

SELLING SOULS: THE ECONOMIC SUPPORTERS OF THE “DIRTY WAR”

by

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## ABSTRACT

HALEY ANDERSON NELSON. Selling souls: The economic supporters of the “Dirty War”. (Under the direction of DR. CARMEN SOLIZ)

From 1976 to 1983 Argentina faced one of the darkest times in the country's history when a military regime took power and waged an infamous campaign against suspected left-wing political opponents during the so-called “Dirty War”. This is a time when state terror was a part of everyday life for the Argentine's as they were oppressed by a military regime that ruled by fear. Initially people supported the regime because the military argued that bringing order to the country was necessary, but most people were unaware of the murder, kidnapping, and torture the regime exercised against thousands of civilians. These horrific human rights violations happened in part because of the support of some important economic and political sectors in Argentina as well as other countries.

Much of the scholarship has paid attention to the characteristics of the military regime, the international context in which the regime took off, and, mainly to the thousands of students, unionist, political activist tortured or disappeared by the regime; however few scholars have studied those members of the society who supported the regime and allowed it to stay in power for about six years. Building on this literature, this research explores the economic relations that the government established with eleven different companies who provided critical supplies from armored automobiles to weapons for the government's operation. My project not only gives light to an aspect that has been little explored previously; but it will offer a more complex analysis of the Argentinean dictatorship as it looks to understand why members of the civil society agreed with the regime.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

From 1976 to 1983 Argentina faced one of the darkest times in the country's history when a military regime took power and waged an infamous campaign against suspected left-wing political opposition during the so-called "Dirty War". This is a time when state terror was a part of everyday life for Argentine's as they were repressed by a military regime that ruled by fear and violence. The "Dirty War" began when a military coup overthrew President Isabel Peron. Argentina was in a state of civil war and the people of Argentina became frustrated with her and wanted change, this gave the military a window to stage a coup.

Since the 1980s, an extended literature has studied Argentina's "Dirty War". Much of this scholarship paid attention to the characteristics of the military regime, the international context in which the regime took off, and, mainly to the thousands of students, unionist, political activist tortured or disappeared by the regime; however few scholars have studied those members of the society who supported the military and allowed this bloody regime to stay in power for about six years. Recently, a new wave of scholars has started to explore the connections between the groups who stayed silent and hence were complicit with the regime and the groups that outright supported the regime. Sebastián Carassai reveals the silent support of the middle class, Horacio Verbitsky denounced the complicity of the catholic church, and most recently in an edited volume with Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky published in Spanish in 2014 and in English in

2016 uncovers the support of critical economic sectors such as banking and car-making companies to the military. Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky look at the relation between the military regime and Ford and Mercedes Benz car companies. Basualdo, Quintana, and Varsky demonstrate both companies have not only established a strong economic relation with the government, but that the military regime used their building for centers of torture and detention. Building on this literature, this research explores the economic relations that the government established with eleven different companies who provided critical supplies from armored automobiles to weapons for the government's operation.<sup>1</sup>

My work looks at the relations between different companies and the government. I argue that these different companies were important to the regime and the regime used them just as the companies used the business from the regime, this was a give and take relationship. I show that while the people may or may not have completely known the regimes actions they still entered willingly into a relationship that allowed both parties to come out with their desired result.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sebastián, Carassai, *The Argentine Silent Majority: Middle Classes, Politics, Violence, and Memory in the Seventies*, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2014.). Horacio, Verbitsky, *El silencio. De Paulo VI a Bergoglio. Las relaciones secretas de la Iglesia con la ESMA*. (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2005.). Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship: Outstanding Debts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz," in *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship*, ed. Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Note: In calling these business supporters I am not implying that they supported every action of the regime just that they supported the regime in an economic capacity to ensure their desired results.



To do so, this research is primarily based on official correspondence (1976-1982) I found in the Archivo Intermedio in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This archive holds governmental documents from the Ministry of the Interior that span over the years of 1882-1992. This archive compiles a large number, ranging in the high hundreds to the thousands, of documents from the time frame of 1976-1983, these documents range in the form of bills to governmental and business correspondences. For this research I review approximately 300 letters and bills, that illuminate the connections between private companies, for example Mercedes-Benz, General Motors and Ford, and the military government.

These letters include correspondences between the different businesses and the government, which discuss the products. The letters show the communication not only between the government and other companies, but also between different governmental offices such as Ministry of Defense and the office of the Ministry of the Interior. In the official correspondences, the government discussed the number of supply they required from each company, and the details about the different products. These documents illustrate that the businesses did not only profit from a fruitful economic relation with the military regime but that many of their produced supplies served directly to the government repressive operation.

Along with these correspondences this archive also holds bills from the different companies to the government. These bills include the product that was made along with details about the product, including but not limited to the prices and the amount of money that would be exchanged. These are important because they are able to tie into the

correspondences that show that the government and the company's had built a relationship and alliance throughout the regime that was greatly beneficial to both sides.

Along with the research from the Archivo Intermedio I reviewed part of the 1984 Nunca Mas Report, which is the report created by the Argentine organization the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons. This report contains 50,000 pages of depositions from the survivors of the Dirty War. This report helped to provide information on the different companies who had economic relations with the government from the first person perspective. Along with the Archivo Intermedio I also researched in the National Library in Buenos Aires. In this library I reviewed the newspapers from La Nación and Clarín during the years of 1976-1983 in order to find articles pertaining to this research. Despite my exhausting search, I could not come across articles showing the connections between the government and private companies.

#### A Look at the Past: A Dark Time: The "Dirty War"

One of the darkest periods in Argentina history was the "Dirty War" that took place from 1976 to 1983. The military leadership deemed this government and the "Dirty War" the National Reorganization Process this was used to imply order and control of the social and political factors of Argentina. The coup took place because the people were frustrated with Isabel Peron because of problems of inflation, mounting foreign debts, workers unrest, and political violence. The military saw her as being weak and surrounded by inept and corrupt advisors. She was continuing the policies of her late husband Juan Peron; she ascended to the Presidency by being elected Vice-President and then taking over when Juan Peron passed away. When Isabel Peron first took office she was well received but as time went on this began to change, which helped to open the

door for the military. This began to change because of economic issues within the country, which created a recession, rising political violence and the creation of the right-wing Argentine Anticommunist Alliance, which was taking part in different attacks against the left wing.<sup>3</sup> The people of Argentina became frustrated with Isabel Peron and wanted change, this allowed the military to stage a coup.

In March of 1976 the military enacted a coup and were successful in ousting Isabel Peron, the elected member of the Presidency. After the coup the lives of the citizens of Argentina began to change, their worlds turned upside down. In order to fill the place that had been left by Isabel Peron the military placed Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla as national leader. Videla would lead the country until 1981 when General Roberto Viola would replace him. The last leader of the “Dirty War” Lieutenant General Leopoldo Galtieri then would replace Viola.<sup>4</sup> When the military did come into power the country changed drastically, they closed the National Congress, censorship was imposed, trade unions were banned, and now all of the citizens had to live and work under military control.<sup>5</sup> The military leaders along with the police and the secret police had a large role in one of the worst time in Argentine history.

This was not the only repressive regime that was in place throughout Latin America during this time. All of these different regimes came together to create a plan that would help in the defense of the area from subversives and help in keeping these different regimes in power; this plan was named Plan Condor. While this was a plan that

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<sup>3</sup> Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc, 1994), 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> M. Patricia Marchak and William Marchak, *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 284.

<sup>5</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Encyclopædia. "Dirty War." *Britannica Online*. Accessed May 08, 2016. <http://www.britannica.com/event/Dirty-War>.

was taking place in Latin America the United States had a role in it and thought that is was a necessary action. The countries within Latin America that were involved with this plan were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. With this plan the security forces in Latin America targeted people on the basis of their political ideas; reputedly ideas of subversion and communism. All of the regimes identified, targeted and hunted down the people that were seen as dissidents, leftists, union leaders, peasant leaders, priests, nuns, intellectuals, students, teachers and also the guerrillas that were operating throughout the countries. During this era, the different regimes helped each other in hunting down the dissidents, taking out people from the other countries that had crossed the border to be protected. For example the forces in Argentina would take out a Chilean, who had crossed the border into Argentina in order to find protection, if the government of Chile had labeled and placed a target on this person as a subversive and a threat to the area as a whole along with a threat to the defense of the hemisphere.<sup>6</sup>

According to a declassified 1976 FBI report, which reveals the extent to which how many other nations knew of the plan and allowed for it to take place in the name of defense against communism, Condor had multiple parts.

“The first was mutual cooperation among military intelligence services, including coordination of political surveillance and exchange of intelligence information. The second was organized cross-border operations to detain/disappear dissidents. The third and most secret, "Phase III," was the formation of special teams of assassins from member countries to travel anywhere in the world to carry out assassinations of "subversive enemies." Phase III was aimed at political leaders especially feared for their potential to mobilize world opinion or organize broad opposition to the military states.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> J. Patrice McSherry, “Operation Condor: Deciphering the U.S. Role,” *Global Policy Forum*, July 2001, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/168/28173.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Thus a well-developed plan between many different countries throughout Latin America emerged to get rid of dissidents, fight communism, and as they saw it to protect the hemisphere. This plan helped the regime in Argentina during their time in power and helped to push them into the repression that they exhibited during the “Dirty War.”

This military regime was very repressive as it had its hand in everything in order to keep control. One of the main ways that the leaders were able to keep control is through fear. In this sense they were able to put fear into the Argentine population as they disappeared between 10 thousand and 30 thousand people, the exact number is not known of today. While the number of disappeared is not known it is known that the military did not care who they disappeared as long as they had control. This is seen in the quote by General Luciano Menéndez “We are going to have to kill 50,000 people: 25,000 subversives, 20,000 sympathizers, and we will make 5,000 mistakes.”<sup>8</sup> The leaders of this repression would claim that the different methods such as torture or killing were necessary in order to maintain social order and to get rid of political threats. The military leaders framed the victims as political threats to justify the horrific acts that took place during this time.<sup>9</sup>

These horrific acts would ramp up when Videla took over as leader and would continue until General Reynaldo Bignone came to power and brought back democracy. At first these acts did not have opposition by the Argentine people because the government told them that these acts were necessary to keep them safe and the people did not know of all of the human rights violations that were taking place against the citizens.

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas C. Wright, *Impunity, Human Rights, and Democracy: Chile and Argentina, 1990-2005* (Austin Texas: University of Texas Press, 2014), 22.

<sup>9</sup> M. Patricia Marchak and William Marchak, *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 150-151.

As time went on and the citizen learned more about the repression they began to protest the government and disagree with their actions.

At the beginning of the “Dirty War” Videla set up camps throughout the country in order to house the people that the regime saw as dissidents. At first these dissidents, the people who opposed the authority of the regime, were the guerrillas that were fighting against the regime in order to pursue a violent overthrow; the government was trying to stop them. Since the military saw these guerrillas as dissidents, they were attempting to kidnap or kill government officials and foreign company executives; they would hunt them down and then torture them in these different camps. The military said that the reasoning for this was to keep the country from falling into disorder to keep the citizens safe from these people but in reality the military saw these people as a threat to their power and knew that they had to put an end to them as quickly as possible, and they were able to capture, torture, and kill many of these guerrillas.<sup>10</sup> This was not the only reason that the military chose to act quickly against these guerrillas. This is true, as it has come to light that the United States government, namely Henry Kissinger, pushed the regime to act in a quick manner and have the country become stable again. This attitude is made evident by the statement Kissinger made on October 7, 1976 to the Argentine foreign minister Admiral Cesar Augusto Guzzetti, where he stated

"Look, our basic attitude is that we would like you to succeed. I have an old-fashioned view that friends ought to be supported. What is not understood in the United States is that you have a civil war. We read about human rights problems but not the context. The quicker you succeed the better... The human rights problem is a growing one. Your Ambassador can apprise you. We want a stable situation. We won't cause you unnecessary difficulties. If you can finish before

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<sup>10</sup> M. Patricia Marchak and William Marchak, *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 7, 270-273.

Congress gets back, the better. Whatever freedoms you could restore would help."<sup>11</sup>

Even though it began as a fight against the guerrillas it did not take long for the military regime to turn on the rest of the citizens, this is where a great deal of the disappeared comes from. This turn was made because the military regime thought that the people were a threat to their power and they needed to get rid of any possible threat no matter the cost. The regime turning on its own people cast a great deal of fear into the lives of the Argentine's because they never knew if they or if anyone they loved could be next. These people include all political opposition, any leftist, trade unionist, worker unionist, students, intellectuals, professors, journalists, writers, and activists were the majority but other civilians or families were involved if it was seen necessary.<sup>12</sup> According to the CONADEP Report, National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, 30.2 percent were blue-collar workers, 21 percent were students, 37.3 percent were white-collar workers, professionals, teachers, journalist, or artist, and the last 11.6 percent range from self-employed to housewives to members of the military to members of the religious order.<sup>13</sup> The regime turned on these people because they saw them as a possible threat to power since these were the people who disagreed with the regimes platform and they were a very smart group of people who could articulate the issues with the regime and provide an opposition, which would ruin the regime forever. This can be seen in the quote from General Iberico Saint Jean "First we will kill the subversives, then

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<sup>11</sup> Edited by Carlos Osorio, Assisted by Kathleen Costar, "Kissinger to Argentines on Dirty War: "The Quicker You Succeed the Better,"" National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 104, *National Security Archive*, published December 4, 2003 and accessed May 8, 2016, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB104/index.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> M. Patricia Marchak and William Marchak, *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 154-155.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 155.

we will kill their collaborators, then their sympathizers, then those who remain indifferent; and finally, we will kill the timid”<sup>14</sup> With these people being seen as a threat they were treated in a similar fashion to the guerrillas, as they were kept in the camps to be tortured and even killed. This is where the “Dirty War” took a turn for the worst.

The groups listed above are members of the 10 thousand to 30 thousand that disappeared and many never to be heard from again. These people would be kidnapped by the military’s secret police and taken to different camps around the country in order to be tortured for information; many of whom were killed in the end. The secret police would kidnap these people anywhere that they were, be it at schools, work places, churches, and homes and even take people off of the street. While one person maybe the target many times the people that were with them were taken as well because they were also seen as being in opposition by association, this meant that many families were kidnapped. The justification for these actions against the people of Argentina was that these people were subversives and were causing problems to the society and the country as a whole, but in reality they were causing problems for the government not for the whole country. After these members of the population were kidnapped they would be taken to the different camps to endure torture and/or death by the killing squads. While there were many of these camps throughout the country the most notable one is the Navy Petty-Officers School of Mechanics in Buenos Aires: a notorious place for many of the disappeared. At this location the kidnapped would endure many different types of torture, for example having bones broken, being electrocuted with instruments such as the picana electrics, being almost drowned in water, or having to watch other members of

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas C. Wright, *Impunity, Human Rights, and Democracy: Chile and Argentina, 1990-2005* (Austin Texas: University of Texas Press, 2014), 22.



your family be tortured as these are just a few examples of what the kidnapped had to endure. After the regime was done torturing, an individual met the death squad most of the time as very few were allowed to be let go. There is no clear number of how many people died by the death squads but we can assume that it was a great many that were killed in this fashion.<sup>15</sup> The systematic detention, torture and murder the military regime carried out could only have happened with the support of many within and outside of the country.

There were many segments of Argentine society that aided and abetted the military regime's many horrific violations of human rights throughout their time in power. This includes but is not limited to Argentine citizens and companies. With the companies the alliance with the government fell mostly to the management of the firms, as these were the people who coordinated the relationship and the exchange of product. While there are many companies throughout the country the following will focus on a small portion of these entities, specifically those within the automobile industry, the communication industry, and the weapons industry. By looking at the cases of the automobile, communication and weapons industries it becomes evident that the regime was not acting completely on their own but with the strong backing of different industries throughout the country.

First of Many:

After two different trials in 1985 and 2010, the Argentinian Supreme Court sentenced General Jorge Videla to life in jail and General Reynaldo Bignone to twenty-five years in jail. This judicial decision was unprecedented in Argentina and also in Latin

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<sup>15</sup> M. Patricia Marchak and William Marchak, *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 151-152.

America. It is worth remembering that human rights organizations tried for years to take to courts and condemn the role that General Augusto Pinochet in Chile, 1973-1989, and General Rios Montt in Guatemala, 1982-1983 had in the torture, disappearance and genocide of thousands of people in both countries, but the cases never materialized into anything of charges or trials.

In March 2016, Argentina took one more step in this unique path: a business owner was put on trial and convicted because of his role with the regime, he helped in the kidnapping and torture of his own employees. This trial and sentence make Marcos Levín, the former owner of a bus company La Veloz del Norte Transport in the province of Salta, the first businessman in the country's history to be convicted for crimes against humanity committed during the last military dictatorship. This is the first of many more trials for the different business owners that played a role in helping the regime in a multitude of ways. This shows that the businesses were not just selling products but that they were also logistically supporting the dictatorship in the disappearances of the people by providing information on those to be kidnapped or even taking part in these kidnappings themselves, this links back to the testimony regarding the roles of the management of Ford and Mercedes Benz, these people have not been convicted as of now. "This is a paradigmatic case that demonstrates how businesses participated in military repression ... Levín and security forces carried out irregular procedures to eliminate labor union activity," said leading prosecutor Francisco Snopce.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Herald staff, "First businessman sentenced for dictatorship-era crimes," *Buenos Aires Herald*, published March 29, 2016 and accessed March 30, 2016, <http://buenosairesherald.com/article/211580/first-businessman-sentenced-for-dictatorship-era-crimes>.

Marcos Levín, a former owner of the bus company La Veloz del Norte Transport, was sentenced to 12 years in prison on March 28, 2016 by federal court.<sup>17</sup> Levín was tried and sentenced for his role in the dictatorships crimes against human rights; he actively participated and has been linked to the kidnappings of his workers who had ties to union activity. While there was multiple times that this owner violated other Argentine's human rights he was put on trial and ultimately sentenced for his role in the kidnapping and torture of his former employee Víctor Manuel Cobos. Throughout the trial it was proven that Levín not only knew about the kidnapping and torture of his former employee but that he actively played a role with the other actors who were tried and convicted as well, former police officers Víctor Hugo Bocos, Víctor Almirón and Enrique Cardozo. Along with the above stated charge Levín is also said to have supplied information to the agents of the dictatorship about where his workers lived, their union activity, providing lists of workers who should be arrested and tortured and allowing his company vehicles to be used to transfer the detainees to other locations.<sup>18</sup>

Víctor Manuel Cobos was one of many of Levín's employees that were arrested and tortured due to their union activity. The following is the details of what happened to Víctor Manuel Cobos, this proves that the agents of the regime were not acting alone but had active actors from other areas in society namely business owners. "Cobos was arrested on January 22, 1977, while he was a member of the Salta UTA delegation, after he was accused of committing fraud against the company. When he was arrested, he was transferred by in a blue Falcon Ford car to Salta's Police Station Number 4. It was there where he was blindfolded and tortured with other workers. Cobos was then forced to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

sign a statement acknowledging that he had robbed from Levín's company and accuse his colleagues of having done so also. Afterwards, Cobos was transferred to Villa Las Rosas penal centre, and freed three months later.”<sup>19</sup>

The military knew that in order for them to retain power there had to be help from outside enterprises. By looking at all of these different automobile, communication and weapons company's it is shown that the military had assistance throughout their time in power, this was a conscience decision that was made by each of the companies and their management. It could also be said that without these different companies the regime would have suffered, as they would not have the same products available or the same capacity. With all of these companies the government continued to build relationships that proved to be vital for both, this brought backing for the regime in different ways. This company backed the regime through the making of product, as well as aiding in the repression by the military. Throughout the entirety of the regime the government and the many different automobile companies had a relationship that was beneficial for all involved.

The Lavín case shows that the contentious debate about the 1970s military regime in Argentina is far from being over. Human rights organizations in Argentina and the families of the disappeared have succeeded at condemning not only to the leaders of the military regime but the ones who silently supported their operations. In this politicized context, my work constitutes a new attempt to explore the private- public economic relations with eleven critical companies in Argentina.

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<sup>19</sup> Herald staff, “First businessman sentenced for dictatorship-era crimes,” *Buenos Aires Herald*, published March 29, 2016 and accessed March 30, 2016, <http://buenosairesherald.com/article/211580/first-businessman-sentenced-for-dictatorship-era-crimes>.

## CHAPTER 2: THE DIRTY WAR AS A FIELD OF INQUIRY

There is a vast literature about the military dictatorship and the “Dirty War” in Argentina. Since the 1980s, a large number of scholars have looked at the origins, and the characteristics of the military dictatorship in Argentina. There are at least four historiographic currents: state terrorism, the international context of the “Dirty War”, resistance of the regime and the support for the coup and regime. With these themes the historiography of the “Dirty War” has lately begun to follow a new trend that is focusing less on the regime itself or the resistance but now focusing on the individuals, groups, and businesses that supported and helped the regime.

Throughout time since the regime there has been a focus on the military and the state terrorism that they were able to complete, such as the torture that was inflicted on the people. There are a great number of studies and works on this part of the regime such as the works by Patricia Marchak and Martin Anderson. In the past various scholars have attempted to understand the causes and characteristics of this case of fragrant state terrorism. In this vein, *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (1999) by Patricia Marchak<sup>20</sup> discusses the state terrorism of Argentina. Her research was based on multiple interviews coming from the military personnel, Roman Catholic clergy, citizens, who stayed silent or were in support of the regime, journalists, unionist, and survivors of the oppression and torture. Her work shows on one hand, the scope of the

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<sup>20</sup> Patricia M. Marchak and William Marchak. *God's Assassins: State Terrorism in Argentina in the 1970s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

violence that the state exerted against its citizens, and, at the same time, the multiple and overlapping factors that explain this process, such as the reasons for the violence, the military's policies and the aid or support given from foreign entities. Martin Andersen's work *Dossier Secreto: Argentina's Desaparecidos and the Myth of the "Dirty War"* (1993)<sup>21</sup> takes a different approach to understanding state terrorism and repression. Andersen explores the relation between the right wing, the police and the military. Andersen's shows that the military created a myth of a left-wing guerrilla threat, that had actually had been wiped out by 1975 by Juan Peron. With this myth in place Andersen argues that the 'war' was waged against subversives and claimed the lives of thousands under the guise of a lie. Andersen researched on human rights organizations documents, FBI and US embassy reports, and the press.

Beyond the military policies of state terrorism, a vast number of works researched the international context in which this dictatorship emerged. The Cold War was at its peak in the 1970s and the United States was increasingly worried about Soviet and Cuban influence in Latin America. The United States supported dictatorships in Latin America that would stop the spread of communism. This is evident through the edited work of Marcia Esparza, Henry R. Huttenbach, and Daniel Feierstein titled *State Violence and Genocide in Latin America: The Cold War Years* (2010).<sup>22</sup> These authors explore the political violence in Latin America through the United States' political power on the continent. The work uses case studies based on the regimes of Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay to show how U.S foreign policy affected each. One of the

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<sup>21</sup> Martin Edwin Andersen. *Dossier Secreto: Argentina's Desaparecidos and the Myth of the "Dirty War"*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Marcia Esparza, Henry R. Huttenbach, and Daniel Feierstein. *State Violence and Genocide in Latin America: the Cold War Years*. (London: Routledge, 2010).

most critical effects of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, was the 'National Security Doctrine' which justified military operations to hunt down individuals and groups that were labeled 'communists'. Along with this, the countries armies relied on U.S. training and economic aid to carry out their campaigns against the labeled communists, this is evident in Stephen G. Rabe's *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (2012).<sup>23</sup> Rabe looks at US intervention in Latin America as he shows the effects of the Cold War. For instance he shows countries like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala that had to endure political violence, dictatorship, and state terrorism between 1945 and 1989. Throughout this time the U.S. repeatedly intervened in the internal affairs of Latin America in order to fight communism but in turn they were aiding those who murdered and tortured, the dictators. The United States played a role in the state terrorism and dictatorships in Latin America during the Cold War as they saw a need to fight communism no matter the cost. In other words, the United States directly and indirectly supported the mass violation of human rights in the name of individual rights and democracy.

Throughout the regime's time in power there were groups of resistance that fought back against the junta, this resistance was a fight for the oppressed. The largest part of this section surrounds the resistance group the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo; this was one of the largest groups of resistance and the most active during the time period. Along with the Mothers there was also resistance in the form of guerrilla movements. Most of the Argentine population did not want to actively take part in the resistance movements because they were afraid of becoming a target of the regime. Most people opposed the

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen G Rabe. *The Killing Zone: the United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

dictatorship silently, as they did not outwardly resist the regime but they did not fully agree with the regime's actions. The mothers of Plaza de Mayo were one of the few groups that took to the streets to protest, calling for the return of their children and grandchildren disappeared during the dictatorship. Marguerite G. Bouvard's work *Revolutionizing Motherhood: the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (1994)<sup>24</sup> traces the history of the mothers in order to show the resistance that they put up against the government in order to find out about the disappeared. Through her work Bouvard shows that the mothers began as an informal group who were making rounds searching for their disappeared family members but when they realized that the state along with others had conspired to disappear the people as well as to withhold information, the mothers began their marches. Her work does not end with the fall of the regime as she follows this group through their fight with other Argentine governments to find out about the disappeared. Bouvard shows that the mothers were a source of resistance in a society where people did not want to actively resist. At first the citizens did not receive the Mothers well because of the fear of the regime but as more of the regime's actions were realized the citizens of Argentina received the Mothers better.

Continuing with works discussing the resistance to the regime is the works *Circle of Love over Death: Testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (1997) by Matilde Mellibovsky<sup>25</sup> and *Guerrillas and Generals: The Dirty War in Argentina* (2002) by Paul

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<sup>24</sup> Marguerite Guzman Bouvard. *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Matilde Mellibovsky, *Circle of Love Over Death: Testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1997).



Lewis<sup>26</sup>. Mellibovsky's work continues with Bouvard's work on the mothers as it shows the resistance that the mothers put forth and the anguish that the mothers went through while their children were disappeared. This work is important as it does not just trace the history of the mothers but it also gives their personal stories and plights against the dictatorship. While the mothers were the most active and vocal resistance against the regime there were some smaller groups that resisted the regime as well, especially at the start. This can be seen in Paul Lewis's work *Guerrillas and Generals: The Dirty War in Argentina* (2002).<sup>27</sup> In this work Lewis argues that the guerrilla movements were created long before the regime came to power as they were created when Juan Peron was overthrown by the military in 1955. Within his work Lewis shows how the guerrilla groups moved through the time period and resisted the government, especially the military. One of the main examples that Lewis uses to show the resistance of these groups during the regime is a discussion on the anti-guerrilla war in Tucuman's jungles. The resistance to the regime existed throughout the regime's time in power but only part of this resistance was active and vocal while the other part stayed silent.

Where the regime had resistance there was also support, there were many different forms of this support. These works discuss the support from the start of the regime all the way throughout the regime's time in power. One of these is the work by Vicente Mulerio that focuses on the main event that started the Dirty War, the coup. This work titled *1976 El Golpe Civil* (2011)<sup>28</sup> focus on the non-military groups that supported the coup. This is an extensive look at the main event that started the regime off. Through

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<sup>26</sup> Paul H Lewis. *Guerrillas and Generals: the "Dirty War" in Argentina* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Vicente Mulerio. *1976 El Golpe Civil* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2011).

this work Muleiro gives the reader a look at who participated in this coup, other than the military, businessmen, landowners, clergymen, and journalists all had an important role. Muleiro's work is an important addition to the historiography of this period as it is a study of the event that started the military on their course and the people that played a role, like foreign governmental officials, and the citizens of Argentina such as businessmen, landowners, clergy, and journalist. This work is something that had been missing as most of the work focuses on the time after the coup and the regime as a whole.

Another one of the ways that the regime was given support was through the silence of the people and the Church. The discussion of this silent support of the regime began with a discussion of the Church's silence and role. This can be seen with Horacio Verbitsky's work *El silencio De Paulo VI a Bergoglio Las relaciones secretas de la Iglesia con la ESMA (2005)*.<sup>29</sup> This work is a study of the role that the Catholic Church played in keeping silent and helping to hide the human rights violations of the regime. Through this book Verbitsky reveals secrets that paint the Church in a negative light. As the Church helped to hide what was happening and in some cases even helped with the kidnapping of the victims. This book is the start of a new historiographical switch as there is now studies that are starting to looking at the supporters, even though it does not look at the active supporters it is a start. Along the lines of silent support is Sebastian Carassai's work *The Argentine Silent Majority: Middle Classes, Politics, Violence, and Memory in the Seventies (2014)*<sup>30</sup>, which is another work that follows the new historiographical switch. Carassai's work does not focus on the supporters per say but

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<sup>29</sup> Horacio Verbitsky, *El silencio. De Paulo VI a Bergoglio. Las relaciones secretas de la Iglesia con la ESMA* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Sebastián Carassai, *The Argentine Silent Majority: Middle Classes, Politics, Violence, and Memory in the Seventies* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2014).

focuses on the group that remained silent throughout the dictatorship; he calls this group the silent majority. Throughout the book Carassai is aiming to show what this group of people thought about the violence and the role that they played, through understanding their actions or inaction and the memories of the middle-class. In order to show this Carassai conducted around two hundred interviews with different members of the middle class, these members range from middle-class non-participants and their families to journalists, politicians, scholars, and artists who were politically active. Through these interviews Carassai comes to the conclusion that the members of the middle-class silent majority were in agreement with the radical left wing at times as they all opposed the military dictatorship and violence but they never fully agreed or became activist as they did not join revolutionary programs, meaning that this group stayed in the middle and was hence silent and complicit.

While there are many works that focus on the civilian groups that resist and challenged the military<sup>31</sup>, few focus on those groups who actively supported the regime. While some people backed the regime themselves; others took advantage of the economic opportunities they were able to establish with the regime. A shift in historiography has taken place in the last few years that has changed the focus even more to a focus on studies of the supporters of the regime. This new trend can be seen in the work *Consent*

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<sup>31</sup> A few examples of these works are Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc, 1994.), Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002.), Matilde Mellibovsky, *Circle of Love Over Death: Testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1997.), Jo Fisher, *Mothers of the Disappeared* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).

*of the Damned: Ordinary Argentines in the Dirty War* (2012) by David Sheinin.<sup>32</sup> In this work Sheinin looks at how Argentine civilians and foreign powers ignored and even aided the state's crimes against humanity. For this work Sheinin studied previously classified Argentine government documents, human rights lawsuits, and archived propaganda in order to understand the support of the civilians and the foreign powers. Through his study Sheinin comes to the conclusion that compliance with and support of the military constructed fantasies of this violence as a defense of human rights helped to perpetuate the violence and terror committed by the regime. In other words Sheinin is showing that the people who believed and supported the regime's idea that the state violence was in defense of the state itself and human rights helped to maintain the acts and violence of the regime. Sheinin was one of the first in the new shift of historiography but this is a direction that is continuing to present day.

This trend is evident in the work *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship: Outstanding Debts* (2016) edited by Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky<sup>33</sup> which is an examination of mainly the dictatorship's economic supporters. This book seeks to explain the role of banks and companies in perpetuating the regime and also if they should or should not be held responsible. The various chapters discuss the economic support that the regime received during their time in power from different entities ranging from foreign governments to the public to the Church to many different businesses within the country. While all of these parts of the book are important to

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<sup>32</sup> David Sheinin, *Consent of the Damned Ordinary Argentines in the Dirty War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship: Outstanding Debts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

further explain the support that the regime had there is one section by Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky that begins the discussion that this project aims to continue. This section is titled “The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz.” In this section the authors aim to show that these automobile companies had an important role in aiding the regime that goes beyond just the exchange of product and money. Rather the authors assert management of these companies actively participated in the kidnapping of their workers by giving the military the workers names and pictures. While the chapter discussed above is an important part of the following work the rest of the chapters from the book are important to the discussion of support for the regime as well. These chapters are important as they investigate multiple forms of economic aid given to the regime. These chapters look at the economic support from entities such as foreign powers, the public, the Church, the agricultural business sector, and business deals with companies such as the media. Along with discussions on the economic aid that was provided to the regime there are also chapters that provide an investigation into the actions, responsibility and complicity of the leaders in the labor sector during this time, that shows the leaders made deals with the regime and are hence responsible. These chapters go into detail regarding the actions that the labor leaders and the factory managers took during this time. Many of times these actions were making business deals to provide aid or support or even giving up their own workers. Also these chapters assess the responsibility of the leaders during the regime as well as the legal responsibility, meaning can these leaders be held legally responsible today. This work is the most recent on the regime and is an addition to the historiography as no one before has looked at the economic support that was given and the role that it played in the regime being able to

stay in control. This project will fit in with this work and the current historiographical trend, as my project is also looking at the support for the regime, specifically the economic relations with the regime and my work is continuing in the same direction.

This project is important because it looks as a section of the historiography that is understudied, as it aims to understand the economic relations between the regime and companies within Argentina. These economic relations helped the regime as they were supplied critical tools and materials that were necessary for the regime to work. The project adds to the shift in the historiography as I am helping to take the discussion away from the left wing resistance and toward the supporters and those who aided the military, by investigating the economic relations that aided the regime. The following adds to the work *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship: Outstanding Debts* (2016) edited by Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky as it continues with the work of looking at the economic relations with the regime. This work continues this book as it looks at two of the same companies, Ford and Mercedes Benz. While this is true my work adds to the book by helping to fill in some of the holes that are missing from the book that include but are not limited to adding to the discussion of Ford and Mercedes Benz by showing the economic relations in more detail, and by discussing other companies within the automobile and other industries. As well this work is important to current happenings in Argentina as this time period is still an open wound where they are currently working to try and convict the owners and managers from these many different companies who aided the regime. The work speaks to this issue as it shows the economic relationship between the two involved parties. This work is important to the shift in historiography as well as the current debate in Argentina.

### CHAPTER 3: A LOOK AT THE INDUSTRIES

The violent military dictatorship that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983 was able to stay in power not only because of the iron fist they used against their citizens but also because they had the support of important national and international actors. For instance, several authors have demonstrated that a small number of workers, factory owners, businesses, and private citizens that were mostly right wing leaning supported the regime.<sup>34</sup>

The regime also counted on the support and complicity of other military regimes in the region, through different agreements such as Plan Condor. These right-wing military regimes that rose up in the context of the Cold War had the effective support of the United States, which was expressed in money, military training, and governmental collaboration. The United States worked and had an alliance with the government because they saw this government as fighting off communism and helping to defend the hemisphere, this was important to the United States as they did not want communism to come into the hemisphere and they wanted to make it safe for their people. While this is true this relationship was a bit strained during the Jimmy Carter Administration, 1977 to

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<sup>34</sup> Examples of these authors are: David Sheinin, *Consent of the Damned Ordinary Argentines in the Dirty War*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012.) Horacio Verbitsky, *El Silencio: de Paulo VI a Bergoglio : las relaciones secretas de la Iglesia con la ESMA*. (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2005). Horacio Verbitsky, and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship: Outstanding Debts*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

1981, it was not this way during the Ford, 1974 to 1977, and Reagan Administrations, 1981 to 1989. This is due to the human rights violations, and this could be why the military turned to having their production needs met within Argentina instead of importing the critical tools and materials. United States tacit support was important because it allowed the regime to stay in power despite flagrant human rights violations without backlash and continued money, training, and products. Along with other governments there was also assistance from the Argentine people that ranged from economic support to turning over other citizens to the regime. While all of these are different ways in which the government was reinforced, one of the most important and influential was the economic relations that was given to the government by the different businesses within the country.

This economic support came through many different aspects that include business, and business deals. When looking closely at this support it becomes evident that the government gained the economic backing from “those who benefited both from economic advantages granted by the dictatorial state, that include but is not limited to subsidies, tax exemptions, elimination of business competitors, corrupt business deals, and privatizations, and from the market conditions generated by the repression of certain sectors of the society.”<sup>35</sup> This was aid vital to the dictatorship because it was one of the ways that the dictatorship gained and continued their power. The support helped the regime retain their power as they had gained the backing of many of the large and

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<sup>35</sup> Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz," in *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship*, ed. Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 7.



important businesses within the country and these different businesses were giving the government the items that they needed for the regime to work. This was a give and take relationship, the government dispensed money and the companies gave the product to the government.

While there are many different business sectors that held relations with the government the following will discuss three of these different sectors, namely the automobile, communication, and weapons industry. One of the business sectors that held a strong relation with the military was the automobile industry. Responding to governmental petitions, several companies produced from standard cars to military cars to buses to ambulances. These companies include Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Renault Argentina, Tecin S.A.I.C., Igarreta S.A, and General Motors. Along with the business sector of the automobile industry there were also two other business sectors that held a strong relation with the military, these were the communication and weapons industry. Responding to governmental requests, the companies within these industries produced items from radios to walkie-talkies to guns and ammunition. These companies include SICOM, Datotek, Dirección de Fabricaciones Militares and Industrias Marcati S.C.A. Although these companies did not have a direct relation with government repressive actions, these companies never questioned the regime or interrupted their economic relation with the government, and quite to the contrary, they continued benefiting from a very profitable economic relationship. These different relationships all carried throughout the regimes hold on the country and power.

This chapter will look at case studies that will analyze the assistance that these automobile, communication and weapons companies were giving to the regime, as stated

before this backing comes in many forms like economic and repression. These case studies are only a glimpse into the great amount of support that the regime received throughout their time in power. Through these case studies it becomes evident that these companies gave their support in order to benefit everyone involved in the relationship. These economic agreements are important because they allow us to understand the complex set of political and economic relations that allow the military regime to remain in power despite. This chapter explores the economic agreements that the military government established with car companies such as Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Renault Argentina, Tecin S.A.I.C., Igarreta S.A., and General Motors, as well as with communication companies for instance SICOM and Datotek, and lastly with weapons companies like Dirección de Fabricaciones Militares and Industrias Marcati S.C.A. The chapter first examines the situations of the industries in Argentina prior to the regime and then explores the individual economic agreements that each of these companies weave with the military regime. To do so, I look at over two hundred and fifty letters between the government such as the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior and the multiple companies.

The automobile industry played a large role in supporting the regime, as shown in the case studies of this thesis. Without this industry the regime would have been lacking in the amount of automobiles that they had at their disposal and this would have limited the movements that the regime was able to make. This is true as the relations with countries such as the United States became strained it became harder to import the product and easier to purchase and produce the product locally, this increased the importance of the local industry. This industry is important to the regime not only

because it allowed for mobility but also it allowed for the regime to gain necessary products that they would need to continue to wage this campaign and complete their ultimate goal of total control. While this alliance helped the regime it also helped the different companies within the industry, namely Ford, Mercedes-Benz, General Motors, Renault Argentina, Tecin S.A.I.C., Igarreta S.A. It has been shown that the management of Ford and Mercedes-Benz benefited even more from this relationship as they worked with the military to disappear some of their employees that they saw as a threat to their company and/or the government, these were people that were known to be unionist or perceived as subversives.<sup>36</sup> Even though this was a give and take relationship both sides benefited from it greatly.

Along with the automobile industry the communication industry also played a role backing the regime. Without this industry the regime would not have had the same capability to communicate with each other throughout the entire country. This thesis includes case studies of the companies SICOM and Datotek. These two firms provided the government with different types of communication equipment, including walkie-talkies, radios and recorders. These were supplied to the government in order to make the communication between the different areas possible and to be able to record interrogations for later use. The radios were supplied so that the government could use them in different places around the country in order to spread their message. These products and firms are important because without them the government would have had a difficult time in communicating with each other throughout the entire country as the

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<sup>36</sup> Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz," in *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship*, ed. Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 159-173.

companies provided the technology and that the government required to assert their power. Without the walkie-talkies the government would have struggled to be on the same page throughout the regime, this is true because if they did not have this product then it would have been hard for all of the areas to stay in contact with each other at once. While the people of these industries may not have known the extent of the regimes violations they still entered willing into a business relationship that greatly benefited each side.

Just like with the other two, the automobile and the communication industry, the weapons industry, namely Dirección de Fabricaciones Militares and Industrias Marcati S.C.A, also played a role in backing the regime. Without this industry the regime would have had to rely on just the weapons and equipment that they already had and would not have been able to increase their supply. This industry made many different products that range from different types of guns, different types ammunition, and different types of grenades. All of these products are important to the regime because without them the regime would not have been able to reach their goal of total control, as they would not be able to instill the same amount of fear in the population if they had a limited supply of weaponry. Without this industry the regime would have reached a point of struggle but because the industry backed the regime there was an open exchange of weapons that greatly aiding the regime with their agenda. The people within this industry were not worried about the scope of the regimes actions as they entered into a relationship with the regime that benefited both sides greatly.

The arrival of the car industry to Argentina:

While the automobile industry was important during the regimes time in power it also had a role within the country even before the regime came to power. The companies of Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Mercedes Benz and Fiat arrived to Argentina early in the 1900's; these companies began to arrive around 1916. Many of these different business wanted to expand overseas in order to increase production and sales, this led to an expansion to not only Latin America but also world wide. These companies expanded into other countries within Latin America, such as Mexico, Brazil and Chile.

Most of the car industry arrived in Argentina in the early 1900's: Ford set up a plant in Argentina in 1916 followed by General Motors in 1925 and Chrysler a few years later by 1929, all within Buenos Aires.<sup>37</sup> The early plants were assembly plants that had the parts being sent over from the company's home country, this would change in the 1950's when the companies introduced plants that would not only assemble but build and create the parts. In the early years of the automobile industry in Argentina, specifically in the late 1920's, there were over 50,000 cars being sold throughout the country.<sup>38</sup> This shows that the industry was being successful from an early stage. When the companies came to Argentina they were all still attached to the main company back in the original company, be it the United States, Germany, or Italy, which made these company's all foreign enterprises. In the book *Labor Wars in Córdoba, 1955-1976: Ideology, Work, and Labor Politics in Argentine Industrial City* James Brennan shows that being attached to the foreign companies came to hurt the industry when Juan Peron came into power as there was great restrictions put on foreign capital in order to help grow the local capital

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<sup>37</sup> Rhys Jenkins, *The Rise and Fall of the Argentinian Motor Vehicle Industry*. (Norwich: School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, 1983), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 2.

and it caused the foreign automobile industry to greatly decline and some companies cease to exist. This happened because Peron wanted to push for national industry over foreign industry; this would stand until Arturo Frondizi in 1958. Frondizi opened Argentina to foreign investment once again in 1959 and foreign automobile industry began to grow again. The rules being relaxed resulted in Ford, Chrysler, General Motors, Citroen, and Mercedes Benz all bringing a production and manufacturing plant to the country, specifically Buenos Aires, within three years.<sup>39</sup> While the industry had been in the country before this after 1959 is when it really began to take off. This industry would continue to grow and be successful for the many years and decades to come, for example the amount of automobiles manufactured rose from 13,901 between 1951 to 1955 to 136,188 by 1961<sup>40</sup> and the number continued to rise as the years went on. The automobile industry had roots in Argentina long before and after the military coup; the military just used this already established industry to their advantage.

Ford:

Ford was one of the many companies with which the government worked closely. This relationship between Ford and the military government carried on throughout the entire dictatorship. This exchange helped both Ford and the government, as the government was able to gain the product that they deemed as necessary and Ford was able to continue to be in business and make product.

Although Ford was a well-established company before 1976, it was after the coup that the relationship between the company and the military began to grow to new levels.

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<sup>39</sup> James P. Brennan, *The Labor Wars in Córdoba, 1955-1976: Ideology, Work, and Labor Politics in an Argentine industrial City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1994), 37-38.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 15-16.

Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky argue that a few months after the military took power; twenty-five workers from Ford's plant were kidnapped.<sup>41</sup> According to their research, Ford managers played a critical role in their kidnap as they granted the military the names, pictures and location, as well as allowing the military to use one of their trucks in this operation.<sup>42</sup> Along with Ford's management partaking in the before mentioned role of the kidnappings they also participated, in some instances, in the interrogations of these kidnapped victims. The management wanted to partake in these different interrogations in order to learn about different activities, be it union or subversive activities, which were happening within the plant.<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that this was not the only instance where the military and the company worked together in order to create a secure a repressive environment. This would be created by the company allowing the military to place a military unit within the plant and to create a military barrack out of a section of the plant.<sup>44</sup> This arrangement allowed for the company to wed the subversives and the workers they wanted to get rid of while allowing the military a chance to complete repression and have access to a different group of people and a different area. When looking at this relationship it becomes evident that the "company's management was pro-military," that the military was acting at the managements request and that the military was allowed unabated access to the plant.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz," in *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship*, ed. Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 160.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 161.

This shows that the Ford Company knew what was happening at the hands of the military and they not only allowed it but also helped to make it happen.

While there were multiple products that Ford made for the government, the Ford Falcons as the ones that called our attention the most. The Ford Falcon was the car that the government commissioned the most, as these cars were very important to the regime since they served many different purposes to the ultimate goal such as transporting items throughout. This is an example of one of the ways in which the government used the Ford Falcons to extend and continue their regime and these cars came to feared all throughout Argentina during this period, as no one was safe from an experience with one of these cars. These cars and Ford became an important part of the regime as a whole and an important symbol of fear for the people.

An example of one of these correspondences between the military itself is,

“SEÑOR SUBSECRETARIO:

Tengo el agrado de dirigirme a Ud., - con relación al Plan de Reequipamiento de las Policías Provinciales, solicitandole quiera tener a bien disponer se arbitren los medios necesarios para que se proceda a la compra directa de noventa (90) automóviles Ford Falcon no identificables, en su version “Standard”.

Se acompaña un detalle de las características de los vehículos a las que deberá ajustarse la Firma vendeora “ACFOR S.A.C.”.

La presente compra responde a la standarización de los medios, como así también de la facilidad de mantenimiento y utilización de la línea de repuestos ya existentes. Se deja constancia que en el presente año se entregaron a las Policías Provinciales ciento setenta y nueve (179) automóviles de las mismas características con excelentes resultados en su rendimineto general.

Saludo a Ud., muy atentamente.

Signed: Cnel. (R.E.) José Ruiz Palacios  
Subsecretario del Interior”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio, Republica Argentina, Ministerio Del Interior, N° 294 0070, Iniciador: Subsecretaria del Interior, Fecha de Entrada 3-10-77.



This particular correspondence was written on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977 and illustrates the specifics of what the government wanted, as they are wanting to give them to the police in the different provinces in order to complete the agenda. It proves the case that the government was not completing this regime on its own, as it shows that the government had a complacent partner and there was assistance throughout the country particularly in the economic sector. The correspondence is important for Ford as well because it shows that the company was working closely with the government throughout the regime in order to not only gain money but also gain power and position. The correspondence between the government and Ford were similar to the correspondences between the governmental offices, as these communications not only discussed the details of the cars but also the locations that these cars would be sent to. The regime had Ford make an amount of vehicle that numbers in the high hundreds, the exact number is not currently available. These cars were made with specific instructions that included but are not limited to the color, the material on the inside, and that the cars should be anti-noise and untraceable. The government believed that the cars needed to be made in a certain way in order for this agenda to be able to be played out correctly. The following is an example of the details that Ford would be given in order to create the product in the correct way

“Noventa (90) Automóviles marca “Ford Falcon” Standard, sedan cuatro (4) puertas, último modelo serie, motor a nafta comun de seis (6) cilindros, con potencia de 116 HP a 4.000 r.p.m. con caja de velocidades de tres marchas de avance sincronizadas y una de retroceso, espejos retroscópicos: exteriores derecho e izquierdo e interno día/noche; herraminetas standard de fábrica.

Pintura: Original de fábrica, con protección anticorrosive debajo de toda la carrocería, mediante pintura anti-ruídos “Universal”.

Manuales: Uno (1) de conducción y mantenimiento por unidad.”<sup>47</sup>

The cars had to be spread out in order for the plan to work and the regime to gain and hold on to control of the entire country. Every correspondence stated the locations as well as the amount that will be sent. As example on the previous document dated October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977 it is stated where the ninety Falcons will be sent, these locations and amount are as follows Catamarca 10, Corrientes 10, Chaco 5, Chubut 8, Enter Ríos 5, Formosa 6, Neuquen 3, Río Negro 6, Salta 5, San Juan 5, San Luis 5, Santa Cruz 8, Santa Fé 10, Tierra del Fuego 4.<sup>48</sup> Through these it is made evident that Ford was making a conscious choice in helping to support the regime. This was done for many reasons that include the trading of product but also because the management of Ford was pro-military and into helping the military in many different ways as seen in the section “The Cases of Ford and Mercedes-Benz” by Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, morality was not a major component in this decision.<sup>49</sup>

While the main product that Ford made for the regime was the Falcon it was not the only product that was made as they also made buses and ambulances.<sup>50</sup> These

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<sup>47</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina, Ministerio Del Interior, N° 294 0070, Iniciador: Subsecretaria del Interior, 3-10-77.

<sup>48</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina, Ministerio Del Interior, N° 294 0070, Iniciador: Subsecretaria del Interior, 3-10-77.

<sup>49</sup> Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz," in *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship*, ed. Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 161.

<sup>50</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina, Ministerio Del Interior, N° 300 0081, Iniciador: Subsecretaria del Interior, Tramita por: Div. Compras, 14-11-77.

different vehicles that Ford made were used for different purposes during the time period, for example transportation. The ambulances were used to help transport people throughout the country who needed medical attention. The military requested these different vehicles from Ford for the same reason that they wanted the Falcons, they wanted these vehicles in order to complete their agenda. With Ford making these vehicles it continues to prove that they were not only backing but also working with the military in order to continue their rule, this is true as Ford continued to make the conscious decision of support.

Ford was arguably the most important automobile company that the government worked closely with but it was not the only one. There were many other companies that the government worked closely with in order to complete their plans and continue to hone in their power. The government also worked with Mercedes-Benz, Renault Argentina, Tecin S.A.I.C., Igarreta S.A, and General Motors.

Mercedes-Benz:

Mercedes-Benz, which is also known in Argentina as Automotores y Servicios S.A, was one of the many companies that the government worked closely with. When working with the government both of these names are used interchangeably. This relationship between the company and the government was similar to the relationship that Ford carried on, and was vital for both sides of and the government. Through this relationship it shows that Mercedes-Benz was making a conscious decision in working with the government throughout the entirety of the regime in order for the government to gain what they were in need of and for the company to get what they wanted, which was

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to get rid of the trade union representatives within the company as argued in Basualdo, Quintana, and Varsky's work<sup>51</sup>, as well as to prevent the country from falling into chaos and anarchy.

This relationship played out throughout the entirety of the military's time in power. Mercedes Benz opened a plant in Argentina before the coup, as the initial branch was opened in 1951 and was the first branch that the company had overseas.<sup>52</sup> Mercedes-Benz was one of the few companies that arrived to Argentina when the nationalist Juan Peron was in power, as he had placed restrictions on the foreign companies and on them entering the country. While the company had been in the country for many years before the relationship with the military took over after the coup and the regime came into power. One of the ways that this relationship was seen was that Mercedes Benz's top client during this time period was the Argentine military and this helped the company to become one of the top grossing companies with in Argentina during this period of time, as argued by Basualdo, Quintana, and Varsky.<sup>53</sup> This is important because it exemplifies how important the business with the regime was for the company and that this business helped make the company one of the most important and profitable within the country. The other major example of this close working relationship is that the company's management worked with the military to repress the workers and played a role in some of the companies workers being kidnapped, as seen in the section "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes-Benz" by Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky. The

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<sup>51</sup> Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz," in *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship*, ed. Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 169.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 168.

company's role in this is illustrated by the fact that the managers gave the names and addresses of certain workers that both sides saw as a threat, this led to the ultimate kidnapping of these different workers.<sup>54</sup> This is not the only example of the company of Mercedes-Benz working with the military to disappear their own workers, it can also be seen in the stories of Héctor Ratto, Esteban Reimer, and Diego Nunez. All of these individuals worked at the factory for Mercedes-Benz and were a part of the union or named to be subversives by the boss and production manager Juan Rolando Tasselkraut, who helped in giving out these individuals names and locations along with directions to have them disappeared. Recently the stories and/or testimonies of these and other individuals disappeared from the Mercedes-Benz factory have come to light through law suits that are being brought against the company in the United States as well as Germany, as the company was bought out by a German company.<sup>55</sup>

Automotores y Servicios, Mercedes Benz, was commissioned to make mostly buses instead of standard vehicles like Ford. There are many examples of this relationship at work through analyzing many correspondences discussing the work that needed to be done along with the reasons for this work and the particulars of the work,

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<sup>54</sup> Victoria Basualdo, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and Carolina Varsky, "The Cases of Ford and Mercedes Benz," in *The Economic Accomplices to the Argentine Dictatorship*, ed. Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky. Trans. Laura Pérez Carrara (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 167.

<sup>55</sup> Gaby Weber, "Los Desaparecidos de Mercedes Benz," Project Disappeared-Argentina, published September 9, 1999, <http://www.desaparecidos.org/arg/voces/ensayos/weber.html>. Gaby Weber, "Los desaparecidos de Mercedes Benz Argentina," GabyWeber.com, accessed May 8, 2016, [http://www.gabyweber.com/dwnld/bucher/conexion\\_alemana.pdf](http://www.gabyweber.com/dwnld/bucher/conexion_alemana.pdf). "El negro estigma de la Mercedes Benz," Proceso.com.mx, published December 14, 2003, <http://www.proceso.com.mx/190704/el-negro-estigma-de-la-mercedes-benz>. Diego Martínez, "El caso Mercedes-Benz en Estados Unidos," Página 12, published October 20, 2008, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-113637-2008-10-20.html>.

these correspondences are similar to the ones discussed above with regards to Ford. One of these examples is found with a correspondence from May 18, 1979 that is discussing Automotores y Servicios, Mercedes Benz, about making 12 buses. In this correspondence it is stated that the buses will be going to the police in the provinces.<sup>56</sup> The following example shows that the before mentioned buses were being bought to benefit the police in the many provinces within the country of Argentina.

“Por expediente N° 678/78 “S”, se tramitó la compra de doce (12) Micro-ómnibus marca Mercedes Benz, con destino al equipamiento de las Policías Provinciales.

La adquisición se aprobó por Decreto N°3219 fecha 29 de diciembre de 1978 y que diera origen a la orden de compra N° 456/78.”<sup>57</sup>

Along with these details it is usually stated the location of where these buses will be sent, these locations more often times than not are the capitals of the provinces throughout the country. Through the company making these buses for the government and taking the money from the government for the buses it becomes evident that they were reinforcing the regime.

Renault Argentina:

Renault Argentina was another of the many companies that the government worked closely with in the building of vehicles. This relationship between the company

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<sup>56</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina, Ministerio Del Interior, N° 678 Secr. /78 Cde. 11, Iniciador: Direccion General de Administracion, Tramita por: D.G. Seguridad Interior, 23/5/79.

<sup>57</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina , Ministerio Del Interior, N° 678 Secr. /78 Cde. 11, Iniciador: Direccion General de Administracion, Tramita por: D.G. Seguridad Interior, “Ref. Expte. N° 678/78 “Secreto” Buenos Aires, 18 May, 1979” 23/5/79, 1.

and the government was similar to the relationship that Ford carried. When looking at this relationship it becomes evident that Renault made the decision of supporting the government throughout the entirety of the regime.

During this time Renault was commissioned to make a multitude of vehicles that include standard cars and ambulances. All of the different vehicles that Renault made were important to the regime and the military's process of reorganization. The standard cars that were made were mostly 4S modelo 908<sup>58</sup>. These cars are not the same as the Ford Falcon as they were not made to be used for the same purposes, they were used as a means of transportation throughout the country more then as a means of anything else. Along with the cars that were made Renault also made ambulances for the regime. These ambulances were created in order to help in the transport of the victims or citizens who were in need of attention along with the members of the military who also needed attention from a medical staff. While there are many examples of Renault building cars and building the relationship of collaboration one of these examples is found with a correspondence form July 18, 1978 that is discussing Renault making 6 ambulances and 4 4s model 908<sup>59</sup>. The reason that is given for these vehicles to be made is for the police and the government. Along with the above stated the correspondence also states the locations of where these different vehicles need to be sent, as these are the locations that are seen as to be in need.

Tecin S.A.I.C:

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<sup>58</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. N° 321. Iniciador: Direccion General de Administracion. 19/7/78, 13.

<sup>59</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. N° 321. Iniciador: Direccion General de Administracion. 19/7/78, 13.

Tecin S.A.I.C. was one of the companies that the government worked with in order to have automobiles built throughout the regime. This exchange helped each as the government was able to gain the product that they needed in order to have the dictatorship continue and the company was able to gain money in order for them to stay in business and live their lives.

During the reign of the military Tecin was entrusted to make vehicles that the military could use. The vehicles that Tecin made were different then the vehicles that the other companies made as they did not make a standard car or bus but instead the main vehicle that Tecin made was the Tecin-Rosenbauer, modelo TLF-1300<sup>60</sup>, which is a fire truck. While these vehicles are very different then the ones that were made by the other companies they were still of great importance and helped to increase the importance of the company as a whole. There are many examples of Tecin building fire trucks and building the relationship of support one specific example is found with a correspondence form August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1981 that is discussing Tecin making 6 Tecin-Rosenbauer, modelo TLF-1300<sup>61</sup>. The reason that is given for these vehicles to be made is for the need to retrofit the police in the provinces within the country. Through the exchange of money and product between Tecin and the government it becomes evident that Tecin was backing the regime through an important economic relationship for both sides.

Igarreta S.A.:

Another company that the government worked closely with throughout the regime was Igarreta S.A. During the reign of the dictatorship Igarreta was requested to make

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<sup>60</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. N° 347 Secreto.

Iniciador: Subsecretario del Interior. Tramita por: Compras y Sum. 29/5/81.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 29/5/81.



vehicles that the military could use. The vehicles that the company made were similar to vehicles that had been made by other companies. This is true as the vehicle that was mostly requested from this company was a bus. The buses that were requested are passenger buses that can carry up to thirty passengers. These buses are important to the regime as they can transport the people that were victims to the different locations around the country that people were being held, as well as helping to move troops. While this was the main reason that the military wanted these buses they also could be used to transport people who worked for the government, the military or the police force when they were needed in a different part of the country. The military saw these buses as essential to completing the process of reorganization and to help the police with equipment. Through the willing exchange of money from the government and product from Igarreta it becomes evident that the company was backing the regime through a mutually beneficial economic relationship.

#### General Motors:

General Motors was another one of the many companies that the government worked closely with during the dictatorship. This exchange helped both, as they were both able to gain what they saw as necessary. Throughout the duration of the military's reign General Motors was commissioned to make vehicles that the military could use. Throughout the time period General Motors either built or put in an offer to build a number of different vehicles. These different vehicles range from standard cars to buses to trucks. The buses that General Motors would build for the government were able to carry passengers along with carrying cargo as well as a mix of both. They were also important as they could carry cargo from one location to another location where it was

needed, this was a vital part of the plan or reorganization. General Motors also built version of a trucks, chasis con cabina y carrocería de cargo con toldo, marca “Chevrolet” Modelo CS 10734 and chasis con cabina carrocería de carga sin toldo misma marca y modelo<sup>62</sup>, for the military. Along with the buses these trucks were important for the military as they could be used in many different ways. For example some of the many ways that these trucks can be used is to transport materials throughout the country as well as using them for patrol of the country. There are many examples of General Motors working with the government through building cars and building the relationship of support but one specific example can be found with a correspondence form September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1977<sup>63</sup> that is discussing General Motors building the above mentioned trucks. With the building of these trucks and the selling of them to the government General Motors makes it evident that they were assisting the regime through an economic relationship from the early stages to the end.

Throughout the duration of the regimes reign this assistance came from many different avenues but one of these avenues was from automobile dealerships. These automobile dealerships include Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Renault Argentina, Tecin S.A.I.C., Igarreta S.A, and General Motors. With all of these different companies the government built relationships that proved to be vital for both sides and this brought backing for the regime, mainly economic collaboration. The support of the companies was vital to the regime as it allowed the regime to continue holding and gaining more power, the automobiles that were built for the military played a vital role as it gave the government

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<sup>62</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. N° 290 0088. Iniciador: Subsecretaria del Interior. 9-9-77.

<sup>63</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. N° 290 0088. Iniciador: Subsecretaria del Interior. 9-9-77.

the products that were necessary for their agenda. While this is true this alliance was also vital to the many companies because it brought in money to the companies and helped to give them power and position within the country. Throughout the entirety of the regime the government and the many different automobile companies had a mutually beneficial relationship.

#### Communication Industry History:

The communication industry played a role during the regime as well as before. This industry was important to the regime, as it was a way in which the military could communicate with themselves as well as with the public. Along with those reasons this also was another way of governmental control as they were able to censor large parts of the ways of communication for the population. Before the regime as well as during these different ways of communication range from radio to television to newspapers.

Throughout the history of Argentina newspapers have been an effective way of communication, as the people have been able to disperse information through different types of articles and notices throughout the different newspapers. There are many different newspapers throughout Argentina that range from small to large, the most important and largest newspapers such as La Nación and Clarín were established in the 1870's. All of these newspapers were important in regards to communication in the country before the regime and continued to be a communication tool for the regime through their censorship policies.

Along with newspapers television was also a way of communication before the regime came into power. This form of communication could be used in order to get a certain message across to the people that were watching the television. Television

arrived in Argentina in 1951 with cable arriving in 1960's, even though television was in the country before the regime it was not widely available till around 1978 when the regime was already in power. This means that television was not as effect of a way of communication as newspapers were. Even with this being said the television was able to reach some of the population and serve as a communication tool before the regime came to power as well as after.

Just like newspapers and television the radio was an important form of communication before and during the regime. The radio was important because it allowed for the Argentine public to be exposed to culture, such as music, and sports as well as being used as a communication tool by the people and the government in order to disperse information or messages. During the time leading up to the regime there were many different radio stations and broadcast that allowed for the communication with the population. The radio arrived in Argentina before the regime as it first arrived in 1920 and expanded to more of the population in the 1930's. This allowed for the radio to become more of an important communication tool as it was able to reach a broader audience and able to disperse any messages to a larger number of people. The radio was used by the population for many reasons such as culture, sports and communication before the regime came to power and it continued to be a tool of communication for the regime.

The communication industry was already established within the country before the regime came into power, the regime just used this industry to their advantage. While all of the different ways of this communication are important the main focus of the following research is the electrical forms of communication, such as the radio.

SICOM:

SICOM, SISTEMAS DE COMUNICACIONES S.A.I.C, was one of the many companies that the government worked closely with throughout this time. This exchange helped both the government and SICOM gain their desired necessities. Throughout time SICOM was important in making communication equipment, chargers, and batteries for many different purposes in Argentina. By looking at the many correspondences between the company and the government it becomes evident that SICOM was working with the government throughout the regime through a relationship that was mutually beneficial as they discuss the many different products that SICOM would be making for the government during this time.

The company made a great deal of different types of equipment but the most important equipment for the regime was the communication products that include but are not limited to walkie talkies and radios. This is true as these products allowed for the military to be able to communicate amongst themselves as these were made of military grade to be used for internal communication.

The interaction that SICOM had with the government is comparable to the interaction that the automobile companies had in the previous sections in terms of the correspondences, that discuss the certain product being requested between the government itself and the companies, and bills that were passed between both the companies and the government. These documents, which are from different governmental offices such as the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense as well as from the company itself, are important because they help to show the relationship that the companies had with the government and they show the ways in which these

different companies supported the government throughout the regime. These different correspondences are important as they discuss all of the details of the product and the government's necessity for the product. An example of one of these correspondences is as follows,

“SEÑOR DIRECTOR GENERAL:

Solicito de señor Director proceda a la elaboración de la documentación correspondiente para la compra directa a la Firma “SICOM” S.A.I.C.F., de la cantidad de trescientos cuarenta y nueve (364) transceptores portátiles banda alta y cuarenta (40) transceptores portátiles banda baja, cuyas características se detallan en cotización adjunta.-

La presente adquisición se realiza en tal forma, por tratarse de material secreto de seguridad y por encuadrarse en la política de estandarización fijada en el “Plan de Reequipamiento Policial”, previsto para el corriente año.-

Al respecto se adjunta a la presente los Anexos I y II, correspondientes a la distribución de los elementos a adquirir, como así también el referido -/ presupuesto elaborado por la Firma “SICOM” S.A.I.C.F., el cual se ajusta a las especificaciones técnicas requeridas y que este Ministerio presta se conformidad.-

Saludo a Ud., muy atentamente.-

Signed: Cnel. (R.E.) Jose Ruiz Palacios

Subsecretario del Interior

AGREGADOS: Lo indicado en el texto-

SEÑOR DIRECTOR GENERAL DE ADMINISTRACION

CONTADOR D. RODOLFO DELL'OSO

S/D.-<sup>64</sup>

This particular correspondence was written in September of 1978 as showed in the previous letter clearly stated that the required products were fundamental for police security operations. This particular correspondence is a great example of how important this company and their support of the government was. This is true as the government was ordering a great deal of the product that they were using in order to communicate to their members throughout the whole country. While they were ordering a great deal of product, and many different kinds, as this is only one example, they were not ordering it for just one location. The following is an example of where these were sent, these numbers accompanied the many different correspondences and bills during this time period and these exact numbers are along with the previous correspondence that would state the location,

“Of 364

Table 1: Locations for Transceptores Portátiles Banda Alta to be sent

Catamarca 15	Neuquen 10
Córdoba 45	Rio Negro 5
Corrientes 20	San Juan 30
Chubut 20	San Luis 15
Jujuy 10	Santa Cruz 30
La Pampa 4	Salta 15
La Rioja 40	Santiago del Estero 20
Mendoza 20	Tucumán 15
Misiones 20	Case de Gobierno- Capital Federal 15

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<sup>64</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. 589-78-“R”-MI  
Iniciador: SICOM-S.A.I.C.F. y A. Tramita por: D. Gral. Seg. Interior. 28-9-78, 9.

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Table 2: Location for Transceptores Portátiles Banda Baja to be sent

Catamarca 15	La Pampa 5
Chubut 10	Río Negro 10

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The equipment had to be spread out in order for the plan to work and the regime to gain and hold on to control of the entire country. This example is important because it shows that the government was using this equipment on a widespread level in order to complete the goal but even more importantly it shows that the company SICOM was greatly benefiting from this sell which in turn prompted the company to continue to do business and support the regime in order to continue the economical flow. The example only shows some of the products, some walkie-talkies and some radios, which were being made by SICOM. While the example shows some of the most popular items that were made, SICOM made a multitude of other items that the government used to their advantage. Through these it is made evident that SICOM was making a conscious choice in helping to support the regime, this support comes in the form of supplying product as this more an economic support instead of ideological support.

Datotek:

Datotek Argentina was another of the many companies that the government worked closely with throughout this time. Datotek was a company originally established

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<sup>65</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. 589-78-“R”-MI. Iniciador: SICOM-S.A.I.C.F. y A. Tramita por: D. Gral. Seg. Interior. 28-9-78, 9.



in the United States in Dallas, Texas that specialized in manufacturing electrical equipment such as voice encryption systems. It becomes evident that Datotek Argentina was working with the government throughout the entirety of the regime through a relationship that was mutually beneficial.

Datotek Argentina made multiple items for the government throughout this time period. While there were multiple products that were made one of the products that government commissioned the most was the different types of codificadores. The different types that were made include but are not limited to “Codificadores con control remoto, Codificadores sin control, Codificador para voz, marca DATOTEK, model DV-505, con Control Remoto and Codificador para voz, marca DATOTEK, model DV-505, sin Control Remoto.”<sup>66</sup> These were important because they allowed the regime to communicate through codes as these codificadores were used in cryptography. These products made by Datotek helped to serve the military regime in multiple ways; for example through communication and security. All that was ordered was sent out around the country in order to help with communication, investigation, information, and security. The following is an example of where these were sent; these numbers accompanied the many different correspondences and bills during this time period,

“Of 52

Table 3: Locations for Codificadores con Control Remote to be sent

Señor Ministro del Interior	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De La Pampa
Señor Subsecretario del Interior	Gobernador de la Prov. De La Rioja

<sup>66</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio, Republic Argentina Ministerio Del Interior. 666-“S”-78-MI-. Iniciador: Datotek Argentina. Fecha de Entrada 28-9-78. Tramita por: D.GRAL.SEG.INT.

Señor Director Gral. De Seguridad Interior	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De La Rioja
Jefe Policia Federal Argentina	Gobernador de la Prov. De Mendoza
SubJefe Policia Federal Argentina	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Menodza
Superintendente de Seguridad Federal	Gobernador de la Prov. De Misiones
Señor Gobernador de la Prov. De Buenos Aires	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Misiones
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Buenos Aires	Gobernador de la Prov. De Neuquen
Gobernador de la Prov. De Catamarca	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Neuquen
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Catamarca	Gobernador de la Prov. De Salta
Gobernador de la Prov. De Cordoba	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Salta
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Cordoba	Gobernador de la Prov. De Rio Negro
Gobernador de la Prov. De Corrientes	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Rio Negro
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Corrientes	Gobernador de la Prov. De San Juan
Gobernador de la Prov. De Chaco	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De San Juan
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Chaco	Gobernador de la Prov. De San Luis
Gobernador de la Prov. De Chubut	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De San Luis
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Chubut	Gobernador de la Prov. De Santa Cruz
Gobernador de la Prov. De Entre Rios	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Santa Cruz
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Entre Rios	Gobernador de la Prov. De Santa Fe
Gobernador de la Prov. De Formosa	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Santa Fe
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Formosa	Gobernador de la Prov. De Santiago del Estero
Gobernador de la Prov. De Jujuy	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Santiago del Ester
Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Jujuy	Gobernador de la Prov. De Tucuman
Gobernador de la Prov. De La Pampa	Ministro de Gob. De la Prov. De Tucuman

Of 25:

Table 4: Locations for Codificadores sin Control Remoto to be sent

Departamento Informaciones (Seg. Interior)	Departamento de Seguridad (Seg. Interior).
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Buenos Aires	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Catamarcama
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Cordoba	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Corrientes
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Chaco	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Chubut
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Entre Rios	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Formosa
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Jujuy	Jefe de Policia Provincia de La Pampa

Jefe de Policia Provincia de La Rioja	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Mendoza
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Chubut	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Neuquen
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Misiones	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Rio Negro
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Salta	Jefe de Policia Provincia de San Juan
Jefe de Policia Provincia de San Luis	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Santa Cruz
Jefe de Policia Provincia de La Pampa	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Santa Fe
Jefe de Policia Provincia de La Rioja	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Santiago del Estero
Jefe de Policia Provincia de Tucumán	Jefe de Policia Provincia de Tierra del Fuego

»67 68

The product had to be spread out in order for the plan to work and for the regime to hold on to control of the entire country. This example is important because it shows that the government was using the different product on a widespread level in order to complete their goal as well as showing that Datotek was greatly benefiting from this relationship. These products were vital to the regime and their ability to stay in control and power, this is why having this company making products and having their support was instrumental to the regime.

Dirección de Fabricaciones Militares and Industrias Marcati S.C.A:

Throughout the regime's time in power there were different weapons and ammunition companies such as Dirección de Fabricaciones Militares and Industrias Marcati S.C.A that the military worked closely with throughout this time. With these companies the weapons were being produced in Buenos Aires, as they were locally owned and operated companies. This relationship between was critical for both sides because throughout the duration of the dictatorship. This is true as the company and the

<sup>67</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior. 666-“S”-78-MI-. Iniciador: Datotek Argentina. Fecha de Entrada 28-9-78. Tramita por: D.GRAL.SEG.INT.

<sup>68</sup> Note: One Codificadores was sent to each of the locations listed in the tables.

government exchanged money, products, and time. It becomes evident that the company was working with the government throughout the entirety of the regime through a relationship that was mutually beneficial.

The weapon and ammunition companies made multiple items for the government throughout this time period. While the government deemed all of the companies that they were working with as important and their products as vital these certain companies were some of the most important all because of what they produced for the government. The different type of product that was made ranged from different types of weapons with different types of caliber such as pistols to different types of ammunition. Examples of the different types of product that would be purchased are as follows,

“Cartuchos de hostigamiento cal. 38, 1mm corto alcance CN/ (lacrimógeno), Cartuchos de hostigamiento cal. 38, 1mm corto alcance CS (irritante), Cartuchos de hostigamiento cal. 38, 1mm largo alcance CN/ (lacrimógeno), Cartuchos de hostigamiento cal. 38, 1mm largo alcance CS (irritante), Granadas de hostigamiento HC (antitumulto de humo), Granadas de mano hostigamiento CN (lacrimógenas)”<sup>69</sup> and “Cal 12/70mm, Pistolas Browning 9mm, Cartucho cal. 9mm, Cartucho cal 12/70, Cartucho cal 7.62, Cartucho cal 22”<sup>70</sup>

These products were very important to the regime as they helped to serve a multitude of purposes. The product had to be spread out throughout the entire country just like in the previous examples in order for regimes vision to come to a reality. The before mentioned merchandise was used by the military and the police all throughout the country for many reasons that include but are not limited to gaining control, investigating, interrogating, disappearing, and killing citizens of Argentina. These products were fundamental to the

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<sup>69</sup> Archivo General de la Nación, Archivo Intermedio. Republic Argentina. Ministerio Del Interior, N° 1011, Cde. 41,1982. Iniciador: Direccion General de Seguridad Interior. Tramita por: Compras y Suministros.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

regime and their ability to stay in control and power, this is why having these products made and having the companies support was instrumental to the regime.

The military knew that in order for them to retain power and control there had to be support from multiple outside enterprises. Throughout the duration of the regimes reign this support came from many different avenues that proved to be vital to the duration of the regime. These avenues included many different companies that include but are not limited to Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Renault Argentina, Tecin S.A.I.C., Igarreta S.A, General Motors, SICOM, Datotek, and the weaponry companies. With all of these companies the government built relationships that proved crucial for both sides as this brought support for the regime. The support of the companies was vital to the regime as it allowed the regime to continue to realize their vision and complete their agenda. While this is true the support was also vital to the companies because it brought in money and helped to give them power and position within the country. Throughout the entirety of the regime the government and the many different companies had a mutually beneficial relationship.

Table 5: Number of Product Purchased, Based on the revision of 300 letters:

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Automobile	-	610	277	102	13	16	-	-
Communication	-	-	980	375	304	26	515	136
Weapons & Ammo	-	8,605,5000	4,488,455	-	32,184	-	300	-

<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Note: This chart is indicative of the items that I reviewed and had available to me while in Buenos Aires, this is not indicative of all of the product that the regime bought.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

1976 to 1983 was a time of suffering for the country of Argentina and the people, as the military regime systematically disappeared thousands of people and ruled by fear. The military waged this campaign known as the “Dirty War” in order to retain control of the country and get rid of the political subversives that they deemed as a threat to their control and power. During this time the military kidnapped, tortured and even killed many of their own citizens in order to get rid of perceived threats to their power, this helped to instill fear throughout the rest of the country and within the people. This was waged with the help of a great many that range from support within and outside of the country itself.

While the military was the main factor in the “Dirty War” they did not act alone. The military had the support of many not only within the country of Argentina but also outside of the country. During this time there were governments throughout the world that were supporting this regime, specifically the United States. These different countries governments supported this regime because they saw it as a positive for themselves and were not worried about all of the regime’s actions. For example the United States supported the regime as they saw it as a positive for their campaign of keeping communism out of the hemisphere and they were not as worried about what was taking place at the hands of the regime, this is true for the Ford and Reagan Administrations as a whole but this is true for only a part of Carter’s Administration as he scaled back the

support in the name of Human Rights violations. Even though this is true this is not the only group that was backing the regime in this campaign against the Argentine people.

The regime had the backing of many different companies within the country, these companies range in their products and the importance that they played. Without these companies the regime would have struggled, as these were the ones who made and exchanged the product that the government needed in order to carry out the “Dirty War”. This thesis uses case studies of three different industries to prove that the military regime was not acting alone but was acting with the backing of others within the country, namely different companies. This is proved through looking at case studies of the automobile, communication and weapons industry, all of these companies had a role within the rule of the regime.

The automobile industry played a large role in supporting the regime, without this industry the regime would have been lacking in the amount of automobiles at their disposal and this would have limited the regime’s movements. This industry is important for many reasons that include allowing for mobility and allowing for the regime to gain items they would need to continue to wage their campaign. Along with helping the regime this relationship also helped the different companies, namely Ford, Mercedes-Benz, General Motors, Renault Argentina, Tecin S.A.I.C., Igarreta S.A. While the companies were helped by this relationship through gaining money and position, it is also shown that the management of Ford and Mercedes-Benz benefited even more as they worked with the military to disappear some of their employees that they saw as a threat. Both sides benefited from it greatly.

The communication industry played a role backing the regime, without this industry the regime would not have had the same capability of communication. The two companies of SICOM and Datotek provided the government with different types of communication equipment in order to make communication between the different areas of the country possible. While the people of this industry may not have known the extent of the violations by the regime they entered willing into a give and take relationship, one that greatly benefited each side.

Along the same lines the weapons industry also played a role in backing the regime. Without this industry the regime would have had to rely on the weapons that they already had which would cause the regime to struggle in reaching their ultimate goal, instilling fear and torturing the individuals. This industry made many different products that range from various types of guns, different types ammunition, and different types of grenades. The people within this industry may not have known the scope of the regimes actions but they still entered into a relationship with the regime that benefited both sides greatly.

These case studies constitute the beginning of a larger-scope study of the economic relations between the military regime and keystone private business in Argentina. Until very recently most research about the Argentina Dirty War focused on the characteristics of the military regime, the international context of the regime, and, mainly to the thousands of students, unionist, political activist tortured or disappeared by the regime. However, in order to understand how such a bloody regime could stay in power for six years, we need to pay attention not only to the violent repressive governmental activities but also to those silent interactions that allow the military to



accomplish their goals. Whether these companies were fully aware or not of the government activities, Ford, Datotek, Mercedes Benz, and the other companies cited in this work provided critical transportation, communication, and weapons equipment. Through studying these members of society it will help to expand the understanding of these members relations this regime. As well it is important to undertake these studies in order to allow for a different viewpoint on the regime and allow for a better-rounded picture of the regime to be crafted. The studies of the other side of the society have began slowly but hopefully with time there will be a greater number of studies taking place, this will help to not only understand the side of society that supported the regime but also will help to fully understand the regime itself.

The military regime committed many horrific human rights violations during the “Dirty War”. This is true but it did not happen without the reinforcement of others within the country, mainly the citizens and the companies. With the companies the alliance with the government fell mostly to the management, as these were the people who were coordinating the relationship on all levels. While there are many companies throughout the country that could have had the same relationship with the regime this thesis focused on a small portion of them, namely companies within the automobile, the communication, and the weapons industry. By looking at the cases within these different industries it becomes evident that the regime was not acting entirely on their own but with the backing of others throughout the country.

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