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Social Evolution of the Argentine Republic

By
Ernesto Quesada

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THE SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC

BY

HON. ERNESTO QUESADA

Attorney-General of the Argentine Republic; Professor in the Universities of
Buenos Ayres and La Plata

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THE SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC¹

BY THE HON. ERNESTO QUESADA,

Attorney-General of the Argentine Republic; Professor in the Universities
of Buenos Ayres and La Plata.

To condense into a few pages several centuries of the history of a nation like the Argentine Republic, to give some idea of the nature of the forces that have determined the development of this country from the end of the sixteenth century, the period of its discovery, to this the second decade of the twentieth, when it is celebrating the first centennial of its independence, is a task at once delicate and arduous. For, aside from these natural difficulties, it will be necessary to avoid all details, to shun statistics, and even to lay aside historical evidence, in order to crystallize into seemingly dogmatic statements, the complicated social evolution of a people in process of transformation, a people still in a formative period. It is a venture bordering upon the impossible.

A century after the commencement of the conquest of the American continent and after the scattering over the land of the invading race, at once warlike and religious, an expedition which was purely Andalusian discovered the River Plate in the southern extremity of the continent. Instead of penetrating to the south, the expedition fixed its gaze northward, searching for a route by which to renew relations with the rich district of the old empire of the Incas. This was in obedience to that thirst after wealth which characterized the taking possession of America. Two centuries later, these remote provinces had been converted into the very important viceroyship of the River Plate. In one direction it extended from the tropical viceroyship of Peru and the torrid lands of Portuguese Brazil, to Cape Horn, lashed by the raging Antarctic seas, and in the other direction it stretched from the chain of the Andes, which runs like a solid wall the length of one of its flanks, to the Atlantic Ocean,

¹The Academy wishes to express its appreciation to Layton D. Register, Esq., of the Law Department of the University of Pennsylvania, and to Mr. Enrique Gil, of the National University of La Plata, of the Argentine Republic, for the translation of this article.

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which bathes its extensive coasts. This enormous territory thus embraced every sort of climate, and was inhabited by a heterogeneous collection of aboriginal races. Its conquest and colonization had been effected upon two convergent lines, that by water, by the River Plate, that by land, from the north. This impressed upon the civilization of these regions different characteristics which must be defined since, even after a century of political independence, their mark is still stamped upon the ideals, aspirations and conduct of the inhabitants.

The "Leyes de Indias,"² faithful reflections of the purposes of Spanish colonization in America, show how extraordinary was the importance of the native races, how relatively few were the Spanish conquerors and how closely the two races became mingled, through the régime of the *encomiendas*³ the *mitas*⁴ and the *yanaconzagos*.⁵ The Spanish colonies were founded and developed in the midst of a mass of people, who, because of their enormous superiority in point of numbers, necessarily reacted in turn upon the small number of the invaders, either by interbreeding with the latter, or by the contact of daily life, or by their superior adaptability to their natural environment. The conquerors themselves presented different traits, according to the region of Spain from which they came, and naturally they sought to group and to settle themselves in obedience to the ethnic affinities of their origin. Biscayans, Basques, Castellians, Aragonese, Andalusians, etc., gave typical characteristics to every American region where they established themselves. They transplanted their social prejudices, their spirit of communal independence, their concentrated energy and their buoyant temperament. From this it resulted that in whatever corner of America a particular Spanish strain of blood was found, there were reflected the traits of the corresponding district of Spain.

As the native races varied according to the region, from those

²Old Spanish legislation for the Spanish-American colonies.

³*Encomienda* is the Spanish name for the concession, granted by the crown during the Spanish Colonial period, of a certain number of native Indians, to a Spanish conqueror for purposes of service. The *Encomendero* was the recipient of such a concession from the crown.

⁴*Mita*. Spanish term for the distribution by lot of the native Indians for purposes of public work.

⁵*Yanaconzago*. Spanish term for that peculiar kind of land tenantry by which the tenant has no title to the land, but receives a proportion of the product of his labors upon the land.

of a peaceful and civilized character to those of an untamable and warlike nature, and even to ferocious savages, the Spanish settlements existed without any common plan. They made a republic with the tribes, and they were the beginning of a creole type which was quite distinct in each locality. In the viceroyship of Buenos Ayres the ethnic geography of the aborigines shows a kaleidoscopic variety of races. In the north and in the regions which formerly had been subject to the rule of the Incas, the population—both servient and dominant classes—was peaceful, attached to the soil, resigned and passive.

In those regions lying between the two great rivers the population was of a gentle and peace-loving nature and, therefore, was easily molded by missionary civilization. Along the slopes of the Andes the people were daring, excitable and independent. The south or Patagonian extremity was overrun by brave and unconquerable tribes, closely related to that Araucanian race which the Spanish conquest never entirely succeeded in subduing. The Spanish settlements on the other hand presented different characteristics. In the north they came from Lima, and were Biscayan and Castillian, aristocratic, very proud of their ancestry, holding aloof, enriched by the mines of Potosi and the commerce of the fleet of Portobello. Southward were Andalusians and Spanish common folk, little given to titles and conventionalities. They were condemned to pursue the smuggler's trade, because the mother country, following an economic error of the time and perhaps owing to deficient geographic knowledge, permitted them only an overland commerce, by mule back, from the Panama fleet which unloaded its cargoes in Callao. Hence in the provinces of the north, called High Peru, and in the present provinces of Jujuy and Tucuman, the Spanish population held up Lima as their ideal, and exhibited both its vices and its virtues. Out of it was formed the aristocratic, commercial and luxurious city of Salta. On the other hand, in the river provinces, the existence of the cities was precarious and fraught with the dangers of a smuggling trade carried on with the Portugese neighbors—the source of the centuries-old controversy of Sacramento colony. These settlements were not unacquainted with the fear of pirates, of daring navigators and of roving slave dealers, who on their arrival at the River Plate unloaded the "products of their country," with the toleration and secret complicity of the government officials and with

the connivance of the inhabitants. These inhabitants were true outlaws. They scoffed at the administration and fiscal measures and trusted more to their fists than they feared being caught in the complicated meshes of the uneconomic laws.

The interbreeding of these different classes of population resulted in creole types, characteristic of each region. In the central cities of the north, they were always aristocratic and devoted to learning, while in the vast stretches of country they lived the semi-feudal life of *encomenderos*. The interbreeding with the Indians formed an inferior class of half breed which approached the type of the mother more than that of the father and which was certainly not a robust or handsome race. In the river region, the population lived on a democratic plane of equality in the cities, while in the rural districts they became that creole type known as the *gaucho*.⁹ Found amidst a scattered population and inheriting the far from sedentary habits of the Spanish mother race, the *gaucho* preferred the free and roving existence of the pampas. He lived by the herds of semi-wild animals, which had multiplied amazingly since Mendoza's expedition had introduced the very limited stock, destined later to be converted into the stupendous riches of this country. In the central, more mountainous region also, the interbreeding of the races produced very definite results and the creole population of the rural districts acquired traits as though living closely associated with the *gauchos* of the pampas. In the south the aboriginal races remained pure, except for the insignificant mixing which came from the Spanish captive women, victims of the attacks of the Tehuelches of the north, from Santiago del Estero to the Bolivian frontier. Wherever the native population was dense and attached to the soil the creoles living in the country and about the cities show a closer affinity with it, than with the Spanish blood. They adopt native habits and conform to native peculiarities, even to the extent of adopting the melancholy rhythm of the music and songs, those unique *tristes* which are heard even to-day in the Argentine provinces of the north, from Santiago del Estero to the Bolivian frontier. There the creole laborers of the land and the half breeds of the districts about the cities tenderly preserve the *quichua*, or native language of their ancestors, by intermixing it with the Spanish. The same close affinity with the native element is found in the river

⁹The cowboy of the Argentine Pampas.

provinces, and especially in Corrientes, where in the rural and semi-rural districts the dregs of the missionary population have preserved as their most precious possession the *guarani* dialect. But, where the native population was more scattered and nomadic, the creole population became transformed and converted into the *gaucho* or cowboy of the pampas, a very handsome half breed, full of energy, of noble instincts, accustomed to the freest sort of life over boundless plains, where each one depended solely upon himself and recognized no superior. Here we have the explanation of the great hold which this type (*gaucho*) has upon the imagination.

In spite of these differences, however, the colonial life was stamped with a certain uniformity which served as a background for these local peculiarities. Spanish-American society was zealously preserved from contact with other European nations. Only inhabitants of Spain were free to go and come, so that this triple characteristic—that they were Spanish, monarchical and orthodox Catholic—was the salient feature common to all South America. The person of the monarch and the supreme authority of the colonial office were very distant and the tribunals of the viceroys and governors holding actual sessions there upon the territory, were the real and tangible personifications of the monarchy. The Pope himself was also very distant and had given over the superintendence of ecclesiastical affairs to the crown, which had in turn confided it to the respective viceroys. The bishops and religious orders were, strictly speaking, the visible representatives of religion. In this way throne and altar came in touch with the colonial populations, who took heated sides in the formidable conflicts which used to arise between the representatives of each. But they retained respect for them; they recognized their high merits and prerogatives and obeyed them as representing that which could neither be questioned nor altered. Public officials of all grades were drafted from Spain and remained for definite periods. The laws forbade them to mix with the populations and they kept themselves aloof, with the ostensible purpose of assuring their complete impartiality. But the result was that they tried to take advantage of their period in office to swell their personal fortunes, without allowing themselves to be deterred by any scruples or drawing rein to their appetites. The priests even, both secular and those regularly ordained, allowed themselves to

be carried away by that spirit of self-seeking which led them to look upon America as a mine to be exploited.

Doubtless there were zealous officials both civil and religious who performed the best type of service. The Spaniards were established amidst a native population, who devoted themselves to commerce or to mining in the north, and to the raising of cattle and lesser trades in the river and central districts, and they always looked upon their residence in this part of American territory as a temporary sojourn, during which to acquire riches. The creoles, of every class, both of the city and of the country, perhaps because they seemed to be looked down upon by the Spaniards, were unconsciously trying to enlarge their hold upon affairs of all kinds. They felt themselves, as it were, rooted to the soil, and far from proceeding only from selfish motives of money making, they took an interest in local affairs, which, for them, were of greater importance than those of a crown, only vaguely known to them by report. The city creoles, thanks to an advanced communal spirit, aroused by the establishment of the *cabildos* or Spanish town council, were diligently at work on their own municipal problems. They thus became accustomed to limit their horizon to the limits of their own city and of the immediately surrounding country district, because communication between the cities was slow, difficult and dangerous, a condition which resulted in their virtual isolation from each other. The city might almost be regarded as the center of their universe. From the rest of the world news arrived months and years later, tempered or misrepresented. It awakened not the faintest echo. It might as well have been the news of far away ages and peoples.

The mass of the natives, with whose women the military and civil population cohabited, since relatively few Spanish women came to America, took no interest whatsoever in the affairs of a monarchy which was not that of their ancestors but of a race different from themselves. They showed, rather, such a passive indifference that each community seemed a world unto itself, occupied and pre-occupied only with its own matters. The religious and civil officials, in their turn, were soon contaminated by this environment. They gave to local affairs so excessive an importance that it also appeared to their eyes as if the boundary of the Indian city was the *ultima Thule* of civilization. In the northern provinces, which had reached the final stage of perfection under the old Inca conquest, the native

population preserved and protected its pre-Columbian traditions by the use of their dialect, the *quichua* tongue. The régime of the *encomienda*, the *mitas* and the *yanacozgo* had produced only a formal subjection of the natives. In the depths of their souls the natives preserved and fostered traditions of bygone centuries. In this way the creoles, the product of interbreeding, were recast into the dense mass of the Indian population and became more conversant with American traditions than Spanish.

Amongst the missionary converts, the Jesuits had erected cities that flourished artificially under their care. They were inhabited only by Indian races, and the Jesuits zealously guarded them from contact with the Spaniards whom they removed far from their admirable theocratic empire as though they were the very incarnation of evil. An unreal civilization was thus created, governed patriarchally by the priests and without any vitality of its own. Hence, the expulsion of the priests by the *coup d' état* of Charles III brought about the destruction of these populations, which had realized during the century of their existence, the ideal of the most exacting of Utopian civilization. But the results were not such as had been desired. These Indians, on being distributed over the colonies, did not coalesce with the rest of the inhabitants, but returned to the depths of barbarism or, as in the present province of Corrientes, constituted the mass of the population, an element indifferent to national interests just as the old missionaries had been to those of the crown and sensible only to the recollection of their ancient and traditional life, that is to say, to their own local affairs.

In the central and river provinces, the marvelous increase of animals capable of domestication but still in a wild state brought about a profound transformation. The native tribes, sparser than in the north, without losing any of their savage customs, soon possessed themselves of the horse and overran the boundless pampas. The creoles of the country districts and the *gauchos* in their turn vied for the possession of the horse. No longer able to remold their life to that of the savage tribes, they checked their bold and ferocious habits and became keen and cautious, forming a race of special type, midway between the Indian and the Spaniard. They were extreme individualists, for in the immense pampas, authority, both civil and religious could obtain but a weak hold. The *gaucho*

made so complete a face-about from his former self as to devote his life solely to cattle raising. He evolved a special fitness or adaptability to his new life and created the most curious types, from the *zumbon compadrito* with his peculiar cloak and *chiripa*, who flashed his sarcastic jests with such grace and elegance, to the poet troubador and famous animal tracker who was but little less keen than the hound in scenting and following the trail of man or beast. As the *gauchos* came in contact with not a few of the city population, upon whom they were dependent for obtaining the things they needed in exchange for pelts and the products of the country, they formed with such of the latter as came most closely in touch with them, a community of ideas and aims. Thus by busying themselves only with their own special lives, they became independent and without attachment for any but their respective municipal centers. Each region possessed its local feature, each was separated from the rest and all were but nominally linked and united with their remote and common monarch.

In the River Plate region, leaving aside the factor of geographic interest, to which I have just made allusion, the racial history was limited to the Spanish population and its creole interbreeding with the native races, because the negro population had no importance whatsoever, in this part of America. The quantity of negro slaves introduced by the "dealers" was reduced to a minimum, and even these, upon the breaking out of the war of independence, were killed off, for now that their masters were freeing them, they formed the great body of the troops. In this way they helped the American cause. The mulattoes, consequently, were also reduced in number. This process was carried to such a point that the singular scarcity of pure negroes or even of mulattoes was a real characteristic of this country.

Foreign influence could only penetrate by way of the Atlantic, and even then only covertly, unless it were by crossing the rocky barrier of the Andes. The Portuguese influence was limited to the profitable commercial relations with the smugglers. That of other nations only made itself felt through the occasional visits of ships forced to take shelter in the La Plata from time to time, or dropping anchor upon various pretexts, but always with the intention of smuggling. This was an open secret to the then few inhabitants of Buenos Ayres, the possibilities of which as a port,

although gainsayed by the crown, had been ordained by nature. When, during the last days of colonial domination, commerce was permitted to the port of Buenos Ayres, there was no longer time for foreign influence to penetrate to the heart of the country. The English invasions left a greater residue of influence through the distribution of the English prisoners, who in great part established homes in the midland regions to which they were sent. There, in the midst of the Spanish families, with whom they were left, they disseminated ideas of liberty and standards of independence, unknown among the rest of the population, the best classes of which in those days of unrest, were a turbulent and irrepressible element.

The revolution of May, 1810, wrought a fundamental change in the social situation. Distinguished officers of the Napoleonic wars came to the country to offer their military services. English merchants, attracted by the reports of the English invasions of the Argentine Republic in 1806 and 1807, hurried over in increasing numbers. Soon they were influencing the society of Buenos Ayres which adopted London fashions, many of its customs, and became accustomed to the English character. Foreign commerce was concentrated in the hands of the English and many of these merchants finally married in the country. During the colonial epoch only books expurgated by the Inquisition had been admitted, but now the revolutionary movement unmuzzled these mysteries and flung wide the doors through which penetrated a flood of French and English works. The doctrines of the French revolution were at that time the passion of the majority of our public men, and its influence, even its Jacobin and terrorist phases, is traceable from the first instant. This is revealed in the "plan of government" of Moreno. On the other hand, the constitutional doctrines of the Anglo-Saxons were embraced only by the few. Dorrego went to the United States and there absorbed them. During the first decade after the revolution, the educational system scarcely advanced at all but followed closely to the traditional path of teaching taught by the University of Cordoba. The University of Buenos Ayres was founded in the second decade, and made an effort to reform public education. But the war of independence was not yet over and the internal situation of the country at the end of the anarchical dissolution which took place in 1820, was such that a multitude of affairs

demanded attention, and as yet it was hardly possible, outside of the large cities, to turn to such questions of reform.

The winning of independence was the cause of the sad dismemberment of the viceroyship of the River Plate and the statesmen of the period could not have prevented it. From what was once a single historic province there have gradually been detached the province of High Peru, to-day the Republic of Bolivia; the province of Paraguay, to-day the Republic of the same name; the eastern missions which now constitute the present Brazilian provinces of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catalina and Sao Paulo. The Banda Oriental has since become the Republic of Uruguay; the Falkland Islands were snatched by England; the territory about the Straits of Magellan was ceded later to Chile, under color of regulating the boundary line. The Argentine Republic, during the first century of its existence as an independent nation, far from acquiring a single square mile of territory, has continued to lose territory at every point of the compass. Her international policy, from that point of view, has been lamentable and the memory of it is still a bitter lesson.

Within the enormous territorial expanse which now constitutes the Argentine Republic political integration was effected slowly. The different populations settled at intervals along the routes which connected Buenos Ayres with Lima on the one side, with the Andes on another and with Asuncion on still another. Each settlement was an oasis of Spanish population set in the midst of a savage country. In order to establish something approaching unity within each section, the people organized themselves after the pattern of the urban centers of Spain with their *Cabildo* or town council as the communal authority, which controlled and regulated the extremes of opinion and conditions and brought the whole municipal life to a focus. Each settlement lived a life apart, separated from the others. In fact they were cast in the mold of the ancient Spanish village society, and the central authority only made itself felt at infrequent intervals.

The inhabitants of each village thus developed an aptitude for municipal life and for self-government, and a concentration upon local interests which became the basis of their political development. They fostered a local character which was the very foundation and essence of their later federal tendency. To

the interests and pretensions of the crown as formulated by the "Council of the Indies," they preferred the authority of the viceroy and of the intendants, but their main preference was the municipality itself, whose frank and loyal mouthpiece was the traditional Cabildo. For this reason, when the movement for independence commenced, each village and each city was led by its own Cabildo, and it was the Cabildo which gave vigor and form to the revolution. Around the Cabildo the inhabitants of the vicinity grouped themselves in the different organic or anarchic revolts which followed. It was for this reason, too, since the present republic possessed no basis of political division, that each one of the cities formed a nucleus in its respective province of the same name, and that the whole territory was subdivided according to the radius of authority exercised by the principal cities of colonial times, without any account being taken of economic autonomy or of demography.

Federal sentiment made its appearance profoundly rooted in tradition and blood, and the tendency towards centralization only emanated from certain groups of dreamers at the metropolis who with their eyes closed to the past believed along with such deluded men as Rivadavia that, by destroying the traditional Cabildo, they would wipe the state clean of such precedents, just as the Jacobins of the French Revolution did with the institutions of the ancient régime. Argentine society issued from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries already shaped toward local self-government and local loyalty. It already appeared a federation in fact which was easily transformed into a federation in law, because the federal idea was at bottom the very heart and soul of things.

The development of our colonization also indicated that of our civilization. As we approach the north, the brilliant center of civilization of Lima society becomes more aristocratic, infatuated with its learning, luxurious and fastidious. The youth of the Plate Valley were attracted to the University of Chuquisaca, where, amidst its cloisters, they acquired a grave and disputacious manner. Later the University of Cordoba, like a pale reflection of the former, drew upon a part of these youths and, if they left its lecture halls also practiced in the art of sophistry, they did not imbibe in return that atmosphere of aristocratic aloofness, pomp and presumption. Buenos Ayres and the river country were without a university and without an aristocracy. At the periodic auctions of titles of nobility,

the receipts of which were added to the colonial contributions and were intended to meet a certain deficit in the Spanish treasury, not a purchaser appeared and there was not a single herder of the pampas nor a single rich smuggler who would bid. The titles which were thus put up to sale remained unpurchased, for the people held them in no esteem.

With no resources other than its commerce and industry which were both of a contraband nature, Buenos Ayres developed more rapidly than other cities and with a greater freedom from "red tape" and formalism, in spite of its being the seat of the general government, with its Spanish officials, its civil, military and religious authorities and an administrative machinery identical with that of the other capitals of the viceroyship. For here there was not the same atmosphere, the life was simple and democratic, the officials had no stage from which to display their importance, and within the narrow walls of the modest home of the government, the few inhabitants of this metropolis used to mingle in its marshy, unpaved streets, or in their unpretentious and simple adobe houses. They treated each other with a certain equality, which was due precisely to those conditions of intense individualism developed of necessity in a cattle raising community.

In the northern and central districts society was cast in the Peruvian mold, a reproduction of Spanish civilization, aristocrats adopting primogeniture and, in modified form, the feudal régime of the *encomenderos*. In the river and mountain region, the urban was a reflection of the rural population, independent, haughty, brave, accustomed to making forays upon horseback over the endless pampas, trusting to its own decision and in the end to the knife, which was a symbol of the worship of personal courage, inherited from Spanish ancestors who had developed it during the centuries of the struggle against the Moors. In the river district the commerce, which in the main was carried on illegally by doggedly persevering merchants who plied their trade fearlessly with pirates and foreign smugglers, caused a certain spirit of self-confidence to grow. This spirit made itself felt in the popular movement of the reconquest of 1806, and in the impulse of the revolution of May, 1810.

From Buenos Ayres started the movement for independence, and the Cabildos of the interior cities fell in with the movement with more or less alacrity. Hence the further inland these

cities were, the less enthusiastic. The Paraguayan region isolated itself and followed the conservative policy of the Cabildo of Asuncion. The province of High Peru, in spite of its efforts, was the last to revolt and never followed with any ardor the movement initiated by the metropolis. Indeed, the revolution of May, which had spread to the banks of the Paraguay river and over the plateau of Bolivia, might not, perhaps, have succeeded in so closely cementing, in spite of the righteousness of its cause, the independence proclaimed in Tucuman in 1816, had not the inspiration of San Martin added that powerful impulse which flung armies across the Andes, liberated Chile from Spanish dominion and brought independence to Peru. He might have pursued this glorious course toward the independence of the whole continent, if the colossal egotism of Bolivar in that tragic conference of Guayaquil had not placed our national hero in the dilemma of either eliminating himself and leaving his selfish rival to wear the laurels planted and nurtured by Argentine blood or of sacrificing the fruits of the campaign for independence, by not being able to obtain from him the military assistance he was in need of. He placed his country before his own glory and yielded the field to one to whom personal renown was preferable to all else.

For the social evolution of Argentine the sacrifice of San Martin was of incalculable importance. Upon eliminating himself, he left to his rival the army which he had himself led until then and this country was deprived of its one organizing force. Disintegrating tendencies manifested themselves without counter-check. In the second decade of the century, various little republics were defiantly established in the interior. They were constructed upon the plan of the old settlements which had risen to something greater. They were governed by Cabildos, and these in turn obeyed the local leader, who was raised to dictatorship over the districts. Each province was sufficient unto itself. It barely communicated with the others and retrograded towards barbarism without regularly organized government or other will than that of its respective tyrant and the free-lances who were his immediate followers. Schools closed; families took refuge within the walls of their dwellings; terror pervaded; life was everywhere insecure; those who could, emigrated, leaving behind them on the land the sick, the women and the children. Men were bedfellows in misery; there was no industry, no commerce; sin flourished and virtue was trampled under foot. These thirty

years of bloody and merciless civil strife made prominent the idea of the rule of force. People were taken from peaceful work, efficient teaching languished, every social bond was weakened and in the end a society evolved in which not education, ancestry or fortune exercised the least influence, but audacity, the impulse of the local leader, the mob instincts of the city population and of the rural *gaucho*. The local leaders and their followers alone wielded any real power. They dominated without possibility of counter-check and an entire generation tolerated this condition during that terrible period.

The local leadership, like the legendary tyranny of ancient Rome, demolished everything which tried to rise above the obedient, passive, resigned and common level. It brutally choked it or forced it to emigrate, and Argentine society had to develop in these anaemic surroundings. There was no possibility of foreign immigration, or of establishing industry and commerce.

The idea of nationality was observed by party passion and the factions were ready to launch out upon some fight upon the slightest pretext. Social classes were divided into irreconcilable parties, the reds or federalists, and the blues or centralists, those who believed in the local leader, and those who detested him. The former were called federalists, because they believed that each locality ought to adopt the kind of government which best suited it; the latter were called the centralists, because in their weakness they leaned upon the influence of the national government in order to give to the whole country a common unified administration of which the local government would be the agent.

Rosas met this situation and put an end to it. After the dismemberment of the ephemeral republic of 1825, and the national convention, and following upon the Brazilian war, the centralist party, deceived in its principles and in its men, closed its doors to counsel and committed the error of executing Dorrego at Navarro. The mass of the rural population resisted the straight jacket proposed by the doctrinaires of the centralist party and in this they showed themselves unrelenting. Then Rosas came into power in the government of Buenos Ayres and also secured control of the situation in the provinces. He succeeded in bringing about the organization of each province with a view to forming the Argentine Confederation. He was entrusted by the federation with the management of foreign relations. He left the interior provinces to

organize themselves after the pattern of the government of Buenos Ayres. Doubtless, during the long quarter of a century while he was dictator, real security and peace were never enjoyed, for the centralist party was ambitious, arrogant and factious, plotting within itself, and when it was not exciting to rebellion, or leading an invasion it was provoking foreign intervention. Finally the terrible and merciless war between the centralists and the federalists developed a state of terror which culminated in the excesses of the year 1840. The dictator treated his adversaries without mercy and they in their turn had none for him. To be strictly truthful, neither party can be absolved from wicked and culpable action. Nor can I shut my eyes to the fact that the great power bred pride, and that pride bred hatred of the subject class. But this prolonged dictatorship saved the country from the anarchy of the petty republics of 1820, it solidified the country into a sovereign entity and it gave to the different parts the cohesion of a nation capable of victoriously resisting the French and Anglo-French interventions. This much is owed definitely to the centralist party, who in this way solved the difficulty traditional to our national organization and so guided along the right road the severest crisis of Argentine history, not only from a political but also from a sociological point of view. The chasm that separated the social classes of the capital city from those of the provincial districts was bridged; the prejudices of blood, of caste and fortune were destroyed and there was established complete equality, where every man was the heir of his own labor and depended only upon his own hands.

After the battle of Caseros, in 1852, the government which had so used and abused oppression and patronage fell, leaving the country, however, in such a condition of stability and internal organization that the different provinces grouped themselves logically under the Convention of San Nicolas. The Argentine Federation was maintained and Urquiza was placed at the head of the government. Despite the local character of the revolution of Buenos Ayres, on the eleventh of September the country at large adopted the fundamental constitution of 1853, at the Congress of Santa Fé. The government of the recalcitrant province of Paraná realized but slowly the new organization, with which it finally incorporated itself, while the nation continued developing in the path established by its constitution. Without losing sight, therefore, of the bitter lessons of this

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phase of our evolution, it is but fair to show an appreciation of its benefits.

The characteristic of this intermediate epoch is the very slight introduction of the foreign element. To-day this element is scattered over the land, but at that time such as were firmly rooted in the country, principally in Buenos Ayres, were very few. Of these the English formed the greater part, for the infusion of German blood, which resulted from the distribution of prisoners taken from the German regiments at Ituzaingo, though they included some estimable families constituted a very subordinate factor. English commerce was always respected and in spite of the bitterness produced by the naval interventions, it was left to develop peacefully. But as it did not increase in volume and was never reinforced by that of other nations, it did not become great. The path of social evolution was in the direction of the commingling of the city and rural population, and of the participation of the *gauchos* in public life, either by forming a large and worthy element in the army or by becoming the active nucleus of the popular civic movements. The democratization of the country was complete, for in general, the upper classes of society in the cities affiliated themselves with the centralist party, while the populace supported the federal party. Hence the bloody triumph of the latter brought about its complete predominance and from this period the social and political problems remained more enduring in nature, while differences of blood and tradition were put aside.

Since the constitution of 1853, the social evolution of Argentine has been guided and carried forward by two factors, immigration and foreign capital. Under their influence, the characteristics of the prior period were gradually modified to a certain extent. The administration of Mitre struggled against the difficulties of inadequate means of communication between the distant cities and against traditional custom of guerilla warfare. Force was employed in order to remain master of the field and to break up the resistance which the men of the interior set up against the prominence of those of Buenos Ayres, and a cruel war against Paraguay was undertaken. The ability and consistency of this Argentine statesman was great.

When the passions of his contemporaries had been assuaged, he became the "grand old man" of the nation, growing in stature as

posterity forms its judgment on his policy. That administration, like the following one of Sarmiento, had to cope with two factors, the great uninhabited tracts of land and the survival of ancient custom. On the one hand the different Argentine regions lived in isolation from one another, communication between them being difficult; on the other hand there still survived the custom of local chieftainship and of the constant and armed movements of different political factions, who would set out upon guerilla forays on any pretext whatsoever, raising their banners on high as though their behavior was patriotic and praiseworthy, whereas it was but the vicious habit of a barbaric and backward age.

The administration of Avellaneda continued the task of combating such tendencies by the establishment of the telegraph which would unite all these centers to each other; by the construction of railroads to facilitate communication; and by the encouragement of European immigration for purposes of settlement and in order to mix other races with that of Argentine and so modify its political idiosyncracies by more conservative standards and interests. The conquest of the Patagonian wilds, with the final subjugation of the warlike native tribes of the south, opened and ushered in an era in the Argentine evolution. This occurred contemporaneously with the historic solution of the problem of federalism versus centralism, which silenced forever the old antagonism between the inhabitants of the metropolis and those of the provinces.

From 1880 till the present, the work of multiplying the telegraphs and railway routes has gone on, as has also the increase of foreign immigration. These have produced the desired effect in the social transformation of the country. The telegraph and the railroad have definitely killed the seditious germs of guerilla warfare and of local chieftainship. Local uprisings are no longer possible. The city and rural populations have become convinced of this, and the popular mind is at peace since the generation has disappeared which saw the last revolts of the *gauchos*, and other forms of popular uprising. Foreign capital commenced and encouraged the exploitation of our natural resources. The sugar industry of the northern provinces, the wine culture of the Andes provinces, even the stock raising and agriculture of the river districts have been the combined work of these three progressive elements. Immigration has helped immensely toward this same end, but the settlement of

new lands does not advance by leaps and bounds, but spreads gradually.

Starting from the port of arrival, the stream of immigration continues to spread clinging closely to the land and little by little it mixes with the existing population, inter-breeds with it, fuses with it, and gives a great surging impulse to agriculture, industry and commerce. The social transformation of the river provinces is due to this junction of the two currents as a result of which the *gaucho* of the metropolis of Santa Fé or of Entre Rios, who, formerly famous for his bold and lawless tendencies, has to-day been so fused with the different foreign elements that all but the memory of this ancient type has disappeared, and the country is covered over with populous settlements, laborious, prosperous and progressive. The great fertility of the soil has returned with interest the foreign capital which first watered it, and has enriched marvelously all who have engaged in its cultivation. The development of the national resources, in turn, has given birth to such conservative interests that it is incomprehensible to the new generation that the former generation could, at the signal of a semi-barbarous chief jump on their horses and, rushing over the fields, kill, pillage and destroy. It is true that the transition has been effected at the cost of producing a certain political indifference in the new generations, which no doubt, will be overcome in time.

The social evolution of the Argentine Republic has finally found its true channel and to-day is in full course of development. In proportion as the foreign immigration continues bringing therewith its happy complement of foreign capital, the country will continue to develop industrially. The astonishing increase in industries, with a total production out of all proportion to the growing population, is only explained by the use on a large scale of the most advanced machinery. But such a metamorphosis spreads from the river districts toward the interior of the country. It does not jump from one point to another without connecting links between them, but always preserves a channel through which a relation is maintained between the different zones already transformed or in process of transformation. The first effect of each infusion of foreign blood into creole veins is to appease the hot political passions of other times, abolish the old institution of the local chieftainship, even blot him from memory and replace it

by an absorption in our growing material interests. These material interests appear to have conspired to bring about that indifference towards the state, as such, which makes men look mistakenly at a political career as a profession which thrives off the real working classes. For, our government both municipal, provincial and national appears to be the heritage of a well-defined minority—the politicians—who devote themselves to politics just as other social classes devote themselves to agriculture, stock raising, industry, commerce, etc.

Public life with its complex machinery of elections and governing bodies has been, so to say, delivered into the hands of a small group of men who at present are not productive of anything new in the general social situation of former times; that is to say, these men form a definite class, moved by the influence of this or that personality. Though it has suppressed the bloody characteristics of the previous period it has not relapsed into their heresies.

Little by little this shadow of the old system changes into that of the "boss" of the settlement and ward. The boss makes his business that of the mass of the voters, he stirs them up from their indifference, makes them go to the polls, deliberately falsifies public opinion, and so wins for himself a political managership, which gives him a marked influence in the back offices of officials and in the lobbies of legislatures. From such methods there spring no little censurable legislation of privilege and a great loss of contentment on the part of the people. When public spirit strengthens and shakes from itself the dust of inertia, and when the laboring classes have passed beyond that first stage of money grabbing, all the inhabitants of the nation will commence to busy themselves about the common weal. The thorn of the "boss" will prick them and they will then be able to form into political parties with unselfish programs and platforms. Every voter will cast his ballot to send to the legislature candidates who uphold the principles of his particular platform. As yet the people have not even reached the gateway to this goal. The past is still seen in full process of evolution and it is not easy to foresee the end.

This does not mean that the present moment of transition is valueless. On the contrary, it is of very great importance, because the social situation in the Argentine Republic is in process of making.

The politicians, now that they look upon themselves as called to stand forth above the heads of the rest of the people, have to be real statesmen. In this historic period, such statesmen, have the personality of the chauffeur who directs one of those swift engines of our century upon its dizzy course, the mechanism of which is so sensitive to the controlling pressure of the hand that it can deftly avoid all accident or cause a catastrophe of fatal consequences. There is required in such a man extraordinary coolness, clearness of vision as to responsibility, perfect knowledge of the course to be run, besides ceaseless vigilance, iron nerve when the time of trial arrives and a complete concentration upon the task. The legitimate tasks of government, in this very grave period of Argentine evolution, require a special training on the part of public leaders. They must study thoroughly the problems of our social evolution, and they must form a clear idea of the necessary solutions. Towards this they must steer with undiverted eye. The necessity of further exploitation of our national resources, the successive expansion of enterprise over zone after zone of our territory, the assimilation of the foreign immigrants by the creole population, the slow formation of a national spirit in the new generation, all these monopolize for the present the national energies and prevent them from turning to other problems. The country is converted, as it were, into a giant boa constrictor. It is entirely given over to the task of converting its food into nourishment, of abstracting the juices from the hard and resisting substances, of passing a multitude of different elements through its living organs so that they may later form a new tissue, adapted to the present and future needs of the country.

From this point of view the present moment in the evolution of Argentine is of immense sociological interest. We are permitted to be present at the visible transmutation of a society, too weak even to direct itself, and absorbed in the fusion of different influences. The direction of this process has been handed over without counter-check to public men who are obliged to dictate and put into practice legislation and administrative rules of every kind, as though they enjoyed absolute power. Furthermore, by the very nature of things, the administrative functions in such periods have to discount the future and effect in the present a series of public works or social regulations which will weigh upon future generations not only

from the point of view of the general finances but even from the point of view of national character. The national transformation of the land with ports, canals, railroads, telegraphs and every sort of means of communication, indeed, with every kind of public work, cannot be accomplished with present resources. A call must be made upon those of the future, by means of loans which will be a burden upon coming generations. If such a governmental policy is not accompanied by a skillful and prudent financial management, the burdens of our descendants will be considerably increased. They may even be committed to a policy that will cause eventual bankruptcy and an inevitable retrogression in the national development. The intellectual metamorphosis of the nation by a proper system of primary, secondary and higher education and by special schools of technical training, in order to form the national spirit of the future type of Argentine citizen, is certainly our most difficult governmental problem, because it is a question of molding the very soul of the nation. To teach different and contradictory systems, to do and then undo, each day changing the courses of study to successively adopt antagonistic standards and show a real lack of fixity in pedagogic methods, is to commit the greatest of all crimes, because it is not a crime against the exchequer of posterity but against its very soul. To accomplish a fusion of the currents of foreign immigration, to sort out the best from them, and to direct the formation of the new type which is being evolved, melting it in the crucible of the school, of the army, and of public life, is perhaps, to-day our task of transcendent difficulty. Such a problem is greater than that of directing the stream of foreign capital which, while fructifying the national soil, clings to it like the countless tentacles of a gigantic octopus and absorbs a great part—sometimes too great a part—of the riches produced only to transmit them through the arteries of the Republic, to foreign nations who employ it to their exclusive profit.

Perhaps no moment in the history of our nation requires a greater combination of qualifications in its public men. The student may contemplate this most interesting transformation, displayed before his eyes like the moving film of a gigantic cinematograph which permits him to grasp at once the different phases of the social problem which it presents. Rarely in the history of humanity has it been possible to contemplate a like spectacle. The United States

presented it a half century ago, to the astonished gaze of men of that day who were but little familiar with social problems. The Argentine Republic is repeating now the same phenomenon, with this difference that it can observe itself and be guided by the experience acquired elsewhere. Other countries of the world, in the future will, no doubt, in their turn repeat a similar evolution, though perhaps in a different environment. But the interesting part of the present moment is that the Argentine Republic is sailing upon the same course in the twentieth century that the United States did in the nineteenth. Our evolution is proceeding with greater care because it is being worked out amid better conditions. We can now take advantage of the costly experience gained by our brothers of the north and so by avoiding many of their errors, seek to escape the shoals upon which they stranded and the mistakes which they involuntarily committed, even though we have in our turn special problems which they did not have. Thus the tremendous politico-social crisis of the North American War of Secession will not be repeated in the southern hemisphere and the Argentine social evolution will not have to solve the profound anthropological problem of the rivalry of races, which, in the United States, arises from the white, black and yellow races, living together side by side.

In Argentine there are no ethnic problems. The social antagonism raised by an arrogant plutocracy on the one hand and poverty stricken proletariat on the other, is not presented as an Argentine problem, because riches are still in process of formation there, and easily pass from one hand to another. A monopoly of riches cannot be prolonged beyond a single generation because with the system of compulsory division of descendants' estates, it soon returns to the common mass of the population. Social conditions in our evolution, present distinct problems from those which characterize other nations and demand, therefore, a direct study on the ground and must not be viewed through the doctrines developed in other nations and amid other conditions. The molding of the national spirit by uniform and compulsory schools and the slow adaptation of the mass of the immigrants to historical traditions and to future national aims, demand much time and they are now in the full process of being worked out. The celebration of the Centenary of our independence has made prominent the fact that such an evolution is much more advanced than one would think. There still

remains, nevertheless, not a little to be done in this direction, though the national compulsory school system and the army conscription are factors of great importance which are working for fusion. But, in the country districts and in those places where the error has been committed of permitting the formation of settlements, homogeneous in race and religion, which regard themselves as autonomous offshoots of their mother country, resisting the Argentine school or any intermingling with the mass of neighboring population—in such districts, the fusion, though inevitable, will be necessarily slower.

All these sociological problems might and should have been exhaustively studied in the history of the United States during the nineteenth century, a history which, as I have said, the Argentine Republic is repeating in the twentieth. Foreign immigration at this time has no outlet more profitable than the River Plate. The doors of North America are gradually being closed, and the other regions do not yet present the same advantages as those offered by our country. The same thing that happens with the excess of population of other nations also occurs with its surplus capital; no other quarter of the globe offers better prospects for the investment of capital and for a greater rate of return. The “manifest destiny” of Argentine depends for the present entirely upon the development of its commercial relations with the rest of the world. It must convert itself into the granary and the meat market of Europe.

The closest bonds of mutual interest unite Argentina with Europe, because being producers of unlike commodities, the European markets consume our exportation and our markets consume theirs. With the rest of America our interchange of trade must be upon a smaller scale, because for more than a century to come we shall be countries producing similar commodities. Therefore, our respective markets will not reciprocally serve to buy the excess of production, but only that which by reason of climate or industrial development is to be found or manufactured in any other country than our own. This has happened to us notably in the case of the United States with its tremendous industrial expansion. In order to fulfill this “manifest destiny,” we need *pax multa* with the whole world. We need to give attention exclusively to our development without intermeddling in that of others. In this is summed up everything. Hence our inter-

national policy has to be pacific and neutral; we must be every man's friend, and shun imperialistic fancies. The "splendid isolation" of England fits her condition and her inclination. We must work and we must be allowed to work. Our social evolution still requires a century to acquire a definite contour. Though results may be foreseen from their beginnings, it is not possible to foretell what will be the future Argentine type, physically, mentally or materially.

For the present, the only proper thing for us to do is to devote ourselves exclusively to the exploitation of our resources for we have seen how much effort will be required to assimilate our population, to form a national spirit, to build up a great future nation, to develop an administration which shall be a model of honesty and scientific preparation, and to adapt the republic to its future needs by public works and institutions, and by showing ourselves firm in faith and effective in works.

The present social tendencies in Argentine evolution give promise of a great future for the country. The nation is not hesitating or vacillating before the realization of its manifest destiny. It follows with profound interest the new and colossal social experiment, which is unfolding to the view of the world the different phases of the formation of a nation in whose development the shoals are being avoided where others were wrecked, and which is putting into practice the improvements suggested by the experience of the other nations in order to realize the new evolution easily, prudently, and successfully.

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