decisive ones of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. Few have accurately forecasted the results; the large majority of newspapers and newsmagazines reflected the spirit predominating in the Cafiero headquarters and virtually discarded Menem's victory. Now the political scene was different. Menem, who aggregated sectors that had commanded the 1983 campaign, achieved an unexpected victory; those who were defeated by Alfonsín in 1983 and were left aside by the Renovación in the process of democratization of Peronism, had reemerged. The Renovadores, who since 1983 had battled to reform Peronism, both its methods and doctrine, and had gained increasing reputation by society at large, faced a surprising defeat.

What happened? Then-Cafiero spokesperson explains that

for the Renovadores "having overestimated virtues and undervalued mistakes" proved to be fatal (Telerman 1991). The excessive confidence backfired, badly hurting electoral chances. Renovación insiders state that their confidence was demonstrated not only in appointing de la Sota as Cafiero's running mate (showing the reluctance to compromise with union and other party leaders), but also in the overall structure of the campaign. Exclusively reliance on a "superstructural" campaign organization; disregard of grass-roots canvassing (thereby removing local leaders from their traditional active role in the campaign and generating lukewarm support from some bosses for the campaign); the spurning of traditional Peronist symbolism; and the lack of a campaign "epic" spirit; all these factors indicated an inappropriate organization for a Peronist primary.

Documents and working reports informing campaign decisions show that the campaign was planned to target not the Peronist but the whole Argentine electorate. An early campaign report submits "to position the candidates at the national level" as the main goal. The primary election was conceived as a minor procedure to win the presidency in 1989; this remained the underlying premise. The campaign organization stressed organizational devices and messages distant from both Peronist voters and party structures; "it was a brilliant campaign for Milwaukee [meaning, the U.S. or other country] . . . we talked

to other people, to the national electorate, but we ignored the Peronists" (Telerman 1991). Assaults on the "union gangs" revealed defiance (and dismissal) of the power of traditional Peronist groups and a campaign design tuned more to the whole Argentine electorate (or at least, to what seemed to have been its 1983 demands) rather than to the classic Peronist vote. The rank and file, to a large extent, followed the leadership and proposals of the Renovación, but the average member, the die-hard Peronist detached from party bickering and disputes, remained dubious. After the election, many party insiders and analysts argued that the high voting turnout for a primary election (almost forty percent voted out of an approximate total of 4,100,000 party members) shattered the expectations of the Cafiero-de la Sota ticket to beat Menem; party activists were sure voters for the Renovación but the large mass of average members, whom were seen by core of the Renovación to be strong supporters of Cafiero-de la Sota, were distant from party structures and favored Menem. In fact, Menem based his campaign on addressing this sector; those who were loosely connected to the party structure and remained forgotten by the "modern" campaign of the Renovación, constituted Menem's audience and followers, particularly in the deindustrialized and marginal areas of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe.

The results of the Peronist primaries shook the country

as few conjectured any chances for Menem. Truly, Menem's impressive final rush and escalating approval in public opinion polls suggested that the race was going to be close. Yet most prognoses signaled Cafiero the sure winner. Menem's victory obliged most observers to reevaluate the perspectives for the May 1989 national elections.

THE 1989 CAMPAIGN: CANVASSING AMIDST MILITARY REBELLIONS, INSURGENCY AND HYPERINFLATION

Radicals found the results of the Peronist primaries auspicious. They judged that Angeloz had less chances to defeat Cafiero; the latter could not only draw support from the working classes but also from the middle classes. Amidst the defense of social rights (historically a Peronist turf), Cafiero and the Renovación Peronista could have also exhibited what Radicals boasted as their own trademark in Argentine politics: the defense of democracy.²⁷ The triumph of Menem fueled hopes that Angeloz could win the 1989 elections, most fundamentally, as Menem was surrounded by political groups with a dubious democratic profile, namely right-wingers and

²⁷. The Renovadores made the democratization of Peronism a battle cry of their struggle. In the 1985 election the Renovación's top brass were elected representatives in their districts and in 1987 Cafiero became the governor of Buenos Aires. Many analysts argue that the Renovadores definitely obtained the "democratic license" in the eyes of the society during the military insurrection in April 1987 (the "Easter rebellion") as leaders of the Renovación publicly supported the Alfonsín administration and the continuity of democracy.

former guerrilla members who actively participated in violent episodes during the 1973-1976 Peronist administration. Thus, Radical strategists speculated, Angeloz could stress this point: the Menemist version of Peronism still did not offer democratic guarantees, thereby, the Radical option was the best alternative to definitely consolidate democracy.

After the primaries, the presence of Angeloz in diverse economic and political forums and the mass media was intensified. Television advertising, frequent contacts with the press and meetings with different political forces were the central ingredients of the Angeloz campaign during the second semester of 1988. Aware of the persisting difficulties to convince Radical leaders to incorporate his free-market themes into the party doctrine, Angeloz sought to strengthen his position in the party by actively tapping support for his economic ideas in business organizations. The strategy was to install his economic program in the public opinion through non-party mechanisms (television, meetings, conferences, press interviews), aiming to make it an unavoidable point of reference for the debate inside the party. Despite the expectations of some Coordinadora and Renovación y Cambio leaders to redefine the message of the candidate, giving a more "social" tenor to an extremely economicist and free-market platform, Angeloz was reluctant to lose his autonomy both in "defining his campaign team and the contents of his

electoral discourse" (Blanck 1988).

Simultaneous to Angeloz's intense campaign routine, the Radical party took a more active position. While the organization of the campaign remained in the hands of the candidate's team, the "dirty work" of the campaign, namely, attacking Menem and exposing the skeletons in his closet, was done by Radical leaders.²⁸ Among campaign aides and party leaders, the premise was that the candidate should not lead the charges on Menem as such strategy contradicted and could harm the intentions of building Angeloz's serious and respectable image. Campaign working reports suggested introducing Angeloz as a "good manager," a crusader of state reform and modernization to cure the ailing Argentine economy and a successful governor in contrast to Menem's poor economic performance but popular governorship in La Rioja. The goal was to present Angeloz, a rather uncharismatic politician, as a predictable and trustworthy figure in contrast to Menem, a magnetic but erratic candidate.

Radicals attacked Menem on two flanks: his frequent contradictions and the resume of groups that supported him. In

²⁸. The Radical magazine El Ciudadano had an important role in this task. Among other "denunciation" articles, it published an interview with a leader of the Montoneros (the major Peronist guerrilla group of the 1960s and 1970s) who declared that Mario Firmenich (the convicted head of the organization) was promised to be freed by a future Menem administration.

various opportunities, Menem made contradictory remarks about different issues. Amidst a disorganized campaign that basically followed ideas planned for the primaries (a mix of a populist and equivocal message coupled with intense "pump the flesh" routines), Menem promised Argentine audiences to expropriate British properties while committing to foreign gatherings (in his European tour in November 1988) to negotiate with Great Britain the sovereignty of the Malvinas/Falklands islands; called both Sandinistas and the Contras patriots; and defended a halt to payments on the foreign debt and simultaneously vowed to pay it. Radicals targeted these contradictions, stating that Menem's ambiguous stands made him highly unpredictable for governing the country.

In addition, similar to the assaults made by the Renovadores in the primaries, Radicals highlighted the support Menem received from groups equivocally aligned with the defense of democracy. The intention was to stress the scarce guarantees Menem offered for the consolidation of Argentine democracy. The support given by Montoneros and talks of links between Peronist representatives (enrolled in the Menemista faction) and Colonel Mohammed Seineldin (the leader of the December 1988 military uprising) were indicated, by Radical leaders as signs that a future Menem presidency was a menace

to democracy.²⁹ Radicals pointedly revived memories of the chaotic 1973-1976 Peronist administration, ridden with violent intra-party battles between guerrilla groups and right-wing factions; in case Menem was elected president, Radicals warned, those conflicts would reappear.

In January of 1989, in the midst of a rather charged political climate, important changes took place in the Menem campaign command.³⁰ In addition to Julio Mera Figueroa, the campaign director during the primaries, Alberto Kohan and representative Carlos Grosso entered the campaign command. The formation of triumvirate aimed to soothe the pressures and post-primary animosities and to give more room to the Renovadores in the campaign. While Kohan, who headed the FEPAC (the Menemist think-tank responsible for the campaign design hitherto) incarnated the pure Menemistas, Grosso represented the core of the Renovación. Although the wounds of primaries were still healing, a main reason why Renovadores and

²⁹. Vice-presidential candidate Juan Manuel Casella stated: "There has to be taken into account who is with the candidate, who is in his entourage, who is going to be in his government, the homogeneity and articulation among those who surround him" (Somos 1988). President Alfonsín affirmed: "The Argentines' dilemma still is democracy or dictatorship" (Clarín 1981) and "Peronism still is Damocles' sword on Argentine democracy".

³⁰. After denouncing Menem and Lorenzo Miguel for being involved in talks with Col. Seineldin to stage a coup, members of the leftist organization Movimiento de Todos por la Patria attacked a military garrison in the outskirts of Buenos Aires on the grounds of preventing another military insurrection.

Menemistas decided to exchange olive branches and combine efforts in the campaign was the momentum Angeloz picked up in the polls. Menem still had a comfortable lead but Angeloz's measured gains were enough for the Peronists to put disagreements and resentments aside and try to work together.

After the primaries, Menem's rhetoric continued to be erratic and his campaign organization remained distant from the party. Renovadores and Menemistas agreed to readjust two aspects of the campaign: to coordinate campaign actions between the party structure and the campaign headquarters and to define the message. For the Renovadores, "the campaign was not tuned-up" and due to lack of organization key difficulties persisted in both the advertising design and the relation with the mass media; they argued, "everything was limited to spontaneous and sporadic efforts" (Clarín 1989c).

What changed in the Menem campaign after the formation of the triumvirate? Peronists worried about the incessant discursive battles between Menem and the Radicals. The main problem was, in their opinion, that Menem himself counterattacked the Radicals' insinuations about his contradictions and the resume of his entourage, making things worse as the candidate frequently made rhetorical faux-pas. As the candidate had ample access to the mass media, Menem's frequent exposure became a source of trouble rather than an advantage. The campaign command planned to solve this problem

by putting journalists at arm's length and removing Menem from the media spotlight (namely, making his visits to Buenos Aires, where main newspapers and television stations are based, more intermittent). From then on, the strategy was to intensify Menem's campaign tours throughout the country, to refine the campaign platform and Menem's speeches, and to tune the campaign more towards the non-Peronist electorate rather than to its own acolytes. The campaign team advised Menem to ignore the Radicals' assaults and to leave responses to other politicians. Menemistas called for an end to "an aggressive campaign" and invited Radicals, as Senator Eduardo Menem put it, "to carry out a clean, constructive, and responsible campaign to end [their] disowning tactics of using lies, offenses, personal attacks, defamations and affronts as methodology to debase the Peronist candidate" (Clarín 1989d).³¹

By the end of February, the National Convention formalized the agreement between Menemistas and Renovadores to collaborate and to integrate the party into the campaign. The bulk of the organization rested upon the shoulders of the Menemistas while the Renovadores, primarily the teams headed by Carlos Grosso, were responsible for activities in the city

³¹. Also, television commercials had an important role in answering the Radicals' criticisms using what Peronist advertiser Albistur (1990) calls "jujitsu communication," that is, using the strength of the rival for defense and counterattack.

of Buenos Aires. Yet the party, controlled by the Renovadores, had a minimal role. Only some regional leaders (like de la Sota in Córdoba) showed more enthusiasm, mobilized the party machine and stamped their mark on local stumping. The party remained, as a journalist who covered the Menem trail puts it, "a minor partner" (Eichelbaum 1990); the Menem headquarters masterminded the campaign and supplied the infrastructure. However, the differences within Peronism were not an obstacle (as they were in the 1983 campaign) for electioneering. Forecasting a sure triumph, all Peronist sectors, some more enthusiastically than others, jumped on the bandwagon.

Members of the campaign committee did not consider the separation between the campaign control and the party apparatus a drawback. In fact, it fit like a glove their intentions to present Menem as an alternative to "party politics," as a candidate removed from party machineries and behind-the-scenes political maneuvers, as a politician who asked people to get him to the presidency against established political powers. Despite his prolonged militancy in Peronism and his public trajectory inside party politics, strategists aimed to present Menem as an "outsider" to party bickering. These characteristics were stressed during the last phase of the campaign. According to Peronist advisors, the main idea was to emphasize Menem at his best: a powerful, charismatic candidate with a direct relationship with voters. Die-hard

Menemistas (the so-called rojo punzó) argued that as the formula of heavily touring the country and establishing close contacts with voters was successful in the primaries, why not repeat it for the presidential elections? Their suggestions were followed during the last months. Once the media was kept at bay from the candidate, Menem's activities consisted fundamentally of extensive rallies and intense tours under the banner of siganme and the promises of revolución productiva ("productive revolution") and salariazo ("wage increases").³² After the triumvirate implemented the reforms, the campaign ceased to focus on reciting the Peronist gospel (as it has been during and after the primaries) and became more centered on the candidate's persona, his folkloric image, his epic caravanas and Menemóvil, and his prolonged travels throughout the country.³³

Compared to the Menem case, the distance between the party and the campaign team was even larger in the Angeloz

³². Siganme ("follow me") was the main slogan utilized by the campaign immediately after the primaries. Its similarity to Mussolini's seguitemi was indicated by Radicals as another sign of the suspicious democratic conviction of the Menemistas.

³³. After the election, an editorial in the pro-Radical magazine Redacción (1989) described Menem's campaign as follows: "While everybody spent most hours in speculating, knitting alliances, and speed up decisions, [Menem] went to walk patiently the country. He visited small towns, distributed kisses, gave away smiles, left pictures, signed autographs, whispered hopeful words and made mystic invocations."

camp. The Angeloz campaign did not seem a party endeavor, but rather a solitary enterprise, plotted and acted out by the candidate and his advisors. After the first phase ended by the end of 1988, the campaign switched from being focused on stumping business and political organizations to addressing the general electorate through tours and the mass media. Despite President Alfonsín's public pleas to "all Radicals to fully mobilize towards the victory" (Clarín 1989b) and to "[consolidate] party unity overcoming internal divergences" (Clarín 1989e) and invitations by party officials to add efforts to the campaign, Angeloz found little echo in Alfonsinistas-controlled party echelons. As deep differences lingered on between the party hierarchies and the Angeloz command, the campaign was organized virtually separate from the party. In turn, the campaign was organic at the level of the candidate's schedule but discoordinated from party echelons.

The main reasons for the divorce was that, in contrast to Alfonsín's 1983 campaign, Angeloz was the candidate but not the party's leader. His hesitancy to champion deeds of the Radical government, his opposition to the Administration's economic policy, his distrust of some cabinet members and party leaders, and his unwillingness to strike symbolic chords, definitely alineated sections of the party from the campaign. Clearly, Angeloz did not inspire the engine of

grass-roots canvassing: the rank and file. Some members of the Angeloz committee claim that local party hacks (especially in Buenos Aires, a city he never "walked") were reluctant to campaign for Angeloz and did not mobilize the party machinery. A member of the Angeloz campaign comments: "We seemed like the candidate of the opposition . . . It was even possible to suspect that there was some pleasure if we lost" (Gibaja 1990).³⁴ Alfonsinistas, in contrast, argue that two factors explain why the rank-and-file did not mobilize: Angeloz ran against the grain of party ideology and apparatus and the campaign design did not assign a major role "to the people." A Coordinadora notable explains the scarce enthusiasm of the Radical rank-and-file as follows: "We could not move the militants not even with a crane. Canvassing, as Angeloz did, without carrying the party torch and without send[ing] signals to the party culture" (Stubrin 1990), inevitably distanced party members from the campaign.

Differences became wider when Angeloz demanded that Finance Minister Juan Sourouille resign. After his successful European tour in January 1989, Angeloz, helped by Menem's confused campaign, was reducing his distance from Menem in the polls. But amidst the echoes and the general surprise of the

³⁴. Ricardo Yofre, the campaign manager, rejected any suggestion that the party conspired against Angeloz and admitted that in some districts Radicals fully supported the campaign (Somos 1989).

Tablada attack, another event staggered the country and definitely buried the hopes of Angeloz to win the presidency. On February 6, the dollar exchange rate skyrocketed, fueling hyperinflation in subsequent weeks and the collapse of the economic plan (the Plan Primavera, fundamentally devised as an "emergency plan" to allow the government and candidate Angeloz to get to election day with an economic situation, more specifically the inflation rate, somewhat controlled). Encouraged by campaign advisors, who for several weeks had considered demanding the removal of minister Sourouille, Angeloz petitioned the resignation. Both the mechanics of the decision and the petition itself reinforced the underlying animosities between the campaign command and the party. Party insiders recall that Alfonsinista leaders (including leaders of both Renovación y Cambio and the Junta Coordinadora) and the rank and file had a hard time stomaching the decision by their party candidate to petition the removal of the Finance minister (who had been emphatically defended by the President against all critiques) without consulting with Alfonsín (who was not only the president but also the visible head of the party).

Moreover, the decision by the campaign advisors to accentuate the differences between Angeloz and the Alfonsín administration led to a dead-end conflict. An original campaign report established that rather than trying to make

people vote for Angeloz, the goal was to avoid anti-Alfonsín votes. In this sense, the Angeloz headquarters planned to stress differences (especially in the economic area) between the candidate and the Alfonsín administration. Voicing disagreements with the Administration about the economic situation (to avoid being identified with it) while trying to rally the party behind his candidacy was a hard task. Angeloz attempted to distance himself from the Radical administration, blamed according to poll information for a chaotic situation fueled by a seemingly uncontrollable inflation, and simultaneously mobilize party ranks.

Carrying the Radical label turned out to be a heavy burden in the months immediately before election day when inflation was out of control (an average of forty percent per month) and the government had completely lost its capacity to redirect the economy. Facing this situation, Angeloz was presented as an "efficient governor," concerned with the modernization of the economy and detached from the government's fumbles. Being questioned by Peronists on why, if having economic solutions, he did not "give his economic advisors" to his party government, Angeloz replied "I do not cogovern" (Clarín 1989f). Attempts to separate Angeloz from the Alfonsín administration were unwelcome by party ranks, thereby deepening disagreements that persisted beyond election date. A Coordinadora member describes: "Radicals, who have

shouldered all attacks against the government, observed that their candidate criticized many things they have defended. They were disappointed and had no enthusiasm" (Muiño 1990).³⁵

Yet the attempts to disconnect Angeloz from the government were mild. Despite the advice of some collaborators to separate himself in a vehement and clear manner, Angeloz only moderately announced his divergences with the administration. Certainly, Angeloz was not as aggressive as his campaign advisors encouraged him to be - the campaign command generally held more critical positions vis-a-vis both the Alfonsín government and the party than Angeloz. Although a notable gap separated him from the Alfonsín administration, Angeloz only moderately criticized the government; journalists who covered the campaign observe that "Angeloz and his people were alone, completely disconnected from the presidency, from the national direction of the party" (Díaz 1990) and that "Angeloz was, in reality, more detached from the Presidency

³⁵. The campaign strategy was also a point of conflict between the committee and the party ranks. Radical leaders claim that the campaign design did not help either to conciliate the two camps as it privileged the "air war" over the "ground war," the mass media and technical resources over personal contacts and the role of the rank and file. A campaign format that emphasized, as one party notable puts it, "entering voters' homes through the [television antennas in the] roof rather than through the door" fed the disaffection of party activists who found little room for participating within the campaign scheme. Furthermore, some party notables rejected the aggressive strategy pushed by members of the campaign committee and urged lowering down a high-voltage campaign strategy.

than what most people perceived" (Lombardía 1990). Explaining why Angeloz made mild objections to the government, though its economic policies were indicated as the main factor responsible for diminishing his chances for victory, the campaign manager argues:

There were certain limits [to separate Angeloz from the government] as, first, Angeloz was the candidate of the Unión Cívica Radical and to be against the government would have brought about the complete lack of party support (as the party was solidary with the government) and, second, it would not have been credible . . . Public opinion would not have believed if Angeloz had taken the role of the opposition . . . Besides, what was even more important, it did not conform to his idiosyncrasy" (Yofre 1990).³⁶

On this point, Angeloz's Buenos Aires press chief states: "Angeloz could not be extremely critical [of the Alfonsín administration]. It was his party. He could indicate his disagreements but he needed the party's monetary resources and national political structures" (Fernández Suarez 1990).

The last weeks did not alter the main lines of the campaigns described so far. Finance minister Juan Sourouille was replaced by veteran Radical leader Juan Carlos Pugliese while inflation continued to spiral. Menem intensified his campaign raids relying on the old campaign repertoire such as train tours, motorcades, food-parties and stump-speeches while the Peronist gospel was replaced by promises of "wage

³⁶. Angeloz stated: "It would be opportunistic [to distance from President Alfonsín] with whom, like with my party, I have an absolute doctrinaire, philosophical and ethic identification" (Clarín 1989g)

increases" and "productive revolution." Hoping to surmount Menem's considerable lead in the polls, Angeloz completed an impressive final rush touring the whole country preaching his modernization platform. Convinced that rational arguments and the presentation of a clean-cut platform would augment his presidential chances, Angeloz strenuously hammered his program and issues; columnist Morales Solá (1990b) comments, "[Angeloz] believed in the thesis of a 'deep Argentina,' the rational Argentina [that would prevail over] Menem's improvisation." Meanwhile, the chorus of Radical politicians continued waving the specter of a violent and unpredictable Peronism and exhuming the dangers of fascism and corporatism in case Menem won the presidency.

Neither Angeloz's persistent efforts nor the Radicals' scare tactics were sufficient to win. According to most post-election evaluations, hyperinflation toppled Angeloz's possibilities, making his laborious efforts impotent. Others, without discarding economic factors, argue that centering the campaign on criticizing Menem was a mistake as it drove attention away from Angeloz and his program. Menem conclusively won the election with 47.3 percent of the votes while Angeloz obtained 36.9 percent (including 4.5 percent from the alliance with the Confederación Federal

Independiente).³⁷

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the making of the 1983 and 1989 presidential campaigns of the Partido Justicialista and the Union Cívica Radical shows that party dynamics and structures played a major role in election campaigns. Parties' monopoly over the nomination of candidates and candidates' allegiance to party precepts and goals secured an important role for party structures in campaigning. For presidential elections, political parties indisputably controlled the selection of candidates and the launching of election campaigns. Both the Union Cívica Radical and the Partido Justicialista are indisputably the main national apparatuses; they are the unavoidable avenues to run for the presidency with running chances. Party structures functioned as the undisputable committees for screening officeholders. The fact that candidates were selected through close primaries gave both

³⁷. The alliance with the Confederación Federal Independiente introduced Angeloz as the presidential candidate and Maria Cristina Guzman (a conservative leader from the northern province of Jujuy) as the vicepresidential nominee. Many evaluated that Angeloz's results were a more than acceptable result considering the critical condition of the Radical government. Other parties got the following percentages: Alianza de Centro (integrated by two conservative parties, UCeDe and Partido Demócrata Progresista) 6.2; Izquierda Unida (a coalition of three leftist parties, IDEPO, Movimiento al Socialismo and Partido Comunista) 2.4; and other parties got below two percent of the votes.

party mechanisms and party routines a central role in the campaign process. In the words of a political consultant:

"It is very difficult to leave the party structure out of [the campaign]. The campaign is not only the media but the people doing politics in comités and unidades básicas. Both the activists and middle-rank leaders ask to participate" (Haime 1990).

All four presidential candidates were, above all, party candidates. They had to traverse party labyrinths to be nominated. Candidates had to tap support inside the party to be selected to run for office. To secure the capacity of mobilization of party machines, candidates needed to court support from district caudillos and party leaders. A significant part of the campaign routines was geared towards obtaining the backing and the enthusiasm of party networks. In the words of a pollster: "Candidates have to go to provinces of 100,000 voters because the local leaders ask for it. The campaign belongs to the party. The party pushes to participate and intervene in the campaign" (Catterberg 1990).

Once they were nominated, usually after a heated and conflictive process, candidates inevitably attempted to reconcile positions and to calm troubled party waters. All candidates, admittedly some more successfully than others, tried to count on the full support of their party to face the national campaign. The first post-primary campaign activities were, in all four cases here analyzed, devoted to reconciling relations towards having a fully mobilized and

supporting party for the national campaign.

Candidates' attempts to heal "post-primary" wounds and rally the whole party structure behind their candidacies resulted from two factors. First, parties offered a substantial amount of campaign resources, including state funds assigned on the basis of the amount of votes parties received in the previous election, media coverage (this point will be examined in chapters five and six) and manpower (especially during the early campaigns when, as a byproduct of the resurrection of democratic politics, parties were swamped with a diligent and free workforce of activists and supporters). At the time of the 1983 elections, due to the explosion of participation amidst the demise of the authoritarian regime, parties offered candidates larger human resources than during the 1989 elections. Despite the notable dwindle of participation in party offices, parties still provided important resources for campaigning.³⁸

³⁸. Membership numbers increased for the 1989 elections as 7.051.358 citizens were members of a total of 29 political parties. The Partido Justicialista had 3.163.882 and the Union Civica Radical 2.322.035 members, that is almost 78 percent of the total (Somos 1990). Despite having more members by 1989, parties had a harder time in mobilizing the population than in 1983. Party neighborhood offices mostly reopened for the campaign but, according to party insiders, attracted significantly less people than before. Interviewees state that the decline of party activity in neighborhoods throughout the country was significant. Reconstructing the trajectory of party offices during this period is full of obstacles as parties do not keep an up-to-date system recording party activity (including data on party members and campaign finances). Parties lack a systematized method for tracking

Second, the preservation of a partisan prism led politicians to try to work in tandem with their parties. Even when confronting party ranks reluctant to unite behind their candidacy or bearing a party label was more a handicap than advantage, fidelity to party identities, customs and routines among candidates accounts for why office-seekers remained anchored in their parties. Despite an adversarial or unfriendly party structure, candidates still stayed inside their party structures on the basis of loyalty to partisan identity and party ideologies. While, as polls have shown since 1983, fewer Argentines claim to align themselves with a party and parties' legitimacy has notably declined, politicians remained faithful to party traditions and organizations. During the period under consideration, both party traditions and politicians' partisan ethos persisted, definitely branding stumping activities.

Along these lines, I consider parties as "sponsors, strategists and foot soldiers." Parties monopolize the presentation of candidates to society, that is, constitute the only possible mechanisms for politicians to run for national office; massively participate in the architecture of campaign activities, or to put it differently, the making of campaign schedules occurs in constant dialogue with party ranks and

their activities. In this case, available information registers the opening but not the closing of party offices. National party departments absolutely lack this type of data.

with the "intrusive" participation of party networks; and provide not only the logistical brains but also the "foot soldiers," the legions of party members willing to propagate the party and/or candidate message through different activities and rituals. Next I turn to discuss "parties as strategists" and campaign organization.

CHAPTER THREE

PARTIES AS STRATEGISTS: CAMPAIGN MANDARINS, FACTIONALISM AND (DIS)ORGANIZATION

This chapter advances the idea that the centrality of parties in the organization of campaign activities also challenges the common conclusion that Argentine political parties are weakly institutionalized. The persistence of party routines, that is, "the forms, rules, procedures, conventions, strategies and technologies around which organizations are constructed and through which they operate" (Levitt and March 1988, 320) in electioneering should make us more skeptical of claims that Argentine parties are "weak" institutions. What is remarkable is that differing from the cases in which parties secured a fundamental function in organizing campaign efforts through the provision of an oiled apparatus of mobilization, communication instruments, and substantial and stable economic assets - such as the classical examples analyzed by Robert Michels (1968) and Maurice Duverger (1954) in European democracies or nineteenth-century U.S. parties analyzed by Jean Baker (1984), Michael McGerr (1986) and Richard Formisano (1983)- Argentine parties asserted control of campaign organization despite lacking all those resources.

Political parties lacked stable monetary resources or institutional channels to collect funds to finance campaigning or regular activities; institutional apparatuses to communicate politics and formal avenues to relate with the mass media; functioning networks articulating party local districts; and teams of experts of established think-tanks that could have acted as campaign intelligentsia.¹ Despite these shortcomings, parties were key in campaign organization; their presence was continually tangible and an unavoidable point of reference for canvassing teams. Campaign headquarters resulted from candidates' entrepreneurial efforts to secure means and to articulate campaign channels. Candidates, especially for national elections, were the ones who had to recruit campaign intelligentsia, construct and grease the communication and mobilization infrastructure, and collect campaign funds. They could not rely on their parties as the latter offered an anemic infrastructure for articulating

¹. A number of research institutions, somewhat affiliated to party factions and leaders, emerged during the last years. Party notables were members of the directory boards but these institutions (such as the Fundación Arturo Illia, Fundación para el Cambio en Democracia, Fundación Ricardo Rojas) were neither organically included in the party structure nor funded with party resources. Though affiliated members and researchers participated in diverse campaign headquarters, these institutions were not formally integrated in the campaign structure. In some cases, think-tanks were established exclusively for the campaign (such as the Menemist FEPAC, funded with resources from entrepreneurial groups) but they "belonged" to the candidate not the party.

campaign organization and communication mechanisms.² Yet parties were not absent from the organization of stumping operations. This seems to be the paradox of Argentine canvassing organization: parties, in spite of their lack of stable and organized means for communicating and financing politics, secured a key function in choreographing campaign drives. The question becomes: How do parties manage to be central in the architecture of election campaigns? This chapter seeks to answer this question.

WHO MASTERMINDED THE CAMPAIGNS?

A main avenue through which parties intervened in campaign organization was in the process of staffing headquarters. The figure of the politically independent, party-detached, professional consultant who organizes campaign activities and recruits specialists for specific tasks, did not exist. The personnel who assumed different responsibilities belonged to party ranks and, though in most cases selected by candidates, needed the "approval" of the party faction. Only in a few cases candidates relied on the

². A recent piece of research on the Radical party (commonly seen as "the most organized Argentine party"), sponsored by a Radical foundation, presents a bleak picture of the party's organization (Raimondo and Soukiassian 1989). The authors state that "[there exists] an inefficient functioning of the internal system of communication" (104) and that "the only communication alternative for the district committees is informal and personal contacts, the prestige and the "maneuver" capacity of their leaders" (112).

services of individuals attached neither to their parties nor factions. But in these sporadic situations, party hierarchies, candidates or their delegates remained in control of both the strategic planning and setting out the campaign's themes.

The explosive spread of different campaign technologies in Argentine elections during the 1980s fueled the emergence of assorted specialists. The spread of campaign techniques such as public opinion polls, sophisticated advertising, and media planning virtually produced an earthquake in campaign practices. Parallel to the surging reliance on modern campaign arts, an incipient division of labor within campaign headquarters developed. The specialization of campaign tasks emerged simultaneous to both the wide usage of new campaign arts and the development of a more professional approach to media coverage. Though certainly far from the degree of specialization observed in other democracies, a breed of experts in different areas of campaign organization matured. While in previous elections, campaign technologies basically meant asking the services of an advertising agent, recent campaigns counted on the skills of pollsters, media strategists, event organizers, computer specialists and advertisers.

Although in earlier campaigns only a few claimed a grounded expertise in electioneering, campaign aides developed campaign-based skills as elections continued. While for the

1983 elections, campaign handlers mainly offered their experience in related areas, by the 1989 presidential elections, many were veterans of various state elections and proudly exhibited campaign "spin doctor" titles. The professional background of those who later became campaign advisors varied: advertising, journalism, business management, marketing, show business and, of course, law. Advertisers, expectedly, directed advertising operations; marketing experts intervened in polling and media planning; journalists arranged media relations; business directors and lawyers managed the whole enterprise; and show-business professionals coordinated public campaign events (rallies, festivals and fairs).

But, above all, campaign handlers offered a background as party activists. Exhibiting a previous participation in politics and within the party was a definite requisite to assist in canvassing drives. Certainly there was no formal test of party identity but showing a personal record of partisan allegiance was expected. A Peronist pollster observes: "Those of us who are inside the campaign committee are recognized as men of the party who can be trusted. They [committee members] see you as being in the same boat not just as a professional" (Haime 1990). Campaign headquarters remained filled with party members and party-affiliated personnel. For both local and national elections, campaign aides who directed canvassing operations were party insiders

generally enrolled in the candidates' faction.

Those who worked as poll takers, advertising advisors or campaign handlers often explain their participation as a prolongation of their activities as party members and/or supporting the party's and the candidate's project. The reflections of a campaign consultant for several Peronist candidates nicely illustrate a belief widely held by others who staffed campaign headquarters:

We did not start making campaigns. We started as militants. We have an advantage: those are the last twenty-five years of our life. You know the characters, you know the web of relations. You know [how] power [works], you know it in a more realistic way than someone who comes just from the advertising [world]. (Stupenengo 1990).

In 1983, advertising pundit David Ratto explained his intervention in the Alfonsín campaign as follows:

In my opinion, Alfonsín is the option for this moment. And like any other [party member] in other areas, I work in the [advertising] design of Alfonsín's campaign. But I don't do it in my agency because I work with people who not necessarily have to share my political ideas (quoted in Clarín Revista 1983).

Enrique Albistur, advertiser for several Peronist candidates, defines his advertising firm as "a technical-political group." He claims: "We do not make advertising. This is something different: it is militancy making a message. It is not selling soap. It is a new science because an electoral campaign is impossible from a strict professional approach" (quoted in Somos 1989c). In another interview, Albistur stated: "It is very difficult to make a Peronist campaign without being

Peronist" (Mercado Publicitario 1989b)

But given permanent intra-party battles, having a record of party militancy did not automatically put potential aides in campaign committees. Within parties permanently entangled in internal disputes, it was fundamental to carry membership credentials in the winning faction or to maintain ties with the selected candidate. In any case, for those not belonging to the winning faction, their participation was subject to the working out of divisions among internal factions and shared control of competing groups in the campaign. Enrique Albistur explains that his participation in the 1989 Menem campaign, designing and producing advertisements and television spots, started once Carlos Grosso (the then-Renovador leader of the city of Buenos Aires with whom he had worked in previous campaigns) was incorporated in the campaign command in January 1989. As his career in the political advertising business was "[rooted] in the Renovación of Peronism," that is working for Antonio Cafiero and other leaders who supported Cafiero's bid against Carlos Menem in the 1988 Peronist primaries, Albistur became part of the Menem presidential campaign only after Menemistas and Renovadores ironed out differences and decided to share campaign responsibilities in January 1989.

The distribution of campaign duties slightly started in 1983. Alfonsín's successful quest for the presidency is credited by both politicians and analysts with having

dramatically changed existing stumping practices. New practices such as the use of up-to-date advertising styles in street advertisements; the spectacularization of campaign rallies; the reliance on poll information for strategic decisions; and the design of a methodic plan of campaign activities, distinguished Alfonsín's campaign from previous ones. Those practices were practically unheard of for Argentine canvassing standards.

This "modern" campaign, however, was planned out not by a cadre of experienced campaign wizards but by an inspired candidate with accurate intuitions and a group of members of the Radical party who basically offered political experience and professional training in other fields. Some joined the campaign on the basis of having been Alfonsín's old party companions and allies while others participated on the basis of maintaining a personal relationship with the candidate. But, for all of them, the 1983 election was their first experience in directly handling a campaign. Except for campaign manager Emilio Gibaja and advertiser David Ratto who counted on previous experience in matters of political communication during the Illia administration in the 1960s, the rest had almost no expertise in campaign operations. Instead, they counted on (what proved to be) accurate intuitions shaped by both their trajectory in Radicalism and knowledge of the country's politics and a prior background in

related fields. A member of the campaign command describes the headquarters as follows: "We were five or six guys who if we had started a business we would have made tons of money. It was a hodgepodge of Argentine and pseudoscientific vainglorious talk [chantada]" (Monteverde 1990).

An increasing professionalization of campaign headquarters and the incorporation of a string of specialists was also visible in Peronism. In contrast to the dismissive attitude displayed during the 1983 election, the Peronist party incorporated new technologies and experts in later campaigns.³ The introduction of modern campaign practices went hand-in-hand with the emergence of the Renovación Peronista. Although some Renovador leaders generally accepted and had already used newer techniques during the negotiations for selecting candidates in 1983, it was only after they secured command positions in the party (by replacing the old guard of

³. Among numerous examples, the words of the advertising coordinator for Angel F. Robledo, a candidate in the early stages of the 1983 primaries, portray the then-dominant attitude within Peronism: "The Peronist concept is very far from the idea of liberal advertising, from [the idea of] simply selling a consumer product. We disseminate the Peronist doctrine and the word of Doctor Robledo. There is our truth and strength. We know, of course, that now modern media have to be used but we do not believe in marketing studies because we affirm that the people are not a market to whom a product has to be sold" (quoted in Clarín Revista, 1983). Consultant Hector Stupenengo (1990) recalls: "In 1983 there was a rejection [of modern campaign technologies], especially in Peronism. [Peronist said] "con tiza y con carbón somos todos de Perón" ["with chalk and charcoal we are all with Perón," a popular graffiti during Perón's campaigns in the 1940s and 1950s alluding to the scarcity of means].

politicians and union leaders who were more skeptical of these innovations) that Peronism fully embraced modern canvassing styles and formally included specialists in campaign headquarters.⁴ The 1985 campaigns for Congress of Renovador notables Carlos Grosso, in the city of Buenos Aires, and Antonio Cafiero, in the state of Buenos Aires, revealed the embryonic "modernization" Peronist electioneering was undergoing. This process became full blown in the 1987 midterm elections, especially as reflected by the organization of the campaign team of Cafiero's bid for the governorship of the province of Buenos Aires. The campaign manager recalls: "We had a committee in charge of the [campaign] line and themes, [and] around twenty experts" (Haiek 1990). Jorge Telerman, then-Cafiero's spokesperson, describes the campaign as follows:

[It] was the most organic [structure] Argentine politics had at that moment . . . Cafiero dared to break, to reject the traditional forms of organization, to call the 'intellectuals.' This was not well considered within Peronism, it was tilingo ["puffy"]. He presented them proudly. We had political experience but we [mainly] came from universities and other fields . . . It was a group of advertisers planning the campaign (Telerman 1990).

But despite the increasing professionalization of

⁴.On how modern campaign techniques were viewed within Peronism, Mario Moldován, spokesperson for Buenos Aires mayor Carlos Grosso, recalls that traditional Peronists criticized the "American profile" of the 1985 Grosso campaign based on the "modern" design of billboard posters and the images of the candidate with his children in the family living room. "Technology meant the U.S. It was a bad word" (Moldován 1990).

campaign headquarters, that is, the incorporation of specialists in different arts of modern canvassing into campaign committees, canvassing activities seldom strictly followed the advice of these new mandarins. Candidates constantly intervened in charting campaign strategies at the expense of consultants' autonomy, were generally unwilling to leave the design of electioneering completely in the hands of their aides, and rarely observed their suggestions. Consultants recognize that in early campaigns, when "modern styles" of canvassing were an absolute novelty, candidates frequently let their aides be sovereign in their decisions, but soon thereafter politicians claimed to be experienced enough not to observe their assistants' advice and, instead, to follow their own strategies (Garcia 1990; Muraro 1989; Ratto 1990; Stupenengo 1990). Only circumstantially candidates fully relied on the suggestions of their advisors, mainly when facing a complicated and puzzling picture. Advertiser Ratto (1990) states:

When [politicians] are 'small' [meaning 'unknown'] or have a big problem they let you do things. If they do o.k. with what you do [for them], they self-aggrandize a bit. The second time they claim to also know, and if they still do o.k., the third time they teach you how to do it.

The reluctance to comply with the suggestions of campaign advisors also applies to foreign consultants. After the 1983 election, Argentine campaigners were eager to get advice from U.S. and European operatives and, in many cases, flew to the

U.S. and Europe to observe campaigns to get first-hand impressions and knowledge of canvassing. Inexperience in campaign business resulting from years of authoritarianism and discontinuous elections certainly stimulated Argentines' interest in state-of-the-art campaign skills and the flow of experts from abroad.⁵ Politicians were curious about the opinions and recommendations of foreign campaign handlers. Upon request from local candidates or to participate in conferences on campaigning, U.S., Spanish and French consultants flew to Argentina in the last decade. The import of campaign brains was even more evident once new technologies were more accepted after the 1983 national election.

Yet requesting the services of outside experts was a rather problematic and secretive matter. Local advisers as well as foreign experts are usually vague and reluctant to disclose information about the participation of the latter in Argentine campaigns. The statement of an anonymous consultant, quoted in an article analyzing the export of U.S. campaign wizards, accurately describes the Argentine case: "A lot of

⁵. A good indicator of this awakened interest was the holding of five highly-attended conferences on campaigning between 1987 and 1991 organized by a Buenos Aires-based polling firm together with the editorial board of the magazine Campaigns and Elections. These seminars included presentations by Argentine candidates and campaign advisors but, unquestionably, the main attraction was the participation of U.S. consultants who lectured on campaign organization, campaign scheduling, political advertising, strategic use of polls, media management, targeting and tracking.

these foreign parties do not want the perception in their campaigns that they are being run by Americans" (Campaigns and Elections 1989, 16).⁶ More than "anti-American imperialist" sentiment among some politicians, fears for the consequences of public knowledge about the participation of U.S. consultants and accusations of "selling out" to "foreign powers" account for the reluctance of both consultants and clients to divulge any information in this regard. Though more clear in the case of U.S. experts, the unknown repercussion of accepting (and paying the) services of foreign advisors in local politics makes candidates and campaign aides to disclose about the role not just of American but of European advisors as well. The unforeseeable echoes of publicizing these connections and possible damages to electoral chances rather than nationalistic pride deter local participants from being more open on this question.

Despite frequent consultations, Argentine campaigners only occasionally followed recommendations from foreign experts. Certainly, locals were attentive to campaigning elsewhere: ideas were directly imported (as the Radicals did in 1983 with the 100 Puntos and the 1987 slogan "Vamos por el

⁶. The article continues: "Veteran consultant Joseph Napolitan cited the case of an unnamed colleague who was recently hired by an Argentine political party. The party insists it has no Americans under contract, but Napolitan said: 'I don't think my friend would lie to me. My guess is that he is there and working quietly'" (Campaigns and Elections 1989, 17).

Buen Camino "borrowed" from the Spanish Partido Obrero Socialista Español) and foreign practices inspired local habits (for example, the staging of television debates, the sporadic use of direct-mail and the realization of precinct walks based on U.S. examples). Politicians attended classes on public oratory and campaign techniques taught by foreign instructors and asked for the latter's counseling skills, but they irregularly followed the suggestions of foreign handlers. Both local advisors and candidates remained dubious about fully embracing foreign consultants' advice. Unfamiliarity with the dynamics of Argentine politics, idiosyncracies and the characteristics of the personalities involved, locals say, impede foreign experts from both having accurate diagnoses and designing appropriate strategies. Campaign advisors claim that having experience in party matters and local politics was a decisive advantage over foreign political consultants. The observation made by Angeloz's campaign manager exemplifies a belief widely held by politicians and advisors:

A foreign expert cannot, only if he had lived in the country, replace the political knowledge we have of the customs, history, idiosyncrasy, the historical formation of the people. They can help. They are experienced and methodic. They can give ideas on that (Yofre 1990).

Some campaigners mention that foreign consultants' extremely technical approach to campaigning also deters from being more accepted. They lack what many consider essential for electioneering: intuition. Political instinct formed by

experience in the country's politics and party dynamics is credited as fundamental for masterminding campaign strategies (Beliz 1990).⁷

The 1989 Angeloz campaign is commonly seen as an example of planning canvassing tactics according to the advice of foreign consultants. During the last months of 1988, the Radical campaign headquarters repeatedly harpooned candidate Carlos Menem, accusing him of continual contradictions. This became more evident during the subsequent campaign stage; assaults on Menem became frequent in speeches of Radical leaders and in television spots, especially those commercials sponsored by political parties allied to the Angeloz campaign.⁸ Peronists interpreted these attacks as part of an

⁷. Yet some local analysts observe that the success of foreign consultants lies not so much in the expertise they offer but in "being an authority figure, arbitrators accepted by factions in conflict within the campaign" (Zuleta-Puceiro 1990).

⁸. The spots "Menem versus Menem" and "Malvinas" displayed the label of two small parties, Partido de Acción Transformadora (PAT) and Partido Socialista Unificado (PSU) respectively. While "Menem versus Menem" centered on the contradictions of Carlos Menem, "Malvinas" embodied the Radicals' view that Menem's position on the South Atlantic islands was mistaken and dangerous. The latter spot introduced: images of the Malvinas war (wounded soldiers, the sinking of the Argentine battleship "General Belgrano" and a casket wrapped up in the Argentine flag); Menem's statement "I don't know how much blood we will have to spill to get the Malvinas back;" and testimonies of "regular citizens" warning about the consequences of Menem's assertion. The "Malvinas" spot generated heated debates as, facing accusations from the Peronists, representative Simon Lázara, the leader of the PSU, denied having produced or financed the commercial, admitted that he agreed to "loan" the party label to the Radical

aggressive campaign masterminded by an U.S. advisor. Radicals were accused of staging, in the words of then vicepresidential candidate Eduardo Duhalde, "a campaign to dishonor the persona of doctor Menem that includes the most absurd and slandering versions, designed by an North American expert three months ago upon [the Radicals'] request" (Clarín 1989a).

Duhalde's campaign team published a sixty-page manifesto entitled, paraphrasing the title of the famous "Blue Book" and echoing Juan Perón's "Blue and White Book," Libro Azul y Blanco (blue and white are the national colors).⁹ Besides an enthusiastic biography of Carlos Menem and a critical review of Eduardo Angeloz's resume, this publication analyzed the so-called "Barnett report," named after U.S. consultant Louis Barnett who, according to the authors, advised the Angeloz team to launch an aggressive campaign; its front cover displayed the epigram: "All the truth the People want to know." It claimed that Radicals were following Barnett's

campaign and attributed all responsibilities to the Angeloz committee; the latter rejected all charges of being involved and credited Lázara with the authorship of the commercial (El Periodista de Buenos Aires 1989; Somos 1989b).

⁹. The Libro Azul, an exposé describing Juan Peron's ties to the Axis, was edited by the U.S. State Department and under the sponsorship of U.S. ambassador Spruille Braden who strongly canvassed against Col. Perón during the 1946 campaign. In addition to the charges made by the Unión Democrática and its political allies to Peron and his military entourage of having close relations with the Nazi and the Fascist regimes, the Libro Azul distinctly attempted to damage Peron's electoral chances.

advice that only "a negative and aggressive campaign will prevent a [Peronist] triumph;" the manifesto stated: "[a]fter suggesting multiple forms to hit low blows to Menem, his administration, collaborators and Peronism as a whole, Barnett asserte[d] that from that moment 'the campaign will be clearly offensive, attacking in all chosen fronts'" (1989, 4-5). Radicals virtually ignored all accusations. Campaign manager Ricardo Yofre rejected charges in a straightforward manner: "There is no advice of an American nor anything about that story" (Somos 1989b).¹⁰

Many Argentine campaigners recognize various reasons why aggressive techniques used by the 1989 Angeloz headquarters are inapplicable in Argentina. Observers recognize various reasons why an aggressive campaign does not work in Argentina. Some advertisers indicate that people (both voters and politicians) are not used to "hard-hitting" commercials; these ads are not a standard practice in consumer advertising as conventions specifically prohibit them. Negative commercials clash with accepted advertising practices. Others contend that aggressive advertising goes against the grain of accepted behavior; Argentines, they argue, after decades of political

¹⁰. Differing from the Peronist charges leveled against U.S. consultant Louis Barnett for "going negative," Radical party insiders claim that representatives from the New York-based Sawyer/Miller group were the ones who, towards the end of 1988, observed that the lack of aggressiveness of the campaign was a major flaw and recommended rougher tactics.

and social violence reject or, at least, are more sensitive to any form of political aggression. Advertiser Federico Ortiz observes: "People are not willing to accept a boxing spectacle between presidential candidates. People want peace and a proposal to solve the country's problems" (Mercado Publicitario 1989a). Martin Oyuela, an advertiser who worked in the FEPAC (the Menemist campaign think-tank), states: "We refused negative advertising. It was just fireworks ["just noise"]. People rejected it; aggression as an instrument was rejected" (Oyuela 1990). When asked what imported techniques do not "work" in Argentina, two consultants for Peronist campaigns responded: "Aggressive advertising. People here do not like it. It is not part of the collective imaginary" (Stupenengo 1990) and "Compared to the U.S., there is a different context, voters and philosophy here" (Hugo Haime as quoted in El Cronista Comercial 1989b). Advertiser Ratto (1990) recalls that during the 1983 campaign the use of negative advertising was unimaginable given the country's situation and the population's mood after years of authoritarianism. While candidate Alfonsín was offering "life against death" and people's main demands were "peace" and "tranquility," the production of aggressive spots was, according to Ratto, absurd.

Besides these underlying conditions, most opinions coincide that a negative campaign was mistaken, especially

given the unique circumstances of the 1989 campaign. The rapid succession of different and disturbing phenomena created a sensitive situation, inappropriate for a belligerent campaign. The third military rebellion in December 1988; the energy crisis and subsequent electricity and water cuts in vast regions of the country during the summer of 1989; the staggering and violently crushed ambush at a military garrison by a left-wing group, amidst a shocked and baffled population; and skyrocketing inflation triggered after the so-called Black Friday of February 6, 1989; all these events sensitized voters. The soil was tilled not for going after the rivals' jugular but for a compassionate and "humane" campaign.

This was the strategy of the Menem campaign. Advisors claim that besides an unbecoming situation, blasts against Menem were mistaken given the latter's permanent talk of "hope" and "peace" coupled with the general perception, reflected in polls, that Menem was a "tranquil and peaceful individual" (Muraro 1991). Federico Ortiz, former head of Ogilvy & Mather in Argentina and a widely respected advertiser who worked for the Angeloz headquarters until February 1989, claims that ignoring the trajectory of Menem and his reputation among the electorate led to a wrong strategy. Ortiz specifically referred to the case of the Sawyer/Miller consultant assigned to produce advertising spots for the

Angeloz campaign.¹¹ He recalls:

[There was in the campaign committee] a swirling spirit that Menem had to be depicted as a savage. I told the guy of Sawyer/Miller: 'Watch out with what you are doing. You have to know that Menem is a guy everybody loves. He opens [his house] door with one hand and gives you an empanada [Argentine traditional stuffed pastry] with the other [hand]. This is not an obnoxious guy who is going to start a fire. Quite the opposite. Menem talks all the time about peace and tranquility. That is a terrible mistake' (Ortiz 1990).

Sawyer/Miller was indicated as responsible for designing a television spot that clearly attempted to identify Menem with violence and chaos and was later canceled by candidate Angeloz. The spot was an odd collage of images of the Peronist guerrilla movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s; vignettes of the June 1973 events at the Ezeiza airport (the Peronist welcome to Juan Perón from exile that met a turbulent end as shootings among different factions broke out); flashes of Col. Seineldín and carapintada officers (Seineldín headed the December 1988 military rebellion and carapintada" [shoe-polish painted faces] alluded to the rebellious officers); scenes of people smashing windows in the aftermath of the rally organized by the Central General de Trabajadores on July 1988 (the first Peronist event after Menem won the primaries); and clips from the left-wing attack at La Tablada military garrison in January 1989.

¹¹. Ortiz resigned to his role as Angeloz's advertising handler once the delegate of Sawyer/Miller took control of the advertising.

Some Radical party insiders also suggest that an aggressive campaign was mistaken by offering the following reasons: Menem was not perceived as synonymous of violence and chaos (as campaign commercials depicted him); voters rejected harsh ads; and by centering the Radical campaign around Menem, Angeloz and his popular governorship tenure in Córdoba remained in the background, only sporadically in the campaign.¹² The former secretary of Communication during the Alfonsín administration claims: "We made Menem the center of the campaign" (Muiño 1990). Radical veteran advertiser Ricardo Pueyrredón (1990) recalls that during the 1946 campaign the Unión Democrática made the same mistake by continuously criticizing Perón rather than focusing on the merits of their candidates.

Yet Angeloz's campaign cannot be considered as a product of the recommendations of foreign consultants. The campaign was significantly less aggressive than what foreign aides suggested. Angeloz minimally suscribed to the advice of U.S. campaign wizards, and consequently, the campaign introduced some mean-spirited ads. But the campaign design was far from the ferocious tone suggested by foreign consultants. The

¹². A survey on "evaluation of television spots" conducted by pollsters Hugo Haime and Julio Aurelio reports that aggressive commercials were the ones most catalogued as "bad" by the interviewees; sixty-six percent and fifty-five percent included respectively the ads "Malvinas" and "Menem vs. Menem" in that category.

candidate himself and some advisors doubted the probity of such a strategy and also tempered the militant advice of other campaign aides to fire the heaviest artillery at Menem.

In any case, the strategy to "go aggressive" seems to have been less a result of the counsel of foreign advisors and more a consequence of an existing conviction among Radical insiders to hit hard on Peronism before U.S. consultants were invited. Talks of unearthing violent images of Peronism from the 1970s and preparing a litany of "undemocratic" quotes by Peronist leaders existed even during the 1988 primaries when Radicals were convinced that Cafiero-de la Sota was going to be the Peronist ticket. Later in the year, echoes of the hostile advertising used during the 1988 Bush-Dukakis election that arrived via party insiders who witnessed the campaign in situ and encouraged the staging of a bitter campaign, provided a referent. The lukewarm aggressiveness of the Angeloz's campaign should be considered a product of a sector of the Angeloz command, supported by some party leaders and rejected by others, but above all, a result of local inspiration. Fears for the consequences of a possible Peronist administration and attempts to warn of Menem's capacity to dominate party factions and military sectors suspiciously aligned with the defense of democracy prevailed not only within Radicalism but also in other social and political groups as well.

FACTIONALISM AND CAMPAIGN DISORGANIZATION

In addition to staffing campaign teams with party-affiliated aides, parties influenced the planning of campaign schedules and the coordination of activities through constantly attempting to steer and to direct campaign routines.

Party machines intervened in the making of election campaigns through organizing (what some campaign pundits wittily called "disorganizing") local canvassing for presidential campaigning. Customarily, candidates had to follow demands of local leaders to visit their provinces and participate in regional canvassing operations. In addition to the need for national candidates personally to visit states and towns for both building support among party ranks and garnering popular votes, regional leaders expected candidates to visit their districts. Local party branches normally hoped to be influential by remaining close to the national campaign operations. Also, through these visits, national candidates endorsed some leaders and blessed local candidacies.

When receiving the visit of a presidential candidate, local bosses made their power known through the organization of activities that denoted their capacity of mobilization and legitimacy in their districts. To display the size of the following, local leaders resorted to mechanisms familiar to analysts of campaign politics in Latin America (Graham 1990;

Lomnitz, Lomnitz-Adler and Adler 1990). Staging popular and crowded events such as rallies and party festivals and creating an atmosphere evidencing control of the district by carpeting city walls with affiches showing party logos and candidates' names and faces, often were favorite means to demonstrate regional supremacy. Expecting the blessing from touring national candidates, local bosses performed to show their strength in the district.

The daily schedule of a presidential candidate on the road commonly followed a similar scheme and sequence of activities: arrival in a town, press conference for the local media, motorcade to the downtown hotel, meetings with district party leaders, lunch sponsored by party or local organizations, conferences with local associations (business, professional, union, and religious organizations), the mandatory evening rally and a late-night dinner. Who welcomed the illustrious visitor at the airport or train station; who led the parade to the hotel; who arranged the press conference and managed contacts with the local media; who introduced the candidate in meetings with local powers; who preceded the candidates' speech in the rally; and who hosted dinner in a town restaurant or in an estancia; all these were signs spelling out the strength and influence of local bigwigs. Yet these cues were, above all, "demonstration gestures," signals aiming to impress the visiting candidate, staunch efforts by

regional caudillos hoping to lock up influential roles in national party politics.

The organization of presidential campaign routines at the local level rested on the shoulders of district party branches, not of the national campaign headquarters. The arrangement of local campaign activities was practically left in the hands of local prominents. As the latter were constantly enmeshed in parochial conflicts, hoping to assert control and to have national resonance, the organization of presidential electioneering frequently spun to the frantic rhythm of local rivalries and campaigning. This point, commonly mentioned by party insiders and political analysts as detrimental for putting together an ordered campaign, is illustrated by Menem's 1988 and 1989 campaign speechwriter:

The disorganization was a result of pujas prepoder [literally, 'prepower squabbles'. Every one wants to be near the candidate, to travel in the [candidate's] plane as he thinks that in that way he will be [appointed] Minister, Secretary or is going to hold a high-ranking office. [There is a] visible degree of hysteria and anxiety. The credential to go to certain places is missing. You go to a hotel and there is no room because the puntero [ward boss] does not allow you [to be there]. Someone wants to kidnap the candidate to take him to their rally and prevent him from contacting other internal groups (Beliz 1990).

Beliz's comment illustrates a central characteristic of Argentine political parties: from the left to the right, parties encompass several factions generally formed on the basis of both allegiance to party notables and ideological differences (Cavarozzi 1986; McGuire 1990). These divisions

are constantly immersed in permanent disputes, especially at times when possibilities to hold public office open such as in the cases of appointing new cabinet members and determining future candidacies. Disputes among factions on these matters were (and still are) constant. The frequency of elections triggered continual deliberations among party factions. As office tenure in different levels varies, elections were held almost every year. Presidents are elected each six years, Senators each nine years, and Governors, Representatives and City Council members each four years. Of course, primaries to select candidates for each level should also be included in the list of elections. Consequently, parties were continuously engaged in often arduous and prolonged sessions to discuss nominations. Factions strenuously pushed to place members in strategic positions in the list of candidates, and feverish negotiations to consolidate positions usually absorbed the attention of politicians and party insiders.¹³

¹³. Another occasion in which internal conflict surfaced was during the frequent changes in presidential cabinet. During the Alfonsín administration - as well as during the present Menem presidency - dozens of cabinet officials paraded through different public offices. While some briefly held positions for later to walk the plank, more fortunate others played musical chairs and worked in different offices. In a panel at the XV Conference of the International Political Science Association, Buenos Aires, political scientist Oscar Oszlak, director of the Instituto Nacional de la Administración Pública during the Alfonsin administration, claimed that the average term for a high-rank public bureaucrat was less than a year during 1983-1989. Observers agree that intra-party quarrels stimulated ongoing office shifts while changes, in turn, prompted debates among party

Given these conditions, central campaign committees had, to say the least, a hard time in trying to handle the campaign in an organized fashion. The incoherence from below spilled over into the efforts to stage a coherent campaign from above; the excited vibrations of local politics, somehow aligned to factional quarrels at the national level, echoed in the heights of the campaign command. Constant bickering among party factions and the continual attempts by regional leaders to extend their influence by managing local events (generally to secure a position near the "future" president), reverberated in the general campaign structure and frustrated efforts to follow a methodical schedule of activities.

This point shows a central component of Argentine electioneering: a clearly dominant chaos. To stage a neatly arranged and coordinated campaign, would be, as many party insiders put it, "wishful thinking" in Argentina. A central reason accounting for campaign disorganization is precisely the importance of political parties in staging stumping activities. As discussed in chapter two, candidates were situated closely vis-a-vis their party machineries; their party-rooted legitimacy of origin coupled with their personal conviction and adherence to the parties' credo placed candidates in the very center of party dynamics. Candidates found themselves surrounded by their parties. Consequently,

factions to nominate public officials.

the dilemma was how to arrange an election campaign as ordered as possible given the suffocating presence of faction-ridden and jumbled parties. Candidates were inevitably located in what a journalist refers as the "eye of the storm;" that is, in the middle of tempestuous and raucous party winds. For central headquarters, to put together a planned and methodic campaign amidst factious and disorganized parties certainly was a tough challenge.

The chaotic structure of parties deters attempts to carry out arranged and methodic plans for coordinating stumping activities. Diagramming campaign routines from the central campaign headquarters masterminded by a clique of advisors and based solely on the candidate's needs and strategic decisions, turned to be impossible as disorganized party structures were overwhelmingly present, local leaders demanded participation and decision-making powers, and factions pushed to influence the campaign design. Canvassing inexorably reflects the character of party organization. Campaigns cannot be what parties are not.

Commenting on the confused architecture of campaigning, a campaign aide for several Radical candidates says, "there is too much party in campaigning" (Stuhlman 1990). The presence of "too much" of a disorganized "party" impedes a better arranged campaign organization. Parties were not only a constant and forceful presence in the marshaling of stumping

activities but also a "disorganized" presence. Even in cases when candidates dared to ignore party structures (like the visible efforts made in that direction by the 1989 Angeloz campaign headquarters), mainly as a consequence of not having control over the party machinery and/or facing party ranks disinclined or reticent to give full support, parties were imminently (and for some candidates ominously) present and the organization of electioneering was still confined by party limits.

The tenacious and ebullient presence of chaotically functioning parties eliminated any possibility of running an ordered campaign. Many candidates did attempt to choreograph carefully their movements but they ran across ill-organized parties which undermined those intentions; a journalist who assisted several Radical candidates states: "Initially, a central control is attempted but [the organization of] political parties is a mess" (Gregorich 1990). Party structures were too disjointed to stage a coordinated campaign; their disarray was a formidable obstacle for candidates trying, following the basics of modern campaign organization, to stage an efficient management of two scarce resources: money and time. Politicians state that during the last years they have learned "a more systematic control of time [and developed] an interest in analyzing campaign strategies" (Suárez Lastra 1990). But the disorganized

structure of political parties was a main hurdle for putting in practice these "new" lessons, namely the need to coordinate a methodic campaign making an efficient use of finances and time.

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

Both factionalism and disorganized party structures affected the dynamics of campaign financing which, in turn, also diminished the chances of staging an organized election campaign. Prevailing ways through which campaigns are financed hindered efforts to launch more systematic campaigns. Enrique Zuleta-Puceiro, a Radical campaign consultant and former official in the Alfonsín administration, accurately argues:

[The lack of] organizational and operational transparency of political parties also clouds the capacity for strategic planning [in campaigns] . . . State funds cover a minimum part of canvassing [expenses], I would say very little. Thus parties are engaged in trying to access groups that can finance the campaigns . . . The lack of political mechanisms for open or transparent financing, subsidies for electoral activities and foundations negatively influences the campaigns. In fact, it cannot be strategic planning as it presupposes an open, clear, debated calculation of resources assumed by the whole party" (Zuleta-Puceiro 1990)

Data on how campaign monies are collected and invested are virtually impossible to obtain. Party insiders claim that only candidates and their most immediate collaborators possess factual though unsystematic information on campaign expenses (Moldován 1990; Zuleta-Puceiro 1990). Sociologist and pollster Manuel Mora y Araujo (1991, 26) observes: "The origins of

resources are rarely clear. Party members ask for resources outside their parties, mainly to private groups and the state, but no [income] is declared." The whole management of party and campaign finances differs from what the Código Electoral Nacional (1983, 16) (the National Electoral Code) establishes in its Título V. While its article 50 expressly prohibits "contribution or donations" from "anonymous [donors] . . . autonomous organizations . . . companies in charge of public works . . . gambling enterprises . . . foreign governments, firms or companies . . . trade unions or business and professional organizations," it is widely assumed that campaign funds mostly come from these organizations. Also, the actual handling of those funds contradicts what the Code decrees; Article 53 establishes: "Party funds will be deposited in official, national, provincial or municipal banks, on the name of the party and the authorities named by the [party] carta orgánica" (1983, 17).

Parties lack a methodical accounting system not just of campaign finances but of the funding of their regular activities; those sources publicly known and those publicly suspected of having contributed to campaign war chests are reluctant to disclose any figures or names of recipients; numbers reported by the Fondo Partidario Permanente (the public funds assigned by the Executive on the basis of previous electoral performances to parties for campaigning)

largely differ from the rough figures commonly handled; and official control of campaign finances, origins and uses, are notably absent. Other methods to evaluate donations such as reviewing tax returns are vitiated as campaign contributions are not declared. Also, reports on media advertising investments not only offer an incomplete picture as other types of campaign expenses are not included but also the accuracy of prices for different ads is often questioned. Not all media advertisements, whether in newspapers, radio or television, were necessarily paid for at the market price (or even paid at all) as, according to campaign insiders, on many occasions rates depended on confidential negotiations between campaigners and media executives. The absence of any certified or reliable data and the secrecy of public officials on this regard prevents an exhaustive reconstruction of campaign financing. All existing estimations are conjectural and based on impressionistic calculations and dispersed numbers.¹⁴

According to these conjectures, the bulk of campaign warchests was composed by donations from private corporations (Somos 1990). Only a small part of campaign funds came from party coffers. Except for state monies channeled through party

¹⁴. Rough figures show that expenses for presidential campaigns have significantly increased between 1983 to 1989. While for 1983 the total amount calculated is approximately nine million dollars, numbers for 1989 climbed to twenty million (information based on Clarín 1989a; Página 12 1989c; Fraga 1989).

structures, parties did not have other means, such as dues-paying members or investments, to secure funds. Parties are often described as in "Franciscan poverty" (Muiño 1990) thus when campaigning time nears, fund-raising operations become urgent.¹⁵ The opaqueness of the procedures to collect monies and the inscrutable origins of campaign financing cause recurrent accusations about contributors and amounts disbursed. Most typically, "fat cats" claim to contribute more money than what beneficiaries maintain while presumed "financial angels" reject any suggestions of having donated campaign monies.¹⁶

¹⁵. State monies are allocated during electoral campaigns; eighty percent is allocated to district party offices and twenty percent to the national committee. Party platforms establish different financial sources: a monthly quota given by delegates to the national committee; a percentage of Congress members' salary; contributions by district offices; and others (Jackish 1990). But party officials admit that donations from both party leaders and companies constitute the main funding resources. They acknowledge that party coffers are in complete disarray. Remo Constanzo, finance manager of the Partido Justicialista, states: "I have to tell you the truth. The organic and official structures of political parties are very precarious. Most [parties] offices are devastated, [they have no] resources" (quoted in Somos 1990, 10).

¹⁶. In September 1991, the assertions made by Jorge Born, former president of the corporation Bunge & Born, that the company contributed \$3,000,000 and \$2,000,000 dollars respectively to the Menem and the Angeloz campaigns, triggered a heated debate. Former members of the finance committee of the Menem campaign rejected the numbers given by Born and claimed that the company donated just \$700,000 dollars. Also, the former manager of the Angeloz campaign denied that the committee received two million dollars. Similarly, an official communique of Bunge & Born stated that Born's assertions did not represent the company and concluded "[his assertions] do not correspond to reality" (La Nación Internacional 1991).

Similar to the problems for coordinating campaign routines, centralizing the handling of campaign monies was inconceivable. Several campaigning party groups and, in the case of Peronism, trade unions, independently harvested and managed their financial sources and simultaneously pumped funds into campaigns. As the rhythm and quantity of campaign donations were erratic, varying according to candidates' momentum, rising chances and, mainly, personal agreements between candidates and donors, headquarters had a hard time in trying to carefully budget campaign costs. In addition, the uncertainty created by fluctuations in inflation rates impeded precise and permanent calculations of money allocations. All these factors strongly conditioned the possibilities for coordinating campaign plans. Candidates often tried to institute centralizing offices and directors responsible for collecting funds but they faced several obstacles. A hydra-like situation in which parallel party factions campaign and control funds separately from the central command undermined attempts to achieve a unified management of campaign finances.¹⁷

¹⁷. Advertisers compare the reigning anarchy in the administration of campaign funds to the more systematic habits in the business world. Despite the problems created by inflation, both the centralized direction of business firms and the fact that budgetary decisions are taken beforehand, make the planning of consumer advertising campaigns more feasible. As these two conditions are lacking in political parties, in the words of a Peronist advertiser, "the planning [of election campaigns] cannot be done as rigorously as it is

The prominence of muddled mechanisms and the lack of clear information on campaign funds not only prevented the existence of coordinated campaign organizations but also have damaging consequences for the functioning of Argentine democracy. The absence of publicly transparent methods for collecting and disbursing campaign funds makes the functioning of political parties, their relations with political organizations and economic groups, and, accordingly, the dynamics of the country's democracy, susceptible to corruption and citizens' distrust, less transparent and less democratic.

ORGANIZED CAMPAIGNS

Despite the considerable obstacles to plan methodic stumping routines, some candidates were able to stage more coherent campaigns. To overcome factors strongly deterring the charting and execution of systematic canvassing plans, namely, disorganized and anemic party structures closely positioned

in commercial campaigns" (Lohle 1990). Media researcher Heriberto Muraro (1991) indicates: "A political party resembles very little a business firm. Decision mechanisms common in a company, except for family businesses, are more formal and more authoritarian than those of a political group. Positions and responsibilities are clearly assigned, a relatively stable system of assigning roles to reach quick decisions. In parties, instead, underneath the candidate who heads the list, positions, roles and responsibilities are diffuse and permanently reviewed. In addition, as parties are voluntary associations and most members work ad honorem and in their free time, decision-making tends to be a collective process in which people of lower ranks in the party apparatus also participate."

vis-a-vis campaign headquarters, and anarchic methods for campaign financing, the only possible solution was to mitigate the pressures of different party factions pushing to influence the campaign. Only in two alternative situations, candidates were able to reduce the influence of these factors and thus stage a more coordinated campaign. The first case was one in which candidates from competing party factions ran for different office levels and agreed to abstain from intervening in their respective campaigns. The second was when candidates rallied all factions behind their candidacies, that is, when the candidate achieved full consensus within party ranks.

The first possibility for launching an organized campaign was when party factions decided to campaign separately, consequently the pressures and pulling on campaign headquarters were stifled. This scenario was more feasible in local stumping as in national elections different party factions tried to intervene in the campaign organization. The 1989 campaigns of the Radical party in the city of Buenos Aires were a good example of this case. Incumbent senator Fernando de la Rúa ran separately from the faction Junta Coordinadora Nacional that dominated the list of candidacies for Representatives (headed by then-Foreign Affairs minister Dante Caputo) and City Council members (led by then-Buenos Aires mayor Facundo Suárez Lastra). In fact, advisors admit that the campaigns for all offices turned out to be

coordinated as competing factions remained distant. A similar case was the campaigns, also in the city of Buenos Aires, of the conservative party UCeDé. The campaigns for president, senator and representative, headed by party leader Alvaro Alsogaray, representative Maria Julia Alsogaray and City Council member Adelina Dalessio de Viola respectively, were run separately. Existing intra-party conflicts pitted factions against each other and consequently campaigns were planned independently; in turn, all three campaigns, according to party members, were more coherent than previous experiences (Domán 1990; El Cronista Comercial 1989; Jimenez Peña 1990; Siracusano 1989).

A failed example of this situation in which campaign headquarters tried to canvass apart from other party factions was the 1989 Angeloz campaign. The campaign committee was not entirely successful in staging an arranged campaign despite staunch efforts to centralize activities by establishing contacts with local districts only for the organization of Angeloz's regional tours and controlling the overall design of the campaign. In this sense, the advice of a veteran party leader to the campaign manager, "if you want to build a good campaign committee, do it at the margins of the party and don't let yourself be obstructed by the party, otherwise they will not let you do anything" (quoted by Yofre 1990), was observed by the campaign headquarters. Campaign manager

Ricardo Yofre (1990) comments: "The committee functioned separately from the party, otherwise, it would have been trapped by the bureaucracy and the internal party fights." But the coordination of campaign activities was extremely complicated amidst the reigning chaos generated by hyperinflation (and its consequent damage to both the government's image and Angeloz's chances) and the resentment between Alfonsinistas and Angelozistas (present since the very beginning of the campaign but exacerbated by criticisms of the Alfonsín administration made by Angeloz aiming to detach himself from the government's economic mismanagement). Given these conditions, choreographing a systematic campaign was, in the words of a Radical campaign aide, "like ordering deck chairs on the Titanic" (Del Franco 1990), a worthless enterprise.

The second scenario for an organized campaign to be possible was when candidates were hegemonic within their parties, thus, the campaign was released from the pulling from different factions and a more systematic plan of activities designed by the campaign headquarters could be carried out. The best example of this was the 1983 Alfonsín campaign. During the 1983-1989 period, some local candidates were able also to organize systematic campaigns as they exercised full

command of the district party apparatus.¹⁸ But the Alfonsín campaign was the only one at the presidential level that counted on the complete backing from different party factions. The 1983 Luder campaign was subjected to intense disputes among party factions while the 1989 Menem campaign, though notoriously better organized than the former, was not fully coordinated either. As we have seen, the 1989 Angeloz bid faced numerous problems in this regard.

The 1983 Alfonsín campaign was ordered and organized basically out of the decision of rival factions to simply join and accept the prevailing campaign structure after Alfonsín triumphed in the primaries. Once ward and regional bosses perceived that support for Alfonsín was swelling, they jumped on the bandwagon without interfering in the general organization plan. Though campaigns in different districts were not centralized by the national headquarters but remained autonomous, regional candidates coordinated activities with the presidential team and converged on the main lines programmed by Alfonsín and his advisors. A member of the Alfonsín campaign explains:

[The campaign] was more organic than the typical Argentine campaign. Perhaps, the fact that everybody

¹⁸. For example, the campaigns for local office of leaders of the Renovación Peronista such as the cases of Carlos Grosso in the city of Buenos Aires for the 1985 midterm elections and of Antonio Cafiero in Buenos Aires, Octavio Bordón in Mendoza, Jorge Busti in Entre Ríos and Ruben Marín in La Pampa, all for the 1987 governor races.

wanted to be close to Alfonsín, helped [the campaign] to be more ordered . . . Even the governor of the most remote province asked for a picture, a spot, a poster with Alfonsín" (Monteverde 1990).

Weaving alliances with local powers while refraining from intervening in conflicts among regional caudillos helped Alfonsín to capitalize on support from competing factions and leaders; as many Radical insiders put it, Alfonsín often appeared to be "above local disputes".¹⁹ The hegemonic position Alfonsín held during the 1983 campaign certainly allowed a systematic arrangement of campaign routines and schedules. Alfonsín's unquestioned leadership allowed staging a coherent campaign by, in the words of the campaign advertising manager, "handl[ing] all the craze and dispersion [usually] fueled by the 'spontaneous' ones," the myriad of simultaneous campaigns launched by different party sectors and local committees (Ratto 1990).

Peronists argue that staging a coordinated campaign such as Alfonsín's would be inconceivable for Peronism. The pandemonium-like experience of the 1983 campaign is often considered as the best embodiment of Peronism's problems for staging a coordinated campaign. The then-prevailing intense party factionalism coupled with the jumbled and visible

¹⁹. Journalist Carlos Quirós who covered the Alfonsín campaign commented: "Not all Radical state branches are a realm of harmony. When Alfonsín had to engage in some of these conflicts, at some point of the debate, he frequently recommended resolving the problem within local limits and refrained from intervention" (Clarín 1983).

influence of the trade unions (manifested in both their mobilization power and resource capabilities) frustrated the few attempts to diagram the campaign. Furthermore, campaigns were not only discordant but factions competed among themselves. The presence of assorted factions, aligned behind local leaders and/or ideological beliefs, and the disorganized participation of the trade unions, turned any attempt to coordinate campaign activities into a Sisyphean effort. In this sense, the configuration of the party structure is indicated as a major obstacle for choreographing a coordinated campaign: "There are various not just only one Peronist campaign. Trade unions run their own campaign" (Albistur 1990); "Peronism could not organize a good, ordered election campaign due to the disordered characteristics of the movimiento" (Beliz 1990).²⁰ Vicepresidential candidate Eduardo Duhalde stated: "Justicialismo is not a political party. I will not explain to you the doctrine but Peronists little respect party organization and, personally, I do not believe it is necessary" (Página 12 1989a). The following description by a Peronist journalist nicely summarizes this point:

If something cannot be said about Peronism it is that it is a synonym of organization. Its enormous tide of social energy, the most potent of Argentine politics, is usually

²⁰. In 1986, then-governor Carlos Menem stated: "We conceive Peronism as transcending 'partidocracia' [literally, 'partyocracy']" (Beliz 1986, 201).

wasted because of lack of an adequate articulation. This deficiency is highlighted during electoral campaigns. An inborn triumphalism that considers the victory as an axiom and equal proselytism with the party liturgy, clashes with increasing demands of professionalism of modern political battles (El Cronista Comercial 1989a)

An appropriate example to discern the dynamics of Peronist electioneering is the case of the 1988 primaries. The campaigns of candidates Carlos Menem and Antonio Cafiero displayed different organizations. Members of the Menem headquarters recall the campaign as a typical Peronist endeavor, meaning, not only that the party creed was permanently vindicated but also that canvassing activities were highly disorganized (Beliz 1990; Oyuela 1990). The lack of central control and the massive and disjointed backing from the unions prevented any organized efforts.

The Cafiero campaign, instead, was more organized. Two factors contributed to its organization. First, the abstention of local leaders from participating in the campaign headquarters. The large majority of ward bosses and caudillos adhered to the Cafiero-de la Sota ticket but did not intervene in the campaign organization. The party machine worked in their districts practically divorced from campaign advisors; the latter planned and scheduled activists without the interference of district branches. Second, the decision of the unions to side with Menem eased the control and organization of the campaign. Traditionally, the fact that vast numbers of unions supported the candidates and wanted to control and/or

influence the campaign command, inevitably contributed to making Peronist campaigns disorganized. This was not the case of the Cafiero-de la Sota campaign; the unions were on the other side. The Renovación had successfully gained the control of party structures at the expense of union bosses and union-backed leaders. Both the 1987 and 1988 elections showed this separation as the campaign headquarters were under the control of party chiefs.

Consequently, as a combined result of party networks supporting the Cafiero-de la Sota ticket but not pushing to control the campaign and the unions massively backing Menem, the Renovación campaign committee was highly autonomous and organized. The managers were the four pilots of the Renovación: Cafiero, de la Sota, and representatives Carlos Grosso and Jose Luis Manzano. The "eminence grise" of the Renovación, namely, teams of professionals who have been working with different Renovadores since 1983, executed a more professional, systematic and careful campaign.

CONCLUSIONS

Political parties held an important role in the organization of Argentine election campaigns in the 1980s. Candidates often had to build campaigning structures anew, including headquarters, finances and intelligentsia, as parties lacked stable communication apparatuses and organic

economic resources, but parties were constantly enmeshed in the architecture of electioneering plans. Campaign headquarters were staffed with party-attached personnel and party insiders assumed the staging of local activities of presidential campaigns but, above all, the powerful presence of parties was expressed in the active participation of party ranks and factions in the dynamics of campaign coordination. The field organization was planned not by a group of independent campaign professionals but by party-based advisors coupled with the active participation of party notables. Candidates were not alone when canvassing; to their advantage and/or disadvantage, parties were continuously present.

Besides being candidates' sponsors (as argued in chapter two), parties provided enthusiastic campaign manpower (especially in early campaigns when party local offices bustled with activity), public finances (in the form of cash for campaigning, free transportation, mailing), and free airtime in radio and television. But candidates were sitting on top of active volcanoes. Party in-fights permanently influenced campaign plans. Party sectors and candidates' command constantly wrestled over numerous campaign matters such as the design, schedules, strategies, finances and alliances. Sore points among party leaders and factions generated contretemps in the development of campaign activities. The persistence of conflicts within parties was

responsible for delays in the official launching of canvassing plans, independent management of campaign funds, passive boycotts of candidates' activities, and campaign disorganization.

To summarize, the powerful role of fractious parties mainly accounts for the incoherence and disarray of electioneering. Behind the campaign disorganization loomed the disorganization and conflicts of political parties. The disjointed presence of parties often derailed canvassing plans and obstructed endeavors to eliminate discordant and parallel campaigns, to unify the party message and to overcome improvisation. These circumstances torpedoed all initiatives to orchestrate campaigns according to the canons of modern consulting. Consequently, as long as parties remain absorbed in the architecture of electioneering and maintain a jumbled and weakly articulated structure, attempts to systematize activities and to install modern forms of campaigning will be chimeric. A better organization of regular party activities, the implementation of more open and clear mechanisms for campaign financing and the strengthening of party means of communication will certainly originate not just more articulated campaigns but a more solid and transparent democracy.

CHAPTER FOUR

STREETS, PLAZAS AND WALLS: THE SITES OF PARTY COMMUNICATION

The writing on the walls of Buenos Aires is particularly illuminating these days - and rather better informed than most of the press.

The Economist 1973

The crowd covered the whole plaza; from the platform, the solid stage that Beder and his people built for the rally, heads and shoulders, faces like blurred spots were seen. Everybody was in the crowd that stretched towards the ends of the large central spot like the sparks of a star that flow through each point. From above, from the large platform, they seemed that: cramped circles to fill a big star-shaped spot. They did not seem men and women [but] I do not want to reduce them to cattle. I just want to describe them as part of a dry sea star, with its irregular tentacles.

Martha Lynch, La Alfombra Roja

Juan Perón claimed that "winning the street in decisive moments and places" was fundamental in political action. In Conducción Política, a compilation of his reflections on political strategy, Perón considered that street supremacy in specific situations was decisive. The idea that "taking over the street where and when matters" (Perón 1951, 229) remained central in the Peronist creed. Drawing multitudes in street spaces, especially on two dates, "Workers' Day" on May 1 and "Loyalty Day" on October 17, was conceived as a key mechanism for organizing the masses and as a técnica de propaganda Peronista.

Peronism best incarnated the obsession of Argentine

politics of seizing street spaces for political communication; the early Peronist era definitely shaped the plaza-mindedness character of the country's politics. As historian Luis A. Romero accurately puts it, "there exists a kind of [popular] participation . . . unquestionably related to Peronism: street mobilization" (Romero 1985, 61). Peronism's birthing, engraved on its most sacred memories, was precisely a massive congregation of workers and the poor in Plaza de Mayo petitioning General Perón's liberation.¹ Plaza de Mayo, the historic site in downtown Buenos Aires where Argentine politics has been beating since the colonial days, later became Peronism's shrine, the stage for unforgettable, colossal demonstrations, the arena where both Juan and Eva Perón delivered speeches and congregated their acolytes, and the auditorium where Argentine politics still reverberates.²

¹. Reporting the whole historical context surrounding the events of October 17, 1945 exceeds the scope of this work. David Rock nicely summarizes the events which still constitute a highly debated topic on Argentine history; "Perón's departure [he was imprisoned by the military government] left a political stalemate and a growing power vacuum . . . In the day following his imprisonment several of his closest followers canvassed the working-class neighborhoods of greater Buenos Aires, launching a campaign to free Perón . . . On 17 October 1945 thousands of workers suddenly took to the streets and began marching toward the presidential palace. From the Plaza de Mayo they demanded Perón's release and reinstatement" (1987, 260).

². Given Buenos Aires hegemony in Argentine politics, the whole country's political rhythm beats in its plazas and streets. However, street spectacle is not exclusive to Buenos Aires; politics in other cities and towns also transpires in public spaces. The analysis is not limited to Buenos Aires

Yet, as described in chapter one, street performances as an instrument to dispute politics was not only a driving concern for General Perón and his followers but rather a tradition in Argentine political history. Long before the irruption of Peronism in the 1940s, whether during the 1852-1916 period, the so-called "oligarchic republic," or after the 1912 Saenz Peña electoral reform (which extended voting rights to the male population over eighteen years old) was decreed, patrician groups, anarchist and socialist trade unions as well as the Radical and the Socialist party frequently played out politics in plazas and streets (Chaquez 1919; Rock 1975; Walter 1985). To paraphrase Peter Kenez's observation on early Communist Russia, Argentina has been "a country of mass meetings, oratory, slogans, and posters" (Kenez 1985, 49). The occupation of public spaces has been historically adopted by political parties as a central avenue to communicate with other forces and the citizenry; more crucially, the massive display of people in streets has been often equalled by conservative groups as a worrisome sign associated with chaos and ungovernability.

The 1983 campaign showed that capturing public spaces was still a central preoccupation in Argentine politics. Political parties envisioned street, plazas and walls as beloved sites

campaigns but considers party street communication throughout Argentina.

for communication. The intense politics, the participatory fervor of the transition was best expressed in streets swamped with jubilant masses and profuse affiches and graffiti. On the eve of election day, the prestigious daily La Nación (1983) affirmed:

[A]fter years of absence of a genuine democratic exercise, we, Argentines, discovered that the public rally, as an event intending to deeply influence political feeling, has not died . . . Though ten years have gone by since the last electoral confrontation, the public rally reemerged. Rallies, revitalized with great ceremony throughout the Republic, are an unquestionable point of reference at election time.

Yet continual calls for drawing people to the streets did not remain the exclusive monopoly of Peronism. Peronism was not the only occupant of street spaces nor the victor in the competition for swamping plazas and avenues either. Peronism has certainly copyrighted street politics in contemporary Argentina but other political forces challenged Peronism in the frantic race to stage public political events. Moreover, paraphernalia customarily used in Peronist street campaigning and demonstrations were also espoused by other political parties. In 1986, then-governor Carlos Menem stated:

We are not ashamed of our folklore, which it currently imitated by almost the whole national political spectrum. It is interesting: those who for many years complained about the Peronist drum, today carry it to their rallies (quoted in Beliz 1986, 238).

In what constituted a novelty for Argentine politics, Peronism seemed no longer the undisputable "proprietor" of Argentine streets. Radicals, who "had lost the streets long time ago"

(Muiño 1990), launched strong efforts to challenge Peronism's mastering of public spaces for over four decades. A member of Alfonsín campaign headquarters recalls: "We wanted to take the lead in occupying all spaces, all plazas, all streets and have a active presence. This was a signal that Radicalism was alive and ready to dispute the Presidency" (Inchausti 1990). The impressive numbers of attendants gathered at stumping activities indicated that Radicals have been highly successful in their attempt to take the "campaign to the streets." This constituted a novelty for Argentine electioneering standards. As a campaign advisor for several Radical politicians puts it,

the turning point of the [1983] election was when the Radical party won the street. Finally, someone has swiped away the street from Peronism. In our memory, only Peronists or the military have marched in the streets before (Sthulman 1990).

The 1983 elections rescued this strong tradition of Argentine political communication: street performances as an expression of popular participation in politics, stages to dispute political power. The transition to democracy unleashed traditional, popular forms of political communication, harshly repressed during the authoritarian years. Similar to other countries witnessing the fall of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, popular demonstrations in urban spaces were extremely significant as arenas in which pro-democracy expressions took place. Closed off from the formal political and communication channels for voicing opposing views,

political parties and social movements relied on the use of urban spaces as means to express their demands to the authoritarian regime. Given the particular swift tempo of the move towards democracy, dramatically accelerated after the military defeat in the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war, and the relatively rapid (but reluctant) acceptance of the military government to hold democratic elections, the staging of anti-authoritarian street events inevitably became intertwined with the launching of the 1983 election campaigns. Street activities such as organizing rallies, painting street walls, posting political posters, and staging artistic happenings in the streets and in plazas were simultaneously both anti-military expressions and central events in party campaigning. It is important to bear in mind that in Argentina, differing from other Latin American countries, the traditional political parties had an unmatched position in the transition to democracy. Though some social movements certainly had an important impact, and even some were pioneers in opposing the regime, parties had a central role during the transition.³

³. Differing from other transitions (for instance, in the Brazilian case), social movements (except for human rights organizations) did not have a leading role. Three factors seem to explain why political parties dwarfed social movements in the Argentine transition. First, the quickness of the phase of liberalization (which shortened the time on which social movements are most likely to develop). Second, the prompt decision to hold elections after the South Atlantic war (which automatically conceded a central role to political parties). Third, the scarce connections between most social movements and political parties (which practically displaced the former

Given the short time between the first calls for elections and election day, anti-authoritarian demonstrations staged by parties rapidly became campaign events.

Public urban spaces were central stages for campaigning. Whether in profusely and artistically painted walls, private and municipal billboards saturated with political posters, numerous pasacalles (cloth-made signs hanging from trees and streetlamps) or buses and trains carrying political signs, cities echoed the course of election campaigns. Central plazas and neighborhood squares were usual places for campaigners to hold rallies, conclude precinct walks, and organize local fairs. Soccer stadiums served as locations for staging candidate-sponsored rock concerts and for holding major campaign rallies. Streets were corridors where incessant party parades and demonstrations took place.

This chapter analyzes the progressive modifications in the uses of street spaces during the 1983-1989 election campaigns in Argentina. Similar to other election campaigns in other Latin American countries that underwent a process of transition to democracy during the 1980s, Argentine electioneering had also adopted modern campaign technologies (Skidmore forthcoming). Candidates became increasingly more attentive to polls, adopted television as a necessary vehicle

from having a leading position after elections were announced). On Argentine social movements, see Mainwaring and Viola (1984) and Jelin (1985).

for campaigning, hired advertising agencies to design television spots and campaign paraphernalia, attended speech-delivering seminars taught by foreign specialists, and gradually accepted some modern methods (direct mail, telephone polling) for contacting voters. Though being far from the level of technological development and professionalization of their North American or various Western European counterparts, Argentine parties have taken some campaign habits and procedures already widely adopted in other democracies.

In spite of the progressive modernization of traditional forms of urban public events and political advertising, a quick glance shows that Argentine election campaigns still offer a varied menu of street theatre ranging from candidates' prolonged country tours to a vast array of rallies, motorcades, parades and train-excursions. Though rallies and other forms of urban public display have been modernized, presidential candidates during the 1983 and 1989 national elections completed several tours around the country and launched endless, exhausting, "pumping-the-flesh" campaign routines. Despite many voices who have proclaimed the death of public rallies in Argentina (Denevi 1989; El Cronista Comercial 1988; Somos 1987), campaign staffs and parties still organized rallies, parades, motorcades and so on and candidates' daily campaign routines invariably concluded in night rallies. Though compared to rallies held during the

early period of the transition (1982-1983), rallies in recent campaigns have evidently shown meager attendance figures; yet, candidates and campaign staff officials still viewed them as central for campaigning.⁴

Why do campaigners rely on some traditional forms of street communication when newer campaigning techniques are available? How have these forms of party communication evolved during the 1980s? Why do wall painting and graffiti still dominate city landscapes during campaigning time when media advertising is extensively developed and media consumption rates among the population are reasonably high? Why do candidates, like their predecessors in the 1920s, still tour the whole country in trains, buses, trucks and planes when they can get to the voters through television, radio, magazines and newspapers?

These are the questions I tackle in this chapter. Also, a discussion of these issues allows us to discuss a frequently highlighted but little researched area in culture and communication studies: the decline of urban public spaces as meaningful arenas for communicating politics. Pointing at

⁴. In interviews I conducted, politicians and consultants with different political orientations and electioneering experiences coincided in stressing the importance of public rallies; in their view, though recent rallies (considering the ones with the highest attendance) might hopefully congregate as many people as low-ranked television shows (about 100,000 attendants/viewers), they are still fundamental for launching a campaign. Reasons for this understanding are developed later in the analysis.

different processes such as the coming of new communication technologies, the decline of political parties, new urban designs and the advent of a consumer society, scholars have implicitly agreed that street events have lost their past significance as means for popular, collective expression (Calhoun 1988; Dinkin 1989; Habermas 1989; Jamieson 1984; Kertzer 1988; Luke 1989; Westbrook 1983).⁵ As it is argued, urban public theatre nowadays lacks its former dimension and resonance for communicating politics; at the most, street events, like rallies, parades and public ceremonies, are solely stages for photo opportunities or scripts for media coverage. Though the idea that public enactments no longer constitute central, vital occasions for expressing politics

⁵. Excerpts from three studies with clearly disparate research interests and analytical perspectives illustrate this point. Describing the transformation of the classic bourgeois public sphere in late capitalism, Jurgen Habermas states that "[p]arty meetings . . . are useful only as advertising events in which those present may at most participate as unpaid supernumeraries for television coverage" (1989, 217). In his superb analysis of contemporary political rituals, David Kertzer observes: "In the United States, as elsewhere, election campaigns involve the staging of . . . dramas by candidates as well as attempts to get the mass media to broadcast these dramatic productions into people's homes. Indeed, candidates often try to limit all contact with the public and the mass media that does not take place through carefully arranged dramatic productions." Similar to other analysts of U.S. election campaigns, Robert Dinkin concludes: "the widespread media coverage proved more beneficial than the crowds present at each site . . . In planning such occasions staffers were not so concerned about displaying large numbers of people as in creating something eye-catching" (1989)

dominates current analyses, little research analyzing how those events were transformed under the influence of contemporary political and communication developments has been done. Existing studies on urban political events are primarily concerned with the uses and transformation of parades, rallies, festivities and other political activities during the eighteenth and nineteenth century; some anthropologists and culture historians have done penetrating and knowledgeable analyses on the uses of street spaces for communicating politics by analyzing different political rituals such as parades, ceremonies, and festivals (Baker 1983; Davis 1988; Hunt 1984; Kerzter 1988; McGerr 1986). But, we still lack studies examining the reasons and the processes through which street enactments are transformed in the context of contemporary politics.

My argument is that even when television and other modern campaign technologies are adopted, popular uses of street theatre are not promptly erased or magically buried in a "trunk of memories." Extemporaneous forms of political communication become amalgamated in an eclectic structure; traditional habits are reformulated while simultaneously newer techniques are adapted to preexisting cultural patterns. Traditional and technological modes of campaigning dynamically interact, hatching a blend of communication forms. Neither popular expressions gently retreat nor modernizing and

technologizing efforts become rapidly hegemonic. The encounter between popular cultural heritages and modern innovations hardly ends in the simple obliteration of the former and the total victory of the latter. Rather, popular traditions and modes of political participation tenaciously survive or are transformed into a newly modernized format in which, often, to quote Soviet rituals analyst Christel Lane, "the main expression of popular participation is the incorporation of pre-existing elements considered to be part of a widely accepted popular culture" (Lane 1981, 60).

To elaborate on the reshaping of street spectacle during election campaigns, I consider two traditional forms for parties to communicate politics in public urban spaces: street advertising (including wall-painting, graffiti and the posting of posters) and rallies. Then I suggest some explanations accounting for two simultaneous processes: the ongoing reshaping of traditional modes of public enactments and the survival of traditional activities in urban spaces despite the spread of new campaign technologies of communication (professional advertising, polling, increasing attention to television coverage) since the 1983 campaign.

THE RESHAPING OF STREET ADVERTISING: CLEANING THE WALLS

Forms of street advertising such as street graffiti and the posting of posters were established popular activities for

political parties as well as for trade unions and social movements. In one of the rare academic analysis on this subject, political graffiti and street painting in Argentina are defined as

a popular culture medium which has not been imposed from above, nor fabricated by technicians, but a grass-roots alternative to regulated political propaganda where communication evolves from below (Chaffee 1989, 38).

Differing from other countries where governments make heavy usage of wall-painting to publicize ideas and call attention to certain issues, street graffiti and wall painting in Argentina have remained mainly forms of communication "from below." After having been officially banned and earnestly repressed during the authoritarian years, graffiti and wall-painting rapidly reemerged into public places, becoming a distinctive landmark of the transition to democracy and major campaign tools during the 1983 October election campaigns. La Nación (1983d), one of the oldest Argentine newspapers and a traditional voice of conservative economic and political groups, described the situation as follows: "The thermometer of the political life of Buenos Aires are the walls. After seven years of white, calcimined, smooth and even walls, night after night, a gale of air-sprays and paint besieges any white space."

Billboards, walls and posters were political parties' revered places for advertising during the heyday of the democratic spring. Ward bosses publicized their alliances

within the party, district party sections announced political meetings and their activities, and parties campaigned and expressed opinions on various ongoing issues. Monuments, statues, streets' pavements, store and newspaper kiosks' aluminum shutters located around city sites where rallies and marches usually took place, were major targets of street graffitiing and sign posting, becoming testimonies of demonstrators' ideas and opinions.

Graffiti and wall painting became the subject of intense street fights and debates during the 1983 election campaign. National newspapers regularly reported confrontations among different party groups, pushing to get wall space. During the last months of the campaign, as violence increased, candidates of different parties agreed to call a truce in street fights and carry out pintadas de unidad, that is, the painting of common slogans with the participation of various political forces. On October 11, 1983, less than three weeks before election day, the front pages of major newspapers displayed pictures and articles about the pintadas de unidad performed by the Movimiento de las Juventudes Políticas (MOJUPO), an organization integrated by the youth sections of eight main political parties.

Simultaneous with these clashes, La Nación, echoing different discontent organizations (conservative parties, real estate owners' association, "friends of the city"), crusaded

against wall paintings and street graffiti. An editorial entitled "Condemned Confrontations" observed:

The majority of the disputes occurred because of the goals to occupy a privileged place to spread wall advertising. This confusion between the diffusion of ideas and the quantity of square meters of wall covered with party writings is incompatible with the seriousness of the country's problems" (La Nación 1983c).

Invoking a Buenos Aires municipal decree which defines any type of wall-advertising as a serious violation and article 183 of the Penal Code which says that "whoever destroys, wrecks, makes disappear or in any way damages a mobile or immobile thing or an animal, totally or partially" will be punished, La Nación made continuous criticisms of wall painting. The title of the series of articles about wall painting and graffiti set the tone of the analysis; "Politics, Aesthetics and Property" clearly expressed the problems involved in the newspaper's diagnosis. Articles usually included descriptions of graffiti, testimonies from citizens and civilian and political organizations criticizing wall-painting and opinions from different parties on this matter. The criticisms characterized these activities as causing "harm to private and public property," and as "an attack to the sanitization, aesthetics and harmony of the city" (La Nación 1982). The "Letters to the Editor" section was also a space for these critiques. While one reader worried about the proliferation of political advertisements on walls, fences and fountains in what he called "the beginning of an intense

political campaign" (La Nación 1983a), another reader, in a more dramatic way, suggested that Plaza de Mayo be closed to crowded gatherings since they threatened historical monuments (La Nación 1983b). To rectify these attitudes, it was urged "the development of civic culture," but given the impossibility of changing habits in the short term, it recommended "political pacts" about wall painting among candidates. As a way of conclusion, it was warned that "the march to democracy should not be incompatible with aesthetic values and with the respect for private property" (La Nación 1982).

Political posters also have had a meaningful role as devices for voicing political opinions and as campaign instruments. Even during the last years, gluing political posters on billboards, bus stops, and municipal spaces was considered the starting campaign activity to position a candidate. For example, immediately after winning the gubernatorial race of the province of La Rioja in September 1987 for the third time, then-governor Carlos Menem inundated Buenos Aires with posters announcing his candidacy for president. An article in newspaper Clarín (1987) stated:

With these posters, printed before the recent elections and hanged in the city's walls, the governor Carlos Saul Menem made another new step into the presidential race. The slogan "Menem Presidente" has a double function, since it serves to dispute both the party and the country presidential candidacies, being both part of the strategy

of the Riojano [from the province of La Rioja] leader."⁶ Another example of introducing a candidacy through street advertising was the launching of now-Buenos Aires mayor Carlos Grosso's 1985 campaign for representative; affixing posters was, according to his then-spokesperson, the best way to install Grosso, then a rising young politician opposed to the traditional Peronist leadership, in the public opinion (Moldován 1990).

Similar to wall painting, the putting up of posters also displayed parties' internal life and the state of campaign organization, leading in many cases to frequent battles, even within factions of the same party. Numerous examples from different parties and campaigns illustrate this point. The deep disagreements within the Peronist party during the 1983 election campaign among Herminio Iglesias (the then-powerful candidate for governor of the vital province of Buenos Aires),

⁶. Alberto Kohan, who later became Menem's campaign manager in the 1988 primaries, states: "The day after September 6, 1987, Antonio Cafiero was elected governor of Buenos Aires, the Capital Federal and the main cities of the country were covered by a poster that read: 'Now together. Now Menem.' This poster had a strong impact and was commented by the press that reproduced pictures of the pegatina ['wall plastering'] . . . We selected that text as it was valid whether Cafiero had won or lost [the election]. We thought that after elections, walls are immediately cleaned up, thus a new poster in clean spots will be visible. The main target was Cafiero himself to whom we wanted to tell, and we did, that after the long and exhausting campaign, he had to face another difficult one against a small adversary who did not rest. I told my friends: 'Plaster those affiches in Cafiero's house walls if possible.' We wanted to tell him that there was no break" (Kohan 1991, 45-46).

the national Peronist council (under the control of the strong trade-union leadership) and the presidential candidate's staff were clearly expressed in fights over the posting of posters. The chief of then-presidential candidate Italo Luder's campaign staff comments:

We [the presidential candidate's staff] posted signs all over the place, and later Herminio [Iglesias] came and glued his posters over ours. There were different political posters with different messages without the approval of the presidential candidate's people (Luder, Ricardo 1990).

Another case of an inner-party campaign battle expressed in the putting up of posters took place between activists of different factions within the conservative party UCeDe. During the 1989 election campaign, posters glued in the precincts where candidate for representative Adelina de Viola was going to visit were covered by posters with the picture of candidate for senator Maria J. Alsogaray, the visible head of a rival internal faction (La Nación 1989).

Though still important during the last election campaigns, wall painting and the hanging of posters have not remained unmodified. Major changes are nowadays observed. Political posters display advertising-agency's designs, improved printing quality and are in many cases posted by professional companies rather than by party activists. Posters featuring small-print letters and lengthy statements by parties or politicians have been gradually replaced by posters displaying only a few elements; newly formatted posters

generally include pictures, slogans, party symbols and/or candidates' signatures in clear colors and, differing from older formats, are designed to be seen from anywhere without requiring close attention from passersby. Street graffiti and wall paintings are nowadays mainly done on walls of empty lots and public spaces such as official buildings, roads, freeways and stadiums. These modes of advertising tend to show identical slogans, clean and carefully designed scripts, and in many cases are signed not by local political committees but by paid painting teams.

A recent example of the intertwining of popular, grass-roots and professionalized forms of street advertising is the hanging of cloth-made signs called pasacalles (literally, "across streets"). Though various types exist (love messages, salutations, commercial advertising), political pasacalles are the only ones legally allowed. Though permitted only during campaigning months, these signs can be hanging for months as no one is responsible for taking them down. The posting of these signs is not in parties hands, but are contracted out to professional posting agencies. Many advertising agencies have criticized the hanging of these signs on different grounds: they constitute a threat to public safety as they hang from trees and streetlamps and may fall, harming passersby, cars or houses; they are exempted from paying municipal taxes; and they introduce "noise" in commercial advertising and diminish

the effectiveness of billboards and other street forms of advertising (Mercado Publicitario 1989). However, political parties have agreed in a municipal decree to legalize the pasacalles and have inundated cities streets with this cheap and fast form of street advertising (La Nación 1987; El Cronista Comercial 1989).

Another example of the borrowing of popular communication techniques and blending them with contemporary campaigning methods was the decision made by the advertising staff of presidential candidate Carlos Menem to graffiti campaign-related phrases, replicating the style of urban young subcultures' graffiti. Somewhat organized youth gangs, mostly with a middle-class and high educational background, started graffitiing Buenos Aires walls around the times of the advent of democracy. Though in general these groups were not affiliated with any political party and did not advertise any political ideas in particular (except for a few who called themselves "anarchists"), their graffiti had definite political connotations; political figures, ongoing issues such as foreign debt and abortion, Argentine history and popular culture were usually main topics of their graffiti. Some examples include "Mary: Jesus was a mistake or an excess?" ("mistake or excess" were words usually used in debates about the repressive actions carried out by the authoritarian regime); "If the Pope were pregnant, abortion would be a

sacrament;" "Martinez de Hoz, martyr of Chicago" (José Martinez de Hoz was the Finance Minister during the first four years of the authoritarian regime, "Chicago" alludes to the school of economics at the University of Chicago as the theoretical source for Martinez de Hoz's policy plans, and "martyr" to the origins of Labor day).⁷

According to the advertising advisor of Menem's campaign staff, who developed the idea of painting streets replicating the style of young subcultures' graffiti, spraying campaign graffiti was part of the intention "to take advantage of the image of Menem as "transgressor" among young people" and "to form an election atmosphere in the public opinion . . . and complement the general campaign strategy" (Albistur 1990). The writing style (short phrases with a funny twist, use of slang and word games) and the signature ("Los Pepe") of these campaign graffiti followed the manner of youth gangs' graffiti. Some examples were: "The bad thing about Caputo is not that he travels, but that he comes back" (Dante Caputo was the Foreign Affairs Minister during the Alfonsín Administration and was criticized by opposite parties of spending too much time and money on his travels abroad); "Angeloz; more than serious is worrisome" (one campaign slogan

⁷. No academic analysis exist on subculture graffiti in Argentina. Only some journalist accounts, detailing some examples and including interviews to gang members, are available.

of Radical presidential candidate Eduardo Angeloz was "Angeloz, a serious candidate"); "Adelina, mayor of New York City" (Adelina Dalessio de Viola was the conservative party UCeDe candidate for representative, and New York City is a fashionable Buenos Aires discotheque where Dalessio de Viola launched her 1987 campaign). Differing from urban graffiti, party graffiti was adopted as part of the campaign in a clearly different context. The latter was systematic not spontaneous, professionalized not amateur, an expression of a major political force not a marginal group, known as part of an identified source not anonymous, and as a stable not feeble form of communication.

How to explain the different changes regarding street modes of political advertising? The decline in the rate of political participation that Argentine parties have been undergoing during the last years has certainly resulted in fewer potential members of street advertising workforces. As a consequence of the dropping numbers of party activists willing to paint walls and graffiti, and facing the lack of a free, grass-roots labor force traditionally provided by the party structure (especially by the youth section), campaigners and communication advisors have had to rely on paid street advertising. A prominent member of the youth section of the conservative party UCeDe states: "The professionalization of the last election campaigns took place because there are no

active young groups in the parties. They were in charge of gluing signs, wall-paintings and so on" (Jimenez Peña 1990).

An increasing sensitivity by candidates and campaign staffers to criticisms about painting and graffiting private property explains why these advertising activities are done in "problem-free" areas. A campaign consultant's testimony clearly represents this feeling: "By painting people's house walls, the only thing you get is less votes and insults from the neighbors" (Stupenengo 1990). Though hard to verify the impact that crusades for "clean walls" had in campaign headquarters' decision to avoid graffiting privately owned walls, it is very likely that strong opposition from different groups developed an increasing awareness about this potential source of conflict. Currently, campaigners give precise orders to paid crews not to paint houses' and stores' walls but publicly owned spaces. Shrinking numbers of party activists in this campaign practices also account for the progressive order of street advertising and less frequent scribbling of private property. The former "unruliness" of grass-roots canvassing faded out as fewer militants willingly offered their time and energy in recent campaigns.

In spite of the vanishing of party workforces, street advertising is still viewed as a necessary element of campaigning efforts. Though some advertisers who have worked in recent campaigns judge wall paintings and graffiti

unnecessary while assign a minimal role to posting affiches claiming that "outdoor advertising is just a reminder" (Pueyrredón 1990), for consultants, those activities are still essential for campaigning.⁸ Out of allegiance to party traditions and believing that "it is still important to control the street," campaign aides consider street advertising as an important tool for electoral battles. Yet, they argue, the putting up of posters and the painting of walls cannot be laid only in the hands of the party; party activists might be a great help, but a campaign staff cannot rely on them for doing the job. A major member of Raul Alfonsín's 1983 campaign staff recalls:

Though it did the grass-roots work, we did not rely on the party for [street] advertising . . . We hired people to put the posters up . . . We have the experience that the party activist is a man who works, but given the organization a modern advertising campaigns demands . . . that needs to be done by paying (Gibaja 1990).

The typical ebullient and disordered dynamics of grass-roots canvassing introduced potential troubles for campaign headquarters aiming to choreograph careful and systematic movements; the manager of Antonio Cafiero's 1987 campaign for governor affirms: "[in a campaign] party activism [left to its own] is chaos." Party activists' irregular "working" schedule or reluctance to canvass for a candidate aligned in a

⁸. These impressions are based on several interviews with both advertising advisors and political consultants who have regularly worked in election campaigns during the 1983-1989 period.

different party faction often resulted in undone campaign chores such as affiches stockpiling in party offices rather than hanging in city billboards or public walls "dominated" by adversaries. Campaign commands did not want to take any risks. To surmount these and other problems (such as party district members scrawling slogans different from the ones masterminded by the central headquarters due to ideological differences or regional rivalries), the hiring of personnel to execute tasks previously done by party activists has been often the solution. In this sense, street forms of advertising are undergoing a changing process; to use Benjamin Ginsberg's (1986) notions, campaign wall-painting and graffiti, traditionally "labor-intensive" are being transformed into "capital-intensive" activities.⁹

RALLIES: FROM POPULAR TO SPECTACULAR EVENTS

In rallies, parallel developments took place. Similar to wall painting and the posting of posters, rallies fulfilled a major role during the breakdown of the authoritarian regime and the transition to democracy. Rallies were means for pressing the military government, occasions for political

⁹. Ironically, these crews paid by candidates to glue posters in street billboards and paint large walls are often managed and staffed by party activists who taking advantage of contacts with party insiders have mounted small businesses. As one of this "foremen" argues, "why doing it for free or "for a barbeque" when you can earn some money and still work for the party?"

socializing, displays of political actors' mobilizing power and arenas for campaigning. Within a political culture in which rallies have traditionally constituted prominent arenas for playing politics, the drive for street expression, fiercely controlled for many years, was exceptionally released during the transition. As soon as the authoritarian government manifested signs of political weakness and contradictions within the military surfaced, rallies and demonstrations signaled the beginning of the transition.

Rallies were perceived as both a test and a demonstration of the popularity of a party, a local boss or a candidate. Ward bosses, through crowded gatherings, showed their power to deliver votes and loyalty to national candidates. Trade unions, having historically been essential Peronist organizations for mobilization, often mustered substantial money and institutional resources to display support for candidates in primary and national elections. National tours were means for candidates to test and galvanize party strength and predict electoral chances. Rallies' schedules and locations were advertised in flyers, street posters, and newspaper and magazines ads. Rallies were opportunities for getting newspaper space, and to a lesser degree, television time. Newspapers' coverage of election campaigns was heavily centered on rallies; pictures and attendance figures were displayed in front pages and articles describing songs, flags,

customs, speeches, and spectacle were placed in the first pages.

Throughout the 1983-1989 period, party rallies were major hallmarks during the campaign. The official kickoff and the closing of election campaigns were marked by the holding of massive rallies. Rallies were also the typical final event of a candidate's daily campaign trail. During the 1983 campaign, the explosive interest in politics among the general public together with the fervent process of reorganization of the political parties were factors spurring the drive for multitudinarios gatherings. Even by Argentine historical standards, rallies' attendance during the 1982-1983 years was extremely high. To a great extent, the 1983 election campaign became a competition among parties, especially between the Peronists and the Radicals, to draw the largest crowds at the rallies.

Given the long absence of democracy, the extent of support for each party was an enigma in 1983. Politicians and observers resorted to various means for forecasting voters' electoral preferences. Past election results (Peronism had traditionally won every unrestricted election since 1946) and party membership numbers, in which Peronism totaled almost 3,000,000 members (an affiche boasted "the biggest party in the West"), were used as indicators for predicting electoral tallies. Similarly, rally attendance also functioned as

measurements of public support. Heated disputes over counts of rally attendance were definitely a mark of the first elections. Constant debates about numbers and methods to count people in different plazas, streets and soccer stadiums dominated a feverish, political debate. A prominent editorialist observed:

The approaching elections have created an hysteria among the political parties; counting the amount of people attending rallies is almost like playing the lotto. Bets are made and numbers are inflated or attenuated depending on who organizes the gathering (Morales Solá 1983).

Newspapers' front pages generally displayed pictures, numbers and headlines commenting on attendance figures. Politicians perceived rallies as challenges, aiming to draw a larger attendance than their opponents. Intending to minimize or to multiply the capacity of a given party to draw supporters, several actors (organizers, the mass media, the police, the government and opposing parties) provided considerably different versions about the numbers gathered at major rallies. Rally organizers typically claimed huge crowds inundated the site; competing forces minimized attendance figures; and the police, in charge of security, often reported the lowest numbers for whatever political rally.

When explaining the rationale behind the selection of a site for holding the closing campaign rallies, politicians alluded to the symbolic meanings rather than to the capacity. Faithful to Berger's (1968, 755) dictum that "mass

demonstrations are not generally held at politically strategic locations . . . but rather at symbolic centers," organizers favored interpretations in which allusions to the historical meanings were at the forefront. Curiously, both Peronists and Radicals decided to hold their final rallies at the same place: the vast area around the obelisk located in the intersection of two main avenues in Buenos Aires. For Peronists, the decision was based on a beloved event in their collective memory, for in that area in August 1951, Eva Perón, despite the petition of 800,000 attending people, publicly declined to be part of the presidential ticket with her husband Juan Perón for the 1952 elections. In contrast, Radicals grounded the decision in two facts: the Plaza de la República (plaza surrounding the obelisk), containing emblems from all Argentine states, conferred a federal atmosphere on the rally, and by setting the stage facing towards Constitución (name of a Buenos Aires neighborhood), the rally symbolized the party's intention to espouse the National Constitution as the basis for democracy.

Though symbolic explanations were favored by rally organizers, the capacity of the obelisk plaza, the largest in Buenos Aires and by far larger than the ones used for other rallies throughout the campaign, was probably the basic motive leading to select that area. Despite the fact that organizers from both parties claimed that they were not trying to

compete, holding a rally in a smaller place would have appeared as an implicit acceptance that the party's mobilization power and electoral chances were lower than the opponent's. The competition for attendance figure was floating in the air. Radicals encouraged rally attendance: a poster and newspaper ad read "Let's show now that we are more. The 26th at five PM at the Obelisk." Peronists, who organized their closing rally two days after the Radicals, could not hold it anywhere else; the challenge had to be responded to. According to standard calculations, the final Peronist and Radicals rallies in October 1983 totaled over 1,800,000 voters.

Similar to posters and wall graffiti, rallies have not remained untouched by the process of campaign organization and professionalization during the 1983-1989 period. Already during the 1983 campaign, rallies manifested some signs of changes. Large television screens, fireworks, carefully arranged stages, musical shows, illumination and audio systems, and facilities for television coverage and press journalists were some of the novelties introduced at that time, especially by the campaign staff of then presidential candidate Raul Alfonsín.¹⁰

¹⁰. However, though certainly modern for Argentine standards, the spectacularization of rallies remained highly amateur at that time. Campaign headquarters staffs were novices in the art of technological rallies and often found it extremely difficult to find the appropriate materials for staging the exceptional closing rallies. Rally organizers recount that they had to borrow illumination and acoustic

Along these lines, politicians and campaign advisors have recently been most careful when designing rally stages and choreographing stage movements. Whether the rally would be televised is nowadays a major consideration for organizers; a chaotic, overcrowded, turbulent stage might scare away a non-partisan television electorate. The dreadful events of the closing Peronist rally were a key (but not the only) learning experience for campaigners. On October 28, 1983, facing a crowd roughly estimated of one million and other millions watching on television, Herminio Iglesias, then candidate for governor of Buenos Aires state, standing in the tumultuous stage where presidential candidate Luder just finished addressing the multitude, lighted a cardboard, red-and-white coffin that read "U.C.R. Raul Alfonsín. Q.E.P.D." (red and white are the colors, U.C.R. is the acronym for the radical party and Q.E.P.D. means R.I.P.).¹¹ Immediately, this episode

systems from several private companies to cover more than ten crowded blocks, "no one had such tremendous paraphernalia," recalls Radical journalist Monteverde (1990), and often ended devising home-made solutions for securing television coverage or building up the stage. An anecdote nicely illustrating the amateurism of the earlier campaigns was the widely circulated picture of candidate Alfonsín delivering a speech, standing on a Coca-Cola bottle box.

¹¹. Crónica (1983), a popular newspaper with a large circulation reported the episode in the following way: "One demonstrator carried a small casket with the "Ahora Raul Alfonsín" inscription ("Now Raul Alfonsín" was the main campaign slogan of the Radical presidential candidate). The casket box was open in the top and when through a rope it was lifted up, a picture of the radical candidate was seen. When the rally was about to finish, Herminio Iglesias, standing on

generated numerous commentaries in newspapers, magazines, television political talk shows and daily conversations. The extent to which that event affected the election results is still unknown, but in Argentine political folklore the infamous "burning of the casket" remained a distinctive feature of the 1983 election campaign, and for campaigners constitute an experience to be avoided.¹² Since then, campaigners have paid special attention to rallies (especially the ones in big cities or televised), intending to orchestrate moves and have only a few people on stage for, as a consultant puts it, "giving a good image," while stump-speaking candidates have been more attentive to both television audience and media coverage not just the attending crowd.

Despite these cosmetic changes, major transformations took place regarding the general structure of rallies. Most notably during the 1987 midterm and the 1989 general elections, motorcades have gradually replaced traditional rallies. Though originally (and mainly) used by Peronist candidates, staging motorcades throughout main streets and state roads became a campaign habit rapidly accepted and implemented by almost every party. Caravanas, as these

the stage, lit a funeral wreath which was decorated with the Radical colors. Meanwhile, Luder was leaving in an ambulance to avoid crowding."

¹². This conclusion is based on my interviews with numerous campaign consultants.

motorcades are called, consist of candidates (national as well local politicians) parading in a remodeled truck or an ultra modern bus conditioned with different facilities (beds, kitchen, fridge, television cameras).¹³ They were Carlos Menem's distinctive landmark of both his 1988 Peronist primary and the 1989 national campaigns. Both the mode of parading and waving to the crowd resembled Pope John Paul II's means of transportation and salutations on his missionary trips.¹⁴ Candidates, dressed in informal clothes, wave, receive tributes (flowers, food, babies to be kissed), greet and occasionally address the surrounding multitude. Schedules and maps indicating candidates' routes were usually posted in streets, continuously advertised on the radio, and fully displayed in magazines and newspapers. Some of these motorcades, mostly the closing ones, lasted for ten hours and fifty miles, including brief stops for candidates' stump-

¹³. Interestingly, and as another example of the modernization of campaigning, while during the 1988 Peronist primary Carlos Menem campaigned riding a remodeled Mercedes-Benz garbage truck belonging to the Lomas de Zamora city (from where Eduardo Duhalde, Menem's candidate for vice-president in both primary and national elections, was the mayor) and standing on a make shift platform with a campaign sign in the background, during the 1989 campaign the menemóvil was a modern, well-equipped bus, with room for other people (candidates for city council members, representatives, senators, and Menem's assistants) that even was a attraction for tourists to visit during the 1989 summer.

¹⁴. Moreover, according to many sources, Menem paid special attention to videos of John Paul II on his papamóvil to emulate his waving hands (Ambito Financiero 1989).

speeches.

According to one of Menem's campaign advisors, the menemóvil (as the campaign vehicle was called) was part of an intention

not to call people to rallies, but to go to them, [it was] a different mode of doing politics by returning to a peronist alluvion-like tradition, very turbulent, very disorganized, very chaotic, but with a great vitality (Beliz 1990).

Eduardo Duhalde, the 1989 Peronist candidate for vice-president, saw the caravans as "Menem's intention to meet his people, which is very different from organizing a rally and making the people go to the candidate" (El Cronista Comercial 1989b). Alberto Kohan, one of Menem's campaign managers, stated: "[motorcades] are valuable mobilizations because they express a collective feeling without the mediations of the rank-and-file or ward bosses" (El Cronista Comercial 1989c).

Intending to bridge the gulf between the public and politicians, the voters and party structures of mobilization, these motorcades were deprived of hard party campaign features. Various aspects make caravans different from traditional party meetings. The former took place not at politically loaded symbolic sites but on places where people's everyday life transpired; caravans introduced politicians devoid of conventional, strict party codes (stump-speeches were occasional, definite party symbols were absent--only the campaign slogan siganme ("follow me"), the initials "PJ"

(Partido Justicialista) and "Menem-Duhalde" were at the front of the bus; by passing near to people's houses, motorcades demanded minimal involvement from bystanders; and the audience was composed mainly of families who flocked into the streets rather than just diehard and mainly male partisans.

What led campaign staffs increasingly to organize these events rather than typical party meetings? Three reasons appear to be driving these changes. First, there was decreasing interest for participating in classic political activities among the general public, and consequently a lesser capacity of parties to mobilize voters. Substantially smaller attendance figures at rallies were, among others manifestations, symptoms of an ongoing phenomenon: the public's withdrawal from party activities across the wide Argentine party spectrum. While organizing a rally demanded a considerable effort by the party to mobilize members, motorcades did not require extraordinary party energy and were generally organized and coordinated by the candidates' campaign staff. Carlos Grosso's explanation why motorcades were preferred over rallies, clearly encapsulated this feeling: "We realized that, despite how massive rallies are, people tend to stay at home" (La Nación 1987).

Second, the enormous security problems and the difficulty of controlling people's behavior during the average four hour rally are also other factors why candidates have lately

refused to organize big gatherings. The possibility that fights among different party factions will erupt or that infiltrating gangs (paid by mysterious funds) will provoke skirmishes, thus, harming candidates' images and electoral chances by diverting independent, non-partisan votes, was a constant fear among campaign officials. A campaign consultant with vast experience in gubernatorial campaigns for Peronist candidates states: "a rally makes things complicated; a disaster might happen" (García, Pedro 1990). Menem himself expressed this rationale: "Neither political nor security factors exist to justify having a multitudinarios meeting" (El Cronista Comercial 1989); "It would be a shame if people infiltrated our rally on the last campaign day as happened last September 9 [1988] during the CGT rally in Plaza de Mayo" (La Nación 1989b).¹⁵

¹⁵. Menem was referring to the rally that was the concluding event of the strike organized by the CGT (CGT stands for Confederación General de Trabajadores, the official name of the central Argentine trade union organization) on September 9, 1988. After winning the Peronist primary against Antonio Cafiero, governor of the Buenos Aires province in July 1988, the meeting was supposed to be Menem's first rally appearance as the elected Peronist candidate for president. But, Menem decided not to show up at the rally when violence erupted, stores were looted and the police tear-gassed the plaza; the chaos of the event, in the very beginning of the presidential election campaign, was considered an unfavorable atmosphere for the candidate's public presentation. The question of who was responsible for starting violence received different explanations. In a few words, while for the Radical government disorder exploded as a result of fights between peronist and leftist rally participants, CGT officials and peronist politicians saw the chaotic events as an "electoral maneuver," organized by the government intelligence service,

Third, the belief that rally attendance is composed basically by party activists or by captive voters, turns rallies into dubious methods to attract either new or floating votes. The increasing numbers of new, indecisive and non-party aligned voters seldom attend these party meetings to make their decisions; rather they rely on other media, specially television to get information on electoral politics. Consequently, rallies are no longer means to communicate with large masses of switch votes, decisive in electoral results.

THE SURVIVAL OF PARTY STREET COMMUNICATION

The 1989 election showed that despite major renovations in the staging of rallies and street advertising, political parties still relied on street performance for campaigning. The fact that fewer Argentines were eager to join stumping activities led campaign teams to a more professional treatment of street practices, namely a reconsideration of the overall structure and the engineering of public events, counting more on paid services than on the free (or "cheap") labor provided by the rank-and-file. Why different forms of public theatre are still significant for electioneering if popular participation, the cradle of those practices, have notably receded? Why does street performance endure? Are street events just backdrops for photo opportunities?

intending to depict Peronism as a violent political force.

Party dynamics have been a tenacious, formidable adversary for running fully-modernized, mass media-centered election campaigns devoid of classic party means of street communication. Newer forms of campaign communication have incorporated typical means of expression of party dynamics into a modernized format. Recent campaigns have adjusted modern techniques to customary party mechanisms of communication; as a result, Argentine electioneering looks like an amalgam of old-time campaign habits and state-of-the-art Madison Avenue recipes.

Political parties during the 1983-1989 period constituted essential mechanisms for selecting candidates, for masterminding strategies and also provided some campaign resources. The persistence of wall painting and rallies, classic party communication devices, needs to be explained by the fact that parties kept an important role in canvassing. As shown in chapters two and three, candidates cannot ignore parties while campaigning; parties are still central vehicles for entering and advancing in Argentine politics. Parties' monopoly over selecting national candidates through primaries in which only party registered members were authorized to vote, partially accounts for why party rituals maintain an important role in stumping routines. Candidates' allegiance to party structures whether for the primaries or for the national elections meant to remain loyal to party traditions. Aiming to

garner votes among party stalwarts and secure support of district party machines for winning the primaries and then cementing a solid and mobilized party structure for the general elections, politicians and campaign handlers could not disregard party traditions.

Street communication was not just mere rite; it is still vital for party life. Public events are rituals for expressing loyalties and disagreements within party limits. Ward bosses publicize their support for candidates on wall paintings and graffiti while local politicians express their backing of touring national candidates by ordering the massive posting of posters and spreading of graffiti. For young activists and party novices, wall painting and putting up posters are rites de passage into the party; for party leaders, activities to channel political participation and call attention to their popularity; and for party members, painted walls reflect that "the party is in motion," following a given candidate or disputing party candidacies.

Street meetings are essential mechanisms of intra-party communication. Fights among different factions pulling to get a closer place to the stage spoke of party inner conflicts; trying to get a place where faction's flags and songs could be better seen and heard by party notables on stage and television coverage expressed ongoing struggles within the party. Who drew more party activists, who gave a speech and in

what order, who was booed and who was applauded, were important questions for party members. Receiving manifestations of disapproval or bringing a large crowd might be crucial for a party boss to dispute power positions within the party. Rallies are a bazaar of party signs and codes, a display of a party's disputes, a moment which party life clings to. Rallies are images where the party gets represented.

For presidential candidates, holding rallies while being on prolonged campaign tours throughout the country is a way to test and revitalize party energies, to install their candidacies at a national level and to settle political alliances. As a party rule-of-thumb, rallies allow local leaders to display their power of mobilization to national candidates on the road; ward bosses, mayors and governors undertake the organization of public events as occasions for showing their support and loyalty to presidential candidates. By choosing a particular town or plaza for holding a rally, touring national candidates make signs of favoring a given community or city boss; party notables endorse local leaders by attending their meetings, giving a speech and sending their messages of support to be announced by rally speakers.

Also, rallies are traditional events when candidates evaluate both their success in reaching those goals, test the party's state for campaigning and envision electoral chances.

Though having realized that drawing a rally's attendance larger than the opposite party does not equal election results, Argentine politicians still adhere to the old-time habit of forecasting electoral chances from counting rallies' crowds. Similar to Japanese politicians described by Gerald Curtis, Argentine politicians still "talk of 'reading the vote,' meaning to predict the vote. In the folklore of [Argentine] campaigning a candidate is able to work out on the abacus a few days before the election" (Curtis 1983, 68). Despite the irruption of polls as instruments to gauge public opinion and political moods during the 1980s (to be discussed in the next chapter), street events have not been abandoned as means for measuring the strength of candidates and parties.

Different forms of street theatre survive due to the endurance of a partisan political culture among politicians and campaign advisors. Contemporary Argentine politicians, though recently discovering the benefits (and drawbacks) of television, still participate in and remain loyal to a partisan political culture; although candidates act in a political world increasingly tuned to television coverage and show great disposition for incorporating new campaign technologies, their political education (whether for old or young politicians) is rooted in times when party forms of communicating predominated. This partisan culture is manifested in various campaign habits.

Both politicians and campaign consultants see putting up posters and wall painting as an easy access, grass-roots activity, central for creating an election atmosphere; developing a climate of "being in a campaign" is considered fundamental for framing campaign routines, strengthening party morale and getting voters' attention. A colossal street advertisement is seen as vital for giving the impression that the candidate or the party has "won the street." Having a stronger, more active presence in the streets than other competing parties is an old tradition of Argentine politics; thus, as a way to influence public opinion and implant the idea that a given candidate or party dominate the street, street advertising still plays a crucial role. Hence, it will not seem odd that politicians, as Peronist campaign consultant Pedro García (1990) puts it: "The first thing they think of for a campaign is a poster." Peronist advertiser Enrique Albistur (1990) affirms: "Outdoor advertising is very important. In this country you still have to show that you always win the street. Affiches and fights for territories are fundamental to generate a triumphalist climate."

Different forms of street theatre are seen as activities in which the party actualizes itself in public display; party campaign activities represent the state of parties and constitute evident manifestations to what extent the party

fulfills its participatory goals.¹⁶ Among campaign officials, the intention to make an intensive use of street advertising and to hold massive rallies denotes an underlying conception about what a political party should look like; namely, a mass-based, mobilized structure with a central role in channeling political participation. Rallies are treasured, cherished events for parties. They are seen as the ending event of campaigning in a given territory, an occasion for strengthening the party community and boosting party morale. One campaign official, in a Turneresque mode, puts it: "Political rallies are a ritual to validate the creed. They are rites of confirmation, religious events to mobilize the party activists. They serve to generate mystique" (Moldován 1990).¹⁷ Radical representative Federico Storani observes: "Popular gatherings are important not because they get to many people, but to generate an identity, a multiplying effect, a moral, a capacity for struggle among party activists" (Storani 1990).

Though Argentine political parties are deeply faction-ridden organizations, party rallies, in a Geertzian vein, can

¹⁶. In a recent study on the Radical party financially supported and written by party members, this conception permeates the analyses. Demonstrations are seen as "a form that political participation takes, an act of presence and public expression, with short duration, but meaningful" (Raimondo and Soukiassian 1989, 59).

¹⁷. On rallies as community rituals, see Herzog (1987) and Miles (1989).

be interpreted as the "ideal of the consummately expressive" party, ceremonies for party's collective memory in which the party becomes the ritual object and party ties thicken (Geertz 1980). Historian Perrot's observation on working-class rituals in Britain can be applied to Argentine party rallies: "The function of such public meetings [i]s 'less to decide than to create communion'" (Perrot 1983). As other party rites, rallies are a ritual that have to be followed; through them, politicians let the party know their common belonging and gain party members' approval. Presidential candidate Italo Luder's coolness for Peronist old-time rituals was seen as inappropriate for a Peronist; as a journalist who worked in the 1983 Peronist campaign explains: "not staying after the rally for the "cold" barbecue and empanadas is lethal for a Peronist, you don't look good to the compañeros [Peronist word for comrade]" (Campolongo 1990).

There are other factors leading campaigners to organize rallies and several manifestations of street theatre. A crowded, successful party meeting often stimulates the free campaign labor force provided by the party rank-and-file. As explained before, organizers conceived party spectacles as moments for lifting up the party, for fueling activists' impetus to spread the message, for forging unity among sympathizers and activists. After a multitudinarios rally, party members, strongly revitalized and full of party spirit,

are ready to continue exhausting and prolonged campaigns. A 1983 Alfonsín's campaign advisor states:

The rally serves for motivating the party militants. The guy who comes, shouts, sings, sees people around him, realizes he is in a party with many others, and that they have jammed the place, that guy, after the rally, has an enormous strength to keep going, to glue posters, to distribute flyers. The guy is a campaigning machine (Monteverde 1990).

A vigorous and inexpensive party labor force was a weighty input into candidates' campaign finances given the continuous problems they face for financing both party activities and election campaigns. Party street theatre multiplies campaign economic resources through casting ready-for-campaign party labor; the unpaid work done by the rank-and-file through wall painting, handing flyers and party platforms, door-to-door contacts and convincing surrounding voters, though rather considered part of the expenses, constitute a substantial injection to campaign monies.

The particularities of the structure of the Argentine mass media during the 1983-1989 period also helps to explain the permanence of rallies and other forms of urban public events. To put it briefly, in a period where the major Argentine television stations were state-owned and, as in many cases, local and state governments closely regulated the mass media, launching television-or media-centered campaign constituted a risky venture. During the 1983 election, with the media still in the hands of the authoritarian regime,

parties had restricted access to the media. In later elections, when the mass media was in the hands of political opponents, whether national or state governments, candidates often decided not to rely on television or newspaper coverage for campaigning. Thus, staging street events, organizing traditional modes of street communication, heavily campaigning in small and big towns, were alternative methods to overcome obstacles in having access to the media.

Finally, street events endure as part of modernized campaign strategies. The fact that in many (and notable) cases advisors have decided to stress classic forms was not a result of sticking to an old conception of electioneering but part of a planned campaign strategy. Traditional modes of street advertising like posters are seen as a cheaper and faster method than other media to set up candidate's and party's position about ongoing campaign events (García, Pedro 1990) and as way to carry out segmented election campaigns, that is, directing different messages to different voters groups (women, youth, retired people) (Sthulman 1990).

Candidates who embark on continuous hand-shaking, visiting remote areas and carrying out any possible imagined form of face-to-face contact are seen as increasing their electoral chances; a Peronist campaign consultant puts it: "Personal contact is decisive, candidate's presence is a tremendous advantage" (García, Pedro 1990). A former secretary

of communications during the 1973-1976 Peronist government and advisor to several campaigns, states: "Still, politicians who win are the ones people see in their towns . . . Informal contacts are still weighty in Argentina" (Papaleo 1990).

When candidates were considered as masters in the art of rallies and other street events (charisma, stump-speech, gusto for long campaign tours, party's folklore), or as having talents more suitable to rallies than mass media requirements, street theatre was privileged. Interestingly, the two winners of the presidential elections were considered experts on street campaigning; for many, "Menem and Alfonsín, despite enormous differences, are alike when campaigning" (Campolongo 1990).

Raul Alfonsín was an example of a politician with a great ability for traditional campaigning; a fine, creative, charismatic stump-speaker, the later Argentine president made three complete country campaign tours in more than eighteen months, congregated unusual multitudes (whether by standards of the Radical party or Argentine history) and according to his advisors and opponents, was the perfect candidate for street campaigning. Carlos Menem was an archetype of the politician gifted for street campaigning who presented problems for running a media-centered campaign; one of his campaign managers describes him as "an expressionist, non-discursive type-of-leader. On television he probably scared

votes away, but in person Menem was a bulldozer. When it came to caress old women, kiss kids and babies, and wave, nobody surpassed Menem" (Grosso 1990). Menem's campaign staff carefully avoided close contacts between the media and the candidate, and emphasized street enactments (motorcades, train-tours). Menem's continual rejection of a challenging invitation to confront presidential candidate Angeloz in a televised debate was the most notable example of a strategy that avoided media contacts.¹⁸ As Menem was considered, by both allies and enemies, a virtuoso in the art of street campaigning, his campaign strategy heavily relied on street spectacle, caravans and rallies. His campaign advisors intended to limit his contacts with television and newspapers given Menem's tendency to engage in long conversations with journalists and his easy disposition to face the mass media that might have created unexpected problems that would have diverted votes away.

CONCLUSIONS

After the 1991 midterm election campaigns, Somos, a political newsmagazine, claimed the following campaign habits on their way to extinction:

¹⁸. Menem's habitual response "I don't care about the debates, but talking to the people" when responding to the challenge made by Eduardo Angeloz to participate in a television debate, denoted not only the constant populist tone of his election campaign but also his campaign strategy.

Drums, headbands and flags [the liturgical elements of mass demonstrations]; wall-painting [the revered tradition of party propaganda]; celebrations in the street and [politicians] waving from balconies [the traditional ceremonies of post-election jubilee]; honks and fireworks; and bumperstickers in cars, metro wagons and buses (1991, 2)

While for the 1983 party politics seemed to be everywhere as Argentines jubilantly celebrated the rebirth of democratic politics, during later elections, parties counted less on street forms of communication. Street performance no longer captured popular interest as it did in earlier elections.

Yet campaigners remained faithful to staging a plethora of street communication routines during the 1980s; these routines endured not as means to influence the electorate but as part of a lasting tradition of Argentine parties. The comments made by the former Radical mayor of the city of Buenos Aires are representative of a widespread sentiment among politicians:

[Old style of electioneering] is important not for massively spreading the party's ideas but for the relation between the party and society. Party activists cannot be replaced by campaign personnel. Employees for a campaign committee do not have either the connection [with voters] nor vocation that militants working for a cause do. The mystic resulting from the compromise with an idea and free labor cannot be substituted. The activists' work allows a better relation between the party and society (Suárez Lastra 1990).

Two factors explain the persistence of stumping activities in street, plazas and walls, the traditional sites of party communication. The survival of street spaces as communicative arenas is a sign of the preeminent role parties

maintain as institutions for electioneering. The persistence of both party dynamics and partisan tradition are major factors for explaining why traditional modes of campaign communication subsist though under a modified format. Also, the conflicting and uneasy relation parties as well as candidates had with various mass media in which impartial control of the media (whether at national or local levels) was the exception rather than the rule, also helps to understand both why running media-centered campaigns during the 1983-1989 period seemed almost implausible and old campaign traditions still were preferred. When opposite political forces managed the media, candidates decided not to count heavily on media coverage or advertising thus, relying on traditional party mechanisms often seemed a more trustworthy, stable, and sometimes even the only possible, way for canvassing.

These developments suggest that modern campaigns recycle traditions, incorporating popular modes of political communication into a modernized pattern. This results in a pastiche, a bricolage of cultural traditions in which popular forms and partisan modes of political communication converge with professionalized and commercialized techniques. Thus, election campaigns display patches of diverging cultural traditions; deposited elements of popular spectacle coexist with bits of current campaign technologies. This seems a fundamental consideration for culture studies; that is,

transformations constitute central and continuous processes within cultures. Rather than by excluding, new cultural patterns operate by renewing and recreating previous traditions. Stuart Hall (1981, 228) accurately states that cultural transformations work through "the active work on existing traditions and activities," thus "they come out a different way: they appear to 'persist'." Along these lines, cultural transformations can be recognized in the ways Argentine parties communicate politics in street environments. Both popular styles and modern technologies seldom exist in their purest form; old campaigning habits do not survive untouched while new inventions are not simply superimposed but are "reinvented" according to preexisting cultural currents. Election campaigns carry presumed antithetical and extemporary communication traditions which, not peacefully but dynamically, not neatly but disorderly, not permanently but temporarily, manage to coexist.

Is a clear systematization of the factors molding the reshaping of street party communication possible? The scarce amount of research on Argentine parties during the 1980s and perhaps the relative newness of these processes make it risky to identify all conditions. Still two simultaneous developments, decreasing levels of participation in party structures and increasing partisan dealignment, need to be pointed out as major factors driving those transformations.

Campaign rallies during the 1989 election hardly attracted thousands as in 1983; the progressive withdrawal of voters from party politics and the loss of parties' capacity to entice and incorporate citizens into their activities encouraged major transformations in street activities during the 1980s.

Rallies and other public stumping practices were gradually conceived less as manifestations of popular participation and more as staged ceremonies formatted to the exigencies of media coverage, occasions when candidates "go down to the people." Former passionate and long stump-speeches were tempered and shortened according to the requisites of television, a more "cold" medium, where viewers seem less prone to tolerate interminable, fierce discourses. The gigantic campaign rally, a honorable institution of Argentine politics, seems in the verge of being, to use John MacAloon's idea, a "ritual degenerating into spectacle" (MacAloon 1985, 272); that is, an event more focused on the theatrics and tuned to the politics of spectatorship than conceived as a site for political assembly. Though still far from showing a fully professional gloss, choreographed precinct walk-about and caravanas constitute manifestations of this tendency. More and more, as reflected by the rallies' architecture and speaking routines, the main audience in mind seemed to be television viewers and newspaper readers than the enthusiast

activists in situ. The design of late street party events reveals an electorate less willing to spend countless hours chanting party hymns, listening to candidates and parading through urban streets, and candidates and campaign headquarters who have tuned stumping activities to these more apathetic political moods.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARTY MAGAZINES, POLLS AND PUBLIC OPINION: REVEALING AND ESTIMATING "THE PICTURE INSIDE ARGENTINES' HEADS"

Those features of the world outside which have to do with the behavior of other human beings, in so far as that behavior crosses ours, is dependent upon us, or is interesting to us, we call roughly public affairs. The picture inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinion.

Walter Lippman, Public Opinion.

In this age in which polls have become a booming business in Argentina, it is good to debate how, why and what for public opinion is daily tested. And, above all, to ask what public opinion is.

José Nun, Encuestas.

Alongside the return of democracy, the methods that political parties traditionally used for propagating politics were also resurrected during the 1982-1983 years. The 1983 election campaign showed not only that the participatory fervor unleashed during the transition revitalized party structures but also that parties, regardless of ideological differences, resorted to various popular, mass-based communication forms such as street demonstrations, rallies, neighborhood offices, and door-to-door canvassing. These practices were found even among parties historically unable to

rely on grass-roots communication due to their limited followings, or those that had commonly repudiated the use of so-called "militantist" or "mobilizationist" practices as unbecoming "truly civilized" democratic politics.

Politicians, campaign aides and journalists observe that, in a way, the 1983 election showed that "political activist" cultures and communication styles were still widespread in the Argentine society; Clarín's columnist Oscar Cardoso's (1990) observation "[in the 1983 campaign] we were all oriented according to the old times" accurately represents a prevailing outlook among party insiders, campaign headquarters and media newsrooms. Public display was conceived as a basic, mandatory rule for marking street supremacy; the occupation and control of public spaces was equaled to political strength. Political power and electoral chances virtually equalled the capacity to attract people to plazas, to register and mobilize new members, to inundate streets with party propaganda. These actions were not only expressions of the capacity for drawing popular support but also main instruments for organizing party communication.

For many, the democratic transition of the early 1980s showed that the "mobilizationist" mentalité, to use the notion developed by Annales historians, that impregnated Argentine politics before the 1976 military coup had remained intact. This mentalité views grass-roots forms of public display (e.g.

staging parades and rallies and the blanketing of towns and cities with campaign propaganda) as central for political struggles. Although its origins can be traced back to the late nineteenth century (especially during the struggles for suffrage expansion) and the advent of popular politics to power, first with Radicalism in the 1910s and later with Peronism in the 1940s, this "plaza-minded" (Wagner-Pacifici 1990, 77) political culture was remarkably nurtured during the heat of the battles against the presidency of General Juan Carlos Onganía in the late 1960s. The belief that politics had to be played in public spaces fueled the intense mobilization "from below" which, according to standard analyses (O'Donnell 1982; Smith 1989), accelerated the progressive deterioration of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime installed in June 1966. Restricted access to existing mass media and the ban of political activities by the military government made the reliance on traditional communication techniques mandatory for all political parties and groups pushing for the return of democracy. The upsurge of street demonstrations, strikes and terrorist propaganda actions that embodied the resistance to the regime between 1967 and 1973 (see Smith 1989) denoted the widespread acceptance of basistas ("from the bases") practices for publicizing political ideas and doing politics. The intensity of these communication actions did not dwindle once democracy returned and the third Peronist administration

headed by Héctor Cámpora was inaugurated in May 1973. Rather, the turbulent politics of the time continued to be expressed through a gamut of grass-roots practices. It was the military coup of March 1976 that put a violent end to the momentum these practices had gained during the previous decade.

The comeback of street politics, timidly before the juntas launched the Malvinas/Falklands attack in April 1982 but more forcefully after the military disaster, suggested that the passionate spirits and political styles typical of the previous two decades had survived. After years of terror and tight control of public spaces by a regime that had exultantly championed "a change in mentality" to be one of its foremost political and cultural goals (as a government television ad endlessly reminded), the "activist" cultural mindset seemed to have outlived. But the comeback of popular electioneering styles during the first half of the 1980s was basically fueled by the democratic euphoria of the transition. As indicated in the previous chapter, the stabilization of political democracy entailed a twin process: the remarkable transformation of street stumping actions towards a more "modern" format and the intensive use of new communication technologies. The evolution of Argentine election campaigns in the 1980s shows the gradual remaking of habits for publicizing politics: revered techniques were altered while up-to-date campaign instruments became widespread. These developments

indicate remarkable changes in the repertoire for stating public opinion in Argentine politics.

The goal of this chapter is to analyze the transformations in, to rephrase the title of Charles Tilly's (1983) article, "how Argentines speak their mind with elections and surveys." What happens to the classic set of forms to express and gauge public opinion when new methods are widely used and democracy remains? Are they displaced by modern techniques, as has been argued by studies on the evolution of public opinion in developed democracies (see Ginsberg 1986, chs. 2-3; Habermas 1989; Tilly 1983)? Or do traditional methods persist? If so, why? To address these questions and understand developments in the use of different means for ascertaining public opinion in Argentina, I consider the fates of two quintessential examples of traditional and modern methods for expressing and collecting opinion: party magazines and polls.

PARTY MAGAZINES

Though not the only, party magazines have been an important component in the standard repertoire of Argentine political communication. For the analyst of the history of political ideas and movements in Argentina, these publications are documents of ideological currents and debates. Together with other practices (e.g. demonstrations, rallies), party

magazines provided elements for assessing the popularity of certain political ideas and/or for visualizing the support and strength of a given party, politician, or political group. Magazines were one of the privileged fronts in which diverse political wars were fought; much of Argentine contemporary political history could be understood through glancing at the available catalog of party publications in different periods. Such an inventory offers a condensed version of "who's who" in the country's politics. For any party, group or leader aiming to gain power and to influence political debates, the publishing of a magazine was almost mandatory.

Party periodicals were low-budget productions, generally financed with contributions from economic groups, party notables and members, or trade unions as in the case of some Peronist magazines. The economic survival of these publications heavily depended on private contributions as advertising was non-existent or skimpy, cover prices were moderate/low, and circulation numbers were modest.¹ Circulation was variable; whereas some publications issued 1,000, others printed 10,000 copies. Magazines were distributed either through the mass commercial press circuit

¹. The obstacles for inquiring about the financial status and resources of these publications are similar to the ones already indicated for getting a precise assessment of the overall funding of party activities and election campaigns: public records do not provide a full picture while the origins and destinations of funds are secretive matters, subjects of endless controversies without final resolutions.

to sell in street newsstands or personally by party activists in rallies, neighborhood offices, workplaces, universities and street corners. Publication schedules were highly irregular; some magazines came out monthly, others bimonthly or simply when monies were available or a major event (e.g. sacred party dates, election day, major rallies) was nearing. In many cases, the advertising campaign for some magazines and/or specific issues was part of popular electioneering styles; blanketing urban walls and billboards with posters of the front cover that usually displayed the picture of a candidate or announced an upcoming rally was the most common way to announce a new publication or the latest issue.

Throughout Argentine contemporary history, party magazines put words to different political alternatives. For example, Que articulated the developmentalist philosophy promoted by Arturo Frondizi, Rogelio Frigerio and other intellectuals who were the *materie grise* of the 1958-1962 Frondizi administration. Inédito was the outlet for Raúl Alfonsín's ideas from 1966 until the founding of his party faction Renovación y Cambio in 1972. El Descamisado was the main press organ of the Peronist guerrilla group Montoneros during the early 1970s. The prospects of these and other publications were continuously subject to sudden political changes. Given the whimsical fortunes of democratic liberties that at different times affected some and/or all political

parties and ideologies since 1930, these magazines functioned as alternative tribunes for proscribed forces. Opposition to the first Peronist administration (1946-1955) and the post-1955 authoritarian regimes was often articulated in these periodicals (see Terán 1991); they provided one of the few remaining outlets to ideas that were, partially or completely, excluded from the mass media, universities, or other institutions of the public sphere.

Eliminated by the censorship of the 1976-1983 authoritarian regime, political periodicals acted as expressions of pro-democracy forces in the early 1980s. While before April 1982, only a few (e.g. the Peronist Línea and Paz y Justicia published by a human rights organization headed by 1980 Peace Nobelist Adolfo Perez Esquivel) dared to defy the tight limits imposed by the juntas, political magazines mushroomed after the Argentine troops were defeated in the South Atlantic islands and the transition to democracy begun. While the move towards democracy offered the appropriate political and cultural setting for these magazines to prosper, the stability of democracy provided unsuitable conditions for their subsistence. Figures on natality and mortality of party publications indicate this trend. The distribution of the total number of party magazines was the following: thirty-one in 1982, thirty-eight in 1983, fifty-four in 1984, forty-one in 1985, fifty in 1986, forty-seven in 1987, forty in 1988 and

thirty-six in 1989.² The tendency reflects an initial rise, reaching a peak during the first year after democracy was installed, and a later decline to numbers resembling the amount of magazines existing during the transition to democracy. A similar trend is observed in the trajectory of general political newsmagazines and weekly historical publications about Argentine politics that were edited by commercial publishers during that period.³

This pattern of growth and decline almost equally applies to magazines produced by all political parties. Except for those aligned with right-wing forces (which experienced a moderate growth), such a trend describes the fortunes of all party magazines: peaking numbers were reached around the mid-1980s and dropped thereafter. The highest number of Peronist-affiliated publications (fourteen) was reached in 1983-1984 amid the tangled party primaries and the internal disputes after the electoral defeat. Stimulated by the exceptional victory and the attempt of many party factions to influence

². The life-span of these publications was brief; out of a total of 160 party magazines published between 1983 and 1989, fifty-six percent lasted one year and sixteen percent two years. Only ten lasted throughout that period. All figures were elaborated by the author on the basis of data provided by the Asociación Argentina de Editores de Revistas.

³. These numbers continued decreasing after the 1989 election. The evolution of non-party affiliated political publications (including weekly newsmagazines and political history reviews) shows a similar pattern: eight in 1982; twelve in 1983; ten in 1984; nine in 1985; eight in 1986; six in 1987; four in 1988; and four in 1989.

the Alfonsín administration, Radical magazines blossomed in 1984: in that year, there were nine publications aligned with different party groups and notables. The highest number of magazines representing the varied spectrum of the Argentine left (twenty-two) was reached in 1986, while 1987 was the year when four magazines representing Conservative parties were published.

From the Trotskyist Solidaridad and Prensa Obrera to the right-wing, fascists Alerta Nacional and Baluartes, the list of party magazines during the 1980s includes assorted examples across the heterogeneous ideological spectrum of Argentine politics. Despite partisan differences or the size of their following, all established political parties counted on magazines for communicating politics. Yet differing from similar tendencies observed regarding the rise and decline of party magazines, data on the distribution of the ideological affiliation of party magazines shows significant differences among parties. Out of the total amount of magazines printed between 1982 and 1989, thirty-eight percent were associated with assorted Peronist factions; thirty-two percent with different brands of Leftists parties and forces (including Populists, Nationalists, Social Democrats, Independents, Communists, Trotskyist, Environmentalists, and Maoists); twelve percent with factions within the Radical party; eleven percent with the extreme Right including nationalistic, pro-

military, ultra-catholic, fascist and anti-semitic groups; and six percent with a vast conglomerate of center-right parties, including Conservatives and Liberals (free-market advocates).

No surprisingly, seventy percent of the total amount of magazines were affiliated with various Peronist groups and Leftist parties; these forces have more notably ascribed to a "grass-roots" vision of political communication and regarded these publications as key mechanisms for disseminating party and ideological precepts (Waisbord 1991). For these political forces, founding a new party or organizing an internal party faction virtually implied launching a magazine. Having a publication was considered an indispensable credential in the eyes of competing parties and factions, and a mouthpiece for the newly formed party/faction. Especially given the lack of a partisan press (see chapter six), magazines provided what different parties viewed as a necessity: a forum for publicizing their views. The first editorial of the Peronist Compañero (1982, 2) illustrates this point.

"Until today, 10,000 compañeros from all over the country have supported Jose María Rosa [a famed revisionist, Peronist historian] in giving birth to Compañero. Although enough to start, 10,000 founders are not sufficient to guarantee what Peronism needs today: a permanent, systematic organ for millions of Peronists throughout the country, for expressing doctrine, politics and information. The success of this project will release Peronism from silence, distortion and defamation by the mass media of the oligarchic and antinational regime. We have to build our own voice."

Within the populated and fragmented Peronist spectrum of the

early 1980s, the idea that Peronism's deficit was the lack of organized and stable forms of communication was widespread. To remedy this plight, large sectors of the Peronist party thought that the building of means for political expression was necessary. To illustrate, "La Voz de los Que no Tienen Voz" ("the voice of the voiceless") was the motto of both Línea, the pioneer Peronist magazine founded in 1981 which was shut down by the authoritarian regime in November 1982 and reopened later for surviving throughout the decade, and the daily La Voz, a newspaper representing the faction Intransigencia y Movilización during the 1983 electoral campaign and fell silent soon thereafter.

Party magazines had two main functions: acting either as the official publication of a party, or as organs of opinion for different party factions mapping out a space in primary and national elections, articulating political and ideological stances, and pushing the candidacy of specific potential or actual candidates. Throughout the decade, neither the Peronist nor the Radical party had an official publication. In contrast, minor parties, on the right and the left, had magazines representing the authoritative views of the party leadership. Feasibly, a much smaller number of members and somewhat narrower ideological differences among internal factions, account for why other parties other than the Peronists and Radicals (especially those on the Left) could

issue official publications.⁴

The absence of an authoritative party organ encouraged different Peronist and Radical factions to use of magazines as means for stating political positions and advancing candidacies. The labyrinthine dynamics of the 1982-1983 Peronist primaries were expressed in a variety of magazines that promoted individual candidates or teamed with the handful of party notables who aspired either to succeed Juan Perón or simply to secure a spot on the presidential ticket. Resuscitating venerated party precepts, terminology and buzzwords, the list of Peronist magazines during the 1983 election included the following. The Verticalistas ("pro-Isabel Perón," then-president of the Peronist party) Mundo Justicialista and Mundo Peronista backed Isabel Perón for the presidency. Compañero, Contraseña and Movimiento brought together the party's most renowned intellectuals and journalists; they initially showed moderate support for former Finance Minister Antonio Cafiero and caudillo Deolindo Bittel (the two leaders of the faction Movimiento de Unidad,

⁴. The following are examples of official party magazines: Alternativa Intransigente (Partido Intransigente), La Patria Grande (Frente de Izquierda Popular), El Nacional (Movimiento de Integración y de Desarrollo), El Humanista (Partido Humanista), La Vanguardia (Partido Socialista), Prensa Obrera (Partido Obrero), Solidaridad Socialista (Movimiento al Socialismo), Que Pasa (Partido Comunista), La Hoja Verde (Partido Verde), Hoy (Partido de los Trabajadores y del Pueblo), and Zona Abierta (Izquierda Democrática Popular).

Solidaridad y Organización, MUSO) and later endorsed Italo Luder to lead the presidential ticket. The right-wing leaning El Brulote, Fortín Peronista and Comunas Argentinas supported Buenos Aires province boss Herminio Iglesias and union leaders of the 62 Organizaciones. Convocatoria Peronista Para la Liberación Nacional supported the candidacies of then-upcoming political figure and later Buenos Aires Mayor Carlos Grosso and former La Rioja governor and current President Carlos Menem. Other magazines such as La Básica, Liberación Nacional, and Reconquista del Destino de la Nación sided with presidential hopeful Luder.

The intense debates within Peronism after the 1983 electoral upset also materialized in a number of magazines. Unidos, the expression of some Renovación forces (especially intellectual circles in both the city and the province of Buenos Aires), critically supported the presidential candidacy of Carlos Menem; the magazine was the springboard for members of what later became the Grupo de los Ocho, a dissident group in the Peronist bloc in Congress after 1989. De Frente, El Argentino, El Descamisado and Jotapé represented sectors of the Peronist left and the Youth branch somewhat aligned with the Renovación, although more critical of the Alfonsín administration and more strongly nationalistic and anti-imperialistic than Renovador leaders. Magazines such as Acción Nacional, Todos los Argentinos and La Rioja: Para Saberlo Todo

(whose director Mario Caserta was later accused of being involved in drug money-laundering operations) backed then-candidate Menem during the 1988 primaries; these were basically "campaign publications" which were defunct after election day.

Radicals also resorted to these kinds of publications for championing individual candidacies and propagating the party creed. Similar to Peronists, Radicals also felt a pressing need to count on a medium for disseminating political views during the 1983 campaign. Gaceta Radical (1982, 1) opened its first issue stating:

The party has no periodicals . . . The most evident consequence of [this situation] is that Radicals are readers of the big newspapers, those dailies that offer no opportunities for them to write and, in past times, have criticized them. Our party has not enough publications for either nurturing the intellectual curiosity of its members and followers or correctly publicizing the thoughts of its leaders.

Support for Fernando de la Rúa's presidential aspirations came from magazines such as La Gaceta Radical, Boina Blanca, and Respuesta Radical aligned with the traditional Línea Nacional faction, while El Partido, Argumento Político (whose editor-in-chief was later Foreign Affairs Minister Dante Caputo), Renovación, and Renovación y Cambio backed Raúl Alfonsín's candidacy. Pushing to influence government policies and party politics after the 1983 electoral triumph, magazines such as Argentina Radical, Compromiso Político y Social, El Frontón,

Generación 83, Cambio 84, La República, and Respuesta Radical surged amidst enthusiasm among Radical ranks. Whereas a few became consolidated (such as Generación 83, representing Buenos Aires party leader Federico Storani), most publications withered away. Neither during the 1988 primaries nor the 1989 national election did any major Radical magazines representing party factions emerge. The exception was El Ciudadano, published during the 1989 campaign, which, rather than being the expression of a particular party faction played an important role within the design of the Angeloz campaign. Its harsh attacks on Carlos Menem, its constant theme that a Peronist victory equaled a return to past violent times, and its exposes of Peronists' skeletons - a "bit exaggerated and too strong" (Pandolfi 1990) in Radicals' post-election evaluations - coincided with major strategic guidelines of the 1989 Angeloz campaign. Peronists maintained that El Ciudadano had an important role within the negative advertising design planned by the Radical campaign headquarters; in their view, the publication executed most of the "dirty work," masterminded by Radical and foreign campaign aides, through constant assaults on candidate Menem.

As democracy endured, the role of party magazines changed. Except for the ones produced by some small parties, these magazines no longer functioned as central means for publicizing party precepts or for supporting the electoral

ambitions of specific politicians. For the 1989 election, amidst a more sedate political environment than in 1983, magazines qua constituents of party opinion, circuits of internal party conflicts, or measurements of the political force of individual party leaders or candidates, were on the wane. Magazines conceived as manifestations of partisan subcultures, outlets for party doctrines, and stages for party battles, seemed less important than in 1983. Now, the mass media provided the central forums for these processes to be played out. Magazines functioned more as secondary arenas for debating party positions or for advancing individual candidates.

Yet party magazines did not completely disappear; some survive and, amidst a much smaller population than in 1983, a few have lately sprung up. The fact that a considerable number survive should not be judged as a mere anachronism, a remainder of past times, prone to disappear as newer communication forms spread. Instead, this phenomenon needs to be understood as testimony of the survival of partisan subcultures, or to put it differently, of the resilience of party cultural dynamics in Argentine politics. Granted, such subcultures are less vibrant and confined to narrower spaces than in previous times, but they can hardly be considered an archeological curiosity.

My argument is that changes in the broader political

conditions which have initially originated certain communication practices (e.g. the rise of underground party magazines or grass-roots street advertising for propagandizing political views as other means were banned) not necessarily determine the fate of such methods. Not just the historical context but also the dynamics of parties both as political and cultural institutions are important in shaping the role of these magazines. It would be mistaken to understand the purpose of party publications "outside of the cultural and historical frameworks in which they are embedded" (Powell and Di Maggio 1991, 15). Following claims made by institutional sociologists, I suggest that the subsistence of these publications is a result of the permanence of party organizational routines and partisan cultural dispositions. Conceivably, magazines are not obligatory credentials for political aspirations or pivotal arenas for ideological debate in Argentine politics anymore. Nevertheless, the reluctance of these publications to become pieces of a museum in Argentine history speaks of two processes: the force of rules conferring parties with a crucial role as institutions for sponsoring candidates and organizing campaign efforts, and the resilience of partisan cultural dispositions. Amidst a political cultural world still impregnated by partisan routines and customs, party magazines endure.

Yet, as mentioned before, the former centrality these

periodicals had as means for expressing party doctrines and channeling political debates, has significantly receded at the expense of other forms of communication. Also, their role as signposts for detecting political trends in the public mind has been in decline. Together with demonstrations and rallies, party periodicals have historically served as means for forecasting the popular support of parties, politicians and political demands. But a remarkable development regarding how Argentines voice and recollect public opinion, had taken place in recent years: the rise and apotheosis of polls.

It is not that polls have replaced party magazines' functions; rather, the former have become important yardsticks of public opinion. During the last decade, polls have emerged as key means for judging the electoral chances of parties and candidates, for revealing existing popular demands, and for identifying tendencies and swings in the political mood. While magazines were formerly considered reliable roadmaps of reigning ideologies, battling parties and contending politicians in the Argentine political geography, now, polls became popular techniques for identifying the contours of public opinion.

POLLS: THE SIGN OF THE TIMES

The incorporation and widespread use of polls is perhaps the clearest sign of recent changes in the Argentine political

communication landscape. Similar to the increasing use of polls in various countries (Traugott 1990), polls have recently flourished in Argentina. They became favorites of both candidates and the media. Polling businesses blossomed; surveys and fly-by-night poll-takers proliferated during campaign months; and newspapers and television news conducted and reported polls. Some pollsters reached stardom: straw-vote journalism developed, newspapers and magazines devoted front-pages to poll results, and even some Latin American and Eastern European countries have lately hired the services of Argentine pollsters. Polling, an anarchic business with neither rules nor professional codes, moved centerstage during the last decade. Former Foreign Affairs minister Dante Caputo (1990) observes: "While polls were unknown six years ago, they rule now."

Polls were not a new instrument. Before 1983, surveys were extensively used in consumer research; in fact, some of the first and most respected poll-takers have a lengthy experience in consumer marketing (El Periodista de Buenos Aires 1985). More than the introduction of the technology itself, the wide acceptance of polls among political elites was impressive. Political cognoscenti attribute the soaring adoption of polls to the success of the 1983 Alfonsín campaign. A newspaper article asserts:

Poll studies successfully entered in Argentine politics in 1983 by the hand of Raúl Alfonsín. Until then, they

were considered an imported object of doubtful applicability. But from that moment, polls became common. What before was a foreign fashion developed into a 'revealed truth' (El Cronista Comercial 1989).

Candidates defeated in the 1983 election favored the interpretation that the use of polls was intrinsic to Alfonsín's victory. Trying to justify unexpected results, Peronists considered that the Radicals' triumph resulted from the "modernity" of the campaign, particularly the use of polling. This became an easy and complacent answer to account for the final tallies. In turn, this view led to another conclusion: as the use of polls was seen as fundamental for shaping the results in 1983, relying on survey information was perceived as indispensable. It seemed that for many the rationale was, as a journalist puts it, "If Alfonsín did alright with [polls], why not use them?" (Blanck 1990a).

The Alfonsín headquarters made use of survey information to measure the candidate's strengths and weaknesses among the electorate. Based on poll information about voting tendencies, demographics and voters' media consumption habits, the campaign team divided the country into different areas to map out the evolution of the campaign and to reinforce stumping activities in regions where Raul Alfonsín was trailing Italo Luder and/or in traditional Peronist districts. This technique of vote tracking was virtually unknown in Argentine campaigning.

But the Alfonsín campaign did not fully use survey

information for strategic decisions according to the prescriptions of modern consulting. Instead, the campaign headquarters made moderate rather than intensive use of polls. Former Foreign Affairs minister and Alfonsín's campaign speechwriter Dante Caputo (1990) states "[the campaign] counted on rudimentary technologies." Polls guided some decisions but key (and widely believed, successful) strategies emanated not from "scientific" data but from intuitive calculations, especially from the candidate himself. Hammering a message that emphasized democratic ideals and values over other issues; reciting the Preamble of the National Constitution at the end of every rally (what Radicals proudly call a "lay sermon" that became a hallmark of the campaign); targeting different demographic segments of the population (women, senior citizens and youth); and deciding to hold the final rally in Buenos Aires streets rather than in a soccer stadium; all these resolutions that branded the Alfonsín campaign were made on the basis of what Samuel Popkin (1991, 212) labels "gut-rationality," that is, decisions made on the basis of "learning and information from past experiences, daily life, the media and political campaigns" rather than on poll information. Alfonsín's strategic accusation that Peronist union leaders had an agreement with high-ranking generals of the lame-duck regime, usually seen as an essential and successful campaign move identifying Peronism with the

authoritarian regime and Radicalism as the "truly democratic force," was born out of intuition rather than poll data.⁵ This illustrates the fact that informal calculations formed by impressionistic rather than scientific readings of the society's mood propelled central decisions throughout the campaign.⁶

⁵. Members of the Alfonsín campaign headquarters recall that the denunciation of the pacto sindical-militar (as the presumed agreement between military officers and union bosses became known) was a bold idea of the candidate himself. Although former Sen. Conrado Storani (1991), a long-time political associate of Alfonsín, credits the late Raul Borrás and himself with the decision, others attribute it to some aides who advocated a confrontational and audacious campaign strategy vis-a-vis the more moderate line inspired by Borrás (a close friend of Alfonsín and later his first Defense Minister). Partially, these two positions resulted from different perceptions of the possible electoral results. The more moderate position held the necessity of cultivating contacts with the conservative provincial parties as they doubted that Alfonsín would obtain the majority in the Colegio Electoral. (According to the electoral system, a candidate needs the majority of the votes to be elected president). The other position, for some observers, best incarnated in Dante Caputo (campaign speechwriter who later became Alfonsín Foreign Affairs Minister), was confident about an overwhelming victory and espoused a "campaign of ideas" to attract voters rather than the building of political alliances.

⁶. Similarly, campaign advertising was informed more by intuitions and personal convictions than by what poll information dictated. Also, the production of television spots could hardly be considered as "slick" advertising. The more "personal" spots in which Raul Alfonsín talked to the camera, referred to specific issues, and introduced other candidates, had a simple format, and scripts were virtually improvised by the candidate right before shooting (Gibaja 1990; Stulman 1990). The more thematic spots that focused on the campaign battlecry (the vindication of democracy against authoritarianism) did not display refined styles or rich images (typically seen as main attractions of modern political advertising) but rather modest visuals (Monteverde 1990).

An important change took place within Peronism. Whereas Peronist headquarters were reluctant to use surveys in the 1983 campaign, the rise of the Renovación Peronista brought about a renewal of campaign methods (Fidanza 1990; Grosso 1990; Haime 1990). In 1983, presidential candidate Italo Luder claimed "polls are not for a culture like ours. People here do not answer what they really think" (as quoted in Blanck 1990b). Peronist insiders recall the problems for convincing either union leaders or party ranks responsible for the 1983 election campaign to pay closer attention to opinion polls (Vera 1990). In contrast to traditional Peronist bosses, leaders of the Renovación were more predisposed to adopt public opinion studies. The more "modern" political culture of upcoming Renovadores contrasted with the more "traditional" mindset of then-ruling Peronist politicians.⁷ In the 1985 congressional campaign of Renovador leaders Carlos Grosso in the city of Buenos Aires and Antonio Cafiero in the province of Buenos Aires, polls were more accepted as a tool to measure public opinion though apprehension to modern technologies

⁷. According to Peronist observers I interviewed, different educational backgrounds account for why Renovación leaders were more receptive than traditional caudillos to newer technologies. Unlike union bosses (most with elementary schooling) or traditional party caudillos (most with law degrees), the main figures of the Renovación as well as their campaign aides had college degrees in various social sciences (economics, literature, journalism, communications, psychology) that provided some familiarity with "modern" methods.

still persisted among the rank-and-file and more old-fashioned politicians (Muraro 1989; Stupenengo 1990; Vera 1990).

Polls were no longer seen as foreign and mistrusted gadgets during the 1985 midterm elections. Though not sure about their functions and merits, politicians turned to the charms of polls. Polling services were in huge demand. Radical poll-taker Enrique Zuleta-Puceiro recalls:

Political parties, especially Peronism and Radicalism, organized routines to follow the latest heartbeat of public opinion. For example, there were provinces where polls were never taken before and suddenly many surveys were conducted (El Cronista Comercial 1988).

Even old-fashioned candidates, commonly more reluctant to succumb to the incantations of modern politics, solicited polls. Pollsters reminisce that even politicians who originally did not request their skills willingly accepted their advice to conduct surveys in later campaigns. While only some first-line Radical leaders seemed open to the idea of adopting polls in 1983, almost all political forces made extensive use of these techniques for the 1985 midterm elections. The zenith of this burgeoning phenomenon was the 1987 midterm elections. Polls were considered an indispensable instrument of campaigning. Advisors who participated in diverse races state that polls inundated campaign offices while committees were constantly eager to get the latest results. In many cases, conclusions taken from focus groups and qualitative polls directly informed candidates' speeches.

A Radical consultant claims that the pervasive use of polls was conducive to producing similar speeches as candidates based their discourse on findings from the same polls (Sthulman 1990).

How to account for the rapid proliferation of polls? The reason has less to do with the correlation between the use of polls and Alfonsín's success and more with the major learning of the 1983 elections. That is, the electoral results indicated that the Peronist majority of almost four decades could no longer be taken for granted. The Radical victory toppled a dominant fact of Argentine politics since the 1940s, namely, that Peronism was unbeatable, that it would inevitably win any free election. Peronist campaign aides recall, "who cared about polls if we knew we were going to win." After 1983, politicians realized that no party had secured a permanent majority, thus, polls became useful instruments to gauge swings in the electorate's opinion. Moreover, the accuracy of polls in preannouncing the final electoral tallies contrasted with the failure of traditional methods for speculating about public opinion attitudes. Peronism, the party which had drawn the largest crowds in rallies and demonstrations, had the highest number of members, and produced over a dozen of publications during the campaign, lost the elections.

The rise of polls needs to be explained fundamentally as

a byproduct of the profound impact that the 1983 election had on political elites. The results, though accurately forecasted by some pollsters, were unexpected. Moreover, throughout the campaign, polls that predicted Alfonsín's victory were dismissed not only by the Peronist camp and political observers but also by some Radical insiders. Survey information went against the grain of what pollsters call "conventional ideas," namely, that Peronism could never be defeated in open elections. Surveys showed that even though Alfonsín ranked first among electoral preferences, respondents believed that Peronism would be the sure winner.

The 1983 electoral results challenged these taken-for-granted beliefs. Voting tallies contradicted what the common sense dictated, what the typical forms for measuring "political temperatures" suggested: Peronism was not invincible anymore and voting decisions could be swayed. Thus, polls, which previously had been rarely used in a rather rudimentary fashion, found fecund soil as methods for gauging tendencies in public opinion. As routinary techniques for evaluating political support and voting dispositions failed to report accurately what happened at the ballot boxes, then, new forms were sought out to perceive and to forecast opinion. Polls blossomed once the old practices for expressing and predicting offered a different picture from the one given by electoral tallies.

Yet it would be misleading to infer that given their massive and frenetic production, polls became central devices informing campaign strategies. Truly, politicians were in a frenzy, asking, reading, comparing results from every available poll. Although they went "from a time when they ignored surveys to asking for every [existing] one" (Albistur 1990), little has changed in their use of poll results in campaigning. Popularity does not imply that polls as well as other novel techniques were widely trusted either. Communication researcher and pollster Heriberto Muraro (1992, 70) claims:

No doubt, most political leaders and activists still distrust advertising and political marketing. If those activities have expanded during the last years, it is due to the intense electoral competition resulting from the reestablishment of democracy . . . Political advertising is tolerated as a minor ill as it is presumed that it will be suicidal [not to use it] in an electoral scene in which two catch-all parties get more than seventy percent of the votes.⁸

During the 1983-1989 years, polls did not fulfill a

⁸. Cases in which political and advertising consultants had to devote long hours in convincing candidates and their entourages about using newer communication techniques and ad designs are numerous. To give two examples, David Ratto (1990) remembers: "Because the Radical badge connected us with only twenty or twenty-five percent of the market at its best, we needed something more comprehensive. I had a heated discussion with Radicals, I told them 'We will not make it [the party badge] smaller. We will take it out.' They wanted to kill me." Consultant Teresa Vera (1990) recalls the long hours she put into justifying to party ranks why the billboard ad for candidate Carlos Grosso displayed a large picture and big letters rather than traditional Peronist symbols: "I went to many places to explain this to militants and leaders for hours but still they did not understand."

central role in shaping campaign plans; with a few exceptions, strategic polls rarely drove electioneering strategies. Three reasons account for this.

First, the accuracy of polls was doubted. Politicians generally remained suspicious of surveys (Lolhe 1990); except for those conducted by a handful of pollsters recognized as "honest" and "accurate" (out of an approximate total of thirty polling organizations mostly based in Buenos Aires), candidates were reluctant to trust polls. Talk of manipulation of poll information to affect public opinion or to misguide campaign planners was constant. Pollsters argue that newspapers and magazines published doubtful surveys without details, whether about the mechanics or the author, while in many cases the information was altered to benefit some parties and/or candidates. No control existed on the validity of surveys reproduced in the mass media.⁹

Second, politicians were novices in the arts of strategic campaigning. Candidates seem to have been more interested in "if we are winning or losing" rather than in adopting polls for campaign decisions. Pollsters comment that politicians' central and only interest was the "horse-race," the numbers indicating who was ahead and who was behind. As a Peronist

⁹. In 1983, the correspondent for the Spanish daily El Pais (1983) reported: "Polls differ in five or six points about the Peronist or Radical triumph, and suspiciously, always in favor of the ideological preferences of the medium that publish them."

consultant states: "Candidates are gamblers. They care about numbers" (Stupenengo 1990). Consequently, politicians showed little enthusiasm to invest in polls providing "basic information" about voters. Despite the scarcity of studies on electoral history, candidates were not interested in conducting polls tracking voting tendencies. What mattered were quantitative rather than qualitative studies.

Third, candidates were disinclined to abandon completely traditional methods for forecasting voting or general political tendencies outside electoral periods. Both pollsters and campaign aides claim that although some are "prisoners of polls," most politicians seldom believed poll information and remained unconvinced about their utility. Candidates were reluctant to drop traditional methods for forecasting voting tendencies. They maintain an ambiguous relation vis-a-vis polls; although even old-fashioned ward bosses showed an insatiable appetite to get the latest polling results, politicians only "followed" survey data when numbers were favorable or confirmed their intuitions (Catterberg 1990; Fidanza 1990; García, Pedro 1990; Mora y Araujo 1990).

Speculations about voting behavior on the basis of rally attendance and alliances with local prominents was still used as a benchmark for reading and interpreting poll information. Following Clifford Geertz's terminology, these "local knowledges" put against the "uncertain sciences" of public

opinion polls, showed to be persistent practices to survey the public mind. A poll-taker describes: "[Politicians] still carry habits from the times of the punteros [ward bosses]. When poll data is negative, they say: "How is that possible! We have so-and-so here, so-and-so there" (Fidanza 1990) or "It can't be true! I went with 'Cachito Ropero' to Almirante Brown [a city in the Greater Buenos Aires] and I realized that people [will] vote for us" (Vera 1990).

In many cases, having to choose between what surveys revealed or what their intuition suggested, politicians followed the latter. Rally attendance tallies were still believed to be synonymous to voting behavior despite a sentiment among politicians that, as the manager of the Italo Luder's electoral campaign comments, "rallies have lost meaning as ways to forecast election results" (Luder, Ricardo 1990). When drawing a considerable attendance on their campaign tours, presidential candidates have interpreted crowded rallies as indications that their electoral chances looked auspicious. The crowded gatherings congregated in Radical rallies in 1983 were perceived by politicians and journalists, party colleagues and opponents as indications of a favorable picture for Raul Alfonsín's presidential intentions. For the 1985 midterm elections in the province of Buenos Aires, then-candidate for representative Leticia Maronese (1990) recalls: "Polls showed that Antonio Cafiero's

image [then head of the Peronist list for Congress] was bad but when we toured the Great Buenos Aires, the crowd was impressive. Then we decided not to follow the polls." For the 1988 Peronist primaries, the Cafiero headquarters handled polls that doubted what was considered within the campaign headquarters a sure victory; according to campaign advisors, the survey results were dismissed as, amidst an exultant climate in the campaign command, the triumph was taken for granted as the Cafiero-de la Sota ticket controlled the party apparatus and got full support from regional bosses (Albistur 1990; Haime 1990; Moldován 1990; Mora y Araujo 1991; Stupenengo 1990). In 1989, contrary to his reputation of "a politician beholden to poll results," candidate Eduardo Angeloz became more enthusiastic about his chances, despite overwhelming poll data showing he was trailing Carlos Menem by six to eight points, as final rallies drew large multitudes (Díaz 1990; Página 12 1989).

When poll results contradicted their beliefs, they privileged other methods to interpret public opinion. Speculations about the public's mood on the basis of rallies, "control of the street," and alliances with local prominents were still frequent for reading and interpreting poll information and scouting the public's mood. In puzzling about opinion swings, candidates usually pieced together bits of information from different sources rather than blindly relying

on one. Besides the upsurge of opinion polls, electioneering in the 1980s reveals the tenacity of other knowledges for reading signs in the public mind.

EXPRESSING AND FORECASTING PUBLIC OPINION

Pollsters conclusively agree that Argentine public opinion underwent remarkable transformations between the 1983 and the 1989 presidential elections. Opinion surveys show that while socio-political demands (e.g. return to democracy, respect for human rights and basic freedoms) were top priorities at the onset of the authoritarian regime, by 1989, the desire for rapid solutions to economic problems (primarily, hyperinflation) dwarfed democratic demands. In this chapter I tried to show that the transformations in the modes for both publicizing and assessing public opinion have also been remarkable. Simultaneous to changes in the ranking of public demands, an important shift in the repertoire of the methods for expressing and identifying political convictions has occurred.

However, to conclude that there has been a dramatic transformation, something like a brusque, clear-cut transition "from grass-roots to modern techniques," would be exaggerated and mistaken. Old party communication practices survive, and polls, though certainly more common than a decade ago, have not acquired demiurgical status as irrefutable documents of

public opinion. Grass-roots media like party magazines endure as part of surviving partisan traditions; in Max Weber's sense, they are an example of "ingrained habituations" of Argentine politics. In more modest numbers than before, magazines are still used for propagating political philosophies and constitute one among other possible manifestations of public opinion. They are still important within internal party dynamics as methods for gathering forces, showing support for major candidates, or addressing the faithful.

What has changed is the potential of party publications to articulate ideas and report opinion trends in society at large. Their actual capacity to mediate public debates or be influential ideological tribunes has receded. They have become more and more communication channels exclusively to be consumed within partisan subcultures or, in some cases, additional cannons in the structure of campaign firepower, rather than instruments for discussing common affairs and representing public concerns. I am not suggesting that in former times party magazines served as outlets for large sectors of the citizenry to voice opinions or that they addressed the concerns of the majority of the population. The difficulty for obtaining information on these questions (e.g. data on readership, composition of editorial staffs) prevents us from arguing that ideas voiced in these magazines expressed

the concerns of most citizens.¹⁰ But it is reasonable to claim that magazines were seen as indispensable vehicles for communicating with party ranks, for gaining political legitimacy and for influencing opinion within political elites, and for indicating tendencies in the public mind. Like rallies and parades, magazines were perceived means as for parties to set public records on standpoints, announce events, disseminate party dogmas and launch candidacies.

The stunning results of the 1983 election led to the reconsideration of the functions of party-based forms of communication, including magazines. Once politicians realized that Peronism would not necessarily carry the majority of voting preferences, the unchallenged assumption of Argentine politics since the 1940s, then it was indispensable to know where the electorate stood. If Argentines were not inevitably going to rally behind Peronism, how would they vote? If traditional Peronist causes failed to attract the popular majority in 1983, what issues lured voters? If an important number of voters did not have fixed political inclinations, how was it possible to assess opinion shifts? To find answers

¹⁰. Most former members of editorial boards of party magazines recognize that these publications were hardly read outside party limits thus, they failed to articulate parties with large masses of voters. The following statement by a journalist who participated in the Peronist magazine Movimiento illustrates this widespread conclusion: "We could not make this instrument to become a tool of the people. It remained within the militancia" (Audi 1990).

to these questions, it was imperative to step out of the partisan microcosm and inquiry about this "new" electorate.

In addition, the fact that, as elections followed, more citizens were less willing to participate in partisan activities, to espouse party precepts and to have blind faith in politicians and parties, precipitated the decline in the vitality of traditional communication practices. Once politicians realized the growing distance between party structures and voters, it was mandatory to modify the ways to communicate politics. Party magazines were no longer perceived either as central channels for publicizing ideas or reliable sources for predicting voting preferences or mapping out political dispositions. Unlike past times, magazines were believed to be partial not representative samples of public opinion, communication channels for the increasingly ghettoized partisan culture not the general public. Polls, instead, were seen as offering more "objective" information on an electorate which not only challenged most predictions in 1983 but continued changing its political priorities and electoral preferences thereafter. The appreciable and important changes in the popularity and reliance on traditional communication methods need to be understood as a consequence of changes in the perception about how partially those methods represented Argentines' expectations and creeds. Aware of this, politicians decided to explore other methods

for reading the public's mind and for contacting an increasingly "party dealigned" electorate; partisan magazines remained a channel for addressing party ranks.

Searching for cues on public opinion, on the "pictures inside the heads" of voters rather than followers, politicians turned to the arts of polling. Searching for means to talk to citizens, they resorted to the powers and allure of the mass media. This is the focus on the next two chapters: the analysis of the dynamics between political parties, newspapers and television by analyzing the uses of the mass media in election campaigning.

CHAPTER SIX

TANGO FOR TWO: POLITICAL PARTIES AND NEWSPAPERS

The morning newspaper is a service, like the bottle of milk or the bread basket. The evening newspaper is a festival

Former La Razón editor Félix Laiño, Interview

Newspapers are the house organ of the political corporation

Political Consultant Pedro García, Interview

[Arturo] Illia said: 'Journalism is like the streams from my home state Cordoba. When seen from afar, you say: How beautiful! What a crystalline water! When you get closer you see they carry rocks. Consequently, they have to be seen from afar'¹

Journalist Mario Monteverde, Interview

Debating the role of the press in the construction and advancement of a democratic society has run parallel to the development of modern democratic theories. Both classic democratic thinkers and contemporary scholars have continuously stressed the indispensable role of the press for promoting an informed citizenry, monitoring public action, and providing means for participation and political discussion. Though unquestionably still a major concern for media analysts in stable democracies, this subject remains an unexplored

¹. Arturo Illia was a Radical politician, Argentine president from 1963 until the 1966 military coup.

question for studies on recent processes of transition and consolidation of democracy in Latin America. Except for a few cases, the press has rarely been a major preoccupation for the mounting studies on the move towards democratization and stabilization of democratic regimes in the region. This chapter attempts to shed some light on this regard. By focusing on the relationship between political parties and newspapers and the role of the press during election campaigning in the 1983-1989 years, I aim to analyze the structure of the interaction between parties and newspapers in Argentina in that period and how that relationship shaped electioneering.

The relationship between the media and political officials has been compared to a dance. When both actors' views agree, their coupling is like a waltz;

when there is a wide gap, or when early on in a particular issue it is not clear which perspective will predominate or even what the perspectives are, toes are stepped on and there is tension between the partners" (Linsky 1986, 37).

To stretch the dance metaphor, the relationship between the press and political parties in Argentina can be interpreted as, not surprisingly, a tango. One dancer (the press) conducts the movements while its partner (parties) try to follow or to adapt to the other's steps and maneuvers; the guided dancer does dazzling pirouettes around the conductor, but never takes the lead; the rhythm is continuously interrupted by "cuts" and

"breaks"; the posture is elegant, the atmosphere intense, the expressions dramatic and the movements smooth. Several "couples," pairs of newspapers and politicians, dance simultaneously in the same ballroom, while everyone wants to be led by the most graceful and powerful dancer.

The interplay between the press and political parties in Argentina can be hardly understood in terms of adversaries or allies, friends or foes. There are neither staunch adversaries nor permanent allies; linkages are continuously built and shaped, adversaries or allies are occasional, based on tactic and momentary decisions. Basically, the relationship was shaped by the country's persistent political instability, from which the press grew stronger than parties as it could survive different regime changes while parties were often banned and their structures gradually deteriorated. Consequently, the press remained more powerful than parties which allowed it to be in a better position to set up the terms of the relationship. Political parties could seldom, and only briefly, develop and sustain autonomous channels for communication. The lack of a partisan press and the continuous problems for parties to maintain avenues for communication augmented their dependence on the press to communicate politics. During election campaigns, the mounting difficulties for parties and politicians to establish regular and solid channels of communication surfaced.

Though some transformations in press campaigning were observed during the 1983-1989 period, basic characteristics of the relationship persisted. The stability of democracy and consequently the need to maintain fluid channels for communication led political parties and politicians to devise more professional mechanisms to go public through the press. Differing from previous times when party life and political careers were invariably subjected to cycles of authoritarian and democratic governments, the persistence of democracy obliged politicians to engineer continuous relations with different newspapers. Transformations were a consequence of two processes. First, as part of a growing attention to campaigning and attempting to systematize and professionalize campaign strategies, candidates and their staffs introduced some novel mechanisms for press campaigning. Second, shrinking press consumption and declining advertising investments together with the emergence of new newspapers created a more competitive press market. Aiming to keep or gain new readers, newspapers resorted to a variety of mechanisms such as a higher interest in publishing breaking news, the introduction of new sections and the improvement of print quality. Devoting more attention to election coverage was also another way for press companies to attract readers.

Yet changes in press coverage of election campaigns, rather than reflecting a renovation in the interaction between

parties and press organizations, expressed, precisely, the persistence of those conditions. Facing the lack of their own newspapers (as discussed in chapter one) and weakly connected to the existing press, political parties and candidates modified their approach toward newspapers during campaigns but the basic relationship with press organizations remained untouched. Parties did little to challenge the power and strong dependency on newspapers for communicating with political elites, party members or the citizenry. To return to the dance metaphor, during the 1983-1989 years, political parties attempted newer, more flashy pirouettes, but, still, kept "dancing the same tango steps," that is, basic features of their connection to newspapers continued. The press remained Valentino while politicians while parties remained occasional partners.

THE PRESS AND MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Newspapers fulfill a key role for communicating politics in contemporary Argentina. The press has a pivotal role in the continual reverberation of information from one mass medium to another characterizing Argentine political communication. This "information bouncing" refers to the continuous use through reporting, echoing or simple reproduction of information originally published or broadcasted by other media. For example, newspapers report and comment on discussions from

television political talk- shows and radio interviews with politicians; radio shows read and discuss newspapers articles; and television staffs use both radio and newspaper information for outlining evening news.

Within this "division of communication labor," as editorialist José Maria Pasquini Durán (1990) puts it, newspapers retain a considerable role. Dailies constitute basic, indispensable material for radio and television news. Through repeating or commenting on newspaper articles, radio and television constantly legitimize the role of the press as the main vehicle for getting news. The high-ranked morning radio shows invariably devote considerable time to reading and commenting on the main newspapers.² Television news productions take newspapers as an indispensable information input; journalists comment that television news rarely air fresh news and often become mere "visual illustrations of newspapers."³ As a consequence of the central role of newspapers in this "communication circuit," dailies' news are often echoed by most television and radio stations. Thus, politicians intensively seek newspaper coverage as,

². An audience survey published in Clarín (1990) reports that seventy percent of the sampled population listens to radio shows, while seventy percent of those listeners claim to turn on the radio for getting information.

³. Low production budgets account for why newspapers are constantly used both as information inputs and working materials in radio and television shows.

indirectly, the latter generates free media exposure thereby opening possibilities for reaching the non-newspaper reading public.

Politicians think of newspapers as the main, unavoidable way to go public in Argentine politics. For journalists, "politicians think that it is better to be in the papers than in other media" (Domán 1990). A main political editorialist of newspaper Clarín comments that after witnessing the role of the mass media in the U.S. election campaigns, "I realized that for Argentine politicians the most important thing is still the press, although they are becoming more conscious of other changes" (Kirschbaum 1990). Even though they have lately realized the importance of television and other media for election campaigning, politicians still approach newspapers as the undisputable medium to communicate; for most politicians, communication often equals newspapers. Accordingly, Argentine election campaigns could be defined to a great extent as "print campaigns." This does not mean that candidates and their staff are oblivious to coverage from other mass media; in fact, as shown in the next chapter, candidates have recently learnt a great deal of new forms to go public and have increasingly tuned their campaign strategies to television. Yet candidates consider newspapers as having an unmatched role for launching their candidacies, whether for communicating with political elites or the general electorate.

Why do politicians still highly appraise newspapers whether for their political careers or for their election campaigns? A political consultant for different Peronist candidates hints a possible explanation on this question:

Politicians worry, and become often desperate, about daily appearances in the papers. Why? Their colleagues read the dailies and it is easier to be in the papers than in television. (García, Pedro 1990)

Differing from radio and television stations which for almost the last two decades were under state control and tightly subject to government instructions, newspapers remained privately owned. The press could offer to politicians more chances to get media attention as newspapers were not subjected to state influence as it was the case of both television and radio stations, while politicians could get press coverage through sending briefs about their activities to newspapers or contacting journalists or editors. Television and radio programs were more difficult to be reached as they were more closely scrutinized and were under the direct management of government officials. Facing enormous difficulties to get coverage from other media, politicians privileged newspapers. Also, the press is a better known terrain as politicians have regularly maintained contacts with both journalists and editors, are more familiar with press than with television or radio routines, and even in many known cases, have worked as temporary or full-time journalists; as a journalist puts it, "given the background of many

politicians, newspapers are still very important" (Leuco 1990). Therefore resulting from both politicians' familiarity with the medium and the fact that newspapers were a traditional and more accessible medium for communication during the last authoritarian regime, the press is extensively accepted as the main channel for intra-elite communication and in a relatively small and closed political world, newspaper articles generate immediate repercussion. Attempting to address specific decision-making groups, party factions or competing candidates, newspapers are indispensable means as "politicians are meticulous newspaper readers" (Pasquini Durán 1990) and "still consider the press as the most credible medium" (Kirschbaum 1990).

Also, politicians' esteem for newspapers is rooted in the high credibility of the press within the general public. Survey information shows that newspapers lead the public's preferences for getting political news and are evaluated as indispensable means for getting first-hand information. In a country where the mass media is significantly distrusted, newspapers are the most credible medium, especially among the well-educated and the well-off.⁴ Newspapers are most trusted indirectly as a consequence of the fact that for almost the

⁴. According to a study by communication researchers Oscar Landi, Ariana Vacchieri and Luis Alberto Quevedo (1990, 69), the distribution media credibility is the following: (in percentage) none 29.3; newspapers 26.8; radio 21.0; television 17.8; magazines 1.2; no answer 3.8.

last two decades the state was in control of the major television and some radio stations. Television and radio news suffered a significant loss in credibility most notably after the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war; throughout the ten-week conflict, radio and television coverage tightly followed government orders and was closely monitored by military officials. In the aftermath of the war, the favorable picture for the Argentine military forces, endlessly repeated through the mass media, suddenly clashed with the dramatic outcomes.

Amidst this situation, the press gained credibility vis-a-vis other media. Newspapers became more credible not because they provided uncensored information or dared to trespass censorship limits during the 1982 war (New York Times 1982), but rather as compared to the broadcasting media. They could maintain some independence from state supervision. Newspapers, though suffered information controls and even some dailies were shut down by the authoritarian regime, had more room to maneuver within the information limits imposed by the juntas. Radio and television stations, being under the direct management of the military, were virtually mouthpieces of government positions. Therefore, the state-owned media significantly lost public credibility simultaneously to the absolute failure of the authoritarian regime after the South Atlantic war.

Both politicians and journalists often agree that the

lack of credibility of the state-owned media was not unusual in the general historical context of the Argentine media. In their opinion, Argentines have always distrusted any mass medium tightly related to any definite ideologized political group. Data on media credibility supports this conclusion: for any medium, credibility is closely related to public perception of its political independence. Frequent explanations for the failure of different projects to establish partisan newspapers follow this reasoning. A journalist's statement reflects a common conclusion among politicians and media analysts:

People don't believe that the press is independent. There is a permanent feeling of media manipulation [among the public] . . . Partisan press had failed because people don't want it; people reject it as they see it as too politicized" (Fernández 1990).

At this point, an examination of the reasons for the absence of a party press is indispensable for setting the backdrop for understanding the general structure of the Argentine press, its relation vis-a-vis political parties and the uses of newspapers for election campaigns during the 1983-1989 period.

THE FAILURE OF A PARTISAN PRESS

In contrast to most European and many Latin American countries, Argentina has traditionally lacked a partisan press. Standard analyses on party press have concluded that the presence of strongly institutionalized political parties

is necessary for the development of a partisan press (Seymour-Ure 1968; Smith 1980). Following this argument, the absence of partisan newspapers in Argentina could be understood as a result of the communication weakness of political parties. The lack of newspapers can be interpreted as another symptom of the problems parties have traditionally confronted in developing stable and sound channels for political communication.

As examined in chapter one, different attempts to create partisan dailies have invariably failed throughout this century. The only quasi-successful attempts to develop party newspapers were born under governmental patronage aiming to propagandize official views but these experiences were temporary, lasting the time the party remained in government. To name a few examples, the Radical newspaper La Epoca died with the 1930 military coup; Democracia, one of the several Peronist, state-sponsored newspapers during the 1946-1955 years, perished simultaneously with the regime; and Mayoría, a Peronist newspaper published during the turbulent 1973-1976 period, was also a short-lived attempt that succumbed with the 1976 military coup.

During the 1976-1983 authoritarian period, several military factions also tried to establish newspapers for defending political goals and standpoints, but similar to the frustrated efforts of political parties, they failed too.

Convicción, an attempt of Navy and civilians groups supporting Admiral Emilio Massera, a member of the first military junta, in his quest to politically survive the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (the official title of the 1976-1983 authoritarian regime), perished in the outset of the military government. After it was taken away from its editor and publisher Jacobo Timerman in April 1977, La Opinión became an attempt of the governing juntas to launch a pro-government newspaper. Yet the project to convert the former daily into the regime's voice failed due to "legal barriers which reflected vacillations and clashes within the government, in addition to the habitual and intense inter-corps competition" (Gregorich 1987, 77).

Why does Argentina lack partisan newspapers? A basic answer to this question can be found in the instability of the political system. The continuous cycle of authoritarian and democratic regimes since 1930 certainly prevented parties from being able to maintain solid channels of communication. Political repression and proscription of party activities were major obstacles not only for developing a partisan press but for any attempt to establish permanent forms of participation and communication within political parties. In the context of a constant political crisis, maintaining a partisan press was extremely difficult as successive regime changes damaged party stability and any form of party expression was silenced.

Political instability, however, addressed in a simple way does not present an exhaustive explanation of the problem. It certainly gives a legitimate but incomplete understanding of the question. It might have been possible that despite the ban of democratic politics, though with considerable effort, parties could run and maintain some kind of press as a way to keep some form of party organization and means for participation. Yet this organizational conception was hardly a major concern for political parties when starting a newspaper. The best known and most important projects for establishing a partisan press were not part of attempts to provide means for discussion and participation in the public sphere; rather, party newspapers were often considered instruments for propagandizing and simply transmitting the views of the government to the citizenry. A party press most commonly emerged out of the desire of state officials to secure a responsive public opinion and guarantee a favorable press. Almost all political parties in government, taking advantage of the access to state funds to finance newspapers, inevitably decided to initiate a partisan press. Only in a few isolated cases during the early decades of the century, partisan newspapers resulted from initiatives to develop instrument for communicating politics, for organizing public opinion outside the state apparatus.

Parties seldom envisioned newspapers a lá Tocqueville,

that is, as associations for discussing matters of common concern, for bringing people together, for articulating public opinion. Rather, dailies were simply seen as institutions for reinforcing a favorable public opinion and defending government policies. Conceiving newspapers "from above," as state-sponsored instruments, rather than as institutions stemming from civil society to organize public opinion from below, has been the rule not the exception in Argentine contemporary history. The impossibility for parties to maintain a continuous relation with the state given the endless cycle of authoritarian and democratic regimes plus the fact that parties have seldom envisioned alternative, non-state forms to establish newspapers, accounts for the lack of a partisan press in Argentina.

In the context of political instability and absence of a partisan press, newspapers independent from party lines have dominated the press market since the beginning of mass democracy in Argentina in 1916. Newspapers can be defined as politically ambitious yet independent from partisan lines. Though newspapers have defined positions on several political as well as economic issues, they have historically remained independent from parties. The press has rarely assumed partisan lines; instead it has adopted broadly defined standpoints echoing different political and economic sectors, and opinion groups. Argentine newspapers can hardly be

described as "Radical," "Peronist," "Socialist," or "Catholic"; rather, they have subscribed to views somewhat aligned with the positions of diverse economic sectors such as the cattle growing sector, financial groups, the industrial bourgeoisie, and small and medium-size entrepreneurs. Yet newspapers have not functioned as official mouthpieces but rather as inorganic expressions of diverse interest groups, having agendas that not always nicely fitted with the ones of distinctive cultural, political or economic forces.

Existing newspapers have traditionally maintained a tenuous institutional relation to political parties. Dailies have grown both economically and politically detached from parties. Amidst constant changes in the political system, press corporations seldom were tightly related to parties; for any major newspaper, a close linkage with any political party could have been detrimental for its aspirations to secure a dominating market position. Having a tight and solid connection with political parties that had a discontinuous life and were visibly fragile for becoming dominant policy-making institutions, was a risky venture. For newspaper companies, political parties, often excluded from having any access to power through military coups, were seldom considered valuable partners.

In contrast, maintaining relations with the state seemed a better mechanism to sustain economic interests.

Historically, the growth of big newspaper firms rested on their connection to the state rather than to political parties. The relation was not of the state having firm control over the press but rather as an association between the major newspapers and state institutions. This association has been a long-lasting one. Already in 1853, the beginning of what is usually considered the "political organization of modern Argentina," there existed ninety-three newspapers financed by the state (Pasquini Durán 1990). Moreover, the big Argentine press has historically expressed or reflected the positions of different competing economic and political groups within the State. Cycles of democratic and authoritarian regimes, while strongly affecting the stability and organization of political parties, did little damage to the development of big newspapers. The latter managed to survive amidst a prolonged political crisis, often, through privileging their relation to state powers over political parties. While parties frequently suffered proscription and were banned from having access to the state, newspapers remained more stable (despite the fact that some dailies went through problems with government officials or were even temporarily banned) as they were able to sustain a more accommodating relation with changing state authorities. Throughout a continual succession of civil and military governments, the big press outlasted political parties as they could find some space within critical

situations and shifting political regimes. Newspaper firms have often remained closer to established powers than parties.

Consequently, compared to parties, the press grew stronger as an influential organization linked to different political and economic actors. Big press organizations were often in a more powerful position and able to remain distant from parties. As political parties lacked means for communication, politicians, whether for campaigning, debating with other party ranks or communicating with political elites, had inevitably to rely on independent newspapers. Only when governing, thus being able to control state funds, regulate press tax policies, and manage state advertising, were politicians and parties in a stronger position. The notorious conflicts between the 1945-1955 Peronist government and the traditional newspapers that reached its peak when the government closed La Prensa in 1951 (see Organización Nacional del Periodismo Argentino 1951; Rabinovitz 1956), and the constant disputes between the Alfonsín Administration and the big newspapers can be analyzed in these terms: government positions gave officials a considerable power vis-á-vis newspaper corporations as they had control over diverse resources directly affecting newspapers' interests. As officials are able to control state advertising monies (a significant input in a stagnated economy and a receding advertising market), decree tax breaks on newsprint production

or imported printing machinery, and reduce or exempt newspapers from paying other expenses (municipal taxes, electricity), press organizations would hardly choose to confront local or state officials who control an important amount of public advertising. As media researcher Heriberto Muraro (1989) comments, "no one is going to have a fight with the Buenos Aires mayor."

TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY, TRANSITION WITHOUT NEWSPAPERS

The close connection between the big press and the authoritarian state was the general context in which the transition to democracy took place. Argentine newspapers, even after the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands fiasco, kept a very cautious attitude vis-a-vis the authoritarian regime and emerging pro-democracy activities. Except for Clarín which during the 1979/1980 years criticized the government's economic policies, the Buenos Aires Herald (a traditional English-language Buenos Aires newspaper) and La Prensa that confronted the military government over the situation of human rights, dissenting voices were rarely published in the press throughout the authoritarian regime.⁵

The relationship between the big press and the

⁵. Coverage on the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, the most notable, constant and early critical voices of the military government, appeared in the international press significantly before Argentine newspapers reported their activities.

authoritarian regime was shaped by different factors. First, the biggest newspapers (Clarín, La Nación and La Razón) together with the military government joined forces in the development of Papel Prensa, a national newsprint industry initiated during the 1970-1973 military government of General Alejandro Lanusse and finished in 1978 under General Jorge Videla. This economic partnership was certainly a major reason for a relatively peaceful and solid relation between the authoritarian state and the press. Papel Prensa was a successful attempt to favor local production by reducing the amount of newsprint imports, which in the 1969-75 period totalled seventy-five percent of raw imported materials.⁶ This joint venture between the big press and the state clearly put smaller newspapers in a disadvantaged position as they have had no access to the state-subsided Papel Prensa production and have had to get their newsprint from other sources at a price sometimes fifty to sixty percent higher.⁷ Non-members

⁶. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INDEC), the growth of the national production has been progressively climbing since 1977 and by 1987 eight-nine percent of the consumed newsprint was locally produced.

⁷. A full narration of the history of Papel Prensa still awaits to be written. Its development was highly conflictive as financier David Graiver, who died in a plane crash in 1976, was according to many, forced to sell his stocks and the privatization was designed to favor some newspapers over others. Windhausen states that "the company was created by the government and the country's three largest newspapers but the military regime established the rules of the game. It reserved for itself 25 percent of the shares, plus the right to select shareholders of the preferred class "A" stock, and thus

of Papel Prensa, such as La Prensa, Crónica, Ambito Financiero, the Córdoba-based La Voz del Interior and the La Plata-based El Día, have often criticized Papel Prensa; accusations targeted both the big press and the state for having created a monopolic newsprint market and government officials for privileging a few newspapers over the large majority (Zlotogwiazda 1986b).⁸

Second, the big newspapers were the direct beneficiaries of the military government's design to heavily propagandize its political and economic goals. Media researcher Patricia Terrero (1982) states that the level of government advertising increased sixty percent in the first year following the military coup. State advertising was a major contribution to the main newspapers' finances as the commercial advertising market, given the somber panorama of the Argentine economy, progressively shrunk.

maintain a political control over the corporation. The three private newspapers hold a joint 65 percent of the shares and in 1977 were authorized by the government to manage the company" (1989, 91). The remaining 10 percent of Papel Prensa's shares is in the hands of an estimated 30,000 small investors favored with tax deductions (Zlotogwiazda 1986a).

⁸. The Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas Argentinas (ADEPA) also regularly criticized the state of the newsprint production, arguing that the production of Papel Prensa was mainly consumed by its members, while the other producer, Papel Tucumán, made a more expensive newsprint that was enough for the market needs. ADEPA maintained the need for the withdraw of the state from Papel Prensa and the lowering of tax barrier for importing newsprint (ADEPA 1983, 1984a, 1984b).

Facing a suffocating political environment, unstable political conditions and difficult economic times, big newspapers adopted a "don't rock the boat" strategy to survive. As in any authoritarian regime, a repressive and uncertain atmosphere strongly conditioned journalism. Both the information provided by news wires and newspapers' editions were supervised by government officials; more than eighty journalists disappeared (Asociación de Periodistas de Buenos Aires 1987; El País 1983); and La Opinión, an influential liberal daily, was taken away from its previous owner by the government.⁹ Though censorship limits over topics and people were vaguely defined, newspapers seldom went beyond accepted norms imposed by the generals. Newspapers rarely tested the implicit boundaries of press censorship by commenting on sensitive issues, presenting diverging views or reporting on people suspected of being blacklisted. Nearly all journalists interviewed, agreed that self-censorship among editors and newsmen gradually replaced the visible official censors.¹⁰

⁹. Jacobo Timerman, editor and publisher of La Opinión, "was imprisoned for alleged links with left-wing rebels" (New York Times 1984), was tortured and was held for thirty months in prison by the regime for later going into exile in 1979. The newspaper was first confiscated by the government and then auctioned off.

¹⁰. Also, journalists state that blurred limits on what could be and what could not be reported were conducive to an overwhelming obscure parlance. Windhausen observes: "The Argentine press today seems increasingly infested with

Parallel to a general deteriorating economic situation, newspaper sales went down. A few newspapers experienced a slightly higher circulation but numbers were small relative to population growth. Many observers argue that the decline of press sales is correlated with the decline in newspapers' quality. As censorship reigned and newspapers tended mainly to reproduce news wires (also monitored by government censors), both the amount and the quality of information decreased thus harming sales. However, without entirely discounting this explanation, the economic downturn since the 1970s was an important factor diminishing press sales. The stagnation and crisis the Argentine economy experienced over almost two decades strongly affected the situation of the press economy: many provincial newspapers disappeared, newsroom staffs were reduced, press advertising dropped, and investments in new press technologies were delayed (Terrero and Schmucler 1989).

Confronting troubled political and economic conditions, reinforcing ties with the state seemed the best alternative; the state was seen by newspapers as an attractive protector for battling through hard times. The fact that the Argentine press, differing from Brazilian (Dassin 1984; Duarte 1987; Silva 1988) and Spanish newspapers (Cibrián 1989; Maxwell

bureaucratic jargon and a multiplicity of euphemisms" (1982, 88). In turn, intricate language and writing style generated an extended phenomenon of "reading between the lines" (Landi 1987).

1983), neither had a leading role nor explicitly promoted the transition to democracy has to be analyzed considering the relation between big newspapers and the authoritarian state. While major Brazilian and Spanish newspapers expressly pushed the move towards democratization and, as in the Spanish case, the press conclusively defended the democratic institutions when they were under attack (specifically during the 1981 military rebellion known as the Tejerazo), the big Argentine press embraced an extremely cautious role during the 1982-1983 transition or amidst the recurrent military insurrections between 1987 and 1990. Argentine newspapers showed a dispassionate attitude toward the advancement of democracy (even when democratic moves were visible) and offered a lukewarm defense of democratic institutions when military insurgency rose after 1987. Newspapers usually identified with the transition to democracy in such as the Spanish El País or the Brazilian Folha do Sao Paulo were notably absent in the Argentine case. The late journalist Pablo Giussani (1990) has accurately described the Argentine transition as a "transition without newspapers."

The big press, however, never became the official, organic voice of the generals. Newspapers' linkages with the state were not expressed through an unambiguous defense or militant propaganda in favor of the juntas' goals. Rather, the big dailies opted to ignore both potentially irksome issues

and dissenting positions, and to avoid trespassing censors' tacit rules. Windhausen rightly points out that "in general, the Argentine press, despite recent shortcomings and the country's political turmoil, has managed to survive by playing a low-keyed role or by adopting a lukewarm attitude toward the military in power" (1982, 89). Though manifestly ignoring some major events during those tragic years, the press was far from becoming a megaphone for the military as happened in neighboring Chile (Munizaga 1988; Sunkel 1983). Its often comfortable relationship with the established powers was expressed in a pact of silence over controversial issues and publishing limited criticisms to the government but not in propagandizing or promoting the juntas' goals. This relation resulted partially from the traditional strategy of the big press to maintain a minimum margin of independence from any government but simultaneously to cultivate friendly ties with the state.

Also, the government policy on mass media generated some uneasiness between newspapers and the military juntas thus hampering possibilities for the conformation of an unabridged alliance. Article forty-five of the Ley Nacional de Radiodifusión (National Broadcasting Law) enacted by the government in 1980 prevented newspaper firms from owning other mass media, particularly the major state-owned Buenos Aires television stations. The survival of the much-debated article

forty-five clearly obstructed the intentions of newspapers to expand their economic activities in the mass media market and consequently became the source of an implicit, though not frontal, friction between the juntas and press companies.

The military denial of the demands, first, to allow newspaper companies to own other mass media and, then, to privatize television stations, was grounded in two elements. First, the lack of a unified media policy within the ruling juntas (another territory in which constant disagreements among the military took place) made it impossible to reach any decision about the future of the state-owned media. Amidst continuous inter-force battles, television stations were allocated to different branches of the Armed Forces and were independently run by its administrators; in this context, the design of a common policy for changing the media structure remained impossible. Second, television constituted an important propaganda weapon for the military government. To privatize it, even when supportive political groups might have been the beneficiaries, would have been a risky move the juntas did not want to make. The situation of the state-ownership of the mass media was deadlocked. Press firms continued the push for privatization while the government was trapped in a web of contradictory policies that impeded any prompt resolution in that regard. For newspaper companies, this remained a pending and urgent matter. Clarín's editorial

on election day, October 30, 1983, best illustrated a widespread sentiment within pro-privatization groups: "The mass media in the hands of the State must reflect again the whole society, without lies nor distortions, until they become handled by private companies in a plural and uniform climate" (Clarín 1983).

During the brief transition to democracy, the press neither defended nor attacked the military government for past deeds. Newspapers clearly avoided taking a straightforward position whether for vindicating or condemning the authoritarian years. No investigative reporting on events that happened during those years was conducted by any of the major newspapers. Rather, the press merely restricted itself to narrating what the society was finding out about the period. Ironically, newspapers covered the opening of mass graves of hundreds of citizens whose disappearance were not reported. Newspapers eluded controversy and opted to reflect the uncertain atmosphere under which the move to democracy evolved. As seen in chapter two, the unexpected and rapid changes after the Malvinas/Falklands war created a highly indefinite political scene. Even one month before election day, it was by no means clear how (and even whether) holding elections would be achieved. Clarín's only headline on October 30, 1983 reflected the dominant feeling throughout the campaigning months: Llegamos ("We made it"). During the

election month, newspapers often quoted prominent government members warning about the viability of elections and advising both politicians and the public not to assume democracy as inevitable. Given this obscure panorama in the broader context of the foregoing discussion, newspapers cautiously and gradually covered emerging political activities. The Argentine transition definitely lacked newspapers strongly encouraging the return to democracy or reporting about events during the 1976-1983 government; rather, the press slowly gave attention to emerging pro-democratic moves and in most cases simply described developments during the transition.

THE 1983 CAMPAIGN

Many observers have rightly pointed out that the sudden return of democracy in Argentina caught both parties and politicians by surprise. Before the 1982 war, the possibility of holding elections seemed a remote, intangible future for Argentine politics. Newspapers were also unprepared for the abrupt call for elections; as a journalist puts it, "the speed of the transition gave almost no time to newspapers to set up" (Aulicino 1990). The sudden reawakening of democratic politics stimulated the return of party activities to newspapers, while a readership, avid for political information, grew. Most newspapers enlarged the political section aiming to reach a market increasingly interested in political news. For example,

Clarín halved its sports section from sixteen to eight pages and doubled the political pages from four to eight. Also, given the need of human resources to cover the upsurge in party dynamics, many newspapers decided to reshuffle journalists from different sections (sports, economics) into the political section. For many journalists, the political opening obliged a rapid retraining; the former indispensable knowledge of military codes, hierarchies and intra-force disputes now needed to be supplemented with information on party structures and the trajectory of reemerging and upcoming politicians. Newspapers were virtually disconnected from party leaders; politicians were either not included in their telephone directories or, after years of absence of democratic life, journalists have lost track of them.

As the transition evolved, the press devoted an increasing space to politicians and campaigning activities. Newspapers provided different opportunities for parties to campaign by publishing stump-speeches, press statements, paid advertising, and running op-ed articles signed by politicians. As radio and television stations, that remained in the hands of the military government, slowly granted airtime to surging democratic activities, newspapers became major and indispensable avenues for going public. For aspiring candidates, the press was the major channel to announce that they were active in politics and ready to run for office after

a prolonged interlude.

Newspapers neither assigned substantial resources nor promptly decided to cover stumping activities. This decision resulted from both the undefined political scene coming after a period of absence of democratic politics and dailies' somewhat neutral position vis-a-vis competing candidates. Perspectives on possible candidacies and parties' actual shape were uncertain given the seven-year absence of party politics. As Peronism had never lost any elections since its rise in the mid-1940s, it was generally believed that Peronism was a sure winner. This widespread, quasi-commonsensical belief, delayed a more extensive election coverage as newspapers considered it was not necessary to assign considerable efforts to campaign coverage in an election whose winner was presumably already decided. In addition, the fact that the Peronist party selected presidential candidate Italo Luder just forty days before election day also contributed to the slowness in devoting more attention to campaigning. Hoping to keep a balanced stance and an equilibrated space assigned to the candidates with chances of winning, newspapers chose not to heavily cover other campaigns (especially the prolonged and impressive campaign of the Radical presidential candidate Raul Alfonsín) until the Peronist candidates were nominated.

Neither newspapers nor news agencies assigned reporters to follow candidates. Most campaign tours were covered by

branch offices located in cities where touring candidates campaigned. Campaign headquarters did not organize "boys-on-the-bus" type of coverage, except for inviting a few journalists who intermittently journeyed with candidates. Reporters were assigned generally on the basis of their close relation with candidates or campaign staff members (usually a "source-press contact" relation) and, frequently, were supporters of the candidates and/or the parties covered.¹¹

What did newspapers cover about election campaigns? Press coverage mainly spun around party rallies, bringing substantial information on both the organization and the holding of rallies. Front pages often displayed pictures of public meetings and headlines alluding to the attendance figures. Thorough descriptions of rallies in the context of the campaign and party's internal struggles were included in the section on national politics, often placed in the first pages. Articles presented a detailed description of various aspects of rallies: the social composition of the audience; the attending party factions and the party's internal situation as expressed in the site through various means (closeness to the stage, amount of followers drawn by each faction, skirmishes among factions, support or criticisms to

¹¹. For many journalists, this particular situation is another manifestation of "the existing bastard relationship between politicians and journalists in Argentina." On journalism ethics in Argentina, see various articles included in Mendelevich (1990).

different speakers); the sequence of speakers and summary of candidates' speeches; and what in journalists' jargon is called color, that is, the atmosphere and mood as expressed in leaflets, placards, chants and slogans.

Different reasons explain why press coverage of election campaigns was often focused on rallies. First, rallies constituted central activities during the 1983 election campaign. The outburst of political participation in the aftermath of the authoritarian regime was notably expressed through rallies. The significance of rallies snowballed as the campaign advanced. As attendance numbers increased simultaneous to higher participation in the reorganization of party life and other pro-democracy activities, parties competed to draw larger attendances. Reporting rallies was central in newspapers coverage as party campaigning revolved around party meetings.

Second, reports on party meetings were given weighty consideration among the highly politicized and captive newspaper readership. Regular coverage of party meetings catered to the expectations of devoted readers of political news. As rallies were occasions for measuring party strength, observing party internal conflicts, and forecasting electoral chances, they constituted indispensable news for a readership immersed in backdoor politics. Journalists define the detailed and continuous reports on rallies and inside party struggles

as "a widespread professional vice" (Cardoso 1990) while recognizing that reports were intelligible only for readers completely involved in internal party politics. The habitual attention to post-rally discussions on attendance figures indicated that stories on party meetings were destined to be read by party activists, who, in a journalist's words, "after the rally, rushed to buy the newspaper to see how many people have attended" (Leuco 1990). Similar to those readers, journalists, many with a past or still active participation in party politics, shared a political culture that considered party meetings important. Both newspapers and reporters were part of a world in which rallies were viewed as central events in party dynamics and reliable indicators of political developments. A Clarín columnist argues: "For a long time we carried a 'rally culture' as rallies were very important in previous elections" (Cardoso 1990).

Despite lacking a firm connection to political parties, newspapers sided with different candidates. Clarín slightly favored the chances of the Peronist presidential candidate Italo Luder; La Nación, given the polarization between Peronists and Radicals, oscillated its support between the Radical party and the conservative UCeDe; La Prensa, out of its traditional anti-Peronist position more than a true ideological enthusiasm, tended to favor Radical and UCeDe candidates; Crónica, mainly due to the Peronist leaning of its

readers, supported Italo Luder; La Razón backed Luder while Diario Popular and Tiempo Argentino supported Alfonsín. Ambito Financiero and El Cronista Comercial, who at that time mainly focused on financial information and gave less consideration to electoral politics, maintaining a somewhat equilibrated position.

Newspapers' support for a candidate was not expressed in an explicit form, but rather, dailies subtly hinted their backing of candidates or parties. Both reporters and officials claim that newspapers are generally careful not to assign more space to one candidate over others. Support for a politician or a party was neither expressed through editorials endorsing candidates nor through an impressive coverage of a candidate's activity at the expense of others. Editorials on election day generally neither discussed elections nor encouraged their readers to vote for a particular candidate. Newspapers notably avoided giving more prominence or explicitly backing one candidate. Joaquín Morales Solá (1990), a former Clarín editorialist whose Sunday analysis was unquestionably the leading political column on Argentine politics in the 1980s, comments: "There is some kind of shame to favor one candidate in a clear way." Another columnist claims: "Hiding its [the Argentine press] preferences is a part of a [political] system not consolidated yet" (Kirschbaum 1988).

Why newspapers did not publicize their support for a

candidate in a straightforward way can be interpreted in light of the foregoing discussion about the relation between the press and political parties. A clear backing for any candidate might work against newspapers' intentions to remain detached from parties. Also, continuous years of censorship and self-restraint in offering distinct political opinions might have contributed to the avoidance of expressing political choices in a explicit way. Accordingly, newspapers indirectly suggested their electoral preferences. Though varying across newspapers, the following were some examples where electoral preferences were hinted.

First, the so-called panorama politico (the main weekly column summarizing political events) usually revealed a newspaper's inclination. While editorials seldom discussed electoral issues and usually referred to assorted matters, the central political column, especially in the Sunday editions, offered some clues about newspapers' preferences. Columnists are considered highly influential as this section is considered mandatory reading for political elites; both journalists and politicians expressed that a candidate's favorable appearance in these articles constitutes a formidable success. These columns do not endorse any candidate, but rather they slightly favored candidates by presenting more information or a more favorable analysis of their activities.

Second, analyses in economic sections commenting on candidates' speeches and platforms in relation to the economy usually insinuated policy preferences and defined the political tone more articulately than editorials. For example, articles championing some form of state intervention in the economy are usually absent from Ambito Financiero or the traditional dailies La Prensa and La Nación; the economic section of Clarín generally included reports on the troubled state of the Argentine industry and criticisms on anti-industrialist policies; and La Nación's economic analyses generally vindicates pro-cattle growers' policies.

Third, front pages, whether through reports on campaign activities or comments about rally attendance figures and stump-speeches, also denoted electoral choices. The position of headlines, the size of rally pictures, and the location of party news within the paper often indicated political preferences. As for most newspapers daily sales are a substantial part of total sales, front pages are highly important for attracting readers. Through front-pages designs attempting to grab the attention of irregular readers by highlighting some issues over others, newspapers also display political choices.

How did politicians and political parties engineer efforts to get press coverage? Although some party newspapers were started, most candidates opted to influence the existing

press.¹² The interaction between parties and newspapers followed conventional practices of building individual rather than institutional relations. For politicians, personal connections and the courting of reporters, newspaper executives, or major columnists especially those in the Buenos Aires newspapers, were the basic mechanisms for pursuing press attention. Yet individual contacts inside the newsroom did not imply that the party was favored with positive coverage; rather, a reporter or editorialist favored or tended to publish more information coming from that particular source but not the party as a whole. To get press coverage, politicians rarely paid attention to activities for systematizing relations with journalists such as holding press conferences or strengthening the role of party press offices; rather, they clung to individual actions for maintaining good relation with journalists (namely those who covered party activities), columnists, editors and publishers. Amidst highly disorganized campaigns and scarce interest in coordinating party press campaign, candidates were left to their own resources, contacts and lobbying efforts to get coverage.

Evaluations of the effects of press coverage or paid

¹². La Voz and La Epoca were the most notable attempts to generate a partisan press. Both newspapers represented different factions in the tumultuous Peronist primaries and similar to most previous experiences, those dailies were conceived solely as instruments to push candidacies for disappearing shortly after the elections.

advertisements for capturing voters were practically non-existent. Candidates blindly tried to "be in the paper." As a result of the six-year hiatus in democratic activities, the major problem potential candidates faced was the lack of public recognition and access to the media; thus, they engaged in continual though unsystematic efforts to gain ink space. Campaigners, almost as a compulsory habit, delivered daily reports on activities to news agencies and newsrooms, and later pushed for their publication through phone-contacting editors and journalists. The simple counting of press square centimeters became a widespread practice for gauging how successful a politician was in getting press coverage.¹³ Yet further evaluations whether the coverage was positive or negative were commonly absent. What mattered was, to an extreme, filling press space.

In addition to efforts to influence news personnel, saturating newspapers with campaign advertisements was another favorite instrument to guarantee constant press appearances. Newspapers were swamped with ads on party platforms and candidates' ghost-writer campaign books, and schedules of rallies, television appearances and other campaign activities such as party-sponsored fairs and festivals. Again, the

¹³. During election campaigns, newspapers often include information reporting the amount of centimeters for each politician in the press. Rosendo Fraga's (1990) book displays exhaustive lists on how many times politicians and different political forces were mentioned in the press.

massive publication of advertisements was not part of a strategic attempt to sway votes but rather, it merely reflected candidates' desire to gain public visibility without any consideration of electoral strategy.

Table one reveals that almost fifty-nine percent of the total number of advertisements included in Clarín during the last two campaigning weeks was published the two days before election day.

Table 1.-- Political ads published in Clarin, by political party, October 16-28, 1983.

	UCR	PJ	MID	PI	PC	UCD	OTHERS	TOTAL
16	2	1						3
17		1						1
18	3							3
19	1		1					2
20	2							2
21	1							1
22	3							3
23	4	1						5
24	1							1
25	2	2	1					5
26	1		1	1				3
27	3					3	2	10
28	7	6	1	2	3		5	24
TOTAL	30	11	4	3	6	2	7	63

Note: UCR: Partido Radical; PJ: Partido Justicialista (Peronista); MID: Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo; PI: Partido Intransigente; PC: Partido Comunista; UCD: Unión de Centro Democrático.

The decision to flood newspapers with ads on the brink of election day was not the result of carefully designed media

plans or modern targeting. None of these practices were commonly adopted by campaign headquarters in 1983. Instead, the avalanche of campaign advertisements during the last campaign days was a symptom of rampant campaign disorganization and absolute anarchy in money allocation. Diverse groups separately canvassed for the same candidate while funds for media campaign were allocated according to availability rather than to strategies to court voters. A major media consultant states:

There is no media planning. Usually there is a mass of funds which is distributed . . . What is allocated are pesos, and as they are there, [campaigners say] let's spend them . . . The process starts upside down (Rival 1990).

The publication of solicitadas followed similar lines as newspapers were also inundated with such ads during the last weeks.¹⁴ Table two shows that forty-eight percent of the

¹⁴. A solicitada is a paid advertisement including a paragraph in which politicians, organizations or independent voters express support for a candidate or party. Originally, they were used as paid means to get press coverage in times when censorship reigned and newspapers could not publish information about censored parties or politicians; these political ads had to be signed by identifiable sources such as parties, trade unions, economic organizations or independent citizens who assumed responsibility for the published opinions. During the 1983 campaign, solicitadas were not only instruments for different groups to express support for a candidate, but also, they were used and funded by campaign staffs to publicize the endorsement a candidate had from groups and public figures. Through solicitadas, Radical candidate Raul Alfonsín got support from intellectuals, independent voters, catholic groups, women and trade unions; Peronist candidate Italo Luder was backed by other parties, intellectuals, trade unions and Peronist party notables; Augusto Conte, the Christian Democrat candidate for

solicitadas put out during the last two weeks were published on the last two days.

Table 2.-- Solicitadas published in Clarín by political party, October 16-28, 1983.

	UCR	PJ	OTHERS	TOTAL
16	1			1
17				-
18				-
19				-
20		1		1
21	1			1
22		1		1
23	4			4
24	1	1		2
25		1	2	3
26	1			1
27		2		2
28	4	5	2	11
TOTAL	12	11	4	27

Similar to the allocation of other advertisements, the pattern of expenditures on solicitadas denoted less an intention to sway voting behavior and more the ambition of groups to gain public recognition and to show support to a given candidate, the lack of coordination among campaign forces, and the allocation of campaign finances on the basis of available monies rather than on strategic goals.

representative in the city of Buenos Aires was supported by human rights organizations and distinguished human rights activists such as writer Ernesto Sábato and 1980 Peace Nobel Adolfo Perez Esquivel.

CHANGES IN PRESS CAMPAIGN

During subsequent years, press organizations and political parties interacted basically along the patterns discussed so far. Without a doubt, important changes for improving the general conditions for journalism took place during the Alfonsín administration, namely, the elimination of censorship, the guarantee of basic civic liberties and the establishment of a more general freer political atmosphere (Council on Hemispheric Affairs and Newspaper Guild 1985). The relationship between parties and press organizations, however, remained basically unaltered. On the one hand, political parties fundamentally continued to rely upon traditional strategies for gaining press attention such as coopting existing newspapers or cultivating personal relations with newsrooms personnel.¹⁵ On the other hand, newspapers remained independent from party lines while endlessly attempted to influence media policies at the state level. Noticeable changes in campaign communication were implemented but without altering the structural balance between parties and the press. Moreover, transformations in campaign coverage were part of candidates' attempt to devise better mechanisms to go public. Politicians basically stayed faithful to old techniques for

¹⁵. These practices and the virtual obliviousness to treating journalists as a group persisted. The most notable case was President Alfonsín, who during his almost five-and-half years in government only conceded six press conferences.

"breaking in the news" while parties made little progress in overcoming their continual problems for building channels for political communication. Consequently, as journalists state and politicians recognize, parties could not surmount problems for strengthening means for communication. In the remainder of this chapter I delve into these issues.

Both the traditional structure of the press and its position vis-á-vis political parties basically remained as analyzed so far; to put it briefly, newspapers continued to be independent from party ideologies and constantly sought to influence state decisions, especially regarding legal and media tax policies. Big dailies resorted to their traditional strategy of keeping a detached position from party lines while continually attempting to sustain political alliances and to pressure media policy-making officials.

The staunch attempts of the big press to expand their economic activities in other media markets and to eliminate various taxes resulted in permanent clashes with the Radical government. The reluctant attitude of the Alfonsín Administration (most notably during the 1984-1985 period in which Emilio Gibaja was the head of Secretaría de Información Pública, the National Communication Office under direct supervision of the executive) to accept the constant demands of press organizations to eliminate article forty-five of the 1980 Ley de Radiodifusión and to initiate an immediate

privatization of radio and television stations was a source of a major conflict.¹⁶ Newspapers also opposed the Radical administration as government policies had little success in overriding the country's economic downturn, thus, persisting economic stagflation harmed press economies by reducing both consumption and advertising.

Still, these were neither the only nor perhaps the main causes fueling permanent battles between the Alfonsín administration and the press. Ideological divergences were also responsible for setting the Radical government and the big newspapers apart. Journalists and politicians who participated in media policy-making decisions during the Radical government consider that ideological animosities more than economic disputes were the main source of conflict. In their opinion, even though the Alfonsín administration would hypothetically have accepted the requests of newspapers, namely, a legal framework allowing newspaper organizations to expand their activities to other media, an immediate privatization of state-owned media, and the lowering or elimination of different print taxes, clashes would have persisted anyway. For Radical officials, the central issue at

¹⁶. This policy directly responded to President Alfonsín who opposed the formation of media conglomerates; in 1969, he argued, "For a true freedom of the press it is necessary that the big media are not in the hands of one economic or ideological sector" (Alfonsín 1969, 141). This point is developed in chapter six.

stake was that the press expressed the opinion of various disgruntled groups who considered that government policies affected their interests. In their words, the relationship between the Alfonsín Administration and the big press was "difficult," "a big headache," "a not very sympathetic subject," "a problem not solved," "a great failure." President Alfonsín's statement that newspapers rank ahead among the diverse groups who showed less support for the consolidation of Argentine democracy, fairly represents a widespread opinion among Radical politicians.

Few but major newspapers were the ones that constantly concerned the Alfonsín administration: Clarín, La Prensa and Ambito Financiero. Clarín was unquestionably the main obsession for the government not only because the newspaper was the visible head of press groups pressuring for changes in the media structure, but mainly given the relevant position of Clarín in the press market. Ironically, though the government and Clarín remained partners in the national newsprint producer Papel Prensa, their relationship was extremely uneasy throughout the whole period.

Founded in 1945, Clarín can hardly be disputed as the most influential and powerful Argentine newspaper. Its circulation is the largest in the Spanish-speaking world;¹⁷

¹⁷. In June 1990 its circulation reached 494,881 daily copies (Instituto Verificador de Circulaciones 1983-1990).

it captures more than fifty percent of the local newspaper advertising market; together with La Nación, it is the largest stock-holder of the national newsprint producer Papel Prensa; its daily edition reaches more than 750 Argentine cities; and it owns the major news agency Diarios y Noticias (DYN), the high-ranked Buenos Aires Radio Mitre and, since December 1990, the Buenos Aires-based Channel 13 television station (Markic 1989). It epitomizes the "journalism for everybody" kind of newspaper (Gonzalez Arcilla 1989). Its daily editions target assorted readerships through including different sections such as architecture, women, youth, agrarian, entertainment, sports, computers, culture, international, economics and the Sunday magazine.

For a long period, Clarín has had a somewhat stable relation with the Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo (MID), a party originated from the UCRI faction of the Radical party which governed Argentina between 1958 and 1961 (Gallo 1983; Smulovitz 1988). Though that relation suddenly ended in 1981, Clarín maintained some basic principles of the MID program, especially its constant preoccupation about the state of Argentine industry and the championing of industrial development to surmount the country's economic plights. This historical background certainly framed Clarín's evident opposition to the Alfonsín administration. The past association to the MID, especially regarding the traditional

rivalry between the MID and the Radical party, echoed in its attitude vis-à-vis the Radical government.

However, this was not the main source of the quarrels between Clarín and the Radical government. For several Radical politicians and journalists, Clarín manifestly sided with different economic and political corporations that opposed the Alfonsín administration such as the central trade union (the Peronist Confederación General del Trabajo), the Church and the military. The following statement made by the 1989 Radical vice-Presidential candidate Juan M. Casella (1988) describes a widespread belief among Radical politicians: "Clarín works for all the corporations."

The peak of the conflict between Clarín and the Radical Administration took place when President Alfonsín in February 1987, delivering a speech in a rally, accused the newspaper of falsifying information aiming to present an unfavorable view of government policies.¹⁸ The accusation referred to the publication of unemployment rates which according to Radical leaders were purposely distorted, while Clarín claimed that the data was simply taken from official sources. Alfonsín's

¹⁸. In June 1988, the government had another known polemic with press organizations when president Alfonsín labeled "terrorist" the article "The Economic Failure of President Alfonsín" written by Arnaldo Musich and published in La Nación. Arguing the need to guarantee freedom of speech, the Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas Argentinas (ADEPA) as well as numerous provincial newspapers and political organizations strongly criticized President Alfonsín for his comments (La Nación 1988b).

open denunciation rapidly sparked responses from several newspapers, which overwhelmingly attacked the President's remarks and championed the right of free expression.¹⁹

Also, the traditional La Prensa, yet more openly than Clarín, often clashed with the government. Differing from La Nación, the other traditional Buenos Aires newspaper also founded in the late 1860s which except for ventilating disagreements on mass media and foreign affairs policies, was not a vehement critic of the Radical government, La Prensa

¹⁹. Alfonsín's accusation to Clarín was vehemently and unanimously attacked by different newspapers and the Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas Argentinas (ADEPA). The Executive Council of ADEPA (1987) stated: "It is strange that the simple transcription of a news produced by a state institution has provoked a disproportionate reaction by such a high authority . . . ADEPA laments the persistence of this and other officials who want to see wicked intentions in national journalism. The Asociación de Entidades Periodísticas Argentinas (ADEPA) shows its solidarity with the newspapers who exercise their right to inform objectively to the public opinion and deplore the improper position of the officials of democracy." The "news produced by a state institution" refers to the publication of unemployment rates as reported by the INDEC, the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (National Bureau of Statistics and Census).

La Capital (1987), a Rosario newspaper with an average circulation of 66,000 copies and highly influential in the Santa Fe province, stated in its editorial "Unfortunate Expressions": "Of course, it would be unjust to attribute dictatorial intentions to Dr. Alfonsín; but, anyway, his words from last Friday are, at least, worrisome, especially when he said that 'many important media have a favorite sport, the perverse sport of discourage Argentines.' It has to be reminded that those media, as long as they operate fully responsible, get data from reality. As it happened in the case of the daily which was accused by the head of the state mentioned the 'politics of dishearten the Argentine people' and just got the unemployment data from an official organism. Meanwhile that press organ [Clarín] is something like a partner of the State in a controversial print industry."

fiercely aligned in the opposition. The 1984-1985 Secretary of Public Information claims: "Even at the beginning [of the Administration] when we received unanimous support, La Prensa was against us" (Gibaja 1990).²⁰ But differing from the conflict with Clarín, La Prensa never became a persistent concern for the Radical government. La Prensa's unique historical status (together with La Nación, it was traditionally considered the finest example of a prestigious press in Latin America) and power position seemed past glories. La Prensa's readership was dramatically falling (while in 1982 its daily circulation reached 115,000 copies, in 1989 it barely totaled 19,000 for shortly thereafter declaring bankruptcy) and its former status as an indispensable reading for decision-making groups has slowly vanished.²¹

²⁰. In 1984, after La Prensa and Jesus Iglesias Rouco (one of its main editorialist, who later became the chief-in-editor of the right-wing weekly El Informador Público) described Gibaja as a "local Goebbels" and insinuated, without concrete evidence, that the youth section of the governing Radical party was training civilian militia, Gibaja accused La Prensa and Iglesias Rouco of yellow journalism, lies, and subverting the democratic order.

²¹. Unquestionably, La Nación was more successful in sustaining both market position and influence in Argentine society. It maintained a faithful readership, especially but not only among political and economic elites, which, in turn, made it a central newspaper for campaigning. Partially, its renovation of both the format and general treatment of information coupled with launching new methods to attract a shrinking press readership (mainly, the Portfolio, a lottery system that requires participants daily consultations of the paper), explain La Nación's capacity to maintain a pivotal

Finally, Ambito Financiero was another distinct opponent to the Alfonsín administration. It started in 1976 as a newspaper exclusively devoted to reporting financial activities. Its front-page, displaying the motto "the newspaper of the financial district," made its intention self-evident. It came out on weekdays and reached an average circulation of 5,000 copies per day. Though still published only during weekdays, Ambito Financiero went through important transformations and progressively gained distinctive influence. At the end of 1989, it reached a daily circulation of 125,000 copies, owned fifty-two agencies in the country and four abroad, surpassed other newspapers in the proportion of subscribers over total readership, and its gross net revenues totaled more than \$20,000,000 a year (Markic 1990).

Two reasons explain its remarkable development: the post-1976 extraordinary growth of the Argentine financial sector and its clear editorial line, a rather scarce good amidst newspapers reluctant to set out clearly their viewpoints. First, Ambito grew simultaneously with the sudden and exceptional expansion of the Argentine financial structure under Finance Minister José Martínez de Hoz's policies after the 1976 military coup. In the words of Ambito's editor-in-

role in the Argentine media. La Nación benefitted from the government battling with Clarín as, in an attempt of Radical officials to secure a favorable treatment, it became a main recipient of information, especially on economic issues.

chief,

The newspaper grew parallel to the financial boom after 1976. There was an increasing interest to know about the stock market and saving strategies . . . We thought that we were read only by bankers but we realized that there were too many bankers (García, Roberto 1990).

Second, though it lack a specific editorial section, Ambito's forthright definition on different issues also contributed to its substantial growth; as many journalists comment, it confesses its editorial position even in the wording of the headlines.²² Amidst newspapers which rarely define their editorial position in a clear manner and carefully (but rarely) include inside information, Ambito's straightforward opinions and taste for sensitive information were assets fueling sales. Differing from other big newspapers, Ambito's distinctive style resulted from its limited connection to the state and to government funds. Its tendency to criticize the government and to offer an editorial standpoint in a clear way were a result of being more autonomous and less dependent than its competitors on state advertising.

How did the Alfonsín administration try to overcome its difficult relation with major newspapers? Amidst a disorganized media policy, the traditional solutions of

²². Headlines as well as front pages are often designed by its publisher Julio Ramos. Ramos is not only the "heart and soul" of Ambito Financiero but he also ran for representative in the state of Buenos Aires in 1985 under a fly-by-night party, the Alianza Demócrata Independiente. With an alluring slogan, "a combative journalist," Ramos failed to obtain a seat in Congress (Markic 1990).

delivering state funds to newspapers or buying stocks of a moribund newspaper were adopted by the Radical government, especially during the early years when President Alfonsín's popularity was high. Similar to many of its predecessors, the Alfonsín administration tried to secure a favorable press by mainly taking advantage of its access to state resources, however, like previous attempts, it failed too. Two examples illustrate this case.

First, when Jacobo Timerman returned from exile and accepted the editorship of La Razón in 1985, many observers presumed that La Razón was becoming a Radical newspaper. Since Timerman maintained a good relation with President Alfonsín, and the government, after negotiating with the Army the transference of La Razón's stocks the military had appropriated, granted a loan to surmount the paper's persistent financial crisis, it seemed that La Razón was switching from being a "drowsy evening newspaper with a pro-military, authoritarian stance" (Advertising Age 1985) to a pro-Radical and quality newspaper.²³ Many envisioned that Timerman was seeking to replicate the successful experience of La Opinión, by targeting the intellectual and politically progressive readership.

²³. The Radical government also supported La Razón through granting a significant portion of state advertising. According to ADEPA (1985), "during 1984, La Razón received two and half times more advertising money than Clarín and La Nación."

La Razón, an evening daily founded in 1905, was for a long time the newspaper with the largest circulation in the Spanish-speaking world. For diverse reasons, mainly economic mismanagement and the worsening of the country's economic conditions, it suffered a dramatic decline in sales. When Alfonsín was inaugurated President in December 1983, La Razón's past splendor was gone and the paper was a gigantic, highly indebted enterprise. Its big structure, resulting from previous economic success and state favoritism, was disproportionate for its diminishing sales.²⁴ La Razón faced continuous problems as sales did not match its exorbitant infrastructure; having the same structure as when the paper sold over 500,000 copies per day was a major burden as its daily circulation never surpassed 160,000 copies.

After replacing Felix Laiño, not only La Razón's editor for over forty years but the classic press caudillo who forged the paper's popular style, Timerman decided to add a morning edition. A few months later, the evening editions were closed. Timerman's decision was based on an unquestionable fact: throughout the world, evening newspapers have lately shown decreasing sales and many have even disappeared (Timerman 1990). Under the new direction, many changes were implemented:

²⁴. La Razón's personnel was over 1,200 employees while its building was the most modern and sophisticated of all Argentine newspapers, which even included an extravagant helicopter pad as city regulations prohibit private helicopters flying over Buenos Aires.

the sheet size was replaced by a tabloid format; journalists signed articles; scandals and gossip stories were replaced by commentary, in-depth analyses, international coverage, cultural and economic sections and op-ed articles were favored. Though the morning edition of La Razón scratched some readers from the main newspapers (its circulation reached its highest 70,000 copies in 1985), the project failed. Its failure was grounded in the fact that it had to compete in a very difficult market of morning dailies and, though its sales were important for a recently established newspaper, its revenues were insufficient for coping with its highly indebted and enormous structure. Journalists state that if La Razón's morning edition had had a smaller structure, it could have survived (Mendelevich 1990; Granovsky 1990).

La Razón not only failed in economic terms but it did not become a militant Radical newspaper either. Despite some sporadic pro-government articles and editorials, La Razón was far from being a Radical newspaper. Though journalists were not members of the party, in fact as a veteran Radical journalist puts it "there are almost no Radical reporters (Quirós 1990), many adhered or sympathized with the government. A main columnist for La Razón commented:

The relation between the government and La Razón was friendly as the newspaper reflected the view of a group close to the government, but the relation was never organic. Some even complained that there was too little relation and that some sectors of the government favored La Nación and Clarín over La Razón (Giussani 1990).

A journalist who also worked in the so-called Timerman's La Razón, states:

[The paper] had a clear line . . . We had to write and include our opinion but not to do ideological work. Given the spirit of 'democratic spring' existing at that time, there was a general inclination toward alfonsinismo, the renewal wing of Peronism and the independent left. [The paper] had its pro-government things, but it was not organic. There were few organic, pro-Alfonsín journalists. The general coverage was not alfonsinista at all, except for few isolated front-pages and op-ed articles (Granovsky 1990).

Another columnist recalls:

The Radical government never took advantage of La Razón. We never could get good information. On the contrary. Being pro-government was a big obstacle. Many times I went to get information from 'excellent' contacts with [government] ministers and they patted my back, called me 'friend' but they never told me anything. Information was for other newspapers . . . We could never get inside information . . . Radicals did not consider [La Razón's] journalists their own (Mendelevich 1990).²⁵

The other attempt to launch a Radical newspaper was started when members of the Junta Coordinadora Nacional, a youth faction of the Radical party who was a major political ally of President Alfonsín, decide to buy stocks of the almost bankrupt Buenos Aires-based Tiempo Argentino, a newspaper started in 1982 that bought La Opinión's premises from the military regime (New York Times 1984). Though moderately supporting some government policies, Tiempo Argentino did not

²⁵. After Timerman resigned in 1986 and due to its persistent economic crisis and mismanagement, the newspaper was in an irresolute conflict. After countless negotiations among the government, stock-holders and workers, La Razón finally closed down in 1989.

become a Radical newspaper either and due to mounting economic difficulties it shortly went out of business.

These two attempts by the Radical party were the only ventures to develop a party press during the 1983-1989 years. Except for the short-lived Nuevo Sur, a daily financially supported by the Communist party which due to economic difficulties lasted from April 1989 to December 1990, parties did not try to publish their own dailies. This could be interpreted as a result of the country's permanent shaky economic conditions as starting a major newspaper was a highly risky enterprise amidst an uncertain economic panorama. However, without discarding economic reasons, the lack of a partisan press during the 1983-1989 period could be explained by addressing the same reasons pointed out in the previous section: the difficulties for parties to become stable instruments for communication coupled with the negligence to developing means for channeling political debates.

Though press communication still remained largely disorganized throughout the 1983-1989 campaigns, some important changes towards an increasing professionalization of press election campaigning were progressively introduced. The fact that, unlike previous periods, elections were regularly held, certainly encouraged politicians to learn about different strategies for media campaigning, to correct previous mistakes and to gradually introduce modifications.

Given the instability of the political system, Argentine politicians could rarely introduce new forms of communication in election campaign, on the basis of past experiences or borrowing strategies from other countries. Among politicians, there is a general sense that the regular holding of elections gave more opportunities to learn about campaigning. In their opinion, as these changes were delayed due to continuous interruptions of democratic regimes, both politicians and campaign staffs were just starting to understand campaign communication during the 1983-1989 period; as César Jaroslavsky (1990), former Radical whip, states: "We [politicians] are in first grade of elementary school but we are twenty years old. We are like old people in school."

An important sign of these changes was the decision made by different campaign staffs to invite journalists from different Buenos Aires newspapers to cover on the campaign trail. As Buenos Aires-based dailies dominate both the press market and the "information bouncing" among the mass media, campaigners intensely targeted the big Buenos Aires press. Given the dominant role in the national press market (Ford 1987) and prestige among regional elites, getting coverage from Buenos Aires newspapers is crucial for candidates, even for municipal or state elections. According to many journalists, regional candidates, especially those pursuing national recognition, pervasively attempt to get coverage from

Buenos Aires dailies. Though the circulation of many papers is similar to or larger than Buenos Aires dailies, the readership is notably restricted to their states. Circulation figures of major regional newspapers is report in Table 3.

Table 3.-- Circulation of Non-Buenos Aires Newspapers (in thousands).

Newspaper	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
La Voz del Interior-Cordoba	76	79	92	84	85
La Gaceta-Tucuman	69	68	82	77	71
La Capital-Rosario	57	58	68	66	61
El Dia-La Plata	54	53	55	57	56
Los Andes-Mendoza	54	53	61	57	50

Source: Instituto Verificador de Circulaciones, 1983-1987.

The decision to include print journalists in campaign trails was part of the broader strategy to assure that the main newspapers received daily reports and wires about candidates' routines. Even though travel and lodging expenses were paid by campaign staffs, newspapers and news agencies decided not to assign journalists as they had limited human resources and were not financially able to pay a replacement or, simply, not willing to hire new reporters. Facing economic troubles, many newspapers and magazines assigned only one reporter to follow the Peronist campaign as candidate Carlos Menem had a considerable lead over Eduardo Angeloz. A journalist who covered Angeloz's campaign observes: "Journalists massively followed Menem. At the airport, it was

a true aircraft fleet. To leave the airport, they took hours. Obviously, the media went for the winner" (Díaz 1990).

Another visible transformation was that politicians started having a more sophisticated understanding of newspapers' readerships and media consumption for their campaign strategies. Though, especially during the last campaigning days, they still stuffed newspapers with campaign advertising, campaign staffs began using press campaigning according to candidates' electoral profile and dailies' readerships. Newspapers still showed a pastiche of disorganized advertisements and solicitadas; on the last campaigning day of the 1989 election, fifty-three percent of Clarín's and sixty-nine percent of La Nación's pages were covered with multi-sized campaign advertisements. The reasons for placing an overwhelming amount of advertising are basically the ones discussed before. First, advertising was a way for some internal party factions, trade unions and different organizations to show support for a given candidate or party; candidates and party factions rather than the general voting population were the main target of those advertisements. Second, and partially connected with the first point, the inorganic organizational structure of campaigning also explains the impressive amount of campaign advertising published during the last days; that is, several groups backing the same candidate ran separate campaigns and relied

on press ads as a central way to manifest support vis-à-vis running politicians.

Despite this elite-targeted campaign advertising, campaigners progressively planned press ads and coverage according to their campaign needs. Press coverage was intensely pursued as it was generally believed that, in a journalist's words, "shifting voters tend mainly to have a middle-class background and are frequent newspaper readers" (Granovsky 1990). An example of the increasing attention to distinctive voter groups was the publication of solicitudes targeted to specific voting segments such as women, senior citizens, entrepreneurs, intellectuals and "indecisive voters," rather than being undifferentiated as it was generally during the 1983 campaign.²⁶ Ads, candidates' articles and interviews with candidates were published in newspaper sections read by the targeted segment.

In addition to segmenting **within** newspaper sections, campaign staffs also segmented **among** newspapers. As the Argentine press market showed a progressive consolidation of different newspapers with distinctive readerships during the 1983-1989 years, candidates were able to segment their message or stress coverage from a given newspaper according to

²⁶. Different examples are: for indecisive voters (La Nación 1987; Clarín 1989b), entrepreneurs (El Cronista Comercial 1989), intellectuals (Página 12 1989a, 1989b), young people (Clarín 1985a, 1985b), workers (Clarín 1985), women (Clarín 1989a, 1989c).

specific campaign goals. Candidates, though generally not ignoring any major newspaper, privileged some specific newspapers based on the campaign design and their popularity among different segments of the electorate.

Basically, the segmentation of newspapers and their publics can be described as follows. Clarín, given its large circulation and the fact that its readership has wide ranging interests and political preferences, was certainly candidates' favorite newspaper. Politicians' spokespeople claim that securing a daily mention in Clarín is a rule-of-thumb, a daily preoccupation during campaigning months. Appearing in Clarín allows the possibility to be known and read by both a large and varied market and policy-making elites. Differing from Clarín's heterogeneous public, other newspapers have more specialized clienteles. La Nación and La Prensa are central channels to address political and economic elites, traditional social groups and center-right leaning voters. Ambito Financiero, given both its late development and widespread consumption among economic and political elites, is highly important during electoral times. Ambito's significance was due not to its circulation numbers, but to the qualitative weight of its readership in both economic and political circles. It is an indispensable medium for "talking" to potential campaign monies contributors and competing politicians; its editor-in-chief Roberto García (1990) states:

"[the paper] is an opportunity for candidates to make a different appearance." Crónica and Diario Popular are central for addressing working-class voters, especially in the heavily populated industrial Greater Buenos Aires. El Cronista Comercial, an old newspaper traditionally focused on financial information, gained significance for campaigning as after it became part of the multi-media Eurnekian group in 1987, its format was dramatically renovated and sales increased. Nuevo Sur was mainly an avenue to target pro-left voters. Página 12, a newspaper started in 1987, was a main channel to address the center-left spectrum and political elites.²⁷

²⁷. According to its managing editor, Página 12 aimed to offer a newspaper to "the politicized progressive sector of the society that due to the dictatorship years have remained without any media" (Pasquini Durán 1990). Its circulation slowly but firmly grew, especially during the 1988 Peronist primaries. After the 1989 hyperinflation which significantly affected general press sales, Página 12 still increased its sales but at a much slower pace. In 1991, its daily circulation ranged between 70,000 to 80,000 while given the lack of a high captive market, sales strongly depend on daily events. Particularly in days of political or economic turmoil, not unusual in contemporary Argentina, Página 12 increases its sales. "In a situation of crisis or uncertainty, sales go up. If on Sunday elections were held in the Buenos Aires province, on Monday I have to increase the paper's circulation because sales will be higher than usual, approximately twenty-five percent more" (Pasquini Durán 1990).

Political elites gradually accepted Página 12 as a main vehicle for information and for campaigning. Despite constant criticisms by politicians who have catalogued the newspaper as "a libel," "a pamphlet," and, as candidate Menem did in 1989, blamed it for the guerrilla attack to a military garrison, Página 12 secured its market position in both general and elite segments. Its readership is mainly middle-class, young, urban, with strong interest in politics, and its political preferences are equally divided among Radicalism, Peronism, and Left.

Several examples on the progressive segmentation in the use of newspapers for campaigning can be mentioned. The head of the 1989 campaign staff of UCeDe's candidate for representative Adelina de Viola reports that in the attempt to go beyond the traditional UCeDe clientele (mainly, upper and upper-middle, highly educated, urban class), getting coverage from the mainly working-class read Crónica (as well as from television and radio shows consumed by popular classes) was a fundamental part of the press campaign (Jimenez Peña 1990).²⁸ The campaign staff of presidential candidate Carlos Menem occasionally sought coverage from the center-left Página 12 or the leftist Sur as, in their understanding, readers of both papers could hardly be convinced about voting for Peronist candidates. The head of the 1989 Peronist list for representatives in the city of Buenos Aires explains that Clarín is the main avenue for addressing the general

The reasons for the remarkable growth of Página 12 are somewhat similar to the ones above mentioned for Ambito Financiero. Similar to the latter, the former addresses a specific (though different) market with defined views on different issues. In a country where transparent opinions in the press are rare, newspapers offering a defined views can secure a small, but qualitatively important, market share. Two reasons explain why while press consumption rates fell (mainly due to economic recession), newspapers like Página 12 and Ambito Financiero grew: both offer a distinctive and self-evident perspective and target a definite readership with strong economic and political interests.

²⁸. The strategy to address this voting segment augmented the temperature of already heated intra-party conflicts in the UCeDe (Gibson 1990).

electorate, Ambito Financiero for the people of "the city," La Nación for political and economic groups, and Página 12 for the left-wing spectrum (Toma 1990).

As different elections have taken place since 1983, newspapers started including different types of campaign-related information. Most notably during the 1989 national election, dailies published commentaries on different campaign strategies, interviews with political consultants, polling information and a more general coverage of campaigning.²⁹ Newspapers published more data, especially horse-race type of coverage, more survey information, and more minutiae about candidates activities.

The fact that the press included more narratives about campaigning was related neither to substantial changes in the relationship between political parties and newspapers nor to a sudden emergence of investigative journalism. Notably, newspapers published more detailed information on campaigns during one of the worst economic moments in the country's recent history which heavily affected press sales. Dailies ran more articles on stumping activities as campaign headquarters provided them with more information about daily routines; the incorporation of a pack of journalists following the candidate resulted from the intention of campaign headquarters to

²⁹. Except for Clarín, who sporadically conducted polls, newspapers published survey information produced by private consulting firms.

enlarge and maintain steady contacts with the press.

Yet newspapers tended to describe rather than to analyze campaigning, acting as part of the campaign, as a witness rather than as a campaign analyst. Campaign coverage did not differ from the extended practice in Argentine journalism of offering almost no investigative reporting. The lack of research journalism can be seen as a byproduct of both the high economic costs of diverting journalists from their daily occupations and assign them to write in-depth reports, and newspapers' intention not to delve into conflictive issues that might irritate diverse powers.

Compared to the 1983 campaign, newspapers maintained similar positions and methods for hinting support for candidates. Clear endorsements were still absent and the backing was expressed though the amount of space given to candidates, articles in op-ed pages and headlines. Electoral preferences also remained. Clarín supported Peronist candidates; La Nación fluctuated between UCeDe and Radical candidates while clearly supported Eduardo Angeloz in the 1989 elections; Página 12 favored Angeloz; La Prensa, given existing choices, unenthusiastically backed Radical and UCeDe candidates; El Cronista Comercial slightly supported Radical candidates; Sur manifestly favored the Izquierda Unida candidates; and Ambito Financiero definitely supported

Peronist candidates, especially Carlos Menem in 1989.³⁰

Newspapers started a more expanded coverage of election campaigns as an indirect result of a stronger competition. During 1989, press competition was stronger than in previous campaigns as two new dailies existed (Página 12 and Nuevo Sur) while Ambito Financiero and El Cronista Comercial, though they previously existed, devoted more attention to political issues. As sales often rise during election campaign and even though they faced a shrinking advertising market, newspapers had the opportunity to capture a larger share of both sales and advertising markets. During election campaigns, as Página 12's managing editor puts it,

There is more information given the stronger competition among newspapers. The media economy which faces a process of economic adjustment, tends to accommodate to high-purchasing consumers to dominate a bigger share of the advertising market (Pasquini Durán 1990).

Dailies engaged in a remarkable, and for Argentine standards, rare battle for capturing both readers and advertising monies.

³⁰. Julio Ramos, editor and publisher of Ambito Financiero, was personal friend of Menem, and Humberto Toledo and Juan Bautista Yofre, two of Ambito's main journalists participated in the Peronist campaign. Yofre was Menem's spokesperson and Toledo replaced him when Menem was inaugurated president (New York Times 1990). Many claim that Ambito's support for Menem was reinforced after Angeloz visited a factory owned by the Eurnekian group during the campaign trail. The Eurnekian group owns a rising media conglomerate (that includes the daily El Cronista Comercial, and radio and television cable stations) and is Ambito's main competitor as they address a similar public and struggle for market expansion. Ramos has often criticized the Eurnekian group as an example of media monopolies (Ambito Financiero 1989, 1990).

Attempting to secure a wider reach in a shaky press market, newspapers decided to introduce a more abundant coverage of campaigns.

CONCLUSION

The structure of press campaigning and the role of newspapers during the 1983-1989 election campaigns reflects the general pattern of the interaction between political parties and the press. Attempting to bridge the communication gap between parties and the public after a long absence of party activity and located in a weaker position vis-a-vis press organizations, candidates endeavored to get as much newspaper coverage as possible. Relying on massive advertising and strengthening personal contacts with newsrooms and newspaper executives were the main strategies for obtaining ample coverage and a favorable treatment in the press.

The presence of more information in the press during recent election campaigns was a consequence of two processes. First, campaign staffs attempted to guarantee steady appearances through incorporating reporters in campaign tours. Second, newspapers were more receptive to campaigners' efforts to maintain a daily presence in the news as press competition increased and campaign information was attractive to increase sales during campaign months.

The basic pattern of interaction between the press and

politicians, however, showed little change. Furthermore, the innovations made by candidates and staff to guarantee press appearances resulted chiefly from the pervading communication weakness of political parties. Journalists often say that the Argentine political class has lately modernized the surface of the methods for political communication but has not altered either the overall structure or the perception about newspapers. That is, parties are extremely dependent on press organizations for communicating, whether with party members, political elites, or the general electorate, and politicians' views of the press have remained instrumental, approaching the press as a medium to carry out specific, short-term goals rather than as means to develop and enlarge spaces for political debate.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BOXING POLITICS: THE COMING OF TELEVISUAL CAMPAIGNS

One must avoid the fallacy of technological determinism; television does not escape the society it serves.

Anthony Smith, The Politics of Information

Research on television and election campaigning has been concerned primarily with two dominant models of broadcasting. On the one hand, the extraordinary amount of studies on the U.S. case have dealt with a commercially-driven, privately-owned television system and its impact on electoral politics (Altheide 1979; Jamieson 1984; Luke 1987; Mendelsohn and Crespi 1970; Ranney 1983). On the other hand, research on Western European countries have accounted for a broadcasting structure, remarkably different from the former: television was originally conceived on a public-service model, assigning an important role to both Parliament and political parties (Blumler 1983, 1991; Gurevitch and Blumler 1990; Mazzoleni 1987; Schoenbach 1987; Seaton and Pimlott 1987; Siune 1986; Smith 1979). Despite recent cracks observed in the public broadcasting system in several European democracies as a result of the ongoing wave of privatization, the use of television for campaigning on both sides of the Atlantic still

offers important divergences as television presents structural differences and political parties relate differently to television.

Though focusing on diverging broadcasting systems, the bulk of the analysis is devoted to tracing the evolution of television in stable democratic regimes. Since its eruption into politics in the 1950s, television, gradually but firmly, has notably reshaped the forms through which politicians and parties go public (Agranoff 1976; Blumler 1987; Diamond and Bates 1984; Farrell and Wortmann 1987; Ranney 1983; Robinson 1977; Smith 1979). The stability of both the U.S. and the post-war European democracies has been the constant background against which television redefined election campaigns. The development of television campaigning during the last decades would be unthinkable without considering the permanence of the political regime; the continuous holding of elections have allowed political parties, politicians, and campaign intelligentsia to progressively alter, reconsider and master the use of television for electioneering.

Television campaigning in post-authoritarian Argentina substantially diverges from these cases. The Argentine television system was neither completely privately owned nor exclusively run by commercial criteria; however, it was not entirely state-owned or absolutely managed following political criteria either. Television was a rare breed: not a fully

commercially-driven enterprise, nor a public-broadcasting service either.

In 1983, Argentine parties faced television after a seven-year absence of election campaigns. Needing to reestablish forms of communication after being censored and banned from television screens, political parties and politicians knew little about television. Their last experience dated back to the turbulent and frantic 1973 election campaign when television was still black and white.¹ The old class of politicians practically remained unfamiliar with the medium as their political upbringing was rooted in times when television had a minor role in politics, for later they were excluded from access to the screens. A new generation of young politicians had matured outside television and once the transition started they had no previous contacts with the medium and little idea about televisual politics. Campaign strategists were also trained in an old style of electioneering that granted scarce importance to, and even dismissed, television.

To understand the evolution of televised campaigning in 1983-1989 Argentina, these two aspects need to be considered: the unique structure of its broadcasting system and the fact

¹. Thanks to the military government's laborious dedication to host the 1978 World Cup and to broadcast worldwide to propagandize the post-1976 Argentina, television became color.

that campaign headquarters and candidates previously had intermittent and scant experiences with television. Little can be understood without a previous consideration of the structure of Argentine television during 1983-1989. The goal is not to offer an exhaustive analysis of broadcasting policy during that period but to present an general framework of the state of Argentine television for a better comprehension of how television was used for canvassing.

THE DISPUTE FOR THE SCREENS

By the 1980s, television was widespread. There existed forty-four open stations while ninety-four percent of the households in the city of Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires and eighty-four percent in the rest of the country owned television sets (Morgan and Shahanan 1991). Though the state played an important role in the early beginnings during the first Peronist administration in 1951, Argentine television developed in the late 1950s under initiatives of private investors plus economic and technological investments of the U.S. three networks (Muraro 1974). Yet the state had a major role in the management of television stations during the 1980s. Although fifty-nine percent of stations remained privately owned, the role of the state was substantial as the Buenos Aires channels that produce and distribute most of the

national programming, remained state-owned.² Transferred to the state by the Peronist government in 1974 who grounded the decision on the basis that the licenses granted to private owners have expired, the four Buenos Aires-based television stations remained state-owned throughout the military government.

Despite announcements made by government officials, those stations as well as other state broadcasting media were not privatized during the authoritarian regime. Two factors account for this. First, the constant disputes among the three branches of the Armed Forces obstructed the development of a unified media policy, and second, the regime's conception that keeping television in its hands guaranteed full control over the formation of public opinion. Though the Law of Broadcasting authorizing the privatization of the state-owned television and radio stations and excluding media corporations from participating in the bid was enacted in 1980, the process of privatization started at a very slow pace. Only after the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war, and urged by its near and unexpected finale, the government accelerated the process of privatization with the hope of retaining some control over television stations by favoring political allies in the bid.

². Over a total of forty-four open television stations, fifteen were state-owned (whether by the central or local states), twenty-six were privately-owned, one was state-intervened and two were run by universities (Todo es Historia 1988).

However, when the newly democratic government was inaugurated in December 1983, only the Buenos-Aires Channel 9 was transferred to private owners.³ As a result, the Alfonsín administration inherited, besides a dozens of small provincial radio transmitters, an attractive yet problematic legacy from the authoritarian regime: three, highly indebted, gigantic, state-owned television stations based in the city of Buenos Aires.⁴

Television was a thorny issue for the Radical government. Though the 1983 Radical party electoral platform set out precise goals, by the end of the five-and-half year term, little was accomplished from the original plan and the general structure of Argentine television basically remained untouched. Certainly, and especially during the first years, the government produced quick and major transformations regarding the abolition of censorship and the partial renovation of television programming. However, other major planned reforms were not carried out. The 1983 platform considered a profound reevaluation of the television

³. Libertad S.A., a media group headed by Alejandro Romay who owned the station before it was taken over by the state in 1974, was favored by the bid.

⁴. How television stations' debts mounted is difficult to trace precisely. A merry-go-round management, seldom obliged to publicly present economic balances, and major investments done in the modernization of station's equipment for color transmission are usually seen as the main factors accounting for skyrocketing debts.

structure, mainly through the creation of a bicameral commission for radio and television "to supervise the right for true information, the respect for ideological pluralism, free access of people and institutions to use the mass media and the defense of the democratic and republican form of government (Union Cívica Radical 1983); the restructuring of the COMFER (the Federal Commission of Radio and Broadcasting) by integrating it with Congress and other "community representatives;" and the repeal of the 1980 Law of Broadcasting. The Radical party envisioned three different forms for television and radio ownership. First, a state-owned sector including a small network of one national television and radio national station and branches spread throughout the country; second, privately-owned broadcasting media (partially inspired by the U.S. case); and third, a mixed model, public but not governmental, conceding participation to universities, political parties and trade unions which, according to the director of the National News Agency (TELAM) during the Alfonsín administration, "was vaguely inspired on the model of PBS and the BBC" (Monteverde 1990).

However, the scenario at the end of the Alfonsín administration was quite different from what the Radical party planned in 1983. The 1980 Law of Broadcasting still remained in force (although the process of privatization started by the military government was stopped by the 1151/84 decree); only

in April 1988 the Radical bloc in Congress presented its first proposal for broadcasting;⁵ and television stations were still government-owned, highly-indebted enterprises, run by a mix of commercially driven and political criteria, fragmented among different party factions and managed by numerous alternating government-appointed directors.

Radical officials conclude that the government had little success in the area of mass media policy. In their analysis, the major problem was the lack of a law which could reorder the chaotic state of Argentine broadcasting. The management of state-owned media was largely fragmented among numerous government branches who had oversight powers over different television and radio stations. There was the COMFER (Federal Committee of Broadcasting) which directly depended on the executive and controlled legislation on media issues; the SIP (Secretary of Public Information) which until its dissolution in 1987 also depended on the executive and was basically in charge of announcing government actions and opinions; and the Council for the Consolidation of Democracy which was in charge of elaborating telecommunication policies. According to the 1987-1989 vice-secretary of Communication, "the overlapping [of roles] impeded having a new Law of Broadcasting" (Porto

⁵. Several proposals to reform the 1980 Law of Broadcasting were formulated and presented by different political parties in Congress, but, for different reasons, none of them was finally approved.

1990).⁶ The dispersion of functions is interpreted as a result that government was reluctant to centralized activities on media policy; observers argue that the trying to differentiate itself from the "Apold model," a synonym for an authoritarian control of the mass media, the government consciously resisted the idea of leaving decisions to one all-powerful official.⁷

Explanations for why the Administration could not achieve its 1983 mass media plan are divergent among former officials. Some argue that the permanent disputes and inability to reach a consensus between a pro-private media and a more pro-state faction within the Radical party made the unification of media policies impossible (Gregorich 1990). In contrast, others claim that there was not a clear communication policy, "nor even the policy of no policy" (Monteverde 1990). The 1985-1987 Secretary of Public Information recalls:

When the government was inaugurated it was not very clear what to do with the media. It hadn't been a central topic during the campaign and there was only the general feeling that they were used by the military to manipulate public opinion and now they had to be opened to every political group (Radonjic 1990).

Still others express the view "it was difficult to privatize in a fair way in both political and entrepreneurial terms"

⁶. Curiously, within this highly intricate and dispersed management of television stations, the Ministry of Economics controlled the La Plata-based Channel 2.

⁷. During the second Peronist administration (1952-1955), Raúl Apold was the head of the Subsecretaría de Informaciones, the media office that controlled the large string of state-owned newspapers, magazines and radio stations.

(Sábato 1990). Some state that the media issue was neglected and avoided prolonging a tradition of the Radicals' feeling ill at ease with the media, the oft-called "Illia syndrome" (López 1990).⁸ Finally, other former senior officials, more attuned to criticisms made by political opponents, hold that the Radical administration, like former governments, could not resist the temptation of keeping and using the media while in power and attempting to privatize them when leaving to favor potential allies.⁹

All these reasons seem to have a grain of truth. Even during the early years under the continuation of the "democratic spring" and amidst popular support, when the Alfonsín administration carried out its plans of removing mechanisms of censorship and guaranteeing political pluralism (Gibaja 1990), the government was slow in carrying out a firm

⁸. "Illia syndrome" is a catchword alluding to the attitude of 1963-1966 Radical president Arturo Illia regarding mass media policy. Illia was overthrown by a military coup which took place in June 1966 under continuous attacks by the major media against his Administration trumpeting the need for and the proximity of a military government. Illia, who considered that the government should not intervene in mass media issues to keep the media independent, proposed a "hands-off" position despite the evident and constant criticisms voiced by the major newspapers and political magazines.

⁹. Television analyst Pablo Sirvén observes that when the Radical bloc presented its first proposal for a new Law of Broadcasting in 1988, "the Radical government attempted to continue with a long-lasting tradition of lame-duck Administrations: to pass broadcasting legislation in the very last minute, to avoid leaving state-owned media in the hands of its political adversaries" (1988, 48).

media policy. The impetus for having a unified direction over television policy was evidently stronger at the beginning but few advances were made in transforming the overall structure of television. Why? It seems that a major revision of the structure of the mass media, though mentioned in various electoral platforms and certainly a concern of some government officials, was not a main preoccupation for the government (and I might say for the other parties) and little was known about "what to do with the media."

The inability (and/or perhaps the reluctance) for reaching an agreement with other parliamentary forces certainly eliminated one main requisite for introducing profound modifications in broadcasting. To introduce some of the major reforms outlined in the 1983 Radical electoral platform without political support from other parties or through negotiation with other parliamentary forces was implausible. Whether the government could not get support because it purposely did not want to reach an agreement with other parties (especially with Peronism) about the future of the mass media or it could not find a common ground with its opponents due to the latter's permanent, fierce resistance to any legislation which "sounded Radical" (as former government officials claim), is still matter of open debate. But undeniably the lack of political agreement prevented any major transformation of the media structure within a design which

granted an important role to Congress, other political institutions and intermediate associations in managing television and radio stations.

In addition, political timing was not on the government's side. When the Radical party enjoyed the majority in the House of Representatives from 1983-1987, the issue of restructuring the media was not a priority in the government's agenda; questions such as human rights violations during the military government or solving the recurrent economic crisis clearly moved attempts to review media policy to the back burner. Later, when Radicals could elaborate a common proposal for a Law of Broadcasting and presented it in April 1988 in Congress, the Radical party no longer had the majority, the government was discredited and, for many, it was moribund. The increasing loss of political legitimacy (especially after the 1987 conclusive electoral defeat) plus the visible factionalization of the party definitely eliminated the possibilities for reaching a consensus among different sectors whether within or outside the party. Once the television stations were distributed according to party internal struggles and the government lost its initial strength and momentum, it was politically difficult to define a common policy.¹⁰

¹⁰. It would be unfair to claim that the Alfonsín administration constituted a unique case of democratic forces being unable to implement sound communication policies. In

The Radical government, though it did not champion full state intervention in television but only a mild role, was left to its own resources to confront the intense push for privatization from different groups. Entrepreneurial and media companies (especially the major newspapers) constantly pressured to simultaneously eliminate the controversial article forty-five of the 1980 Law of Broadcasting (that excluded print firms from owning broadcasting media) and to privatize television stations. Waving the familiar banner that "the public interest is better served by the market," these groups fiercely spearheaded the push for privatization. Their demands for privatization were clearly expressed during the 1983 election campaign. A La Nación editorial (1983a) stated that after nine years of state-owned television the result was not satisfactory; television was unsuccessful whether as an

this area, the historic record of Argentine political parties is far from promising. Since the early arrival of both radio and television technologies, all major broadcasting legislation has been enacted by authoritarian regimes. Certainly, infrequent democratic regimes have not given democratic forces too many chances to legislate in that regard. However, according to many analysts I interviewed, political parties have remained either oblivious or illiterate in broadcasting policies. It is not hard to compile a litany of quotations from former and present government officials, politicians, campaign aides, and media analysts illustrating this claim. Statements such as "parties were weak in [communication] issues even when they were strong;" "[regarding communication], parties are still in the dark;" and "Argentine political parties lack a defined communication policy" are frequently offered to account for why parties have been unable to devise comprehensive broadcasting and communication policies.

economic enterprise or as "cultural vehicle." Along similar lines, whether in conferences and op-ed articles, newspapers and other media organizations urged privatization to develop an independent media and exhorted the elimination of article 45 by arguing that it was unconstitutional (Clarín 1983a, 1983b; La Nación 1983b). By the end of the Radical government and during the 1989 election campaign, presidential candidates from the three major political parties agreed on the need for privatization and the participation of print companies in the bidding amidst staunch lobbying efforts of private firms (La Nación 1989).¹¹

As the early government attempts for establishing a somewhat unified policy failed, the structure of television became highly disorganized. Radical officials observe that once Channel 9 was privatized (after the military assigned the station to a private group, the judiciary in charge of reviewing the decision confirmed the bid during the Alfonsín administration) and initiatives to develop a model of television that included both public and private ownership

¹¹. The Buenos Aires television stations were privatized and transferred to the new owners by the Menem administration in December 1989. Though the 1980 Law of Broadcasting still remained, the conflictive article 45 was bypassed and print groups could participate. Channel 13 was granted to ARTEAR-Clarín, a conglomerate formed mainly by Clarín together with other smaller print and broadcasting media groups, while Channel 11 was given to TELEFE S.A., an association of numerous companies including among others the publishing company Atlántida and Televisoras Provinciales (a conglomerate of provincial media groups).

remained weak, competition became the central criteria for running television stations while all possibilities to develop a coherent policy were lost. Though the major stations remained state-owned, the Alfonsín administration was no longer in full command as, similar to what happened during the military government, the control of television stations was distributed among party factions. Channel 13 was under the Junta Coordinadora Nacional (a faction closely allied to President Alfonsín), channel 11 was controlled by the party office of the Buenos Aires state and channel 7 (Argentina Televisora Color) remained under the domains of the executive. Party factions influenced the workings of stations mainly through controlling the appointment of stations's directors while appointees were often designated more on the basis of their political contacts rather than expertise in the field. Given continuous political and economic pressures, the tenure of station managers (as consequently the continuity of other high-rank executives) was subjected to internal struggles within the Radical party. The former vice-secretary of Communication admits that "internal [party] struggles were permanently reflected in media policy" (Muiño 1990).

Managers were expected to be successful in two terrains. First, once economic efficiency was implicitly adopted as a yardstick for gauging what a "good station" was, managers were pressured to be competent administrators by trying to increase

ratings to get larger advertising revenues and to maintain (or hopefully) decrease the stations' debts. Second, they had to be politically "fair", to run stations in a democratic way guaranteeing "freedom". What "fair" and "freedom" meant was vaguely defined and, alternatively, it alluded to opening studios to political adversaries and to offering equal television time to all party factions and officials. Both commercial and political aspects motivate constant debates.

Though state-owned, stations were managed following typical criteria of commercial television, resulting in what President Alfonsín's former spokesperson defines as "an absurdity, a hodgepodge" (López 1990). Ratings were a central obsession for station directors; individual producers "rented" time slots from each station (the so-called "co-productions") thus having full control over their shows both in terms of programming and advertising;¹² and commercial advertising saturated television screens though the Law of Broadcasting limited the amount of advertising to twelve minutes per

¹². Silvia Schulein (1986) defined these "co-productions" as "a prostitution of the concept of production which instead of incorporating new talents to these stations, has been the way through which private interests are the owners of television programming structure again. By admitting coproductions in the state-owned television, they are allowing ideological control, usually with a very conservative bias of the private coproducers in the screen."

hour.¹³ What a "successful television station" meant was highly controversial and unclear among Radical officials. Opinions ranged between those who conceived television as another public institution (thus, as they argued, it was impossible to expect stations to be profitable) and others who understood television as any other commercial enterprise and claimed that stations had to be lucrative.¹⁴ As tensions between these conceptions lasted throughout the whole Radical administration, television's role remained ambiguously defined and was a matter of continual controversy. Also, what "fair" or "democratic" management (and thus coverage) meant was also ill-defined and usually was left to station managers' criteria. Station directors as well as other officials (especially those in control of television news) were permanently subjected to demands and pressured from both party colleagues and political opponents to "get camera" (Dominiani 1991). Accusations of partiality were frequent, and

¹³. According to Pedro Sánchez, who was in charge of the COMFER (Federal Committee of Broadcasting) and was strongly criticized by many Radical officials given his pro-privatization position, "such violations [of the limit in the amount of advertising] occur[ed] more often in state-owned than in the private stations" (El Porteño 1987).

¹⁴. Emilio Gibaja, the first Secretary of Public Information until May 1985, represented the first position and under his tenure the Administration attempted to coordinate a common policy and fulfill its electoral promise. In an interview (El Porteño 1987), he stated: "It cannot be expected from television, a vital medium for the democratic system, to be profitable. Otherwise television news has to be done not for the sake of democracy but to make money."

politicians often clocked television time to "prove" bias in the screens.

As a result, and despite some important advances in terms of freedom of expression and a clear attitude towards the defense of the democratic system, television presented a lamentable state by the end of the Alfonsín administration. Though reduced during the early phase of the government, stations' debts had astronomically increased afterwards adding to the colossal state deficit.¹⁵ Though supposedly they belonged to the same owner, stations relentlessly competed with each other. In July 1987, an article in the magazine El Porteño (1987) stated: "The state-owned stations compete offering similar shows or stealing stars from each other to get a higher rating and capture more advertising." Though Radical officials continuously described the situation of three state-owned television stations as an eternal source of conflict and insisted on finding a fast and complete solution to the problem, by the end of the Alfonsín administration the channels still exhibited the structure they had in 1983 while the electoral platform was completely abandoned.

Within an extremely chaotic television structure, controlled by competing party factions, and run by a melange of commercial and political considerations, politicians slowly

¹⁵. By 1989, the deficit of state television was \$70,000,000 (Morgan and Shanahan 1991).

adopted campaign strategies to television. Amidst continuous conflicts over television management and accusations over manipulation and negligence to broadcast or to cover specific campaigns, candidates increasingly started to participate in a wide range of shows and to tailor their campaigns to television standards. It is against the backdrop of permanent controversies over the management of television stations that the accelerating importance of television qua medium for campaigning has to be understood.

TURNING ON THE TV SET, TURNING ON CAMPAIGN POLITICS

In times when television structure and management was chaotic, political parties and candidates persistently scrambled to get television airtime. Simultaneous to a relentless voracity to "get camera," political parties mostly assumed the predominant state of television. Simultaneous to what has been argued about press campaigning in chapter five, making inroads in the prevailing system rather than reconsidering the overall architecture of television was the common solution to the need of going public. It was seldom considered that the urgent necessity to reach voters and parties' accelerating weakness to construct stable mechanisms for political communication demanded a profound reevaluation of the role of television in democratic Argentina. Instead, it was generally assumed that stuffing television programming

with candidates solved the persistent problems for widening and strengthening forms of communication.

Campaigning did not equal television since campaigns notably went beyond its boundaries: as argued in chapter four, there was more campaigning than what met the television eye. But on the brink of election day, watching television often equaled watching campaigning. Though it neither absolutely nor permanently dictated the campaigning tempo, television's rhythm and codes impregnated stumping activities. Audience complaints that television was flooded with politics during election times and interrupted regular programming were certainly well-grounded. During campaigning months, almost every television show became an arena for candidates to address the audience. Why were television screens overflowing with electoral politics during campaigning months? Why was a significant proportion of the total television advertising aired in the last weeks of the campaigns? To answer these questions various factors have to be addressed.

First, with few exceptions, election campaigns were often fragmented among different and often opposite party factions (and trade unions in the case of Peronism) who independently canvassed and raised funds for competing candidates. Campaign committees decided to invest in television commercials without consultation with other campaigners; thus, as it happened in many cases, spots for the same candidate (and even identical

ones) were broadcast during the same commercial break but funded by different sources.

Second, overall media planning was poorly designed. This problem was not specific to (but probably more noticeable in) television; whether in radio, newspapers, or billboards, advertisements cascaded in the final campaigning days. Similar to press campaigns, investments in television advertising were decided often on the basis of available funds rather than upon consideration of strategic goals. As substantial funds were usually amassed in the last phase of the campaign (due to lack of systematic accumulation or last-minute decisions made by awaiting contributors), campaigners encountered a sudden and substantial injection of monies "to be invested." As there existed no limits whether on the length of the spots, the campaign kickoff or on campaign expenses, parties advertised according to available funds. Only the in-force deadline for campaigning, twenty-four hours before election day, stopped the avalanche of commercial spots and candidates appearances. Money rather than legal limits or strategic considerations drove parties' decision for television advertising.

Third, politicians held a simplistic, hypodermic-needle approach to television effects. Candidates and campaign strategists vaguely knew which advertising and propaganda techniques effectively "worked" and research on voting decision was almost non-existent. For politicians, it was

fundamental to be in television without further consideration of the kind of appearance (Muraro 1989) and usually conflated both extent and depth (Sábato 1990); as television analyst Ulanovsky (1990) puts it, "politicians make the mistake of confusing quantity with quality. They are seduced by the idea that they have to be in television, regardless of the show." Observers agree that politicians naively believed in a direct relation between space and penetration: doubling television exposure simply implied duplicating their chances to get votes. Stuffing television with advertisements mostly revealed a simplistic understanding of media effects, something like "more-exposure-guarantees-more-chances-for-winning" kind of rationale; as Juan M. Casella (1990), the 1989 Radical candidate for vice-president, states: "it seemed that the dominant belief was that more spots meant more votes."¹⁶

Although article twenty-one of the 1980 Law of Broadcasting prohibited broadcasting commercials on state-owned television stations, a federal judge ruled that each station's **interventor** (the government appointee) had to decide whether or not to broadcast campaign spots. Ultimately, the

¹⁶. A research study published by the daily Página 12 (1989c) reported that out of 36 prime-time hours broadcasted by the four Buenos Aires television stations between May 6 and May 8, 1989 (election day was May 14), campaign commercials summed almost five hours (a fifth of the total airtime). Moreover, in many cases, parties aired the same spot twice in the same commercials shift and five times during the three hours.

evident economic benefit of airing political commercials for stations with severe financial troubles and under constant crossfire from candidates and parties to take full advantage of television for campaigning, station managers agreed to air unlimited amounts of unlimited length political commercials. The continual broadcasting of campaign spots, especially during the last two weeks, led many companies and advertising agencies to remove or simply not to start their television campaign. Commercial advertisers feared that their spots were going to be buried in the avalanche of political advertisements.

Simultaneous to the professionalization of television campaigning, political spots experienced significant changes. While during the first campaigns, clips typically romanticized party politics, strong ideological convictions and offered a simple format, later, they gradually introduced newly professional designs and mostly eliminated party references.¹⁷

¹⁷. The 1983 Alfonsín campaign was seen (and still is) as the one who renovated election campaigning by introducing innovative campaign spots and by stressing television. However, members of the Alfonsín headquarters deny common arguments that television commercials were highly sophisticated. The oft-seen as slick spots that included over a dozen of commercials in which candidate Alfonsín talked about diverse issues (e.g. health, housing, education) and introduced "his people" (local candidates and his running mate Victor Martínez) were actually improvised speeches by the candidate himself right before shooting against a simple television backdrop (Monteverde 1990; Sthulman 1990).

Political parties also campaigned in television by using the free slots (in both state- and privately-owned stations) granted by the in-force 1980 Law of Broadcasting. Time slots were equally allocated among all running parties and were ordered by a lottery; existing television shows as well as ten-minute spaces, specifically ceded to political parties and scattered throughout the regular programming, were available for campaigning. Slight modifications (inspired by the Italian case) were implemented for the 1989 presidential election; it was decided to establish two rounds, one for presidential and the other for vicepresidential candidates, and time slots were ordered according to the amount of votes parties received in the 1987 midterm election. Within the Radical government, while some officials were inclined to assign the amount of free time and to order them proportionally to votes received, others maintained that free spaces had to be equally distributed as parties and candidates did not evenly participate in the rest of television programming (Zuleta-Puceiro 1990). While in the early elections these free spaces mainly starred candidates simply talking to the camera, later ones were generally more technologically sophisticated and introduced campaign spots.

The succession of electoral campaigns allowed parties, candidates and campaign strategists to learn about television campaigning. But still the reasons for flooding television

screens with campaign politics remained. Hoping to be on the tube and to reach maximum exposure, candidates campaigned through almost every television show. Amidst continual disputes over television, different programs had to confront the issue of impartiality and fair coverage of elections. Since campaigning surfaced in a large variety of morning, evening and late-night television shows, pressures often existed for almost all programs. How to cover election campaigns became a problem affecting television as a whole not just some specific shows; every show was progressively subjected to diverse pressures to provide airtime for candidates. Let us review the different television genres used by candidates for campaigning.

Political Interview Shows: Television Central Court

Political talk shows were a central arena for campaigning and perhaps, politicians' most beloved television genre. Though several "political roundtable" shows existed, they were not equally important nor did they attract politicians' attention evenly. Unquestionably, Tiempo Nuevo was the most-talked about, highly-debated and highly-watched show of its genre during this period (it often ranked among the twenty most watched television shows). For candidates, television campaigning often equaled being on this show; Tiempo Nuevo producer Clara Mariño (1990) claims that "politicians see it

as the most influential television show in Argentina" while journalist Carlos Fernández (1990), who co-hosted the political talk show En Profundidad, says that "it is a first priority for politicians." The show started in the 1960s and until 1990 was hosted by journalist-celebrities Bernardo Neustadt and Mariano Grondona until they separated and the former remained the host. Its format basically consisted of a series of roundtable conversations with different guests (politicians, trade unionists, military officers and economists among others), preceded and followed by a commentary-like conversation between the hosts. While Neustadt often was the fast-paced inquisitor, forcing interviewees to give straight and brief answers, Grondona (also a lawyer and professor at the Law School of the Universidad de Buenos Aires) played the more analytical, professorial-type role (Sirvén 1988).

Tiempo Nuevo was a permanent headache for the Alfonsín administration; the 1985-1989 Buenos Aires Radical mayor defined it as an "omnipresent nightmare" (Suárez Lastra 1990). Seen as too conservative and too ideologically close to former authoritarian regimes by some Radical officials, the government was caught up in a dilemma: how to deal democratically with a show which was viewed by many as having an ambiguous and suspicious tradition towards democracy. Solutions to the "Tiempo Nuevo issue" varied within the

government; while some suggested canceling the show or removing it from its traditional time slot, other officials proposed maintaining it on the air. The second option succeeded but, under some officials' recommendations, it was decided to simultaneously sponsored other political talk shows in an attempt to secure a more favorable, or at least a more impartial, treatment in television political talk shows. Host Grondona (1990) explains that

the [Radical] government had an intensive pressure from people close to Alfonsín to remove our show and, apparently, Alfonsín's answer was that they had the right to put up as many shows as they could but they could not cancel us.

As a result, several new political talk shows crashed the screens during the first years of the Alfonsín administration. But these shows never turned out to be official megaphones of the Alfonsín Administration as hosts remained independent. This was a consequence of the fact that the government, though supposedly being interested, exercised almost no control and gave little actual support to these shows, leaving hosts to their own resources and initiatives. Only in sporadic cases, government officials who consistently declined offers to go to Tiempo Nuevo (among others, the 1985-1989 Finance Minister Juan Sourrouille) hinted at some official backing by accepting the hosts' invitations to attend their shows. As journalist Pablo Mendeleovich (1990), who co-hosted the political talk show En Profundidad (one of the new breed, presumed pro-

Radical political shows), puts it, "Support for these programs often remained individual rather than institutional and the government seldom gave clear signs of supporting these shows whether by providing production resources or advertising."

Many of this new wave of political talk shows did not last very long while others, though remaining on the air, never could dispute Tiempo Nuevo's unmatched role, primarily, for intra-elite communication. Often the argument for canceling these shows was their low rating (usually between one and two points), dwarfed by Tiempo Nuevo's much higher numbers (ranking between ten to fifteen points). But, again, it was not clear whether commercial or political criteria were driving stations' decisions over their programming. While these political talk shows were originally encouraged given the Administration's attempt to have some form of support or space for voicing their opinions in television, these shows were canceled on the basis of their low capacity to draw both viewers and advertisers.¹⁸

Besides these reasons, what these after-1984 political talk shows failed at was in disputing what Herstgaard (1989) labels "one the Ten Commandments of presidential politics in

¹⁸. The reasons why these new political talk shows did not enjoy higher ratings and wider attention are varied such as the administrators' impatience and desire to have an immediate commercial success or the meager support they enjoyed from politicians who supposedly were interested in keeping them on the air.

the media age:" the setting of the agenda. This was, unquestionably, the main problem that Tiempo Nuevo presented to the Radical government; the show talked about issues the hosts, not the government, wanted.¹⁹ The new political shows were rarely successful in achieving what many Radicals officials, broadly and vaguely, envisioned as offering a competitor to Tiempo Nuevo. The latter clearly had a definite political agenda, which in its producer's words, was "defending liberal ideas" (Mariño 1990).²⁰ The show periodically clashed with the Alfonsín administration, mainly over the government policy on foreign affairs, human rights and the economy among other issues. To put it succinctly, both hosts constantly championed free-market ideals, promoted a unequivocal alignment with the United States in foreign affairs and viewed the trials of officers accused of violations of human rights as highly disruptive. The government had enormous difficulties battling for this terrain and was often impotent to counter the show's unquestionable relevance for both advancing definite political ideas and

¹⁹. Television analyst Pablo Sirvén (1988, 54) comments: "Tiempo Nuevo was the only dissident television show in those years, setting up an incredible pro-privatization campaign, which not only influenced many of its viewers, but also some officials who criticized the show. Curiously, Neustadt crusaded against state activities from a state station."

²⁰. Within the Argentine convoluted political dictionary, "liberal ideas" strictly refers to free-market, anti-statist economic policies without any specific references to cultural or political ideals.

becoming a central space for intra-elite discussion. Moreover, Tiempo Nuevo gained legitimacy as an arena for political debate as televised debates (introducing Radical officials) were held in the show's time slot while host Bernardo Neustadt, by being selected to moderate two debates, advanced his recognized status as a "prominent journalist" and "social communicator."

For Grondona (1990), the success of the show rested on the fact that

it monopolized independence, it was the only [television] show which could be seen to get an impartial image of what was going on. For some years, Tiempo Nuevo was a synonym of a program that could be watched where all opinions counted and the government could be criticized.

Bernardo Neustadt claimed that the program "was the only thing that permitted Alfonsín to say there is liberty of the press on state television" (New York Times 1987c). Their portrait dissents from what politicians, regardless of political affiliations, often opined about the show, namely that it explicitly supported conservative politicians and ideas, while describing the hosts as biased opinion-peddlers. However, despite eternally criticizing it, candidates steadily attempted to be in the show; as producer Mariño (1990) states, "politicians criticize Tiempo Nuevo but they ask others what to do to be on the show." Ideological leanings were certainly an important criteria for being on the show, but in many known cases, politicians who were prone to sustain heated debates

with the hosts or were skillful at dealing with television's fast pace and drive for agitation and conflict were invited as they guaranteed a strong repercussion and higher ratings (Mariño 1990; Grondona 1990).²¹

For politicians, Tiempo Nuevo (and other interview shows) remained to a large extent equivalent to television campaigning. As these shows decisively secured their colleagues' and political insiders' attention, candidates approached political talk shows as avenues for getting visibility and notoriety among the political elites. Another benefit from attending these shows was that as the press and morning radio programs usually reported and commented on them candidates potentially received free coverage. However, campaign strategists gradually opted to advise candidates not to frequently attend interview shows as these programs concentrated a very specific and definite electorate: the often well-informed, mostly already politically inclined, political insiders. Searching to address wider numbers of the audience, campaign aides and candidates branched out their communication strategies to other television genres.

²¹. Perhaps the best known example was the appearances of Foreign Affairs minister Dante Caputo who in heated discussions, catalogued as "the journalistic event of the year" (El Periodista de Buenos Aires 1987, 35), showed good television sagacity and opposed both hosts' constant criticisms on the Administration's foreign policy.

Television Debates: The Coming of an Age

Television debates were one of the new arenas for television campaigning. Though presidential debates were not held, other debates, in what was a true novelty for Argentine campaigning, took place.

In both 1983 and 1989 presidential election debates were scheduled but did not occur. In the 1983 election the debate between Italo Luder and Raul Alfonsín was scheduled to be held during Tiempo Nuevo's habitual Tuesday night time slot. But after numerous discussions over the format, the debate was canceled given "profound disagreements over the inclusion of journalists and candidates' advisors" (Clarín 1983c). Peronists certainly wanted the debate as it was an opportunity for candidate Luder to address a segment of the electorate traditionally estranged from Peronism: the educated, well-off, middle-class voters. In contrast, Radical campaign officials were not eager for the confrontation and avoided it by setting up many requirements they knew were not going to be accepted by Peronist advisors (Sthulman 1990). Alfonsín aides judged the debate unnecessary and inconvenient for different reasons: Alfonsín had a notable lead over his opponent; it was very likely that middle-class voters, an already firm supporter of Alfonsín, were going to be the main audience, thus, as an Alfonsín advisors held, "Radicals risked a lot and had very little to win" (Dreyfuss 1987); and the debate was potentially

troublesome given Alfonsín's proclivity to lose control in face-to-face debates (a significant disadvantage especially given Luder's more serene and professorial attitude).

During the 1989 election the debate among presidential candidates was also scheduled but not held. The Angeloz campaign committee consistently challenged Menem to hold a television debate. They saw the debate as a great (and surely the last) opportunity for Angeloz to diminish Menem's large advantage. To achieve this, the debate had to be a knockout and Angeloz aides were convinced that it was going to be. More than trusting in Angeloz's television abilities, his campaign advisors firmly believed that Menem's constant verbal faux pas, which the Radical campaigns repeatedly hit during the campaign, would surface in the debate. The Angeloz camp blindly believed that the debate would produce a favorable outcome for its candidate and hopefully might contribute to winning the elections.²²

Due to an almost unsurmountable lead and conscious of Menem's tendency for misstatements, Peronist campaign managers constantly rejected the offer to hold a debate. Even until the last minute, Radicals still tried by all means to play their last card and, as they said, to "sit Menem in the debate."

²². Though greatly telefluent, Carlos Menem's television Achilles's heel was participating in a televised debate. His charisma and familiarity with television routines and codes were an enormous advantage for being in entertainment shows, but were not helpful when arguing about political proposals.

Whether through candidates who publicly challenged Menem to accept the request or through newspaper advertisements, Radicals bet all their chips for winning the election on a television debate.²³ Peronists did not change their decision and also replied through different ways: newspaper ads accused the Radicals of being too concerned with the debate while ignoring other more important problems and Menem repeatedly rejected the debate in his public appearances.²⁴ Angeloz attended the debate (arranged with Tiempo Nuevo's production to be held during the show's time slot and to be conducted by Bernardo Neustadt) and waited for Carlos Menem but as the latter did not appear he ended up being interviewed by the

²³. A Radical print ad read: "Menem's empty chair: These are neither offenses nor insults. These are the conclusions of all opinion polls. Many Argentines doubt your capacity and aptitude to govern the nation. Moreover, many who are going to vote for you will do it just for party loyalty or as a protest against the government. Convince them and us that the doubts are unjustified. There are two ways to do it. First, accept a televised debate, without advisors, in a private station with our candidate Eduardo Caesar Angeloz. Second, if you don't want the debate, accept to be interviewed on television, also without advisors, by qualified Argentine and foreign journalists. Our candidate will do the same. Don't hide Governor menem. Occupy the debate seat and do the country a favor. Convince us that you also have the capacity to sit in Rivadavia's seat [referring to the presidential seat]."

²⁴. An ad stated: "Angeloz's empty words. The Radicals think that to govern is to speak. That's why they are concerned about an empty chair in a television debate. We, the Peronists, are concerned because there are other empty spaces. There are thousands of empty tables in houses. Empty factories. Empty banks. Empty pharmacies. Empty Supermarkets. And even a presidential seat seems empty."

show' hosts and foreign journalists.²⁵ Simultaneously, while Angeloz was in the television station, Carlos Menem, addressing a multitude in a rally in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, stated: "Doctor Angeloz, the people are preoccupied about other things, not a debate between us. I was not going to miss this dialogue with my people by sitting with you in a television studio" (Página 12 1989).

While presidential debates were not held, other debates did take place. The first debate was the one during the campaign for the 1984 referendum on the Beagle question. The debate was the last step of a well-organized and professional campaign planned by the Alfonsín administration which, according to many Radical officials, was the best campaign masterminded by the Radical party. For various reasons the campaign was distinctive: it was the first time the Radical government was facing a public test after its 1983 conclusive electoral victory; the referendum on the Beagle was the first in Argentine history; and as voting was optional not mandatory (as it is for regular elections), possible turnout was unknown. The issue at stake was the century-long dispute with Chile over the boundaries of the southern Beagle channel and the sovereignty over islands located in the channel. The

²⁵. Tiempo Nuevo clearly favored the Radical presidential candidate during the 1989 election campaign mainly given Angeloz's constant promises for modernization and economic privatization, the show's traditional "pet projects."

government faced passionate opposition from some sectors which labeled the question as one for specialists, not for the general public. The question that was up for a vote was the decision made by the Vatican (who acted as intermediary between Chile and Argentina) over this issue. Voters could approve or reject the settlement or abstain. The Alfonsín administration and other political parties (Intransigente, Communist, Socialists, Conservatives) as well as some Peronist leaders (such as then-governor Carlos Menem) endorsed the Vatican resolution while the official leadership of the Peronist party together with other political forces (Nationalists from the right and the left and pro-military groups) championed the no vote, blank vote and/or abstention. The results were conclusive: the turnout was quite high (more than seventy-three percent of the electorate voted) and eighty-one percent approved the agreement while only seventeen percent rejected it.

Though different political groups endorsed the affirmative vote, the campaign remained a government affair. It started and ended with President Alfonsín's brief televised speeches and included numerous print and broadcast advertisements, television spots in which popular figures (actors, athletes, politicians among others) endorsed the si

vote, and several crowded rallies.²⁶

The television debate was the peak of the campaign and starred Foreign Affairs minister Dante Caputo, who represented the si vote and the late Senator Vicente Saadi, then vicepresident of the Peronist party, for the no vote; it was moderated by Tiempo Nuevo's co-host Bernardo Neustadt.²⁷ The debate was not just the first in its genre, but it had an enormous impact; for many observers, it became the sign of the times, the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate of Argentine politics, the main sign that television was transforming Argentine political communication. Both politicians and observers conclusively agreed that out of the debate the government position, thus "the yes vote," on the referendum became stronger; Clarín's headline was categorical: "The Debate Caputo-Saadi: Weighted Scale." More than Minister Caputo's paused, skillful and well-supported arguments, Senator Saadi's performance (absolutely seen as "unbefitting" for television) was viewed as negatively influencing voters (Cardoso 1984). More than for notable incongruities and lack of evidence to

²⁶. Campaign total expenditures for the affirmative vote was u\$ 3.390.000 while the referendum expenses totalled u\$ 6.830.000 (La Nación 1984).

²⁷. The debate was originally proposed by Senator Saadi which according to the Mario Sábato, who directed cameras during the debate and assisted then-Minister Caputo), "was rapidly accepted." The participation of host Bernardo Neustadt was decided by both panelists and he did not intervene except for briefly introducing and closing the debate.

sustain the argument, the Senator's presentation later became the "talk of the town" as it was unusually sloppy, his movements were clumsy, his voice extremely loud and his gestures bombastic for television standards. Politicians stressed the poor performance of Senator Saadi (Clarín 1984), gossip magazines mocked the Senator (one titled its edition "The Comedians of the Year: Saadi and his fight with Caputo) and journalists focused on the decisive impact of television on politics.²⁸

The debate exhibited the persistence of a very naive understanding of televisual politics and the lack of awareness about the potential effects of television among segments of the political class. Senator Saadi's consultants put up many requirements for the debate but forgot some obvious ones, such as having control of the cameras or asking for lecterns which fit their maps, and were not concerned with the stage design, the background color or the quality of the microphones for

²⁸. Journalist Jorge Halperín (1984) concluded: "Last Thursday, two generations of politicians confronted . . . The catamarqueño [Dr. Saadi represented the northwestern province of Catamarca] senator grew up at a time in which political activity did not count on electronic media. He raised his voice until he lost it and read with problems. He did not know what to do facing a television camera, something a politician in the 1980s cannot ignore. But, since when do Argentine politicians have ample tv spaces? How many years are we delayed in public debates? Or time does not count? It is a mistake, not justifiable but certainly a lapidary one, that Saadi ignored that TV is a "cold medium," which scrutinizes its characters with close angles and is not charmed by old charismatic gestures."

each presenter. After the debate, politicians were surprised (and even shocked) by the potential consequences a lousy television appearance could have on a politician's career.

Unquestionably, the debate was a major learning experience. An example of the Beagle debate's enormous repercussion was the debate between the Peronist and the Radical candidates for governor of the province of Buenos Aires, Antonio Cafiero and Juan Manuel Casella, during the 1987 election campaign for state posts.²⁹ The 1987 Cafiero-Casella debate was carefully planned and almost no details were left unattended.³⁰ The debate was conducted by radio interview morning show host Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú (commonly seen as a politically independent journalist) and a 40.2 rating made it the most watched television show during August

²⁹. The debate was the first one between political candidates. A New York Times (1987, A6) article stressed that the debate "underscored the gradually increasing importance of image in Argentine politics."

³⁰. The debate was divided in eight blocs, preceded by a brief introduction by the moderator. It was aired by Channel 9 (the only privately owned station), according to Radical officials, to avoid suspicions of government intervention. On the reasons why the debate was extremely controlled and planned, then-candidate Casella justified: "everybody remembers the Caputo-Saadi debate in which one of the participants overacted so clearly that we took precautions not to repeat that performance. Thus, the debate came up very formal" (Somos 1987). The only minor fumble was that as timing was not very strictly followed (the moderator used a digital clock which did not indicate seconds) candidates complained about unfair time allocation.

1987 (elections were held on September 6).³¹

The debate missed what "good" television debates are supposed to have in the age of telepolitics: pizzazz, excitement, entertainment. The discussion was notoriously intellectualized as hard-politics and economic issues such as inflation, Buenos Aires' GNP, federalism and intervention, agricultural and industrial policies were at the forefront of the discussion.³² Journalist Martín Granovsky (1990) recalls that "the debate did not move anybody. It was incomprehensible if you were not familiar with the economy and the history of the Buenos Aires state." La Nación (1987a) concluded:

The debate's monotonous characteristics were due not to the candidates but to the rigorous rules established beforehand, which prevented a direct dialogue between the participants and replies, exasperation and exhilaration which usually characterizes these confrontations.

Only during the so-called free topics slots (when candidates could choose any issue), some sparks flew and candidates abandoned their earlier stiff postures and arranged arguments.

³¹. The one-and-half-hour debate (with only one four-minute interval) was also broadcasted by three Buenos Aires radio stations.

³². Juan M. Casella (1990) explained: "[television] debates are important as an element to see the capacity of a candidate to confront unexpected situations, to answer arguments. Perhaps on this point Cafiero and I failed. That is why the debate was so boring. It was the first time we did it and we excessively regulated it." However, the then-Radical candidate was somewhat satisfied with the debate as "some serious matters [were discussed]. We did not fall into the trap of bickering, fighting and a circus-like show" (La Nación 1987).

Though the actual impact on voting behavior was not determined, most analysts and polling information agreed that Cafiero, who later won the elections by a wide margin, emerged as the winner of the debate (La Nación 1987b).

The 1989 television debate between Dante Caputo and Adelina Dalessio de Viola notably contrasted with the 1987 Casella-Cafiero confrontation. Then-Foreign Affairs minister Dante Caputo and then-City Council member Adelina Dalessio de Viola were the heads of the lists of Radical and UCeDe candidates for representatives for the city of Buenos Aires in the 1989 national election. Dalessio de Viola publicly challenged Caputo to hold the debate while accusing him of avoiding it.³³ Mario Sábato (1990), Caputo's main television aide, recalls: "We could not back out." The debate had almost no procedure rules, and, as a condition imposed by Dalessio de Viola, Bernardo Neustadt, who openly and strenuously criticized Caputo's foreign policy, was appointed moderator of the debate as part of his Tiempo Nuevo interview show.

For Caputo and his campaign advisors, the debate, more than an occasion for getting votes, was seen as an opportunity

³³. For Dalessio de Viola, a debate with Caputo offered the opportunity to achieve two goals: exposure and legitimacy. First, she was more likely to get potential Radical than Peronist voters due to the more similar sociodemographic profile between Radical and UCeDe voters (middle- and upper-middle class, educated voters). Second, the debate was an important occasion to strengthen her position within her party as Caputo was considered a "bete noire" within UCeDe notables and conservative politicians.

to drive votes away from the UCeDe. Caputo (1990) explains: "We wanted the debate. It was a complex debate as it could not be won but rather the other had to lose. That was our strategy." His media advisor recalls: "We knew that our best possibility was to subtract votes from Adelina but it was difficult for us to get new votes" (Sábato 1990). Amidst a catastrophic economic situation which by extension strongly affected Radical candidates' chances, the Caputo campaign team opted to confront Dalessio de Viola instead of Miguel Angel Toma (the head of the Peronist list) due to several reasons: the UCeDe candidate regularly accused Caputo of avoiding the debate; the UCeDe was ranked second trailing the Radicals by a wide margin (the Peronists were running far ahead); it was more feasible to attract potential UCeDe than Peronist voters; and chancellor Caputo was seen as a strong contender for television debates.

The debate was distinct as it attracted two definite, different personalities. Dante Caputo, a soft-spoken, Sorbonne-educated, intellectual-turned-politician Foreign Affairs minister, headed a highly audacious and conflictive foreign policy (what made him a permanent target of criticism from the Argentine conservative establishment), and had the record of being Alfonsín's only minister to remain in office throughout the Radical government. His 1989 bid was the first time he was running for public office. Adelina Dalessio de

Viola embodied, perhaps, the foremost opposite profile: a housewife-turned-politician who headed her own campaign within the highly centralized UCeDe party, adopted a quasi-populist, girl-next-door type of image (intensively condemned by most UCeDe conservative notables) and, in a heavily male-dominated world, was one of the few female politicians both holding and running for office.

The debate generated a brouhaha as the discussion adopted an unusual tone for Argentine standards. Personal aggressions and accusations rather than the usual politeness and good manners permeated the debate. The discussion mainly spun around candidates' mutual charges; while Dalessio de Viola accused Caputo of overspending on his diplomatic trips, disbursing state's monies in personal dinners and appointing an extra number of ambassadors, Caputo accused the UCeDe candidate of freely spending on clothes. The debate was overwhelmingly criticized. La Nación (1989) reported:

A debate presupposes a confrontation of ideas not a recurring series of aggressions in which personal issues prevail over the proposals and initiatives both candidates have for Congress. Lamentably, the opportunity was frustrated due to the [candidates'] persistence on almost family-like, street-type criticisms. Coarse and vulgar [discussions] show a lack of respect for the public.

Tiempo Nuevo producer describes: "[The debate] was disappointing. Though it starred two of the most interesting figures in Argentine politics, for us as well as for the public, it was a tenement brawl more than a serious debate"

(Mariño 1990). Immediately after the debate, the head of the Peronist list for representatives, who in his opinion "was intentionally excluded from the debate" (Toma 1990), produced a 50-second television spot in which he stated that although he was "neither a chancellor nor a city council member," out of the debate it was clear why the political class was deprecated and advised the electorate to vote for "non-strident men."

Dante Caputo (1990) opines that "the debate was bad because there were no rules for discussion. The UCeDe candidate rejected rules." Caputo's strategy was

that exaggerating her style, [she] would generate rejection. I worked not so much discussing the arguments but trying to produce an exaggerated, vulgar image [of her] so it would scare away some of the electorate. That was the only tactic.

His media advisor admits that "the strategy was bad for your own health but it was a very good one" (Sábato 1990). According to Dalessio de Viola's campaign manager, the problem was that "the people did not want any fights," and although the UCeDe candidate defeated Caputo, her mistake was "the desire to be a man" (Jimenez Peña 1990). Then-Tiempo Nuevo host Grondona (1990) considers that, "Adelina lost . . . because she attacked him . . . She steered the debate towards superficial areas." Besides the mutual frontal charges (certainly a typical trait of electioneering elsewhere but new for Argentine campaigns), what was shocking was, in the

context of a male dominated political television world, the fact that a woman was taking the lead in accusing her adversary in an "aggressive" way. As Hirsch (1991, 56) concludes, "women who participate in aggressive banter risk being stigmatized as "screechy" and "strident."

Broadcasting News: Evening Canvassing, Daily Polemics

While being the center of frequent disputes, television news provided another opportunity for politicians to campaign. As television news was controlled by government-appointed officials (except for the privately-owned Channel 9), accusations from politicians and parties in the opposition, and even from Radical officials not belonging to the party faction in control of the station, were common (Sirvén 1988). Non-Radical politicians often labeled television news as manifestly propagandizing the government's views. Although the complaints about not getting news coverage might have been partially true (in fact, some Radical politicians even agreed that newscasts slightly privileged government officials), it would be mistaken to conclude that television news was part of an elaborate plan of the Alfonsín administration to deliver a favorable picture of government deeds and to intentionally exclude political opponents. Such a conclusion would disregard the fact that the control of television stations during the 1984-1989 years was highly autonomous as the government seldom

had full, direct or centralized control over station management.

Newscasts were, perhaps, the hottest, most sensitive issue of the whole television heritage the Radical administration received from the military government. How to proceed with television news management in a newly established democratic regime was a very sensitive issue for the Alfonsín administration. Television news, given its extremely important role during the authoritarian years but especially during the Malvinas war as it was the official voice of the regime and forcefully manipulated information, was an urgent issue for the new government. While the most renowned television faces from the military years were removed or simply could not find room under the new government after losing their previous "political" support/contact, other popular anchors stayed on television as they were judged by the new Administration to have mostly remained independent from the generals' command. As a result of these changes, television news in state-owned stations, though generally being under the command of pro-Radical journalists or producers appointed by government officials, were effectively managed by politically independent producers and anchors with different partisan preferences and with previous (and in some cases vast) experience in

television.³⁴

Under the Alfonsín administration, the evolution of television news parallels the rest of television programming. Though attempts for coordinating newscasts in state-owned stations, tailoring their format to different audiences and developing investigative reporting were initially implemented, these plans were later abandoned as commercial standards, namely competition and ratings, were adopted as guiding principles and the management of television stations was splintered among party factions. Lacking a firm central direction over what issues to cover and how to treat them, decisions remained confined to news producers and anchors. Pressures from politicians to get coverage were constant while other parties and observers accused station managers of favoring political allies with coverage; as a former news manager during the Alfonsín administration states, "what was news was defined through pressure. If a given politician was better at putting pressure, he won" (Dominiani 1991).

Individual news executives and anchors usually proceeded following personal criteria (in which their position vis-a-vis different party factions amidst perpetual internal struggles was certainly important) rather than explicitly defined

³⁴. For example, Carlos Campolongo and Santo Biasatti, publicly self-defined as Peronist supporters, as well as Roberto Maidana and Sergio Villaroel, commonly seen as politically independent, anchored different newscasts in state-owned television stations.

government instructions. Only during some isolated cases (like the 1987-1989 military rebellions) did the government impart somewhat precise communiques over what to cover and what position to take.³⁵ An advisor to President Alfonsín on media issue claims:

Television news was part of the lack of planning everything had . . . They were neither antagonist nor supporter. It was a hybrid. Radicalism did not have an information policy . . . There was no defined policy over television news, no systematic work at all (Graziano 1990).

To attribute to the Alfonsín administration a methodic plan whether for favoring Radical officials or excluding opponents from access to newscasts ignores both that the government lacked a systematic news media policy and the intra-party struggles that overwhelmed the Administration. Data shows that eighty percent of the government information was produced in Buenos Aires airports where in-transit officials made statements about assorted issues while press conferences were

³⁵. The fact that newscasts of state-owned television stations decisively sided with the government and the whole political spectrum in defending democracy by calling people to congregate around the major plazas in support of the regime and refusing to cover the rebellious officers was heatedly criticized by private media groups. The latter accused the government of manipulation, propaganda and biased coverage of the 1987 military crisis. Radical officials justified television's attitude on the basis of the need to defend democracy while criticizing privately-owned radio stations and news organizations for giving space to the seditious officers to voice their demands. Both government officials and news anchors accepted the charges of manipulation but considered it as valid for the defense of democratic institutions (Campolongo 1990; New York Times 1987a).

unusual. As Graziano puts it, "a ward-boss mentality dominated [television news]," friendly relations with stations and news managers who were subjected to wide pressures from inside and outside the government (Sario 1990), were often the best formula to guarantee coverage.

Television news remained in a critical state throughout the 1983-1989 years. Due to several reasons such as low ratings, changing political alliances or inappropriate coverage of an sensitive topic, television news as well as anchors were removed. Which potentially controversial topics could be covered and how they could be treated were matters of permanent conflict. "Inappropriate" coverage or "delicate" issues were defined not explicitly but depended on everybody's tacit and often unclear understanding of the elasticity of the boundaries. Thus, both anchors and producers had to rely on their own criteria when deciding on topics and their treatment. After the initial attempts to reformulate television news' format by removing show-biz and human-interest stories failed, newscasts later offered an extremely sensational, yellowish design. As competition and economic achievements became the name of the game, the news format that appeared the best for market success was accepted. As the highly ranked Nuevediarío, the private Channel 9 evening news overwhelmingly focused on scandals, human-interest and gory issues, state television news progressively adopted, though

with much less rating success, a similar treatment of what was newsworthy.³⁶ Media analyst Carlos Ulanovsky (1990) accurately observes that these changes signaled states "the renunciation of television news to their guiding, educational, instructive role."

It is plausible that, as Knight (1989) argues, television news became less credible as a result of being increasingly focused on lurid issues. Though no actual data exist on the relation between credibility and emphasis on sensational news, both politicians and media analysts commonly observe that tabloid news are rarely credible. Opinion polls have shown that within a highly distrusted mass media, television was the least credible medium; newspapers and radio are more credible than television news. However, the low credibility of television news can hardly be attributed mainly or only to being focused on lurid, shocking, unbelievable stories. Broadcast news had low credibility even before its turn to a sensational format. Two other previously existing conditions

³⁶. Nuevediarío usually ranked among the ten-most watched television shows with a rating ranging from fifteen to thirty-two points. Defined as a "great soap opera," a "morbid show" (Sirvén 1988, 168 and 178), it constituted one of the "booms" of Argentine television. While a frequent target of criticism for its focus on bloody and macabre news, trivial approach to "serious" issues, and drive for human tragedies (El Periodista de Buenos Aires 1987; Humor 1986), Nuevediarío's occasional coverage of daily problems affecting low-income communities (water shortages, lack of security, traffic accidents) and opening up television cameras to often ignored ordinary people's voices was praised (Página 12 1989).

already undermined the public's confidence in television news.

First, state-owned, one-party controlled television news is often, not just in the Argentine case, hardly believable. Eduardo Metzger (1990), one of the **interventores** of Channel 13, states: "News in the hands of the state lack credibility . . . [People say]: 'They cannot talk against the government'." Second, and partially related to the first point, the role that television (and especially evening news) played during the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war also accounts for why news had low credibility. Being tightly controlled by the military government, television news offered a strongly pro-government, soundly triumphant, and continuous coverage of the war. Television was notoriously the media during the war. Having absolute control, the government earnestly defended and propagandized its goals through the tube (New York Times 1982a, 1982b; The Economist 1982). Television's version of the war rapidly and conclusively contrasted with the dramatic results. The clash between the broadcast version and the actual development of the South Atlantic conflict strongly affected television's credibility afterwards (Landi 1987; Somos 1982).³⁷

³⁷. In many cases, television's lack of credibility restrained many politicians and campaigners from heavily campaigning through the tube. The public's widespread sense of manipulation and distrust of "political uses" of television was considered detrimental to politicians' constant exposure. Luis Sthulman (1990), an advisor for several Radical candidates, recounts: "After Malvinas, television was not

Besides low credibility, newscasts have had almost no capacity to generate breaking news. Journalists describe television news as usually being mere "visual illustration of newspapers" (Ciancaglini 1990) and "the last vehicle of information" (Blanck 1990); columnist Morales Solá (1990) claims: "In twenty-two years of journalism, I cannot recall anytime television broke the news. No one ever talks to me about something that was said on TV, except for Tiempo Nuevo." Within the continual information bouncing from one medium to another, television news often gets little consideration from radio news productions and newspaper journalists to see what is newsworthy;³⁸ television news was definitely not a top priority for both reporters and officials in the Lemming dynamics of Argentine journalism.

During campaigns, the meager ability of television news to generate breaking news persisted. Television stations almost did not have journalists following on-the-road candidates while campaign coverage often consisted of

credible. In the focus groups it was said: 'Whatever is on TV is a lie'."

³⁸. How information routinely reverberates and passes from one medium to another can be summarized as follows: radio morning shows "lift" from dailies, news agencies report comments and news aired by radio shows, and both evening and morning newspapers pick from wire services and radio. An example of this information bouncing is that newspapers usually assign employees (usually newsroom assistants) to listen to radio shows.

broadcasting a two-minute excerpt of major rallies. Airing rally sound-bites was unquestionably more important to campaign staffs rather than for television news productions. Campaign headquarters were often the ones who had to set up the television production of rallies (cameras, illumination systems) stations had scarce resources for coverage. But often only fragments of rallies (generally the closing ones) were nationally broadcast; unless campaign headquarters were interested in getting television airtime by inviting stations to cover photo opportunities or by sending their own filming of rallies to Buenos Aires-television stations, television news virtually ignored candidates throughout their campaigns. During most of the campaigns, television largely remained a vehicle for local rather than for national campaigning.

Technological, economic and political reasons explain why television news' coverage of electoral campaigns was intermittent rather than continuous, local rather than national. First, television stations were not connected in a widespread network and cable capacity was often limited to carry programming. Rallies could not always be broadcast simultaneously throughout the country or could not reach many cities as connecting systems were already taken by television shows. Only when prime-time programming ended (around 10 pm) could rallies be aired. Party campaigners, thus, planned the main candidate's appearance to take place when the systems

were vacant.

Second, covering constant campaign trails in a large country like Argentina was an enormously expensive and difficult endeavor, for television stations with poor technological resources and high debts (Biasatti 1991; Dominiani 1991; Metzger 1990). When not compelled to cover specific events in order to compete against other stations for higher ratings and when not driven by candidates' pressures and lobby efforts to broadcast certain campaign stories, stations usually opted to cover easy-access, close-to-the-station campaign events such as local rallies and nearby precinct walks, especially those potentially fitting television's appetite for tumultuous, chaotic and highly visual events.³⁹

Third, candidates had scarce or null possibilities to get television news coverage when stations were, directly or indirectly, managed by political adversaries. Examples and accusations were numerous. The 1983 Alfonsín campaign headquarters complained that television news (then in the hands of the military) failed to give ample coverage as the Radical candidate was not the generals' electoral choice. Candidates from parties in the opposition consistently charged

³⁹. Rodolfo Pousá (1990), Channel 13 news vice-manager, states: "We are not interested in covering a tranquil rally . . . That is propaganda . . . Images with speed and information are indispensable, otherwise you run the risk of people switching channels. You need more images."

the Radical government with discrimination and favoritism in television news.⁴⁰ Radical politicians denounced that local stations in Peronist-governed states rejected to broadcast their rallies and reported that cable signals, hired to air their campaigns, were mysteriously cut off. Many Radical officials claimed that they were censored by television stations controlled by opposite internal factions.

Entertainment Shows: Desperately Seeking the Mass Audience

Entertainment programming totals eighty percent of Argentine television (Morgan and Shanahan 1991). These shows, encompassing a diversity of programs such as afternoon talk shows (some of them formatted following their U.S. and European counterparts), comedy variety shows and game shows also provided an opportunity for candidates to go public. These shows became more important as politicians attempted to address an audience scarcely interested in hard politics issues, as an UCeDe campaign aide puts it (Domán 1990), "the

⁴⁰. In some cases, Radical officials could not resist the temptation of having control over television to show potentially negative images of opponents and to overexpose their candidates. During the 1989 campaign, when the chances for Radicals to retain the presidency were scarce, candidate Carlos Menem got slanted television coverage: television news heavily stressed Menem's gaffes (his appearances were often unfiltered), and, coinciding with Angeloz's strategists emphasis upon the menace Menem represented as a return to past Peronist violent times, news conceded extraordinary attention to the crash of Menem's campaign plane when arms were found aboard.

people who are tired from politics." While some politicians strongly criticized their colleagues for attending these shows (or for relentlessly expecting to be invited) as, in their view, such appearances were unfit for true "politicians" and degraded politics by turning it into a "circus," a "vulgar, coarse activity." Others, in a "that-is-the-way-things-are" attitude, justified appearing on these shows as the way to be in contact with the majority of voters, detached from hard party politics. Searching for massive recognition, politicians first slowly accepted these shows and later wanted to be invited to them (especially those highly ranked). These shows introduced candidates informally talking about their childhood, hobbies and horoscope; presenting their families; spontaneously cracking jokes with comedians and impersonators; and offering handy analyses on current issues by providing down-to-earth examples.⁴¹

⁴¹. Candidate Carlos Menem was seen as a true master for participating in these shows. Journalists state that "Menem smashed other politicians in that terrain" (Domán 1990) and that "Menem could perfectly host one of those shows." For the Menem campaign staff, getting invitations from entertainment shows was seen as fundamental as Menem faced meager and unfavorable coverage from the government-controlled television news and permanent criticisms from political talk shows (Oyuela 1990). Hugo Heguy, one of Menem's campaign spokesperson, asserts: "People accept Menem but not other politicians taking part in a car race. Menem dances a zamba [folk dance] on television and people praise him. He is different. Being authentic is his most notable characteristic. People are tired of stiff, meticulous, deceptive politicians. You see Menem in the soccer stadium, in a lunch or in a rally and he always is the same person" (Dailia and Haimovici 1989, 37-38).

The show El Candidato was important in presenting a more informal image of politicians. Produced and broadcasted only during the campaign months of the 1985-1989 elections, El Candidato differed from several seasonal political-talk-shows which blossomed in the heyday of the campaigns as it did not focus on hard politics but on the "other side of politicians." One co-host describes that the show attempted to "renovate the journalistic genre on television . . . to defrost the image of candidates and to offer more elements to judge them" (Masetti 1990) while the other co-host recalls: "The idea came up thinking that in times of elections, people are bombarded with advertising . . . but most of the times people have almost no idea about who the character is" (Cahen D'Anvers 1990). The show was an hour-long show in which candidates talked with the moderators about his/her life story, informally chatted with "the person in the street" in different settings such as family houses, schools, and bars, and were taken to "unusual zones" such as leftist candidates discussing economic issues with bankers in select restaurants and conservative candidates conversed with slum inhabitants on issues like the price of daily products. Differing from other lowbrow entertainment shows, politicians generally welcomed El Candidato as both hosts were, as a former candidate puts it, "well-respected journalists."

WHAT HAS CHANGED: DRAMATURGICAL AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Campaign consultants agree that during the 1983 election, except for what Alfonsín's campaign camp hinted, the lack of familiarity with television and its potential for communicating politics was widespread. Campaign staffs and candidates were to a large extent loyal to traditional campaign routines and paid scant attention to television.⁴² As campaigns ensued, attitudes towards television progressively changed. From a timid and prejudice view when "it was usually difficult to make a politician to understand the importance of a good television appearance and annul a rally attended by 200 people" (Sábato 1990), and "television and other campaign techniques were seen as corruption" (Muraro 1989), Argentine politicians have abandoned those former perceptions for an unrelenting appetite for television. Foreign experts were regularly invited to teach courses on television basics and campaign strategies; many politicians no longer seemed political television "illiterates," uneasy about television rules and routines (some even became authentic masters of the medium); and candidates attentively selected their appearances according to image and political strategies.

⁴². Columnist Oscar Cardoso (1990) recalls: "Since in the previous political era, there was a culture of rallies, the majority of journalists followed that idea. We did not have in mind the influence of television." Former Clarín editorialist Joaquín Morales Solá (1990) states: "At that time, it was thought that rallies were a symptom of the society."

Comparing the light of a television camera to the light of an open refrigerator door, journalists crack jokes that nowadays politicians, even when they see an open refrigerator, straighten up, clear their throats and start blabbering.

The changing role and escalating importance of television for campaigning can be traced in the evolution of the investments made in paid political television advertisements in comparison to newspapers. Data in table 1 shows two processes.

Table 4.--Media Allocation of Advertising Funds

	1983	1985	1987	1988	1989
Television Buenos Aires	38	27	35	66	76
Television Interior	36	43	30	19	9
Newspapers Buenos Aires	14	19	16	12	11
Newspapers Interior	10	11	18	3	2
Magazines	2	0	1	0	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Author's figures based on data from Fuentes y Cía.

First, while newspapers received a declining share in the total of campaign expenditures, television increasingly became a major recipient of campaign funds. As elections progressed, newspapers, especially provincial dailies, got a meager part of campaign funds. Comparing the two national elections, 1983 and 1989, the evolution is clear: while in 1983 the press captured twenty-four percent, in 1989 it received thirteen

percent of the allocated monies. In contrast, television showed an opposite pattern by receiving funds previously assigned to the press: while seventy-four percent of the advertising money was invested in television during the 1983 campaign, eighty-five percent was devoted in the 1989 campaign. The primary elections held in mid-1988 seemed to be a turning point. Compared to the 1987 national election for state posts, the distribution of campaign funds in television and print media is notably different: television became an outstanding recipient of campaign monies while investments in newspapers dramatically dwindled. The 1989 national elections seemed to follow the pattern started in the primaries; despite the fall in the amount of advertising invested in provincial television stations, the total allocation of campaign monies remained basically the same.

Second, the role of television and newspapers in different stages of the campaign also changed. While in the 1983-1987 elections, campaign expenditures in television advertising were boosted during the immediate weeks before election day and were dwarfed throughout the previous months by funds for newspaper advertising, the 1988-1989 period shows a different pattern. Newspapers, which except for the election months always got a bigger share of campaign advertising investments in the 1983, 1985 and 1987 campaigns, never obtained a bigger portion than television from the total of

campaign monies spent during June 1988 until May 1989. Whereas the press fulfilled a central role in the earlier periods of the 1983-1987 campaigns, whether for launching or installing a candidate, and television was mainly and heavily used during the heyday of the last campaigning weeks, in recent elections this dynamics has changed; television fulfills a central role throughout the whole campaign, not only during the early stages. While the amount of television advertising monies skyrocketed during election months in the 1983-1987 campaigns, the evolution was significantly smoother in the last elections. From January until May 1989 (when elections were held) the percentage of the distribution of campaign monies between television and newspaper was fairly similar; the amount of money invested grew but the pattern of allocation between those media remained basically identical.⁴³

In addition to pouring a bigger proportion of campaign funds over a more prolonged period into television, candidates and parties gradually adapted their campaign strategies to television requirements. Some politicians became television

⁴³. An increasing devotion to television advertising certainly caused the total amount of campaign expenditures to skyrocket. Though it is hard to figure out the exact quantity of money invested in different campaigns, mainly due to the absence of any type of control over contributions or expenses and the general disorganization of campaigning, a number of analyses show that finances for recent campaigns massively increased (Fraga 1989). According to many analysts, greater expenditures on television are responsible for triggering campaign costs.

cognoscenti by mastering timing and routines. Campaign staffs professionalized their approach to television campaigning by using it in a more "scientific," "modernized" way. Advertising efforts as well as candidates' appearances were adjusted to campaign goals, targeting specific segments of the electorate. Let us examine some examples.

Though still reluctant, candidates, became progressively conscious about the role of political talk shows for addressing both upper-bracket constituencies and news junkies and for influencing campaign agendas. In contrast, to reach non-politicized voters, candidates jumped into trying new, less-familiar terrains for addressing an electorate foreign to hard politics. Getting a spot in the top-watched, sensational television news Nuevediaro became an obsession for many; moreover, several politicians from across the political spectrum participated in Nuevediaro as columnists offering their perspective on a wide range of issues. Being interviewed by a television variety show host was seen as more advantageous than discussing inside politics in political talk shows. Campaign strategists notably improved the control over conditions under which candidates appeared before television cameras such as carefully staging rallies as ordered crowd events and packaging (not always successfully) candidates' contacts with television. Though still distant from the choreographic atmosphere of television campaigning elsewhere,

Argentine campaigning clearly showed signs of a more "modern" approach.

These changes developed as a way to better accommodate election goals to television's requirements and present state. Yet, borrowing Habermas' (1977) terminology, changes were confined to dramaturgical action, an actor's self-presentation to an audience in certain way, while considerations about television as an institution for enhancing communicative action remained forgotten. Transformations resulted from attempts to design and/or to improve candidates' electoral communication; they were strictly instrumental and individual. Changes aimed to solve specific, momentary needs of a candidate for addressing the electorate rather than solving deeper problems affecting parties as communication institutions. More substantial changes regarding the role of television in democratic politics whether during or outside the election period were seldom in the agenda. For Argentine parties and politicians, television communication was simply reduced to brushing up on presentation skills, wearing appropriate ties and suits, and appearing on shows whose audiences matched the profiles of targeted voters.

The steadily accelerating, intensive and disordered use of television for campaigning unmasked the profound problems of parties and politicians for communicating with the citizenry. The thinness of Argentine parties to construct

stable and institutionalized channels for expression, information and participation became evident during campaigns, when the need to reach out voters was most immediate. Television was seen as a way to remedy this deficit.

Facing mounting political apathy and party dealignment as elections ensued, television was viewed as supplying invaluable assistance when voters were more detached from candidates and campaign politics. The full and varied television repertoire amplified exposure but without creating newer forms of communication. Outbursts of commercials and candidates' appearances in almost every program revealed the ample access yet limited imagination of political parties to use television for communicating politics.

Parties basically tried to accommodate to the existing state of television. While initiatives to reshape the structure of television were scarce and the whimsical status of television was predominately accepted, candidates basically conformed their campaign needs and strategies to the prevailing model. Tailoring campaigns to the confusing and disorganized state of television, instead of trying to simultaneously redesign television's structure (whether towards a more commercially-driven, public-service or mixed model), was the dominant attitude. Adapting television to circumstantial needs for short-term communication needs rather than including it within more lasting and inclusive political

goals was the dominant stance.

In countries such as Argentina where parties have historically failed to develop sound means for communication, television could be hardly considered a circumstantial issue, affecting individual candidates only during campaign seasons. Rather it needs to be seen as a medium challenging the whole dynamics of political communication, especially in contemporary Latin American democracies. As communication scholar Oscar Landi (1989) observes, "television came inside the recent processes of democratization in the region and remains a central element."

Despite the popularity and centrality of television in patterns of communication in democratic Argentina, parties made little efforts to reconsider the function of television in a changing communication environment, namely, how television transforms and challenges the interaction between parties and citizens. Most frequently, television was treated simply as a technological gadget modifying the context of candidates' presentation or providing a vast audience in times when parties confronted surging problems for becoming credible and firm public institutions. Parties approached television as a medium to scramble for time, an apparatus offering interstices for individuals to go public not as a means to cultivate links with the public and to mediate public debates. Television can be a catalyst for the development of

citizenship or it can consecrate an existing state of political apathy and a depoliticized public. However, considerations about television as a media giving "an opportunity for being republican" (Habermas 1977), for broadening forms of public argument and discussion (Williams 1975), for nurturing democracy were, often, forgotten.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Political parties' vision [of communication] has been modernized only on the surface not in its structure.

Columnist Oscar Cardoso, Interview

The party structure is old. We do not have a financial organization, a newspaper, any mass media, a public relations structure. We do not have anything. That means, we cannot talk about modernization. We have to talk about doing what does not exist.

Former Majority Radical Whip César Jaroslavsky
quoted in Unión Cívica Radical

The preceding chapters have surveyed different forms that Argentine political parties used for electioneering during the 1980s. Simultaneous to the transition and consolidation of democracy, changes in patterns of political communication have taken place. Methods for communicating politics that were little known in the early 1980s have been incorporated into campaign routines.

Unquestionably, the introduction of new technologies has reshaped Argentine election campaigns. Politicians have recently succumbed to the siren song of new instruments of campaign communication such as opinion polls, television

appearances, press coverage and crafty advertising. Yet it would be erroneous to assume that the popularization of new campaigning styles implies that Argentine campaign routines have become "Americanized" due to the adoption of technologies commonly used in the U.S. Considering the Argentine case, the conclusion that the use of same technologies leads to the uniformization in campaign routines needs to be revised.

During the 1980s, television came to the forefront of Argentine politics, especially during the first election campaigns. Due to the then-prevailing climate of "democratic spring" and the audience's revived interest in political news and stories, politics populated television shows basically as it meant good ratings (Biasatti 1991; Dominiani 1991). Simultaneously, candidates embraced "videopolitics" (Robinson 1977); overcoming an early distrust and uneasiness with the medium, they have devoted mounting economic resources and energies to television appearances and resorted to the advice of foreign and local aides for improving camera appearances and targeting specific audiences.

Besides having adopted modern communication technologies, campaign headquarters have reconsidered traditional forms for candidates to go public. For example, aiming to guarantee steady media coverage, press corps were systematically incorporated onto the campaign trail; trying to maximize the effectiveness of newspaper advertising, print ads were

allocated on the basis of strategic considerations (e.g. target readership) rather than random guesses. Advertising designs and television spots have shown a more careful production and updated designs; a renowned advertiser observes: "Political advertising has notably improved 'the pencil,' [that is] the printing quality, photography" (Ratto 1990). Up-to-date campaign technologies such as direct mail were recently used for the first time.

Traditional stumping practices have survived but under a different format. Nowadays, venerated campaign routines such as rallies, demonstrations and graffiti are conceived as instruments for both reinforcing the creed of lesser numbers of party militants and constructing backdrops for photo-opportunities than as occasions for involving citizens in campaign activities. Gradually, street campaigning become more spectacle than event to be performed and lived by the attending crowd. The growing popularity of campaign, to use Boorstin's (1963) idea, "pseudo-events" such as caravanas, candidates' móviles and caminatas ("precinct walks"), and the hiring out of crews for wall-painting and blanketing streets with propaganda, are signs of the move towards "mercantilistic campaigns" (Jensen 1971).¹

¹. This style of proselytizing is characterized by "strengthening the professional in the party organization at the expense of the amateurs," more emphasis on capturing floating votes and less on traditional party events (torchlight processions, flag-raising ceremonies, blustering

Yet the coming of new patterns of communication does not imply that old styles have disappeared from Argentine electioneering. Contrary to what standard analyses in the literature argue, this dissertation has suggested that the introduction of modern campaign technologies has not necessarily resulted in the elimination of former communication traditions. This dissertation could be considered an effort to steer away from neo-McLuhanite approaches to campaigning which argue that the introduction of modern communication techniques determines the shape and future of stumping practices. Hoping to overcome technological determinism, this study has tried to "bring institutions back" into the study of political communication. The goal has been to put institutional dynamics and cultural beliefs at the center of the analysis of how societies communicate politics. The study of the advent and introduction of modern campaign technologies should not be simply discarded; no doubt, new means of communication are important in recasting campaign organization. But the focus needs to be on institutional and cultural factors facilitating or thwarting, assimilating or rejecting, technological recipes and inventions in campaign

brass horns), and the organization of mass advertising, mail and other arrangements to reach "doubtful voters." This type of electioneering contrasts with the former "militaristic" style in which parties were conceived as army-like, that is, "knit, disciplined and united" organizations (Jensen 1971, especially pp. 165-177).

styles.

I have argued that campaign styles change not because up-to-date technologies are invented and introduced, but as a consequence of institutional and cultural developments which make modern technologies more attractive and feasible to use. In contrast to technological arguments on the transformation of election campaigns, I claim that institutional transformations and cultural innovations account for changes in campaign practices. My goal was not to impose institutional and cultural issues over technological factors but to enhance the analytical framework by incorporating aspects that have been rather neglected in the analysis. The consideration of the dynamics of political parties, the mass media and the interaction between these organizations together with the analysis of political cultures within campaign headquarters is indispensable to understand not only the structure of election campaigns but also prevailing practices for communicating politics. The evolution of Argentine political communication during the 1980s needs to be comprehended along these lines.

PARTY INC.: WHY ARE ARGENTINE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS PARTY-CENTERED ENTERPRISES?

Argentine electioneering can still be defined as party-based events as political parties remain the essential engines of campaign organization. The frequent conclusion that, due to a series of developments (e.g. the availability of different

mass media, partisan dealignment), contemporary election campaigns have become candidate-based and media-centered rather than party-based hardly applies to the Argentine case. Candidates do not canvass based on their own structures and the mass media have not eclipsed party structures.

The reason why political parties have maintained a crucial role in election campaigning does not lay in their control of vast communication resources. The aparato ("apparatus") of Argentine parties still basically implies, as a journalist puts it, "ward bosses delivering votes, chartering buses [for election day and rallies], getting money and organizing events" (Díaz 1990), not structures for mediating communication and opinion. As argued in previous chapters, parties have historically lacked stable means for communicating politics. Since the expansion of the franchise in the early decades of the century, ventures to build parties as communication brokers were sporadic, short-lived and mostly carried out with substantial state support. These experiences failed to continue as they were ill-conceived, financially mismanaged or violently interrupted by the coming of authoritarian regimes. Also, the fact that forums such as partisan newspapers and neighborhood offices were conceived typically as appendixes of the party in government to propagate official views rather than centers for discussion and information, deepened the problems for making party

communication structures stable. As most of these attempts generally relied upon the state and access to public office (and thus to state resources) was highly variable amid recurrent cycles of democratic and authoritarian regimes, efforts were doomed to failure.² Given the little success in maintaining party channels, politicians aimed to maximize their individual communication capabilities by relying upon the state for building alliances with media groups.

I have claimed that during the last decade these conventional dynamics between parties and media organizations continued. That is, meager attempts to develop party structures within the landscape of Argentine political communication were made, while inorganic and temporary solutions to guarantee media coverage of individual politicians have been the rule. Briefing specific, mostly allied, journalists; bargaining with media executives; blackmailing newsrooms; devising attention-gaining means; and a whimsical management of state advertising were frequent procedures for dealing with media organizations.

². Also, the preeminence of a state-centered view did not contribute to making parties appropriate institutions for circulating democratic communication as the state, not the public sphere, was perceived as the pivotal arena. Furthermore, the excessive reliance on the state for organizing communication and for dealing with private forces could be interpreted as a symptom of the inherent weakness of parties in this area. Facing a dearth of means, state control served the purposes of both building means of communication and reinforcing the capabilities for negotiating with press and broadcasting firms.

Aiming to maximize exposure, to guarantee flattering reviews or to reward prudent silence on conflictive issues, politicians remained faithful to the traditional view of "capturing" more than building communication mechanisms. One way for "capturing" was conquering newsrooms through striking deals with individual reporters. In exchange for favorable reports or even small blurbs, "off" and "on the records" were common practices while talk of politicians offering extra income, job opportunities and other favors to journalists was constant (see Leuco and Majul 1992). Mastering state apparatuses was also seen as a means to gain influence and to capture existing mass media. Access to state resources made it possible to deal with media companies from a stronger position. Winning public office provided the possibility to allocate selectively state advertising, to enact tax breaks, to regulate on communication legislation and to decide on other matters directly affecting the interests of media firms.

These maneuvers resulted from efforts of individual politicians aiming to strengthen their own personal status in the media. Organic interactions between institutions, that is, parties and the mass media, were the exception. Parties held a minor and often insignificant role. Negotiations were carried out between individual politicians with individual reporters and/or with media institutions and benefits were reaped by media corporations, specific journalists and

political prominents but not by party organizations. The crucial point was to implement instrumental, short-term agreements to favor the situation of individual politicians rather than parties for the upcoming election campaign. In fact, these practices could be seen as another occasion in which personalism dominated at the expense of institutions in Argentine politics.

Parties failed to devise policies to enhance their institutional capabilities for communicating as the scope of such dealings was often limited to personal gains, to reinforce the position of individuals in the mass media. This general attitude of "scrambling for personal success" and "accommodating individuals" to the mass media proved to be detrimental for political parties qua institutions. Neither involving parties in these operations nor rebuilding or expanding their communication mechanisms was a main priority. Of course, individual attempts to influence both broadcasting and print mass media would be expected given the enormous capacity of the latter to address vast numbers of citizens. Yet exclusive attention to advancing "star politics" bolsters existing personalistic tendencies in Argentine political culture and minimizes the need of parties to institutionalize means for communication.

This scenario is likely to remain as new technologies make it possible to bypass parties for contacting voters.

Calls have recently been made to abandon party traditions and structures behind and espouse the benefits of modern campaign fashions. For example, Argentine sociologist and pollster Manuel Mora y Araujo argues that party structures are inevitably obsolete when modern techniques of communication are available. In his opinion, technological developments such as polls and television are propitious for Argentine democracy as they allow a more direct connection between politicians and citizens. He states:

Today, people can communicate effectively with their leaders without the mediation of the party committee. [People] see them on television [and] find out thousands of aspects without [needing] a band of activists lifting their portraits, deafening voters with speeches, or shouting fanatically that the leader is a god or a semigod. [Also], leaders can know more precisely what citizens think. Survey technology, together with television, has represented a revolution in communication styles (Mora y Araujo 1991, 27).

The extent to which polls and television sets constitute new communication forums, making traditional party forms unnecessary, is certainly not a solved question but still a matter of debate.³ It is undeniable, however, that for

³. As many analysts of political communication in contemporary democracies have indicated, developments such as polls (Ginsberg 1986; Wheeler 1976), television (Kellner 1990; Luke 1989) and new information technologies (Golding 1989; Murdock and Golding 1989) have replaced political parties as mechanisms for communicating politics. Parties no longer fulfill a central role in mediating political debates. However, the possible ways for parties to capitalize on technological innovations, to integrate the latter within their structures, are still untangled matters. In other words, can teledemocracy (Abramson, Arterton and Orren 1988; Arterton 1988; Frantaich 1989) help political parties revitalize their

politicians, facing the pressing need of getting elected or reelected, these technologies become highly seductive as parties do not offer mechanisms to communicate with the large mass of voters.

If Argentine parties can hardly be defined as strong communication-brokers, how to account for their capacity to command the organization of stumping activities? If parties do not offer mass channels for addressing voters, what is the basis for their centrality in campaigning? Or to put it differently, how can parties still maintain a crucial role in campaigning notwithstanding the availability of new communication technologies? Let me summarize the answers on these questions.

First, the persistence of electoral laws which expressly confer on political parties a monopolic role in the selection of national candidates, reinforces the centrality of parties in electioneering. During the 1980s, nominating candidates, regardless of the level of the office, was fundamentally a "party affair." Candidates were above all "party creatures;" they became candidates as a result of mechanisms confined to party boundaries and party members. All presidential candidates were selected through primaries in which only party

communication structures? Or rather, does teledemocracy make party communication structures inevitably superfluous and obsolete? Answers to these questions are not obvious and deserve further analysis.

registered voters were allowed to vote; their legitimacy of origin was rooted in the party.⁴ Even facing deep intra-party conflicts, candidates had to remain faithful to their parties as their selection was determined by party mechanisms. Consequently, searching for an electoral triumph at the national level, candidates had to play party politics, cultivate ties with party actors (regional bosses, the rank-and-file, and regular members) and invoke party traditions. Party dynamics remained a crucial, first stage in electoral campaigning.

Second, parties offered considerable campaign resources. State monies, which are allocated to parties on the basis of their previous electoral performances, are an important contribution to campaign warchests. Though certainly campaigns are not mainly financed with state funds, these resources (which include not only a certain quantity of money per vote but other expenses such as travel and mailing) were an important input, especially for some small parties unable to collect large campaign funds. In addition, candidates, through their respective parties, received free airtime on both television and radio stations during the weeks immediately before election day. Free broadcasting time was equally

⁴. The only exception was the selection of the 1989 presidential and vicepresidential candidates of the Izquierda Unida, an alliance of different leftist parties, as their candidacies resulted from open primaries in which any registered voter (not just party members) was allowed to vote.

assigned to parties, not to candidates. Also, especially during the early campaigns (1983-1985), parties offered a considerable amount of pro-bono campaign humanpower. Party activists, most notably those belonging to the parties' youth sections, provided an enthusiastic, ready-to-work campaign force. Hence, parties provided candidates with a considerable variety of campaign resources.

Third, the survival of a party ethos (what I have called a partisan mentalité) is also a key factor in explaining the presence of party-centered campaign organizations. Candidates and campaign aides remained loyal to their party identity; the latter fueled a widespread sense that campaigning was above all a party endeavor. Except for a few cases, campaign aides as well as pollsters, advertising agents and general campaign staffs define themselves in partisan terms. The participation in campaign-related activities (or even getting paid for campaign services) is mostly seen as an occasion for taking part in party politics; most consultants often explain their participation in campaigning on the basis of their personal adherence to a given candidate or as part of their party identity. In almost all cases, consultants have previously had a past (and in some cases, a long) history as party activists. Furthermore, although in most cases political consultants had formerly worked on commercial advertising or marketing, their proximity to candidates and party officials and inside

knowledge of party politics was indispensable for getting them into the "political marketing" business.⁵

Even though in some cases campaign headquarters decided to put individual candidates rather than parties at the forefront of the electoral offer (both the 1983 Alfonsín and the 1989 Menem electoral bids are clear examples of this as candidates were emphasized over party appeals), campaigning still remained a party business. Certainly, candidates' loyalty to party rituals and disposition to follow venerable party traditions have lately diminished. Coupled with other factors (e.g. partisan dealignment, political apathy), traditional party campaign activities such as conventions, rallies, demonstrations and wall-painting have shown important changes. However, the fact that candidates were loyal to party customs also helps to explain why campaigning was essentially

⁵. Certainly, the small size of the "political market," the novelty of new techniques, and the low confidence that politicians have in such methods result in the absence of a strong demand for consulting and fuel the dependency of political consultants upon major political parties. Except for election times, there are not many other opportunities for political consultants to do politics-related businesses. Only government-paid surveys or state advertising present some opportunities after election day; still, consulting for government agencies is often in the hands of consultants somewhat linked to government officials and bureaucracies. Parties, as well as unions and other organizations, rarely allocate funds for polling, advertising or contacting voters outside the time immediately before election day. Hence, the private sector (even though it has lately undergone hard times as the volume of advertising and marketing expenditures has considerably shrunk) offers the only chance for survival.

party- rather than individual-centered.

In addition, traditional party forms to calculate voting tendencies or to communicate with voters still remain. Candidates, even at the national level, still tend to forecast both voter turnout and voting behavior based on their alliances with local bosses and on their "political intuition," or gut-feeling, formed by numerous rally attendances, hand-shaking, party meetings and, as they put it, "having been around the [political] block." Novel, "rational," "scientific," mechanisms to gather information about the electorate such as polls, surveys and focus groups are generally distrusted or dismissed when not supporting the "data" collected through the more classic forms for testing public opinion.

To understand why, despite the availability of new mass communication technologies, Argentine political communication did not become mass media-centered, several factors have been pinpointed. First, the lack of a national broadcasting network strongly restricts the mass-mediation of campaigning. It has often been said that U.S. politics (and campaigns) became nationalized as a consequence of the national expansion of radio and, most notably, television networks. The lack of such nationally-linked mass media prevented Argentine campaigns from being media centered. Moreover, several factors resulting from the absence of national networks such as the shortage of

technological means, the feeble development of a national distribution system of broadcast programming and the weak links among different provincial and local media groups also made any attempt to stage "mediated" campaigns difficult.⁶ Thus, the institutional organization of media industries needs also to be considered to comprehend the potential that new communication technologies have to influence the making of campaign activities.

Second, and partially related to the former point, radio and television stations, weakly linked at the national level, are not politically autonomous. Close links between political powers and local media or the intervention of political interests in the management of radio and television programming are not sporadic, but frequent. The consequence is that candidates and parties have had a hard time trying to air political commercials or excerpts from rallies through mass media where competitors have control or influence. Cases in which media stations refused to broadcast campaign ads, censored candidates (even those belonging to the same party but to a different faction from the "ruling" one) and even

⁶. Even in this situation, campaign headquarters still tried to cover as much territory as possible through the mass media. Yet they faced massive difficulties. For example, simultaneous broadcasting of rallies, usually the closing ones, in several media markets was almost impossible due to the small number of coaxial cables, which were usually taken by television stations; in some cases, campaign staffs opted to shoot the event and later send copies to stations for broadcasting on the evening news.

abruptly cut the transmission of a campaign rally, were numerous. Facing "problems" in getting media appearances, campaign committees heavily emphasized old-style canvassing, the so-called desembarcos or "disembarks"; that is, candidates and campaign corps would land in a state and interminably and patiently journey through cities, towns and villages, exercising the whole orthodoxy of the old game of campaigning.

Third, politicians were virtually unexperienced in the art of new media politicking, especially television politics, during the 1980s. Though developed in the early 1950s, television had not fulfilled a central role in Argentine politics prior to 1983, partially because the sweat of party conventions and the fervor of rallies and demonstrations were commonly preferred over the silence of television studios, but primarily because politicians did not have many chances to play democratic politics. Repression and the banning of any form of political organization during authoritarian regimes excluded politicians from the mass media. Even during the 1982-1983 years, opportunities to go public through the mass media were limited as state-owned radio and television stations only gradually and sparsely covered pro-democracy activities. By the time democracy was reinstalled, the electronic mass media still remained mostly unknown to most politicians.

Finally, the endurance of personal and behind-the-scenes

mechanisms for soliciting campaign funds do not foster the centrality of the mass media. Neither television nor newspapers are indispensable tools for fund-raising as, for candidates, to gain wide public attention and recognition is not necessary. In cases like the U.S., the need to get media recognition to gain visibility vis-a-vis potential contributors, especially from individual donors and in early stages of the campaign, has fueled candidates' obsession with getting media (above all, television) coverage (Sorauf 1987; Wattenberg 1984). Such methods for gathering campaign funds are nonexistent in Argentina. Instead, campaign monies basically consist of contributions made by corporations which are obtained by party notables and candidates mostly through personal contacts and lobbying efforts. Furthermore, as fund-raising practices are extremely secretive, media publicity is neither necessary nor convenient; the secretness of campaign financing makes media reports on campaign contributions and donors highly disruptive and dangerous.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The expansion of modern forms of communication offers a panoply of forms for citizens to communicate that are extemporaneous to the mass-based party model of communication. The paradigm of party-based communication corresponds to a time in which digital technologies, computers and satellites

were unknown or incipiently developed, while the technical possibilities for developing broadcasting and print media were by far more restricted than today. Images of street-corner orators surrounded by party followers, newspapers championing the party's candidates and programme, and streets packed with crowds chanting party anthems belong to a time different from a one in which political proclamations are faxed across the globe and the tumbling of Cold War limits and the dawn of the "New World Order" are watched on world-wide television. In this sense, Argentine political communication does not differ from what has been observed in several Western democracies during the last decades: the rise and multiplication of alternative forms to reach out voters caused parties to lose the "relatively exclusive control over their links with followers" (McQuail 1986, 144; also see Epstein 1986; Ware 1987).

However, despite the proliferation of channels for political persuasion, the breakdown of Duverger's classic mass-based model of party organization, and the secularization of political life, party mechanisms can still fulfill an important role in communicating politics. Argentine politics has lately welcomed the arrival of new technologies, partisan dealignment has grown and, amidst various signs of deep ideological changes, an historically populist and nationalistic party currently heads the process of

privatization and state reform.⁷ Yet to conclude that as a result of these processes the "party's over," namely, that party communication is on the verge of extinction, would be mistaken. Traditional partisan arenas such as neighborhood offices, magazines and street rallies do not necessarily disappear simply because politicians can address voters through television and newspapers and estimate public opinion through polls. Party forums are still crucial for candidates to get nominated, to get the endorsement of party leaders and followers, and to rally the party behind their campaigns. In this regard I have argued that Argentine parties remain strong in Huntington's (1968) sense, that is, as complex, enduring institutions for nominating office-holders, participating and staging election campaigns, and perpetuating political identities among activists and power seekers.⁸

The case of Argentine election campaigns challenges the assumption that the coming of modern technologies necessarily entails the fading out of former communication practices and/or the homogeneization (the "Americanization") of election campaigns. The persistence of institutional arrangements

⁷. Data show that from 1987 to 1990 the percentage of the population who declare a party affiliation dropped from forty-four to thirty-two percent, while the proportion of independents climbed from fifty to sixty-four percent (Equas 1987-1990).

⁸. I thank Carlos Waisman for bringing this point to my attention.

granting party dynamics the monopoly of nomination politics, partisan loyalties among candidates and campaign headquarters, and intricate relations between political powers and the mass media account for why, despite the massive use of new technologies, Argentine electioneering still displays the whole gamut of traditional styles. The perpetuation of party dynamics, partisan cultures, and the particular arrangements between parties and media organizations fashion Argentine campaigns as a blend of old and new electioneering practices.

To prevail in this communication landscape, candidates need to be amphibious creatures able to live in two environments: one shaped by partisan political and cultural dynamics and another populated by an electorate less attached to partisan identities and more tuned to media than party signals. A successful quest for office, especially at the highest level, requires mastering both natures. The two successful presidential candidates in the 1980s, Raul Alfonsín and Carlos Menem, knew how to seduce activists and voters, to speak both party dialects and standard languages, and to play traditional and modern election games, that is, how to succeed in a democracy of bifurcated political cultures and communication styles. As elections continue, politicians still try to master both cultural worlds and communication techniques, a seemingly indispensable skill to get elected to office.

The difficulties of campaigning expertise, however, diminish when compared to the problems candidates face after the election, namely, governing a democracy than in less than a decade witnessed the trial, conviction, and pardon of officers accused of human rights violations; military rebellions; hyperinflationary explosions; guerrilla attacks; major and painful economic reforms; general strikes; and daily social turmoil. Yet defying assorted doomsday predictions and against all odds, Argentine democracy manages to survive.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Prior to my fieldwork in Argentina, I did library research to reconstruct the vicissitudes of Argentine electioneering in the 1980s. My intention was to get an overview of the process, hoping to find clues for my initial questions. After reviewing newspapers, magazines, and a handful of books and articles on the subject, I came up with the basic story, including the origins of different candidacies, party bickering, and campaign landmarks. At that stage of my research, Argentine equivalents of Timothy Crouse's "The Boys in the Bus" or Theodore White's superb analyses on U.S. election campaigns certainly could have made my task much easier but this type of literature was not available.

This initial and sketchy report provided an useful bird's-eye view of the puzzle I was trying to resolve, however, many pieces were missing. As the literature on Argentine electioneering, politics and mass media is scarce, much information was needed to get a better grasp of my questions. This account provided few elements to answer either why candidates still relied upon the old game of

electioneering even though they could address voters through the mass media and other modern forms of communication or why the press coverage of campaigning had become more specialized and detailed as elections continued. My feeling was that campaign organization was a big "black box," including two smaller ones (decision-making processes inside both party and media organizations), that needed to be unpacked. I concluded that direct observation was indispensable to understand the nuts-and-bolts of Argentine political communication and get a better sense of how those institutions actually function. The dearth of written, published material on Argentine electioneering, parties or mass media made in situ examination absolutely necessary. Direct access to the protagonists could give me a better insight into electioneering and fill out the gaps of my early narrative.

Setting up the fieldwork was not difficult. The fact that I have lived, done research and participated in politics in Argentina before I came to La Jolla in 1987 was an enormous advantage. Close friends and people I knew from my college years in Buenos Aires who are part of the small world of Argentine politics and mass media willingly opened their phone books. After these first contacts, the process of finding informants snowballed; most interviewees offered their help with contacting people. Sooner than expected, I was face to face with the individuals who had a central role in Argentine

political communication during the 1980s.

Many informants not only shared their thoughts but also provided some campaign documents (e.g. strategy papers, letters, memos), packages of campaign television spots and radio commercials, opinion polls, advertising print materials, and surveys on media consumption. As I anticipated, personal contacts were the best way to have access to information which could not be found otherwise. I combed the major Argentine newspapers, newsmagazines and variety magazines published during the 1980s to analyze campaign coverage across time and different media and to follow the schedules of different campaigns. Gathering this material was not easy. The sorry state of Argentine libraries proved to be an enormous obstacle. I had to frequent several public libraries, institutional and newspaper archives, used books stores and personal bookshelves to secure the materials.

But all these written and video materials were not enough. The world of Argentine politics and communication is, above all, an oral culture; a society of unwritten words, telephone deals and crumbled little papers thrown in the basket. "Words are written in the sand" and numerous and contradictory versions often ensue. In an opaque political environment often plagued with rumors; an economy with high tax evasion and a substantial informal sector; and a society in which individuals burned books and records to eliminate

compromising evidence and, until not so long ago, to annihilate ideas or to survive amid life threats and "disappearances," words thrive.

In this context, to search for written documents expressing the values of political activists, the rationale informing specific decisions inside campaign headquarters and media newsrooms, or numbers on campaign finances, is a rather quixotic task. Talking to the actors was not only the way to get better information but the best chance to get information at all. Some interviewees wisely suggested to adopt a skeptical attitude vis-a-vis most written information I could find. The real story, they said, is usually somewhere else, in the minds and memories of the individuals. (On the authenticity of those memories I elaborate below).

My intention was to talk to candidates who ran for offices at different levels (national, state and local) and in different parts of the country, campaign aides, newspaper journalists and editors, television anchors and producers, pollsters, and party activists. As I suspected that campaign organization differed across political parties, I talked to members of diverse parties; to my surprise, many similarities existed beyond dissimilar parties' structures and electoral support. As I believed (somewhat correctly I found out later) that generational lines were important in shaping outlooks towards campaign strategies and media use, I met politicians

from both the "old guard" and the new cohorts. To understand the differences and the interactive dynamics between national and local campaigning, I talked to nationally renowned politicians and those whose reputation is limited to their home states.

The final sample of 99 people listed in the reference section (informal chats with party rank-and-file activists are not included) is representative of the population, if it is taken into account that this dissertation deals with an imperfect two-party system, a male dominated political-media world, and a polity which basically spins around the Buenos Aires downtown area. Most interviewees were Peronists and Radicals than either Conservatives or Socialists; men than women; and overwhelmingly residents of Buenos Aires rather than other areas of the country.

I conducted most of the interviews, and did most of my field research between July and December 1990. In subsequent trips I met again with some interviewees and talked to others who, for different reasons, I could not interview in 1990. My trip to Buenos Aires during July-August 1991 was a good opportunity to observe the campaigns for the September midterm elections, to examine some of my early conclusions, and to present some of my early findings at academic and campaign conventions. Although this was not the first time I had witnessed an election campaign in Argentina (I had actively

participated during the 1983 national election and lived through the 1984 referendum and the 1985 election), my interests (and my attitude) were slightly different. I approached the 1991 campaign, above all, as a subject of study to find further information and test some thoughts.

Invited by some interviewees, I attended campaign meetings at different party headquarters in 1991. My intention was basically to be a fly on the wall and observe both party notables and activists in action to get a better sense of their worldview and decision-making process. Similarly, when conducting the bulk of my interviews in 1990 I also had the opportunity to observe directly the actors and institutions I was analyzing. Long waits at government offices, party building halls and newsrooms, which did not always conclude with the promised appointment, were not necessarily a waste of time. Sipping a cup of coffee while my interviewee was in a meeting, on the phone, or had not arrived to his/her office, I continued gathering information through both chatting with staff members, eavesdropping, and observing the daily routines of public offices, party headquarters and newsrooms.

Although informants were generally well predisposed to meet me, arranging the interviews was not easy. Difficulties included Argentina's collapsed telephone system, the complex and chaotic schedules of politicians and journalists, and the always-surprising, never-boring daily routine of Argentine

politics. The not-so-unusual cabinet crises of Argentine presidential administrations and a brutal military rebellion (in December 1990), were often responsible for the cancellation of appointments I had pursued for weeks. I could not talk to every person I expected though, in my opinion and confirmed by some key campaign specialists, I covered the major actors of Argentine election campaigns during the 1980s.

All informants accepted my request to tape our conversations. In few cases I preferred to take notes rather than to pull out my tape recorder. These unstructured interviews lasted an average of forty-five minutes and questions varied according to the particular role my interlocutor had in different campaigns. Many times, generally towards the end of the conversation, roles switched. I was asked about journalism, party finances, media structure, campaign advertising in the United States and Argentines' favorite questions when talking to someone living abroad: "How do they see us?" "How are we doing?"

When about to describe sensitive campaign decisions and other touchy subjects, some interviewees suggested to press stop and talk off the record. My feeling is that interviewees were generally sincere even though some kept prudent silence on specific matters. Knowing that my research concerns were directly connected to some delicate affairs of contemporary Argentine politics involving human beings with great

investment in the past, the present and the future, I expected (and respected) formal answers which tried elegantly to duck my questions.

Talking to many politicians and campaign aides who had worked in the same campaign allowed me to check information previously given by their colleagues, journalists or published in different media. Sometimes I obtained contradictory versions about a specific event or decision, other times accounts were similar. Informants' silences, pat replies or forthright declarations of ignorance across interviews about the same issues became important clues and triggered new questions. While crisscrossing Buenos Aires' frenzied traffic, I kept wondering why little information existed on the origins and fate of campaign finances or why few people were willing to illustrate in detail the relations among politicians, media organizations and journalists. The seeming absence of information became a piece of data; the dog that did not bark was a clue too.

My interest was not in securing the "official" behind-the-scenes narration or writing an expose of Argentine politics but rather in getting the big picture of campaign organization. Even though I explained to my informants that the questions were part of academic research I was doing to complete my doctoral degree at the University of California, some interviewees talked to me hoping to make some "dirty

laundry" public. Probably most interviewees tended to be more frank than what I expected given my "academic" presentation and my "foreignness" (despite my confession of being born and raised in Argentina). Certainly I do not suspect that everybody was completely open-hearted; after all, I was dealing with individuals highly experienced in the art of salesmanship. In general, I detected an open attitude, not atypical in the Argentina of the 1990s. Many casual observers agree that public and private freedom of expression has notably expanded in the country in recent years, especially compared to the 1970s and the 1980s. The former a decade of repression, censorship and fear; the latter a time of progressive liberation, euphoria, and "going through the past" (a not accidental way to describe the process in a society impregnated by psychoanalytical jargon).

Interviews took place in diverse contexts: offices at the Casa Rosada, government buildings, and Congress; desks at law, advertising and polling firms; newspaper, radio and television newsrooms; cafes; and private homes. Many times, interviewees who were in a rush suggested continuing our conversation in the more informal settings where Argentines spend considerable hours of their lives: sidewalks and cabs. Unable to record or take notes while we dodged pedestrians or our Buenos Aires cabbies (in their unique style) zigzagged between buses and trucks, I ran into the nearest cafe to

scrawl down our conversations after saying goodbye.

Back in La Jolla, I began transcribing interviews, classifying and reviewing the information. Discovering the main lesson of my research was a slow and rambling process: often, I missed the forest for the trees. For many months, I remained attached to some concerns I had at the beginning of the process without realizing that I had found something different (and even more interesting). Later I realized that more than a window on the state of the Argentine public sphere in the post-transitional context, an analysis of the making of Argentine election campaigns provided an entrance into the worldview of political activists and institutional dynamics.

Not that these issues, namely the quality of democratic communication, institutional settings, and cultural and political mindsets, are divorced. But the answers to my early questions spoke of institutional and cultural factors more than about the arrangements for expanding and strengthening means for communication in a democratic society. I discovered that in searching for an explanation for the role of political parties and the mass media as institutions for communicating politics in democratic Argentina, I have produced an ethnography of political activists and communication organizations which helped to answer my first question: how to account for changes and continuities in Argentine (or any other) election campaigns. A major lesson of the fieldwork

(and of this dissertation as well) is that it is impossible to comprehend the logic informing decisions on campaign strategies, media coverage, or stumping speeches without understanding both the worldviews of the people involved in those processes and the dynamics of political and communication institutions.

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