

Explaining Peronism of the years 1946-1955 through images of the time

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Abstract

Juan Domingo Perón remains one of the most important figures of Argentine's history of the XX century. A former army colonel, Peron was elected 3 times as president of the republic through popular vote in 1946, 1951 and 1973. He did not come to power through a coup d'état, as usually happened with army generals in the Latin-American countries at that time. He was the founder of the Labour Party and of the peronist movement and together with his wife Eva Duarte introduced a series of revolutionary reforms aiming at improving the living standards of the workers, thus becoming soon a national myth. Nowadays, the peronist Partido Justicialista is in a deep crisis, but it still remains one of the main Argentinian political forces.

Keywords: *Perón, peronism, Evita, images, populism, Argentina*

Introduction

Using images of the time, such as posters, I will try to explain the figure of Juan Domingo Perón and his wife, Eva Duarte, alias Evita, as well as their ideology and the economic and social policy they implemented in Argentina from 1946-1955.

Here below I have listed some of the reasons why I have chosen to use images as a teaching resource to explain the content of the text:

- I consider that the image, in our case, posters, is a substantial element of the communication language which is better epitomized by the famous phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words".
- In addition, the image constitutes a valuable source of information and learning, and it allows us to know, understand and have our own vision of historical events. It also allows us to make comparisons between different topics and situations.

- It also helps to draw students' attention who might be distracted by long textual lectures, it provokes debate, awakens interest and excitement.
- On the other side, it is of great use to the lecturer himself when he has to present and explain historical events and when he has to discuss with students about the content of the text.
- Students will learn how to distinguish different types of images, such as a photograph or a video, and the messages conveyed by them, which gives us more credible information than the propaganda poster of the time that is deeply subjective, full of symbolism reflecting the ideology of the regime.

The posters are accompanied by texts.

Content development:

The Argentine version of nationalist populism is Peronism. This mass movement is named after its leader Juan Domingo Perón, an Argentine politician known in Latin America and the rest of the world.

Perón was a military man who ruled Argentina between 1946 and 1955 and from 1973 to 1974.

Unlike the other military that came to power in several Latin American countries through coups, Juan Domingo Perón was elected as president of Argentina through the popular vote in free elections, which are the basis of the functioning of the democratic system.

Peronism was directed against the domination of the landowners' oligarchy in the country and strove to establish social justice, while on the international level it presented itself as an anti-US imperialism force.

Along the historical moments the country was going through, Perón had different faces: fascist, communist, neoliberal and conservative but he has always been "authoritarian and populist", according to the historian Ignacio García Hamilton (Hamilton, 2009, pág. 75).

The Peronist doctrine was based on political sovereignty, independent economy and social justice.

Political sovereignty

Peron came to power shortly after the end of World War II and when the world was divided into two antagonistic blocs: the communist camp led by the former Soviet Union and the capitalist world under the leadership of the United States.

Peron propagated his idea of maintaining the Third Position, neither with the Communists, nor with the capitalists, to guarantee political sovereignty. "We think that both capitalism and communism are systems already overcome by time. We consider capitalism as the exploitation of man by capital and communism as the exploitation of the individual by the State" (Perón J. , 1958).

Poster no. 1.



Economic independence

Especially in his first term in office, Peron developed an economic policy of socialist, autarchic and nationalist type. The State took charge of all public services. When Peron had to explain his economic policies, he used to say that "we want to establish a social economy to destroy the regime or the capitalist system of exploitation" (Perón J. D., *Obras completas del general Juan Domingo Perón*, 1948).

For the first time in the history of the country, two five-year economic plans were implemented to transform Argentina from an agrarian to an industrially developed country.

To undertake these radical changes, Peron thought it was necessary to organize the working class in trade-unions. "In the reality of my country, trade unionism is currently the most powerful organized force that supports the Peronist movement" (Perón E. , 1951). In the countryside it operated according to the motto: "the land belongs to those who work it". As the image below shows, the

Argentines broke with the land oligarchic system of the past and began to work for themselves, thus being masters of their own destiny.

Poster no. 2



The worker, in both its forms, industrial and rural, is the new hero, strong and proud, who yesterday was oppressed and who today makes a dignified life thanks to the policies of Perú

Poster no.3



Among the main objectives of the five-year plan was also the creation of new jobs, since one of Perón's mottos was "to govern is to create work". The poster below illustrates this growth in the number of jobs compared to the year 1943, i.e., before Perón came to power.

Poster no.4



Perón implemented a series of reforms dealing with the expropriation and nationalization of the strategic sectors of the economy.

At that time, the National Bank was nationalized, as well as the railway company that previously was owned by the British, the Telephone Union, the gas company, transport, etc.

The Argentine merchant marine was created with a fleet of 162 ships, the state air flight company, *Aerolineas Argentinas*, and the first car, called *Ratrojero*, was manufactured in 1952.

Poster no. 5



In addition, the Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Exchange (I.A.P.I) was set up, which imposed strict control over the prices of the products. To soften the devastating effects of the crisis caused by the Second World War, the State bought at high prices the agricultural products of the farmers and sold them abroad. Argentina, considered the bread granary of the world, exported large quantities of wheat to Spain and other countries of the world, In addition to wheat, the symbol of Argentina, the poster shows also the chimney smoke of the new industrial plants symbolising the industrialization of the country.

Poster no. 6



Social justice.

The most important objective of leftist Peron was the equal distribution of national wealth, based on communist ideology. The main beneficiary of all economic and social reforms was the worker, the pillar of economic development and the social base of Peronism. Thousands of peasants left the villages and migrated to the cities to work in the factories. To ensure the accommodation for newcomers, the State built half a million homes over 10 years, 1946-1955.

Poster no. 7

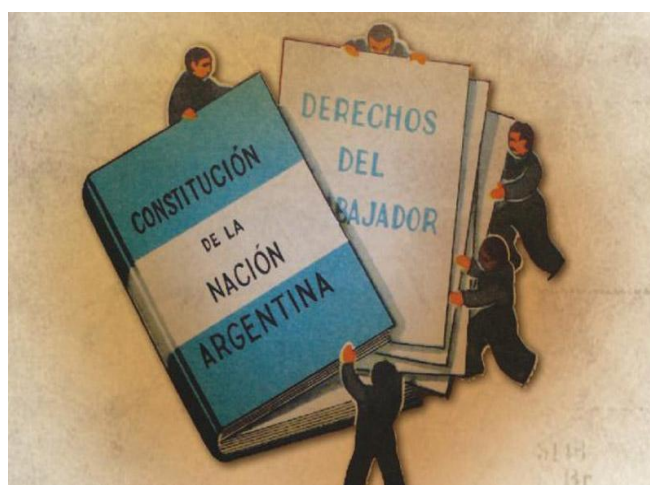


The social work was channeled through Eva Duarte Perón, his wife, an actress and charismatic figure, who served as a connection between the president and the labor movement.

Through Eva Perón Foundation (1948-1955), she provided social services to the *descamisados* to improve their lives, which is why she is considered the "standard bearer of the lay strata" and the "spiritual mother of children, the elderly and of the poor people. "

Through her Foundation, she distributed food, clothes, books and toys to the poor and their children. She also built hospitals, schools, the children's city, sports grounds, homes for the elderly. The rights of the worker and the family was sanctioned in the 1949 Constitution. The minimum wage was established, compensation for dismissal from work and accidents at work, paid vacations, medical assistance, the 13th salary, pensions for the elderly, mandatory education.

Poster no. 8



These profound changes reached the ears of children who began to memorize in the kindergarden stories related to these topics.

Poster no. 9



Thanks to her, for the first time since the independence of the country, a law was passed in 1947 that recognized women's right to vote, considering them citizens with equal rights as men. "We are in favor of granting the suffrage to the woman, because there is no reason that opposes this to materialize in a reality" (Perón J. D., *Doctrina peronista* , 1947, pág. 83). Many women stopped being just housewives and went to work. One category began to study in the school of nursing, while many others began to sew in order to bring some money home. The sewing machine became a symbol of the emancipation of the Argentine woman.

Poster no. 10



Juan Domingo Perón and Eva Perón were populist leaders. They divided the Argentine society into the good, poor and humble people who had to fight against the corrupt elite that threatened the Peronist power. The poor were represented by the couple Perón whom they served and were willing to give even their lives for them. "Perón is the Country and the People" (Perón E. , 1951)

Poster no. 11



The authoritarianism was manifested in the concentration of powers, persecution of opponents, restriction of freedom of speech and press, (He closed the opposition newspaper "La prensa") and in the cult of the personality created by the powerful official propaganda.

The portrait of Evita occupied not only public spaces, but also private houses.

The first broadcast of Argentine television, on October 17, 1951, was dedicated to the figure of Evita, to which songs and films have also been dedicated.

Although Perón died in 1974, Peronism is an inescapable actor in Argentine politics. The division of Argentine society between Peronists and anti-Peronists is evident and is especially accentuated during the time of the elections. Besides being a political option, Peronism is also a feeling, since many Argentines remember how the country's social life changed in the 1950.

Conclusions: Using this unit I have tried to make clearer to students the nature of Peronism through images of the time. These images were used by Peronist movement as a means to sustain its state ideology. I consider that images are also an important pedagogical method that can help Albanian students understand the complicated political meaning of Peronism in Argentina. It is important to grasp the real meaning of that movement which, as previously said, continues to mark the political reality of the country even in our days.

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Webography

Poster no. 1, source: www.elortiba.org

Poster no.2, source: www.eduardobarrientos.com.ar

Poster no. 3, source: www.taringa.net

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