

**David Prando:
Red Dawn, Black Sunset:
Victory or Death for Argentina (1958 – 1976)**
(Submitted paper)

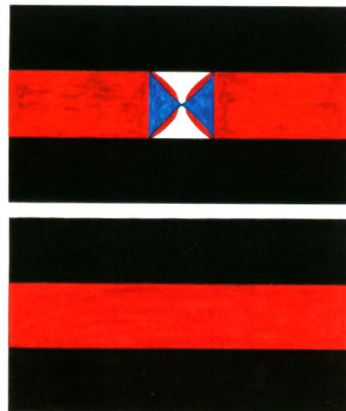
Abstract: *The title of this paper refers to the colours used by both right and left wing groups in Argentina for eighteen years. And the subtitle is based upon a battle cry of the National Left: "Win or Die for Argentina". We have gathered as much data as possible, in spite of the fact that we couldn't see a single subversive flag; some were destroyed, others have been hidden away, and the most of them cannot be seen without permission from the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. And this is impossible with a left-wing populist government in power. So, we have garnered our information from books, magazines, photographs, and oral reminiscences. This work is of course very incomplete. And a great many flags – mostly from very small parties or terrorist bands – have been left out. In any case, we hope that this topic will be as interesting as that of the banners of the Spanish Civil War.*

1. Dawn: 1958 - 1964

After the overthrow of the despot Juan Domingo Peron by the Nationalist-Liberal Revolution of 1955, new political groups appeared to contest each other for power in Argentina.

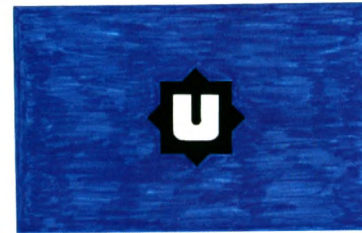
Peron, safely at Madrid, promoted guerrilla warfare among his followers before even Fidel Castro invaded Cuba. Soon, a new political movement of the far right came into view: the Tacuara Nationalist Movement. Tacuara is the name adopted from a kind of lance used by Gauchos in the nineteenth century.

The Tacuara Movement was of the neonazi variety, anticommunist and antisemitic, and was influenced not only by National Socialism, but also by Spanish Falangism and French Nationalism. Tacuara had a three-striped horizontal flag, black-red-black, with a sky-blue and white Iron Cross, with a black and white Iron Cross (not a Maltese Cross as some Tacuaristas have stated). Black stood for National Revolution and red for Social Revolution. As in the Falangist



flag. Tacuara became notorious for its urban terrorist tactics, for its hatred of all enemies of the Fatherland (Whoever they were), and for its good relations with Peron. But Tacuara in part was strongly influenced by the other Socialism, and a splinter group (more inclined to the Left) became known as "Rebel Tacuara". This group displayed the same banner as Tacuara, but without the bicoloured cross.

In 1959, a small and useless Peronist guerrilla group appeared in Tucuman province. It was known as the "Uturuncos" (a name derived



from the Quechua word "uturuncu" (tiger man). They were so badly organized that the Police soon dissolved that gang. It had a light blue flag with a black eight-pointed star and an "U" in the middle. (Eight-pointed stars, either black or red,

were symbolic of right-wing populist parties).

That was during the presidency of Doctor Arturo Frondizi - who had signed a secret pact with Peron before 1958. But Peron, dissatisfied with him, turned loose his followers on him. Peron, who had fled because he didn't want a civil war, nevertheless strived for one and employed not only rightists but leftists as well in his drive to return to power.

Rebel Tacuara became the Tacuara National Revolutionary Movement, which also broke up into two rival groups: the Alfredo Ossorio Sector and the Joe Baxter Sector. As far as we know, the first sector had a



blue-white-blue flag with a black and red Iron Cross. As to Baxter's gang, we only know that it was more socialistic than Ossorio's. Both movements would later merge into Peronism (which was hailed as the "National Movement"). And Baxter - of Anglo-Irish descent like a few Peronists - would later join the Fourth International.

At the beginning of 1964, a new guerrilla force made its presence felt in Salta (in Northern Argentina). It was the "EGP" (The People's Guerrilla Army), whose members had trained in Cuba under the aegis



of Castro and one of his troublesome minions, Ernesto "Che" Guevara. This group also aimed at destroying a democratic government and establishing a Castroite style tyranny. They had a red over black banner with the group's initials in

white. Red stood for the blood of revolutionaries and black for the people's suffering. Like in Castro's flag (of the July 26 Movement). The National Gendarmerie and the jungle and the climate soon settled the new liberators. They had also planned to replace the golden sun in the National flag with a red over black one.

2. Noon: 1969 - 1973

The so-called "Argentine Revolution", of June 28, 1966, toppled the feeble government of President Arturo Illia, and a new President took over: General Juan Carlos Ongania. Everyone had supported that new



revolution, except the Communist Party, and had high hopes



including Peron. But Ongania's policies-totalitarian in politics and liberal in eco-

nomics, enraged most Peronists and leftists. So, accordingly, new subversive elements came into view. And, of course, supported by we-know-who.

A splinter group from the Communist Party was the Revolutionary Communist Party, which had a red flag, and the initials PCR and a hammer and sickle in yellow. Other strongly left-wing bands also

started to make trouble: the Montoneros, the ERP (the People's Revolutionary Army), the FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces), the FAL (Liberation Armed Forces), the Descamisados (the Shirtless Ones), the FAP (Peronist Armed Forces), and other lesser gangs. The two most important were Montoneros (Peronist, but very inclined towards Castro's Socialist niceties), and



ERP (which was Trotskyist). These groups appeared in 1969 and in 1970, together with the Third World priests. Due to reading and learning

much from works on war and on guerrilla warfare by Lenin, Mao, Marighela, Guevara, plus Marx, Engels and other Communist authors, many Nationalists and Progressive Catholics turned more red than the Reds themselves. And not only admired those mentioned above, but also Rosas, San Martin, Bolivar and others who would have done them in for their extremist views. So, there was an incredible, and absurd, political mixture that no one, to this day, has been able to understand.



The Montoneros had a number of different flags: blue and white, white, and red and black with mottoes and or emblems (red eight-pointed stars, sometimes five-pointed ones, a "P" over a "V" signifying "Peron Returns", etc.).



The ERP based its banners on the flag of the Army of the Andes, plus a red star, and sometimes the initials either in yellow or black on the star. The less important

groups had different flags, and in different colours sometimes. Those gangs allied to Montoneros usually had blue-white-blue, white, or red, or black (like the Peronist Youth) with emblems proclaiming their faith



in an aged and ailing Peron, and also mottoes like “Peron or Death”.

All those groups, in their struggle against the Military, resorted to terror tactics: bomb attacks, kidnappings, murders of soldiers, officers, policemen, civilians, trade unionists (of the Peronist Right), etc. And they planted bombs everywhere: in churches, schools, public squares, houses, barracks, etc. The Armed and Security Forces weren't used to rural and urban guerrilla warfare, and so suffered heavy losses. They died while they learned. It was, after all, Peron's fault; he had instructed his minions to prepare the way for his glorious return.

Argentine terrorists and guerrillas - trained in Cuba or behind the Iron Curtain, also had contacts with other terrorist gangs like the IRA, the OLP, the Tupamaros (Uruguay), etc. And obtained the support of the Socialists and Social Democrats of Europe. Doubtless, if the Argentine Left couldn't win the “Dirty War” they had started, they could at least count on propaganda on Democracy, Human Rights and so forth. And ultimately adopt the cultural tactics inspired by Antonio Gramsci that Italian Marxist, more clever and evil than Lenin and his disciples. And they were more fanatical and deadlier than the Baader-Meinhof Gang (West Germany) and the Red Brigades (Italy).

Peron was finally allowed to return to Argentina in 1972 and 1973 by certain Army officers (Peronists and Nationalists) and it seemed that the struggle was over. But, in fact, it was going to begin again, and in earnest. Montoneros and the ERP wanted to liquidate Peron at Ezeiza Airport, but the Peronist Right had a shoot out with them, and a massacre ensued.

Doubtless, the Far Left felt betrayed by Peron – who had used them for his own means without, of course, risking his neck, and so a death struggle began when Peron turned on them, created the Triple-A (the Argentine Anticommunist Association) and more deaths and destruction followed.

3. Sunset: 1974 – 1976

Peron died sudden and unexpectedly in 1974, and it is possible that he was murdered, either by orders of one of his henchmen (Jose Lopez Rega) or someone else. In any case, the death struggle between Leftists and Rightists continued unabated: bombings, murders, etc.

In Tucuman, the ERP tried to create a liberated zone and obtain recognition as belligerents by the United Nations. But nothing came of it, and the Peronist Government authorized the Armed Forces, together with the Gendarmerie and police forces, to root out the Trotskyists in Tucuman.



Up there, the ERP had a small group named the “Ramon Rosa Gimenez Ranger Company” which was divided into platoons and squads (about 500 men and some women). Their flag was captured by the Military and a year later - after having been used for hygienic purposes or so it has been said - was blown to bits; the ERPists promised they would recover it exactly a year later. We have reconstructed it, as best we could from photographs.

Of course, it was no easy task to destroy the guerrillas in Tucuman, but the task was finally achieved.

The final battle between the ERP, plus some help from their rather politically reluctant allies the Montoneros, led to a big battle at the 601 Arsenal Battalion in Monte Chingolo (Buenos Aires province). Due to an infiltrated ex-terrorist, the Military knew of the impending assault. It took place in December 1975, and it ended in the complete rout of the ERP forces. Especially, since Air Force planes, police and Navy units also hunted down the enemy. It was the beginning of the end of Communist terrorism in Argentina.

In 1976, ERP and Montoneros were on the decline, since many of their leaders and followers had been killed, or had fled abroad. And in March of that same year, another revolution kicked out the chaotic and disastrous Peronist regime. So, that finally led to the end of the “Dirty War”. With much repression and so forth, but the job had to be done.

And most people, having suffered a lot at the hands of those red traitors, were glad when it all ended.

It seems that the most of the subversive flags have disappeared. But, maybe sometime we'll be lucky enough to see those that have been put away. So as not to offend the ex-terrorists, no doubt. And who still dream of turning Argentina into a Worker's Paradise of sorts.



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David Prando lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is member of the Spanish Society of Vexillology and has published a number of articles on vexillological topics: in *Banderas* (Spain), *Vexillacta* (Belgium), on historical subjects in *Historia* (Buenos Aires) and on uniformology in *El Dorado* (UK). He has been at congresses of vexillology in Zürich, Warsaw, York and Buenos Aires, and at some national congresses in Spain.

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