

THE NATION ARRESTED: PROPAGANDA AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
AT ARGENTINA '78

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the graphic design and propaganda generated by the 1978 FIFA World Cup in Argentina. The football tournament drew ever more scrutiny to the brutal repression carried out by the country's military dictatorship, which had ruled Argentina since 1976. Increasingly, the World Cup became couched in terms of a conflict between morality and violence, innocence and conspiracy, with the dictatorship seeking to absolve itself through the image of a modern and welcoming event, and a European boycott strongly associating its repressive methods with the Holocaust. The visual materials created for and in response to the World Cup, by the government and by activist groups boycotting the tournament, respectively, reveal a struggle to define the most pertinent image of Argentina: that of a stable, modern, and upright society, or one of a fascist-ruled, cynical nation, living in fear.

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*For Mom and Dad.  
Two down, one to go.*



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE LAND OF THE LIVING

Graciela Daleo remembers the night of Sunday, June 25, 1978 well. She was in a car somewhere along Avenida Cabildo in Buenos Aires, and traffic had ground to a halt. Cheering pedestrians had flooded the street, waving thousands of Argentinian flags. “I asked [the guard] if he could open up the roof, I wanted to stand up and see. I saw that great crowd and I started to cry. I knew one thing for sure: if I screamed that I was a *desaparecida*, no one would care...because we no longer belonged to the land of the living.”<sup>1</sup> Daleo, a militant activist, had been abducted and imprisoned just blocks away at the Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) since the previous October. Halfway through her eighteen-month detention came the watershed moment that she describes in her testimony: citizens flocked to the streets because Argentina won a football championship.

This thesis examines the diverse imagery of the 1978 FIFA World Cup, produced, sponsored, and manipulated by both the last Argentinian dictatorship (*el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*, or National Reorganization Process) and its political critics abroad. The 1976 coup that unseated president Isabel Perón gave way to the systematic elimination of “terrorists,” “Marxist subversives,” guerrillas, and other individuals of disparate, but often leftist, political leanings.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of this political rupture,

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<sup>1</sup> Gonzalo, Bonadeo, Diego Guebel and Mario Pergolini, dirs. *Mundial '78, la historia paralela*. Cuatro Cabezas, 2003. Daleo’s testimony is also cited in Ezequiel Fernández Moores, *Breve historia del deporte argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial El Ateneo, 2010), 164, and Matías Bauso, 78. *Historia oral del Mundial* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2018), 631 and 634-35.

<sup>2</sup> Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, *La dictadura militar 1976-1983: del golpe de Estado a la*

however, the *Mundial*, as all World Cups are colloquially known in Latin America, became one of the most pressing issues at stake in Argentina; the decision to stick with the tournament was a political one, made at the behest of General Jorge Rafael Videla's military junta. A successful World Cup, it was reasoned, could be used to deflect attention away from forced disappearances, indiscriminate torture, and political killings. When the Proceso finally relinquished power to a democratic administration, five years after the tournament, approximately 30,000 *detenidos-desaparecidos* had been erased from the face of the earth in one of Latin America's most notorious genocides.<sup>3</sup> The 1978 World Cup has subsequently become tainted by association.

More than forty years after Argentina's World Cup, the relationship between football and the dictatorship remains a rich topic of study. The all-encompassing nature of the event, and the intersection of pressing sociopolitical factors—human rights, sport, commercialism, the junta's consolidation of public support—have been interrogated further in recent years, reframed as a series of fragmented and counterintuitive experiences with lasting societal consequences. Was the Mundial a deliberate smokescreen for the genocide built on marketing and nationalism, as it has come to be remembered in Argentina, or did Videla and company simply capitalize on the existing well of enthusiasm for the game? For decades, visual culture, literature, and activism

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*restauración democrática* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2003), 83. "Paso a paso...fue tomando forma la doctrina de seguridad nacional, que identificó un enemigo social, político e ideológico con muchos rostros y brazos, que actuaba en distintos terrenos y con variadas formas organizativas y métodos: la 'subversión'."

<sup>3</sup> The exact number of *detenidos-desaparecidos* who lost their lives to the military dictatorship in Argentina has been debated at length since the return to democracy. CONADEP, the truth commission established by the democratic government under president Raúl Alfonsín, estimated in 1984 that 8,960 people remained missing; revised estimates now place the number of disappeared at somewhere between 15,000 to 30,000. The latter figure is the one most often cited by human rights groups in Argentina today. See *Nunca Más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1984).

aimed at dismantling the apolitical arguments in favor of the Mundial have often taken the former as fact.<sup>4</sup> After the Mundial fell under the junta's jurisdiction, prominent figures in the military hierarchy, including Videla and Carlos Lacoste of the Navy, explained the decision to persist with the tournament as a political one with very real international consequences for Argentina's image.<sup>5</sup> Literary critic Beatriz Sarlo, too, has deemed Argentinian society complicit in enabling the irreversible momentum of the Mundial—expressing a sense of alienation in her own country during those fevered twenty-five days in June, and disappointment that her compatriots have discreetly attempted to ignore the correlation between the Mundial and human rights abuses in the four decades since: “we thought that a specific type of highly complex surgery would leave the football untainted.”<sup>6</sup>

The “highly complex surgery” to which Sarlo refers was impossible, of course. The propaganda surrounding the 1978 World Cup was marked by strong narrative through lines and explicit political rhetoric that often transcended the football on display,

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<sup>4</sup> These include the films *Mundial 78, la historia paralela* (2003) and *La Otra Final* (2008); the books *El terror y la gloria* (Gilbert 1998) and *La vergüenza de todos* (Llonto 2005); the commemorative football match known as the Game for Human Rights and Memory (2008); and the exhibitions *Memorias del Mundial 78: una reflexión sobre deporte, DDHH y dictadura* and *Tiren Papelitos: Mundial 78 entre la fiesta y el horror* (both 2018), referenced later in this chapter. All of the aforementioned interventions default, in similar wording, to the position that the Mundial was organized to cover up the alarming rate of *desapariciones* in the host country. See also the 1967 short story “Esse est percipi,” by Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares, wherein football in Argentina is no longer played but instead performed via the “bogus excitement” of player-actors and radio sportscasters.

<sup>5</sup> Bauso 191. “Es una decisión política. Eso declaró cada jerarca de la dictadura cada vez que en esos meses del 78 se le preguntaba sobre los motivos que los llevaron a continuar con la organización del torneo. Una decisión política. La dictadura buscaba mejorar su imagen exterior y, a la vez, consolidar el frente interno.”

<sup>6</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, “Mundial 78, un tabú de la conciencia argentina,” in *Perfil*, June 8, 2014. “Se creyó que era posible una especie de cirugía de alta complejidad que habría garantizado que la pelota quedara limpia... Los que fuimos refractarios a la borrachera deportiva que culminó con la victoria recordamos esos días en los que nos sentimos extranjeros en nuestro país porque nada podíamos compartir de una oleada de sentimiento colectivo.”

but also weaponized it. With Argentina backing itself into a diplomatic corner over human rights, a global competition to showcase the morality and supremacy of the Argentinian people was a useful nationalist tool for the military regime, particularly given the regional backlash against Communist and progressive movements.<sup>7</sup> These ideological points of contention surfaced in the official imagery and exhaustive local press coverage of the Mundial, as well as the politically charged illustrations that responded to them in service of a pan-European boycott.

Due to the high graphic output associated with the Mundial, I believe it is fruitful to analyze the tournament through the lenses of art history and visual culture. I aim to tie together disparate strands of analysis that, to date, have largely focused on the tournament's political controversy—Videla as the public face of the Mundial, foreign footballers voicing their opposition to the dictatorship, and so on.<sup>8</sup> This thesis treats the emblems, posters, and political cartoons of the Mundial not as *symptoms* of these polemics, but as *vehicles* for potent ideological messages that shaped local and international perceptions of the tournament. The imagery of the 1978 World Cup, in other words, was not just background noise.

Consequently, two key research questions guide this paper. Firstly, how were these visual materials designed, and to what ends? For some of the images, such as the Argentina '78 official logo and the abundance of mascot *Mundialito*-branded trinkets

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<sup>7</sup> Novaro and Palermo 166. “El olvido fue, sin lugar a dudas, una posibilidad muy real en ese entonces porque el espíritu del Mundial les permitió dejarse llevar a muchos de los que hasta entonces les había resultado imposible sumergirse en los mecanismos de negación: se dispusieron a convener tácitamente que el terror era cosa del pasado, y que nadie debía cometer la descortesía de recordarlo...”

<sup>8</sup> Two eminent footballers of the era, West German midfielder Paul Breitner and Dutch attacker Johan Cruyff, were seen as having withdrawn from their national sides because of their opposition to the Argentinian dictatorship. While Breitner proudly expressed his left-leaning political sympathies, Cruyff later dismissed his absence on political grounds, citing personal reasons. See Bauso, 229-232 and 235-36.

post-1974, the avenues afforded by the brands' commercialization and longevity made them easily recognizable to a global audience. Conversely, the Paris-based Committee for the Boycott of the Organization of the World Cup in Argentina (COBA) and the galvanization of European leftist and human rights activist movements in France, West Germany, and other nations relied heavily on word of mouth and a grassroots approach to awareness.

Secondly, how did these images contest the legitimacy of the World Cup and/or the dictatorship, and did they do so in a convincing manner? In other words, what picture of Argentina and its World Cup did they "sell" to their respective audiences, and what are the conceits that made them viable and striking visually? Several illustrations that respond to the Mundial, created by European artists in favor of boycotting the event, subvert the tournament's patriotic branding materials and/or denounce the state of mass political detentions and killings. However, these images often feature graphic representations of torture or injury and bear little reference or resemblance to the realities of violence under the Videla regime, such as the mundane and decidedly un-concentration camp like architecture of clandestine torture sites. As a result, I find it intriguing to interrogate what, exactly, images spawned from the boycott. Why are these political cartoons so unreflective of state terror in the host nation, and what historical precedents do they turn to in order to illustrate the Argentinian genocide? In what ways, if at all, do they succeed in highlighting the suffering of the *desaparecidos*?

Finally, a disclaimer: the contestation of Argentina's image and legitimacy vis-a-vis the Mundial was not a bifurcated dialogue. The scope and types of imagery that have secured Argentina '78's place in the public consciousness are admittedly more diverse



that the selection presented here; they are limited not only to emblems, posters, and political cartoons, but to films, photographs, magazines, and more, a marker of the tournament's all-encompassing presence and totalizing rhetoric. This arena also features contributions from parties such as the Movimiento Peronista Montoneros, whose opposition to the dictatorship clashed with the patriotic pride of winning the World Cup, resulting in imagery quite distinct from the case studies I will present later in this thesis.<sup>9</sup> For the sake of brevity, I will largely analyze images made by Europeans, for European audiences, and by a particular subset of Argentinians, for Argentinian audiences. Nonetheless there is considerable room for further analysis as the fragmented dimensions of the Mundial's visual culture continue to be reassembled.

### **Scholarship and Methodology**

Contextual analysis of the images in this thesis draws heavily from the work of design historian Marta Almeida, who has written two key articles on the branding and propaganda of Argentina '78: first, an examination of European boycott fliers and political cartoons, in light of the May 1968 riots in Paris and regional memories of the Holocaust (2013); and then a comparison of the locally informed-vs.-modern design influences adopted by Mexico '68 Olympics and Argentina '78, respectively (2014). I also cite several columns from the project "Papelitos, 78 historias sobre un Mundial en dictadura" (2018), a collaboration between the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, Memoria Abierta, and Argentinian arts and culture magazine *NAN*. "Papelitos," which fields journalistic contributions into nearly all dimensions of the Mundial, features

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<sup>9</sup> Nicolás Sagaian, "Los panfletos de Montoneros durante el Mundial: La resistencia silenciosa," in "Papelitos: 78 historias sobre un Mundial en dictadura," 2018.

numerous pieces on the propaganda, boycott, and communications media of the tournament—including the initial efforts of Amnesty International and other groups to draw attention to the situation in Argentina, and how the topic of human rights was covered in the foreign press.

My own field research conducted in Buenos Aires during August 2018, shortly after the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tournament, coincided with the final weeks of the exhibition *Tiren Papelitos: Mundial 78 entre la fiesta y el horror* at the Parque de la Memoria (National Remembrance Park), and the opening of *Memorias del Mundial 78: una reflexión sobre deporte, DDHH y dictadura* at the Archivo Nacional de la Memoria (National Memory Archive). The two shows offered a framework for analyses of the Mundial that are structured around images and material objects, drawing from the European boycott, government archival materials, and in the case of *Tiren Papelitos*, contemporary artworks. Both projects will figure in my closing discussion of future initiatives and the intersection of sport, visual culture, and human rights in Argentina.

In terms of sporting histories, this thesis builds upon extensive histories of both football generally and Argentina '78 specifically as potent political tools. In recent years, scholarship on the manipulation of football and the World Cup by repressive regimes has flourished. I have drawn much of the history detailed herein from Jonathan Wilson's *Angels With Dirty Faces* (2016), the latest and definitive survey of Argentinian football from its roots to the present day, and Matias Bauso's *78. Historia oral del Mundial* (2018), which attempts to reconstitute the experiential fragments of the World Cup through an "oral history" from present-day interviews and articles from the era. Argentinian journalist and attorney Pablo Llonto (2005) has meticulously documented the

political impulses and controversies that dotted organization of the *Mundial*, as well as the complicity of the Argentinian public in ignoring very real allegations of disappearances and killings.

The social history of this thesis is derived from numerous texts dealing with the rule and aftermath of the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional in Argentina. Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo's survey of the dictatorship's six-year administration (2004) is exhaustive and provides a broader historical scope for analysis of the World Cup by detailing the dictatorship's motives and methods. Marcelo Borrelli and Laura Oszust (2014) have similarly analyzed the role of Argentinian daily newspapers and magazines in promoting the tournament, casting them as "political actors" that largely followed the party line, buying into the narrative of the *campaña antiargentina*. My analysis is further informed by Italian philosopher Umberto Eco's essay, "The World Cup and Its Poms," in which Eco directly references Argentina '78 and the *desaparecidos*. For Eco, football was an out—a funnel for the patriotism and anxieties of differing movements, such as the pro-Mundial stance taken by the Montoneros, and a veiled arena for criticism of the inefficient, and sinister, bureaucracy of the Argentinian dictatorship.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis is broken into two halves: images produced and sponsored by the Argentinian dictatorship and its supporters, and images produced and circulated by European activist and solidarity movements. In chapter two, I focus on the former, largely consisting of the official emblems and branding materials of the Mundial, and the subsequent construction of nationalist megacollectives via Argentinian magazines and newspapers as the tournament progressed. In the third chapter, I follow with an

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<sup>10</sup> Umberto Eco, "The World Cup and Its Poms," in *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986): 171.

examination of COBA, the activation of European activist and solidarity groups, and imagery disseminated across major European cities, principally in France. As previously mentioned, I will examine how COBA's in-house artists (and those from other collectives, including Amnesty International) drew upon appropriately football- and torture-themed iconography: heads or skulls being kicked around, the omnipresence of barbed wire, soldiers present in the stadiums, and so on. Yet, for their exaggerated and gruesome shocks, the European boycott and its political cartoons are now considered by Argentinian art historians and human rights scholars as a "successful failure" for pointing the finger at Videla's regime and drawing global attention to the situation in Argentina, though still failing to force any team's withdrawal from the tournament.<sup>11</sup> I will analyze why, and what these illustrations bring (or don't bring) to our understanding of state terror in 1978.

The fourth and concluding chapter offers a summation of the Mundial's visual conflict, a brief assessment of the boycott's lasting repercussions, and some possibilities as to how the asymmetrical dialogue between European and Argentinian images might be resolved and more closely associated with the present-day discourse surrounding human rights. In Argentina, the World Cup's 40th anniversary has been recently commemorated through books, lectures, exhibitions, and other scholarly and artistic means. Nearly all of these projects have invoked the imagery of the European boycott as an indication that the tournament, indeed, was not all about the football. I will discuss how the rhetoric of the boycott continues to be persuasive in the present day, influencing these interventions as the Mundial's place in the Argentinian public consciousness continues to be reassessed. I

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<sup>11</sup> Luciana Bertoia, "El boicot al Mundial 78: un fracaso que fue todo un éxito," in "Papelitos, 78 historias sobre un Mundial en dictadura," 2018. "La campaña pro-boicot fue muy eficaz a la hora de sumar apoyos al repudio, pese a que el campeonato se realizó con asistencia casi perfecta en la Argentina."

will also briefly address recent developments in the relationship between football and politics, both in Argentina and internationally, and why the 1978 Mundial remains a pertinent, perhaps even vital, topic of study.

## CHAPTER II

### A NATION ARRESTED

British journalist Jonathan Wilson has argued that football in Argentina is “overtly political,” and that few nations invest such cultural stock in the game as the home of the *albiceleste*.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to argue with that notion, particularly given the propaganda that framed the World Cup as a pivotal struggle for moral, as well as athletic, superiority. Many of the tournament’s recent retrospective analyses have seized upon the local explosion of footballing and nationalist fervor as the Mundial became a culturally significant event, particularly in terms of visual and material culture.<sup>13</sup> I will begin with the first wave of images and visual rhetoric from Argentina to reach a global audience ahead of the Mundial: graphic design and commercialized marketing materials.

#### **Official Emblems and the Essence of *Argentinidad***

Prior to 1976, doubts had swirled around the Peronist-backed Comité de Apoyo al Mundial (CAM) and minister of social welfare José López Rega’s ability to develop an infrastructural plan of action with the World Cup looming on the horizon. Practically none of the costly renovations and new stadiums promised to FIFA were underway when the military took over organization of the event. In keeping with CAM’s organizational ineptitude, design historian Marta Almeida contends that designing the main marketing materials for the Mundial was a disjointed effort even before the sudden intervention of

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<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Wilson, *Angels With Dirty Faces: How Argentinian Soccer Defined a Nation and Changed the Game Forever* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), xviii. *Albiceleste* (“sky blue and white”) is the nickname of Argentina’s national football team.

<sup>13</sup> See the exhibition *Tiren Papelitos: Mundial 78 entre la fiesta y el horror*, shown in Buenos Aires between June and August 2018.

the military and Ente Autárquico Mundial 78 (EAM) in July 1976.<sup>14</sup> To determine the logo for the forthcoming tournament, the Argentinian Football Association (AFA) launched a contest in 1972, hoping to accrue a field of the nation's best graphic designers.

The winning design, adopted the following year, was created by Ronald Shakespear and Guillermo González Ruiz.<sup>15</sup> A stylized version of Argentina's national flag, the logo was comprised of 16 light blue rays, evenly divided above and below a central register of eight white rays; a sphere in the center stood in for the gold Sun of May at the heart of the flag (**fig. 1**). The design draws heavily from its World Cup and Olympic predecessors: the influences imparted by the Mexico '68 and Berlin '72 Olympic emblems' prominent use of negative space and curvilinear forms in their logotypes, particularly Otl Aicher's central sunburst icon in the latter, are readily apparent (**figs. 2 and 3**).<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the design was overly abstract, static, and uninspiring. Despite widespread use in official memoranda, there was little surprise when

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<sup>14</sup> Marta Almeida, "Argentina '78 World Cup and the Echoes of Mexico '68: Internationalism and Latin American Design. An Intellectual History of Design in the 1960s and 1970s: Politics and Periphery," (*Journal of Design History* 27.1, 2014)

<sup>15</sup> Bauso 504. "El 5 de mayo de 1972, Raúl D'Onofrio, interventor de la AFA, llamó a concurso para la creación de un emblema que identificara al Mundial 78. Resultó ganador un diseño de Ronald Shakespear y Guillermo González Ruiz. En el mismo acto también se eligió una mascota. El 21 de febrero del 73, en presencia del presidente de la FIFA, sir Stanley Rous, se hizo la presentación oficial y la entrega de premios. A partir de ese momento, todas las comunicaciones oficiales y de difusión del Mundial fueron encabezadas con el emblema elegido. Hasta que en abril de 1974 las autoridades del gobierno peronista decidieron cambiar estos símbolos, que quedaron olvidados.

<sup>16</sup> Aicher was a German designer associated with the Ulm Design School (HfG Ulm), whose faculty also included Argentinian emigre Tomás Maldonado. Almeida notes that Luis Riera, the artist whose design replaced the Shakespear and Gonzalez Ruiz emblem in 1974, would have keenly incorporated the "dynamism of the Gestalt resolution" emphasized by the school's philosophy and subsequently displayed by the Munich '72 logo. See Almeida, "Argentina '78 World Cup and the Echoes of Mexico '68," 63-64.

this “quickly forgotten” first version was replaced in 1974, along with a redeveloped vision for the tournament mascot.<sup>17</sup>

The second Argentina ‘78 design, by Luis Riera, comprises two sweeping, sky blue “arms” on a white field, with a traditional black pentagon, white hexagon-patterned soccer ball at the center of its embrace (**fig. 4**). Like Shakespear and Gonzalez Ruiz’ version of the emblem, Riera’s design seems to borrow from preceding sporting events, particularly from the 1970 World Cup in Mexico and the ‘72 Summer Olympics. However, despite the influence of progressive international exchange, the new logo became an evocative symbol that could not be mistaken as belonging to any other tournament, except an Argentinian one. Drafted two years prior to the coup, the logo called back to a simple but powerful gesture: the raised arms of president Juan Domingo Perón (**fig. 5**).

Perón was never a fan of football—he preferred fencing, boxing, and polo, among other sports—but he recognized that hosting a Mundial could carry tremendous “utility,” politically speaking; journalist Pablo Llonto notes that his vision of “a community of sporting men... a community of noble men,” resonated in a country so preoccupied with football as Argentina.<sup>18</sup> In his third stint as president, and as his health was declining (eventually leading to his death in July 1974), Perón’s long-standing desire to host the Mundial was finally in the infant stages of its organization under the auspices of López Rega and Perón’s wife and soon-to-be successor Isabel. While this revised emblem

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<sup>17</sup> Bauso 504.

<sup>18</sup> Pablo Llonto, *La vergüenza de todos: el dedo en llaga del Mundial 78* (Buenos Aires: Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 2005), 13-14. “Pero a Perón no lo apasionaba el fútbol. Si bien recordaba su paso como entrenador de un equipo que en 1926 había obtenido el Campeonato Militar, sus inclinaciones deportivas apuntaban hacia la esgrima, el boxeo, la natación, el tiro, el básquetbol o el polo... Sin embargo en los cuarteles, incluidos los de los tiempos de Perón, siempre se habló de lo útil podía ser un mundial de fútbol para un gobierno.”



nominally came to represent “the open arms of every Argentinian,” there was no question that it was distinctly *peronista*; it was suffused not only with a national identity, but with the political cult of personality that Juan Domingo had shaped over decades, even while in exile.<sup>19</sup>

Even before Isabel Perón was deposed, the local media was less than enthused at shoehorning “*los brazos de Perón*” into the World Cup. *El Gráfico* disapprovingly insisted in April 1974 that “a new emblem and a new mascot...means the erasure of a situation that has [already] been communicated to every country in the world,” and thus future backtracking on organizational matters could perpetuate a negative view of Argentina.<sup>20</sup> But the EAM 78 was the party that found “*los brazos de Perón*” most vexing: Matias Bauso points out that this lingering trace of Perón “stung” many within the offices of the organizing committee, particularly its *de facto* president, Captain Carlos Lacoste. Despite lobbying for a change, however, it was already too late to wipe the slate clean once again. With less than two years to go before the Mundial, and with lucrative merchandising contracts already arranged, the EAM could do little other than issue a brief internal moratorium on using the logo in their own official communications. From 1977 onwards, they grudgingly accepted their political adversary and late president of Argentina as the symbol of the tournament.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Llonto 13. “...fueron los brazos de Perón el logo del Mundial 78.” Perón was exiled from Argentina in 1955, but he and his supporters agitated for a return until 1973.

<sup>20</sup> “Editorial,” *El Gráfico*, 30 April 1978: “Más allá de la razón o de la sinrazón de la medida, no se tiene en cuenta la vinculación internacional que debe acondicionar cada cambio. Un nuevo emblema y una nueva mascota—lo que se pretende ahora—significan barrer con una situación que fue comunicada a todo los países del mundo. Aquí no es cuestión de que tal cosa se hizo en la gestión de un interventor u otro. Para el resto del mundo es Argentina la que hizo tal cosa.” Cited in Bauso, 504.

<sup>21</sup> Bauso 503-504. “El logo del Mundial que remedaba las manos de Perón tomando una pelota, gracias a esa misma alusión, producía escozor entre los miembros del EAM 78. Procuraron cambiarlo. Pero se encontraron con dos problemas irresolubles. Por un lado, el torneo ya era identificado con ese logo desde

Much like the first draft of the tournament logo, the original conception of mascot Mundialito appeared as an abstract, angular, and relatively austere figure that lacked little Argentinian character save for the colors of the national team shirt and a pair of cleats (to denote his status as a footballer) (**fig. 6**). The design was too impersonal and difficult to identify, and as with the official emblem, it was replaced before being made available for worldwide merchandising. Yet the original Mundialito's replacement fit neatly not only into Argentina and FIFA's commercial plan, but into the EAM's propagandistic campaign, as well. Designed by cartoonist Manuel García Ferré, the new Mundialito is far more lifelike, taking the form of a young boy, and his trappings are made far more legible. Outfitted with a full Argentina kit (blue and white shirt, black shorts, and white socks), Mundialito wears a hat inscribed with "Argentina '78," carries a whip, and has a neckerchief tied around his neck. Notable is the buoyant grin on his face, which García Ferré rendered with a far more dynamic flair than in the original design, along with an ever-present football that accompanies the boy everywhere (**fig. 7**).

Mundialito, as Almeida puts it, arrived with the task of "[condensing] the identity of the country in a unique image for international circulation."<sup>22</sup> García Ferré's refreshed take on the mascot just about did the job, and the decision to retain the figure's identity as a gaucho was a relatively safe choice. Mundialito carried on the figure's legacy as a national symbol of Argentina; real gauchos had fought against the Spanish in the Argentinian War of Independence, and fictional ones had been a staple of Argentinian

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su presentación al mundo en la clausura de Alemania 74. Pero el obstáculo mayor lo constituían los derechos ya vendidos para merchandising y derivados. No podían rever todos eso contratos."

<sup>22</sup> Almeida, "Argentina '78 World Cup and the Echoes of Mexico '68," 65.

literature from the late 19th century onwards, with the publication of *Martin Fierro*.<sup>23</sup> Further, anthropologist Eduardo Archetti points out, Argentinian nationalists as early as World War I had revived the “barbaric” subject... who had been condemned to disappear through immigration, hybridization, and modernization,” to forge an icon of Argentinian identity, in response to the perceived threat of European immigration.<sup>24</sup> The Mundial’s gaucho infused these traditional conceptions of the rural revolutionary Argentinian man with a newfound childlike innocence, marketable both at home and abroad. This apolitical infantilization of the figure, Almeida argues, was functional within the military government’s efforts to drum up a nationalist uniformity: “concepts such as the quality of ‘being Argentine’ and ‘childhood’ were functional within the framework of a nationalist and conservative fascist ideology, adding value to ethnicity (with an emphasis on folklore). With a subtle twist, it also used childhood to add value to ‘tradition’, understood as the ‘conservative and reactionary’ nucleus of totalitarian ideology.”<sup>25</sup>

The new design was not without its critics. While *El Gráfico* received the change positively, *Summa* took aim at the mascot’s design in a special issue eight months before the tournament. The magazine remarked with frustration that “it stings because, given the enormous professional and technological effort needed to update the infrastructure for the World Cup...the image seen round the world will be the outdated one of a gaucho, and by

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<sup>23</sup> Eduardo Archetti, “Masculinity, Primitivism, and Power: Gaucho, Tango, and the Shaping of Argentine National Identity,” in William French, and Katherine Elaine Bliss, eds. *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 215.

<sup>24</sup> Archetti, “Masculinity, Primitivism, and Power,” 214-215.

<sup>25</sup> Almeida, “Argentina ‘78 World Cup and the Echoes of Mexico ‘68,” 65-66.

extension, a child, as if we still decline to accept our condition as adults.”<sup>26</sup> The World Cup’s organizational woes—not to mention Argentina’s societal ones—had left the country’s international image in an exceedingly delicate place for many.

Mundialito proved to be the last major piece of design rolled out by CAM and the Peronist administration. Isabel Perón was deposed on March 24, 1976, with a stalling economy and unchecked guerrilla violence eventually signalling the death knell for her administration.<sup>27</sup> Despite initial lingering trepidation over the tournament’s expenditure, the military junta co-opted the Mundial as a major national and international public relations platform between 1976 and 1978. General Videla himself knew little of, and expected little from, Argentina’s organization of the tournament. Among the junta, it was Emilio Massera and Carlos Lacoste of the navy who more keenly recognized political potential of a well-presented World Cup, regardless of the associated high outlay.<sup>28</sup> From July 1976 onwards, when the EAM 78 replaced CAM as the local organizing committee, the combined armed forces of Argentina made it a matter of national interest to see out an immaculately executed Mundial.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “Las imágenes del Mundial.” *Summa*, iss. 177 (October 1977), 99: “Duelen que sean justamente el símbolo y la mascota, comercializadas a nivel internacional, que sean las más pobres no solo desde el punto de vista del mensaje sino, y sobre todo, de su nivel gráfico.”

<sup>27</sup> Novaro and Palermo 17. The authors note that, on average, a political assassination occurred in Argentina once every five hours during March 1976.

<sup>28</sup> Llonto 18-19. “‘Políticamente es conveniente hacer el Mundial,’ dijo Massera. Hace unos días antes, el almirante que soñaba con ser el nuevo Perón, había recibido un informe de uno de sus colaboradores más íntimos y a quien había premiado con la secretaria de Acción Social: el capitán de navío Carlos Lacoste. Massera leyó una tras otra las supuestas ventajas políticas y económicas que le dejaría a la Argentina a la XI Copa del Mundo. Videla lo escuchaba con atención, pero sin entender demasiado... Videla no tenía la menor idea de lo que era la FIFA ni sabía de que se trataba el “aprovechamiento integral de los estadios” del que hablaba la voluminosa exposición presentada por el marino.

<sup>29</sup> Bauso 77. Author Eugenio Mendez notes that the appointment of the army’s General Omar Actis to the presidency of the EAM irked many in the Navy, with lasting repercussions: “La designación de Actis cayó como un bombazo en la Armada y no era para menos. Había trabajado para quedarse con la organización y esta designación echaba todo por la borda.”

After the EAM convened and then shut down another contest to determine the official tournament poster, the duty of designing another key artwork for the Mundial fell to graphic designer and photographer Eduardo López. The poster is a highly stylized rendering of two Argentinian players, one with his back turned to the viewer and another with his arms raised to the sky, in a gesture very similar to that of the official emblem and, by proxy, Perón (**fig. 8**). At a glance, the figure with his arms raised appears to resemble national team forward Leopoldo Luque—complete with an abstract moustache—while the figure with his back turned, wearing the number eight, could easily pass for midfielder Osvaldo Ardiles. But the poster necessitated neither Luque nor Ardiles’ commitment. Tito Orsi and film producer Guillermo Szelske played those roles, respectively, and their resemblance, according to Szelske, was a fortunate piece of verisimilitude (**fig. 9**). For many, the poster did not feature anonymous and fictional Argentinians; the celebratory “Luque” and “Ardiles” pairing slyly made the dream of a World Cup win more tangible. It also reiterated the prospect of a truly national celebration, with the cities of Córdoba, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, and Rosario listed alongside the capital city and hub of the Mundial, Buenos Aires.

Yet the most obvious place to begin for the junta, branding and developing a global visual character for the tournament ahead of the event, was precisely one area where the Peronist administration actually” *had* made significant headway.<sup>30</sup> A complete redesign so soon before the tournament would have been costly and inauspicious given the Mundial’s already controversial organization. As such, there was not an undue

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<sup>30</sup> Llonto 27. “Lacoste, que formaba parte del sector más antiperonista de las fuerzas armadas, pidió que se hiciera un esfuerzo para cambiar de logotipo, pero cuando sus asesores le informaron que entre los contratos firmados por el gobierno anterior estaba la comercialización del merchandising y que su revocatoria desembocará en un mar de juicios contra el país, prefiere masticar la derrota.”

amount of pressure on the EAM's part to double down on an iconography of *argentinidad*—the quality or essence of being Argentinian—aligned with the junta's vision for the country.

### **Argentina Against the World: The *Campaña Antiargentina***

Concerns surrounding the state of human rights in Argentina grew almost immediately after the March 1976 coup that unseated Isabel.<sup>31</sup> As early as that fall, Amnesty International reported the widespread use of political disappearances as a main tactic of the new regime. With international pressure mounting, Videla's junta finally agreed to host the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) for a survey by September 1979. Nonetheless, the uncertainty surrounding Argentina's fitness to host a global sporting event was palpable. In the wake of the coup, smooth organization of the World Cup was by no means a foregone conclusion, and eventually only completed with enormous expenditure.<sup>32</sup>

The dictatorship's hiring of American advertising agency Burson-Marsteller and Associates to counteract Videla's negative image abroad was one of the regime's costlier strategies. Between 1976 and 1980, the agency played a main, albeit fruitless, role in mitigating criticism from the international press and receiving foreign journalists during

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<sup>31</sup> As Marina Franco explains, Amnesty International was among the first groups to denounce possible human rights violations, and between 1976 and 1978, the Argentinian junta received widespread admonition from the United States under the Carter administration, the United Nations, the Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), and groups of exiled Argentinians, many of whom lived in Europe. See Franco, "La "campaña antiargentina": la prensa, el discurso militar y la construcción de consenso," in Judith Casali de Babot and María Victoria Grillo, editors. *Derecha, fascismo y antifascismo en Europa y Argentina*, (Tucumán: Universidad de Tucumán, 2002), 200.

<sup>32</sup> Estimates place the total organizational cost of the 1978 World Cup at around US\$700 million, a controversial process that involved the construction of three new football stadiums; the installation of an international color television center; and significant infrastructural renovations to airports, highways and hotels. See Wilson 193.

the Mundial itself.<sup>33</sup> Its approach to public relations found minimal success abroad, but at home it soon gave rise to the slogan “*los argentinos somos derechos y humanos*” (“We Argentinians are upright and humane”) (fig. 10)—a dark play on the Spanish translation of “human rights” (“derechos humanos”), and a direct rebuke of Amnesty International, the European boycott, and exiled Argentinian militants, among others.<sup>34</sup>

Beyond the American agency’s help to cushion the blow of foreign criticism, however, visual and textual rhetoric disseminated via national daily newspapers and periodicals was an integral strategy to foster nationalist sentiment ahead of the World Cup. Marina Franco has argued that mobilization and coercion of the Argentinian press was a primary tactic in the junta’s construction of the *campaña antiargentina*, the foreign conspiracy supposedly meant to tarnish Argentina’s image on the global stage. In recent literature, the prominent roles of major dailies such as *Clarín*, along with popular, pro-military publishing house Editorial Atlántida magazines including *El Gráfico*, *Somos*, *Gente*, and *Para Tí*, have been extensively discussed in terms of their adherence to the party line before and during the 1978 Mundial.<sup>35</sup> Franco also points out that the dictatorship’s rhetoric was largely aimed at the everyday Argentinian reader as a

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<sup>33</sup> Bauso 253. “A pesar del plan de Burson-Marsteller los notas más favorables hacia el gobierno o entrevistas complacientes (las únicas que estaban dispuestos a aceptar) a funcionarios argentinos no proliferaron en medios europeos.”

<sup>34</sup> Marta Almeida, “Temas pendientes: la Izquierda francesa y alemana frente al Campeonato Mundial de Fútbol Argentina 78” (*Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazso*, 43.1 2013): 23. “Su eslogan más conocido fue “Los argentinos somos derechos y humanos”. En 1979, Burson Marsteller le dio forma a la consigna y creó un sticker adhesivo pensado, en especial, para automóviles. Sobre varios tamaños, la leyenda estaba escrita en un fondo celeste y blanco (Seoane, 2006). Tenía dos objetivos: contrarrestar las repercusiones del boicot, que habían circulado con fuerza el año anterior, y preparar el escenario para la visita de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH).”

<sup>35</sup> In addition to Franco, Borrelli and Oszust, cited in this chapter, see also Mariano Verrina, “El periodismo deportivo durante el Mundial 78: mejor no hablar de ciertas cosas,” in “Papelitos, 78 historias sobre un Mundial en dictadura” (2018).

legitimizing measure, “a defensive discourse” that ultimately “served the construction of collective identification mechanisms.”<sup>36</sup> Marcelo Borrelli and Laura Oszust similarly cast Editorial Atlántida’s other political and variety publications of the era, including *Extra*, *Redaccion*, and the aforementioned *Somos*, as essentially pro-military “political actors” whose consensus acted as a barometer for the World Cup’s success within Argentina.<sup>37</sup> With a highly divisive World Cup looming, the campaign “became a central and recurring theme in all public announcements by the representatives of the military government.”

Graphic propaganda assisted written rhetoric in further essentializing the siege mentality narrative of the *campana* and the *contracampana* (counter-campaign). Images of a harmonious Argentinian society (and after the World Cup, images of Argentinian sporting supremacy) mixed with striking, sensationalist designs were used to rally the public to defend “the Nation.” Responding in typically brash fashion, less than two months before the tournament *Somos* reappropriated a pro-boycott illustration for its front cover. The original leaflet—produced by COBA in the same vein as the images we will see in the next chapter—featured a football casting an ominous skull-shaped shadow, with the caption “Argentine: terreur et répression.”<sup>38</sup> Unwittingly, perhaps, this played into *Somos*’ hands: the magazine retained the original French text and added the headline

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<sup>36</sup> Franco, in Casali de Babot and Grillo 202: “...si bien las denuncias provenían de foros y ámbitos externos como la OEA y la ONU, en buena medida el discurso defensivo del gobierno de oriento hacia adentro y fue uno de los mayores intentos de reconstruir legitimidades en torno al ‘Proceso’ militar. Para ello, el discurso se sirvió de la construcción de mecanismos de identificación colectivos, y principal, pero no exclusivamente, en torno al Mundial de Fútbol.”

<sup>37</sup> Marcelo Borrelli and Laura Oszust, "El Mundial 78 en la prensa política argentina: entre la "fiesta", el nacionalismo y los derechos humanos." *Palabra* 21.1 (2018): 16.

<sup>38</sup> Marta Almeida, “Temas pendientes,” 25.



“From Europe: A PLOT AGAINST ARGENTINA,” bolstered by an aggressive and eye-catching red and yellow colorway (**fig. 11**), to sell an exposé of *antiargentina* sentiment. A subheading promised “EXORCISM: TRUTH AND LIES,” though *Somos* predictably failed to address the pertinent points of international accusations.<sup>39</sup>

In this regard, however, it is important to recognize that condemnation from human rights activists, married to the production of European illustrations, sometimes fueled responses in kind from the Argentinian press. After the Mundial, the weekly variety magazine *Para Ti* beckoned its overwhelmingly female readership to “defend their Argentina,” inserting four detachable postcards into its August and September 1978 issues that promised to “tell the whole truth” in direct response to the *campana antiargentina* (**fig. 12**). The postcards included images of “everyday” life in Argentina, including photographs of children waving Argentinian flags in the wake of the victorious World Cup campaign: a callback to Mundialito and his apolitical innocence, perhaps, but also to a pre-Mundial television advertisement encouraging the public’s exemplary behavior, with Argentinian children returning a tourist’s lost passport (**fig. 13**).<sup>40</sup>

Although *Para Ti*’s cards could be filled out and mailed abroad to any recipient of the reader’s choice, the magazine compiled a list of foreign persons and publications deemed to be aligned with the *campana antiargentina*, imploring readers to mail in “a

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<sup>39</sup> Franco explains that the “object of ‘aggression’” perceived by Argentinian periodicals frequently took the shape of Argentina’s “image,” rather than specific external criticisms directed at the Videla regime’s methods. “En estas lecturas...la clave conspirativa permite definir el *quién* ‘agresor’ situandolo fuera de las fronteras nacionales, pero el *por que*—su objeto de ‘agresión’—aparece sustituido: la violaciones a los derechos humanos, el gobierno militar, el terrorismo de estado, la represión quedan ocultos por ‘imagen argentina’, ‘la Nación’.” Franco, in Casali de Babot and Grillo, 208.

<sup>40</sup> The advertisement was part of a television campaign that employed children’s entertainer Carlos Balá and football commentator José María Muñoz, and encouraged viewers to “show [the world] what Argentinians are like” during the World Cup through courteous behavior. The video in question is retrieved from the *RaroVHS (Canal 2)* YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztVCAXnpZSM>): uploaded December 27, 2016; accessed March 3, 2019.

message that the whole world needs,” dispelling the negative rumors. These recipients included COBA, Amnesty International, German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, Spanish magazine *Cambio 16*, French newspaper *Le Monde*, U.S. Secretary of State Patricia Derian, and U.S. President Jimmy Carter; the latter two were particularly hostile to the Videla regime’s diplomatic intransigence over human rights.<sup>41</sup>

### **A Nation Arrested**

The counter-campaign promoted by *Para Ti* heavily appealed to individual action, but in practice, the “megacollective” of Argentinian identity was the most favorable expression of patriotism the military government wanted. When Argentina won the 1978 FIFA World Cup on June 25, defeating the Netherlands 3-1 in the final at the Estadio Monumental, joyful fans flooded the streets of Buenos Aires long into the night and in the following days. This was a momentary disruption of the hitherto acknowledged civil order imposed by the junta since 1976, which discouraged public demonstrations for the previous two years. While Videla leaned into the massive public celebrations just a few days after the final, embracing his newfound and ultimately short-lived popularity<sup>42</sup>, no impromptu public gathering on such a scale had been seen in the two years prior, and the

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<sup>41</sup> All of the publications and individuals targeted by *Para Ti* broached the issue of human rights in Argentina before the Mundial, while the U.S. State Department took a particularly firm stance after Carter assumed office. Because the names and addresses were not written in by default, Hebe de Bonafini, one of the founders of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, notes that the Madres would mail the postcards abroad with messages about the disappearances of their loved ones, including their dates of abduction. See Bauso 248.

<sup>42</sup> Bauso 202. “Los días posteriores al Mundial, la imagen de Videla estuvo en su punto más alto. Algunas revistas semanales publicaban encuestas de dudosa rigurosidad en las que preguntaban a quién elegirían presidente en caso de poder hacerlo. Videla ganaba con comodidad, seguido por Menotti y [heart surgeon] René Favaloro.”

junta had not convened a national celebration beforehand; what Videla, Graciela Daleo, and others saw was done entirely of the Argentinian populace's own volition.<sup>43</sup>

Yet not all opinions expressed in the wake of Argentina's first world title moved perfectly in sync with the needs and wants of the junta. Prior to the Mundial, Italian philosopher Umberto Eco theorized football and the World Cup as risk-averse substitutes for political debate, as football "allows you to take positions, express opinions, suggest solutions, without exposing yourself to arrest, to loyalty oaths, or, in any case, to suspicion. It doesn't oblige you to intervene personally..."<sup>44</sup> Though a true explosion of dissent remained some years away, uncertainty and an eagerness to propel the nation forward bubbled beneath the exuberant celebrations; the euphoria that accompanied Argentina's victory was a vehicle for speculation as to what the Proceso could accomplish next. Days after the final, the highly popular variety magazine *Somos* (like *El Gráfico* and *Gente*, part of the pro-military Editorial Atlántida group) called for the World Cup's patriotic spirit and "anti-demagoguery" to be channeled towards more pressing national problems, positing a "Second Mundial" that could further validate Videla and company's "efficient leadership."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Bauso 753. "Los festejos callejeros en todo el país no habían sido calculados. Se apostaba al orden, a dar una buena imagen al mundo. Al éxito deportivo se lo deseaba pero se lo veía lejano."

<sup>44</sup> Making direct reference to Argentina '78, Eco also noted: "...at a moment like this, concentrating oneself with the running of the government (the real one) is traumatic. So faced with such a choice, we are all Argentines, and that handful of Argentine nuisances who are still reminding us that, down there, people are "disappeared" from time to time, should be more careful not to mar our pleasure in this sacred mystery play." See Eco, "The World Cup and Its Poms," in *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 171.

<sup>45</sup> *Somos*, June 30, 1978. Quoted in Marcelo Borrelli and Laura Oszust, "El Mundial 78 en la prensa política argentina: entre la "fiesta", el nacionalismo y los derechos humanos" (*Palabra* 21.1, 2014), 29: "La Argentina quiso y pudo hacer un Mundial de Fútbol. Deberá ahora querer y poder ganar el segundo Mundial, el de su futuro como país. El pueblo parece estar preparado. Falta que los líderes acepten el reto." Ostensibly, this "second Mundial" was an opportunity to ratify the vague but widely-perceived

The groundswell of patriotic fervor that accompanied the Mundial was overwhelming, but not complete. The conceit of a sweeping societal obsession with the Mundial—as codified by Sergio Renán’s 1979 propaganda film, *La fiesta de todos*, wherein Argentina coach Cesar Luis Menotti described his national team as being at the center of “*un país detenido*” (“a nation arrested”)<sup>46</sup>—did not quite seep into the civilian population’s sense of Argentinian identity or citizenship. As historians Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo explain, the Mundial momentarily legitimized the dictatorship, mixing footballing fanaticism and nationalism with the veneer of answering Argentinian society’s ills; simultaneously, the dictatorship failed to take advantage of this popular support, and was unable to replicate it thereafter.<sup>47</sup>

While the very concept of “being Argentine” permeated public discourse into and after the World Cup, ideas on how to best express the quality of *argentinidad* were not always cohesive. In hindsight, some have disputed the sense of widespread spirit and camaraderie supposedly birthed from the indelible experience and imagery of Argentina’s World Cup win. Historian and political scientist Vicente Palermo recalls that the government’s advertising campaign ahead of the Mundial, imploring millions of citizens to “play as Argentinians” during the tournament, meant very little to him and others

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“extrafootballing merit” associated with Argentina’s World Cup win. See also Novaro and Palermo 166-167.

<sup>46</sup> Sergio Renán, *La fiesta de todos* (Arbol Solo, 1979). Menotti, incidentally, had known communist affiliations prior to the Mundial, yet his narration was included at key junctures during the film. For more on Renán’s “disinformation” tactics in film, see Patrick T. Ridge, “La fiesta de todos o pocos? Representaciones filmicas del Mundial ‘78 de la Argentina” (*Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, vol 34, 2016), 116.

<sup>47</sup> Novaro and Palermo, in Bauso 204. “*Marcos Novaro*: Todo el fervor que hubo con el tema del Mundial es naturalmente parte de esa mezcla de fútbol y nacionalismo pero también había una sensación de que la dictadura finalmente estaba teniendo éxito, de que era legítima y prestigiosa para la sociedad, que daba soluciones a los problemas y entonces el que no se subiera a ese carro se iba a quedar afuera del mapa. *Vicente Palermo*: Creo que fue el clímax del Proceso. El mejor momento que aprovecharon mal.”

despite the institutional saturation of the airwaves with this nationalist rhetoric.<sup>48</sup> Artist Julio Flores, too, who helped organize the *Siluetazo* artistic action and protest in 1983, has pointed out the “uncomfortable collective expression of symbols appropriated by the ‘78 Mundial,” all of which were quintessentially or stereotypically Argentinian: “the gaucho, the flag, soccer.”<sup>49</sup> Uncomfortable or not, however, the most significant aspect of state-sponsored Argentinian sporting fanaticism in 1978 was precisely its visibility in everyday society, which facilitated the Mundial as a useful distraction from ongoing clandestine horrors.

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<sup>48</sup> Bauso 194. “*Campaña oficial (mayo de 1978)*: El Mundial también es confraternidad, y usted juega de argentino. *Vicente Palermo, politólogo*: El gobierno podía decir cualquier cosa, hacer la propaganda institucional que quisiera y a mi no me dice nada. Una cosa como la de “jugar de argentinos” en ese momento me hinchaba las pelotas. Y a mucha gente no le decía absolutamente nada.”

<sup>49</sup> Julio Flores, “Siluetas,” in *El Siluetazo*, compiled by Ana Longoni and Gustavo A. Bruzzone (Buenos Aires: Ana Hidalgo, editor, 2008), 85. “Pero a los gritos—silenciados desde el ‘75 (el silencio es salud)—les siguió el silencio sepulcral que reprimía la palabra propia, la imagen que identifica o la música, representada por la incómoda expresión colectiva de los símbolos apropiados por el Mundial ‘78 (el gaucho, la bandera, el fútbol).”

## CHAPTER III

### NO TO FOOTBALL IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS!

On October 19, 1977, the French newspaper *Le Monde* published an open letter by writer and activist Marek Halter denouncing the climate of political violence in Argentina. Halter's appeal was deeply rooted in family tragedy: in July, his cousin Ana Maria Kumec de Isola and her husband, Mario, had been disappeared and killed by Argentinian security forces. Ana Maria's family was Jewish and had escaped the Nazis, only to befall the same fascist brutality.<sup>50</sup> To Halter, the least he and his countrymen could do was turn their backs on the Argentinian dictatorship's principal bulwark of legitimacy: the Mundial. A boycott was the only moral choice. "If we do not win this battle," he warned, "barbarity will prevail."<sup>51</sup>

Halter's letter, along with a column dated December 13, 1977 by *L'Equipe* sports writer Jacques Ferran, thrust the subject of a boycott into the mainstream of French current affairs.<sup>52</sup> Between October 1977 and April 1978 France became a principal hub for public anti-Mundial protests, opinion pieces, debates, and, of course, graphic materials.<sup>53</sup> The end of the year saw the foundation of COBA: the Committee for the

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<sup>50</sup> Marek Halter, "Pour lutter contre la barbarie," in *Le Monde*, 19 October 1977. "Ma famille n'aura pas eu à attendre très longtemps: les corps de ma cousine Anne-Marie et de son mari Mario Isola viennent d'être devant domicile de leurs parents. Ils avaient été anievas il, y a six semaines. Laisant derrière eux un enfant de onze mois. Fallait-il qu'un descendants de rares membre de sa famille rescapés du nazisme disparaisse ainsi?" In 2018, Ana Maria's story was retold by her brother Carlos Kumec, at a roundtable discussion hosted at AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina).

<sup>51</sup> Halter, "Pour lutter contre la barbarie."

<sup>52</sup> Jacques Ferran, "En toute liberte: jouer en Argentine," in *L'Equipe*, 13 December 1977.

<sup>53</sup> Almeida, "Temas pendientes," 25. "La campaña francesa y sus contundentes imágenes pronto llegaron a las asociaciones de defensa de los derechos humanos. Antes, durante y después de junio de 1978, el COBA organizó actividades para recaudar fondos e imprimir calcomanías, folletos y afiches de repudio."

Boycott of the Organization of the World Cup in Argentina, founded by human rights activist François Gèze, and primarily comprised of French left-wing intellectuals.<sup>54</sup> The group convened for the first time in January, headquartered at 14 Rue Nanteuil in Paris, and began reaching out to solidarity groups and left-wing activists across the continent in the hopes of drafting an action plan by late February.<sup>55</sup>

This chapter focuses on the prodigious output of graphic materials by organizations opposed to the Argentinian dictatorship's organization of the World Cup. The effort to boycott the tournament was a truly multinational affair. COBA and its French affiliates lead the charge in denouncing the state of repression in Argentina from January 1978 onwards, accounting for a vast portion of the graphic and written materials on the matter, but arguments were already being made in Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden (among other nations) as to the feasibility of withdrawing each nation's respective national football team from the event.<sup>56</sup> As a result, the images I will analyze in the following sections come from a variety of European collectives and solidarity movements, linked by common tropes and universal strategies of representation that called attention to the atrocities in Argentina. COBA-produced and appropriate materials

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<sup>54</sup> Bauso 212.

<sup>55</sup> A communication dated February 1978 reveals that COBA's executive committee invited solidarity groups from France, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Catalunya, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark for a conference to be held in Paris, on February 25 & 26 of that year. The purpose of the conference, according to the letter, was twofold: "1) Exchange of information and 2) harmonization and coordination of [various] efforts and campaigns," opening the door to the possible adoption of a unified rhetoric countering the Mundial in Argentina.

<sup>56</sup> The Swedish Football Association, in particular, came under the most scrutiny for resolving to appear at the World Cup. The disappearance (and eventual murder) of 17-year old Dagmar Hagelin, an Argentinian national of Swedish ancestry, and the Swedish government's subsequent international appeals to determine her whereabouts was a major diplomatic issue between 1977 and 1978. Hagelin's disappearance, and the repressive situation in Argentina at large, provoked consternation among Swedish football officials. Eventually, however, the national team participated in the Mundial as planned. See Bauso 222.

are among the most numerous in this chapter, but I will also highlight select illustrations disseminated by Amnesty International, the West German group Zille-Kollektiv, and SKAN (Argentina-Netherlands Solidarity Collective) to reinforce the argument of a shared European iconography in response to Argentinian totalitarianism.

In the following section, I will focus on common strategies of subverting the official branding materials of the tournament, as described in the second chapter. I follow with an examination of the generalized methods of rendering political detention, torture, and grievous bodily harm, particularly among images sponsored by COBA, and how these stereotypes illustrate the distance between activist movements in Europe and the totality of the situation in Argentina. This chapter closes with an extensive discussion of the boycott's heavy reliance on imagery derived from the Holocaust and World War II, and how this familiar imagery may have facilitated reception and awareness among European audiences, despite being at odds with the Argentinian reality.

### **Yes to Football, No to Torture: Subversions of Official Imagery**

Several images that originated from the boycott reappropriated the official marketing materials of the World Cup. Luis Riera's "brazos de Perón" emblem (and to a lesser extent, the mascot Mundialito) became a recurring point of reference in these illustrations, often given a brutal or gruesome twist to underscore the dire situation faced by Argentinians who had run afoul of the military regime.

Among the most iconic images to emerge from the French sector of the boycott was COBA's "Pas de football entre les camps de concentration" ("No to football in concentration camps!"), applying a crucial twist to Riera's sweeping arms. Here, the motif is repeated over and over, on both sides of the image. They are no longer arms that



close in a joyful and uplifting embrace, but twelve posts in a prison camp fence, connected by razor wire; the Argentina '78 logo appears in full at the center of the image, integrated into this architecture and receding into the background. (fig. 14). Is the Mundial an escape from the horrors experienced by the *desaparecidos* and other political prisoners, or is it an entrance to them? The implications are ambiguous, but what is certain is that the image conveys an overriding sense of claustrophobia. The literal elaboration of prison-like space is oppressive: the narrow corridor that cuts through the center of the illustration, flanked by tall barbed fences, unequivocally links the Mundial with detention and extermination.

“Pas de football entre les camps de concentration” remains of the most significant images produced by COBA’s artists, and certainly one that has come to symbolize the boycott in contemporary Argentinian human rights discourse. Argentina’s self-stylization as a conservative, morally upright, Judeo-Christian society<sup>57</sup>—the nation-making conceit later sloganized as “*los argentinos somos derechos y humanos*”—belied the Proceso’s systematic extirpation of the left after assuming power in 1976.<sup>58</sup> In response, “Pas de football entre les camps de concentration” leads with the most inhumane association

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<sup>57</sup> Novaro and Palermo 93. “El integrismo argentino bien puede denominarse... “nacional-catholicismo” ya que identificaba a esta fe como la “ideológica nacional” y postulaba una “alianza permanente entre Religión y Patria. Ello compelia al Ejército, en tanto institución madre de la nación, a cumplir un papel decisivo en la tarea de regeneración moral que permitiría a la Argentina y a todo Occidente no solo combatir al comunismo, sino también las causas de sua avance; esto es, las decadentes concepciones liberales, democráticas y agnósticas.”

<sup>58</sup> Almeida, “Temas pendientes,” 23. “...por el otro, aquellos medios que propalaban la versión de la dictadura inspirados en la publicidad de la agencia Burson Marsteller & Asociados, de los Estados Unidos, contratada por la Junta Militar. Su eslogan más conocido fue “Los argentinos somos derechos y humanos”. En 1979, Burson Marsteller le dio forma a la consigna y creó un sticker adhesivo pensado, en especial, para automóviles. Sobre varios tamaños, la leyenda estaba escrita en un fondo celeste y blanco. Tenía dos objetivos: contrarrestar las repercusiones del boicot, que habían circulado con fuerza el año anterior, y preparar el escenario para la visita de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH).”

possible: Argentinian conservatism is linked with German fascism, and the latter's use of the extermination camp as a machine of state terror. This suggestion, perhaps, is the image's (and the boycott's) greatest persuasive strategy: though a layer of political context is lost considering the official emblem's Peronist origins, it expressly denies any condition of morality, stability, or normalcy as applied to the Mundial, all of which could be connoted by the celebratory arms.

Consequently, the Argentina '78 logo remained a popular target for subversion: a means of instantly identifying a perverse dimension of the event, and rallying a call to action in European cities. One anonymously-produced flier from Dortmund, West Germany, augmented the official emblem by again keenly employing razor wire; while the sweeping arms still grasp a football in their embrace, they are constricted by barbed handcuffs. The image is given a stark black and white colorway, with the emblem appearing on a white, rounded rectangle not unlike a television screen. **(fig. 15)** Though made by an anonymous designer—indeed, many of the artists responsible for creating images such as these remain unknown<sup>59</sup>—the flier was an advertisement for an informational session in Dortmund, which took place on March 10, 1978. The caption, borrowed from Amnesty International's own anti-Mundial campaign, inextricably links organization of the tournament with human rights abuses: “ARGENTINA 78: Fußball Ja—Folter Nein!” (“Yes to football—No to torture!”)<sup>60</sup> The information listed beneath particularly speaks to the network of solidarity and activist movements that rallied around the topic of the Mundial; beyond the eye-catching design, the flier advertises that

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<sup>59</sup> Almeida, “Temas pendientes,” 32. “Muchos de los autores del boicot europeo fueron anónimos, como los de Argentina 78: *Fußball Ja – Folter Nein!*”

<sup>60</sup> For Amnesty International's use of the slogan, see Alfredo Relaño, “Polémica internacional en torno al Mundial de Fútbol,” in *El País*, March 31, 1978.

Argentiniens (presumably exiled Argentinian militants, though Marina Franco notes few were directly involved with the European boycott) would seemingly “report on the situation in Argentina” (“*Argentinian berichten über die lage in Argentinien!*”), along with a presentation on the topic of football and torture.

The motif of the sweeping arms restricted by handcuffs or composed of razor wire was continually used to evocative effect. An image designed by the left-wing Zille-Kollektiv’s artists early in 1978 reduced the arms to twisted lengths of wire, substituting a human skull for the football at the center of the image. A triangular gallows, with three hanging figures, replaces the “A” in Argentina ‘78 (**fig. 16**). The same formula (minus the hangman’s scaffold) appears in an image circulated by the Den Haag-based group SKAN, with the skull rendered somewhat abstractly to mimic the use of negative space in Riera’s original emblem (**fig. 17**). As if to amplify the macabre connotations of the image, the skull smiles back at the viewer with a wide and twisted grin, threatening to escape the arms’ restrictive embrace. The stark black-on-white graphic is accompanied by the caption “Argentina ‘78: VOETBAL en FOLTERLING” (“Football and torture”) in bold typeface, and a series of three phrases repeated through the background pattern of the image: “Politieke gevangenen, vermisten, concentratie kampen” (“Political prisoners, disappeared, concentration camps”).

As we will see later in this chapter, the associations with camps and disappearances were designed to be anything but subtle. However, the simple and consistent act of subverting Perón’s gesture is a compelling twist, an example of the artistic sleight of hand required to make the imagery of the boycott resonate with viewers. The multifaceted gesture seen in the original emblem—an icon of Perón’s legacy and his

short-lived return; an uplifting and joyful embrace associated with the Argentinian flag and people; a heavily commercialized symbol of victory—loses any semblance of positive affect and innocence, replaced with increasingly visceral and violent connotations.

To this end, the mascot Mundialito underwent similar transformations in the hands of artists opposed to the dictatorship. When rendered by European political cartoonists, Mundialito retained the original cartoon's football kit and gaucho accessories, with a thematic emphasis placed upon the barbarity of allowing the Mundial to proceed in such conditions. An image published as a part of the 1978 collection *La Coupe déborde, Videla! (The Cup Overflows, Videla!)*, a compilation of 56 individual political cartoons by 56 illustrators, features Mundialito gleefully and forcefully kicking a globe (**fig. 18**). The illustration was created by French political cartoonist Jean Plantureux (*Plantu*), and it turns the boyish charm of the mascot on its head. The innocent grin on Mundialito's face becomes sinister, and blood erupts from Argentina—indeed, all of South America—where the globe has been struck, spilling out onto the ground. Plantu renders Mundialito twice on the same page, and literally draws an arrow from a small-scale version of the original mascot to the new, violent gaucho boy. The implications of the image are clear: the 1978 World Cup was not only a distraction from violent acts against Argentinians, but a violent act towards Argentina in and of itself, and a moral affront to the rest of the world.

At this juncture, however, it might be pertinent to recognize that the visual strategy of reappropriating the Mundial's official emblems was an independently adopted activist strategy carried out simultaneously in Argentina and in Europe, albeit to different

ends. While they are not the primary focus of this paper, it is worth briefly pointing out briefly that brochures and posters circulated by the left-wing Movimiento Peronista Montoneros (MPM) co-opted the World Cup's official imagery to promote their own insurgent campaign. These illustrations were less reliant on depictions of physical trauma than their French counterparts, though heavily informed by Argentina's recent and bloody political past: prior to the Mundial, the MPM had been nearly decimated by the military's counter-subversive operations, aimed at killing off all militant political opposition.<sup>61</sup> Many of the surviving Montoneros opted for exile in Europe; those that stayed in Argentina continued to execute small-scale underground operations, not only with firearms, but with political rhetoric furtively disseminated in the streets via brochures, pamphlets, and graffiti.<sup>62</sup>

The Montoneros re-drew Mundialito with explicitly rural dress, usually replacing the Argentina shirt and gaucho hat used in the official FIFA-sponsored image with a poncho and a blue-and-white headband, though he always retained his football boots (**fig. 19**). The *Gauchito Montonero* was part of the groups' pro-Mundial, anti-dictatorship, anti-Videla campaign, which supported the carnival atmosphere and patriotic pride that

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<sup>61</sup> The military's strategy of cracking down on "terrorist" and left-wing operations in Argentina was infamously summarized by General Iberico Saint-Jean in 1977 as the following: "Primero vamos a matar a todos los subversivos, después a sus colaboradores; después a los indiferentes y por último a los tímidos." ("First we will kill all the subversives, then their collaborators; afterwards, those that are indifferent, and finally, the timid.") See "Murió Saint Jean, el que quería matar a todos," in *Página/12*, October 6, 2012: <<https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/ultimas/20-205033-2012-10-06.html>>

<sup>62</sup> Sagaian, "Los panfletos de Montoneros durante el Mundial 78: La resistencia silenciosa." "Pegatinas en los baños, en estaciones de trenes, pintadas en algunas paredes ocultas de noche y volanteadas sorpresivas fueron algunas de las acciones recurrentes. Las condiciones que imponía la dictadura hacían que cada actividad, por mínima que fuera, se transformara en una operación militar... En otros casos la operación tenía otra dinámica: se dejaba una caja con un sistema de resorte accionado por reloj con temporizador que tiraba volantes por el aire, o se arrojaban panfletos desde alguna moto o un auto en centros comerciales, plazas o en los alrededores de los estadios y lugares con una gran congregación de gente."

accompanied the tournament, but condemned the brutality of the Videla regime through slogans such as “Este partido lo gana el pueblo” (“This game will be won by the people”) and “Argentina campeón, Videla al paredón!” (“Argentina champions, Videla to the wall!”). He could rightly be seen as a reclamation of the rural identities erased by the FIFA- and EAM-marketed mascot, especially as he carries a Tacuara spear, in reference to the gaucho Montoneros that fought in Argentina’s war for independence.<sup>63</sup>

The Montoneros’ militant struggle turned clandestine after 1976, under the constraints of extreme censorship and the ever-looming threat of murder, and thus their propagandistic campaign took place in a vastly different context to the relative freedom of protest exercised in the European nations where the boycott flourished.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, the points of confluence between COBA and MPM’s images may help to illustrate the primary concerns addressed by European artists in response to the Mundial. As I will outline in the following pages, the urgencies conveyed by images of the boycott dealt less with Argentina’s systematic sociopolitical traumas, and more with the imagined horrors inflicted on the *desaparecidos*.

### **“The Labor of Justice”: Rumors and Ruinous Injuries in COBA’s Publications**

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<sup>63</sup> Sagaian, “La resistencia silenciosa.” “Los textos denunciaban la situación político-social del país y se contagiaban del clima mundialista que se vivía en las calles. “Argentina campeón, Videla al paredón”, “Este partido lo gana el pueblo”, “Argentina 78, dictadura 0”, “Resistir es vencer” eran algunas de las consignas que se leían en aquellos papelitos de dos por tres, que llevaban el logo del Mundial y la imagen del “Gauchito Montonero”, una réplica de la mascota oficial de Argentina que iba vestido con un poncho y una lanza Tacuara.”

<sup>64</sup> Sagaian, “La resistencia silenciosa.” “La conducción de Montoneros había fijado para 1978 una política que implicaba la realización de acciones armadas y de propaganda de tal trascendencia que la dictadura militar no las pudiera ocultar. El reparto de panfletos, folletos, el envío de cartas fueron parte de esa estrategia que requirió un trabajo de hormiga y, claro, un impacto mucho menor que las bombas en las casas de generales.”

Violence, torture, and irreparable injury to the body were overwhelmingly pervasive visual tropes used in the images that featured human subjects, particularly those circulated by COBA. When the committee published *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* in the spring of 1978, nearly every artwork included in the book featured extremely graphic representations of torture. Mutilation, death by firing squad, football players using severed human heads as a ball, prisoners tied to posts as “shooting practice,” and torturers that delight in watching football while on the job were all present.

By 1978, rumors of the Argentinian dictatorship’s repressive tactics had spiked sharply, aided by the resolute and increasingly reported efforts of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo.<sup>65</sup> However, the rate of *desapariciones* in the country was beginning to fall after reaching all-time highs during 1976 and 1977.<sup>66</sup> Beyond the experiences of exiled Argentinians living abroad and a lingering suspicion of ongoing activities at the Escuela Mecánica de la Armada, there was painfully little information that could attest to the scope of state terror in Argentina. Videla and company were infamously tight-lipped on the matter of political detentions without due process, and deflected any mention of the *desaparecidos* by default, eventually arguing that they “did not exist” and had no rights.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Franco, “Derechos humanos, política y fútbol,” 29. “Si la represión en Argentina era mundialmente denunciada desde 1976, el “fenómeno” de los “desaparecidos” –y con ello las Madres de Plaza de Mayo– recién comenzaba a ser masivamente conocido fuera del país. En 1978, en Europa el conocimiento del tema estaba bastante limitado a los grupos políticos o intelectuales más sensibles a la política internacional.”

<sup>66</sup> Novaro and Palermo 119. “Hacia mediados de 1978, la mayor parte del trabajo había sido hecho. No las organizaciones guerrilleras y su periferia, sino también los partidos y grupos de izquierda revolucionaria, las comisiones y los delegados sindicales combativos y las agrupaciones estudiantiles habían sido diezmados... La desactivación de los centros siguió en la segunda mitad de 1978 y, hacia comienzos de 1979, tan sólo siete de ellos continuaban operando; ya muy pocos secuestrados seguían con vida (el número de secuestros disminuyó también sensiblemente: la CONADEP registró 137 casos durante todo ese año y 58 en el siguiente).”

<sup>67</sup> During a press conference in 1979, Videla declared on national television: “I’ll tell you that the disappeared, as long as they are such, are an unknown, as long as they are disappeared they cannot receive

To fill the gap, COBA's artists illustrated all manner of grotesque ordeals: some metaphorical, but others distinctly plausible, despite the creative license. One artwork, by an illustrator named Lesueur, makes a direct reference to the possibility of abuse and detention at ESMA: as a torturer watches a game on television, celebrating just as a goal flies in—"Et paf! Deux zero!" ("Wham! Two-zero!")—a bloodied victim lies strapped to the table. In the background sits an anatomical chart labeled *Escuela de Mecánica*, leaving no doubt as to whether the officer has applied his fullest knowledge of the human body (**fig. 20**).

ESMA was Argentina's darkest open secret: it had begun operations as a clandestine prison in 1975, as Isabel Perón's administration struggled to curb the spread of guerrilla violence in urban centers.<sup>68</sup> More than 5,000 detainees passed through the notorious *centro clandestino de detención* (clandestine detention center, or CCD) between 1976 and 1983, the overwhelming majority of them tortured and murdered.<sup>69</sup> However, references to localized and specific human rights abuses, as well as real sites of torture, are otherwise absent from *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* The rest of the book is an exercise in illustrating generalized forms of torture, by no means outlandish, but undoubtedly generic; throughout, there is a lack of regard to the identities of the victims. Some of the unfortunate detainees in these images are identified as journalists, but there

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special treatment because they have no entity. They are not dead or alive...they are missing." ("Le diré que frente al desaparecido en tanto éste como tal, es una incógnita, mientras sea desaparecido no puede tener tratamiento especial, porque no tiene entidad. No está muerto ni vivo...está desaparecido.") See "Videla en 1979: No está muerto ni vivo... está desaparecido," in *La Voz*, May 17, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Novaro and Palermo 118. "Estos centros [ESMA, La Perla, Campo de Mayo, Club Atlético, and Vesubio, all clandestine prisons] compartieron el privilegio de haber iniciado sus actividades antes del golpe militar, a fines de 1975, y de contrarse entre los últimos en dejar de operar."

<sup>69</sup> Federico Rivas Molina, "El centro de torturas icono de la dictadura argentina será la sede del ministerio de Justicia," in *El País*, July 26, 2017.



is a lack of clarification as to who these prisoners are supposed to be: they are not militants, students, intellectuals, or subversives, simply innocents.

And then there is the total and conspicuous erasure of women who might be at risk in the dystopian host nation. Not a single victim illustrated in this collection is female—not even nondescript, as male victims are often rendered—save for one. The only female figure with any kind of centrality in *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* is a grotesque image of Lady Justice. She retains her blindfold, sword, and scale, but she has been stripped of her robes and, contorted backwards, gives birth to a skull (**fig. 21**). The caption laments “the labor of justice” in allowing the Mundial to proceed. But this gruesome illustration is the extent of women’s involvement or suffering depicted in the book, and their absence completely overlooks a significant portion of the state violence enacted by the Proceso.

Forty years on, the absence of women in these images of torture and detention seems puzzling. If Argentinian women made up for a significant slice of prisoner intake at CCDs, why were those inherently gendered experiences of state terror—“extreme situations of bodily vulnerability and destruction” that included rape and physical beatings of pregnant detainees, for example<sup>70</sup>—not accepted as a possibility when COBA and their contemporaries visually highlighted the existence of human rights violations? Their absence in *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* despite dozens of images on the subject of football and repression is a notable omission, although Barbara Sutton has pointed out the longstanding tendency both inside and outside Argentina to focus on maternal figures, such as the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, and their losses at the hands of the

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<sup>70</sup> Barbara Sutton. *Surviving State Terror: Women’s Testimonies of Repression and Resistance* (New York: NYU Press, 2018): 136

military government.<sup>71</sup> The artists of the European boycott, however, left behind Argentina's contemporary traumas in search of a catastrophe decidedly more well-known among their audiences.

### **The Specters of Berlin: Videla, Hitler, and the Reception of Holocaust Imagery**

The boycott's endgame, as described in retrospect by its founders, was never upsetting the apple cart to such a degree that several participating nations would withdraw from the World Cup, despite the slim possibility of success.<sup>72</sup> Though this assertion carries an air of historical revisionism, there is no doubt that the boycott was especially effective at popularizing—or reviving—the notion that totalitarianism was alive and well, and that the Videla regime posed an existential threat to human liberties, even if said threat was found in an oft-overlooked nation across the Atlantic.

Though the West German branch of Amnesty International and its “Yes to football—No to torture!” campaign (**fig. 22**) gained a moderate amount of publicity, with the organization estimating that some 8,000 people had been detained without due process by the Videla regime, COBA and its French affiliates were largely responsible for thrusting the topic of football and repression into the public eye.<sup>73</sup> Between January and May 1978, they saturated coverage of the Mundial with press conferences, posters,

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<sup>71</sup> Sutton 15-16. See also Laura Malosetti Costa, “Memory Work in Argentina 1976-2006,” in Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, eds. *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2014), 225.

<sup>72</sup> Franco, in Bauso 214: “Marina Franco: Es difícil responder si el boicot tuvo posibilidades de éxito, medir lo que no sucedió. Sin embargo, la discusión era real.” See also excerpts from Bauso's interview with Marek Halter, in Bauso 215.

<sup>73</sup> Luciana Bertoia, “El boicot al Mundial 78: Un fracaso que fue todo un éxito.” “Según Amnesty, la publicidad es la peor enemiga de la tortura. Por eso, solicitaba a todos los que fueran a asistir que indagaran sobre lo que sucedía en la Argentina y que después lo difundieran. Como explica Silvina Jensen en su libro *Los exiliados*, la organización denunciaba entonces que habían 15 mil desaparecidos y 8000 presos.” See also Franco, “Derechos humanos, política y fútbol,” 30.

informational brochures and booklets, and community outreach session.<sup>74</sup> Much of the sudden spike in local awareness can be attributed to the *L'Épique* newsletter, an imitation of the popular sports daily *L'Équipe*. COBA's take on the format particularly emphasized topics of human rights, sport and politics, and the debate surrounding boycotts of repressive regimes, including the '78 Mundial and the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, and it frequently played host to political images in service of the boycott.<sup>75</sup> *L'Épique* found an unexpectedly wide readership, and by the beginning of the Mundial over 120,000 copies had been sold.<sup>76</sup>

Nonetheless, artists working in service of the boycott in both France and West Germany were stymied by the scarcity of solid information from Argentina. Subsequently, they turned to the most tangible atrocity that lingered in living memory: the Holocaust. In Europe, the lessons learned from the Nazi regime, its manipulation of sport, and the continental genocide were not forgotten lightly. Almeida suggests that because the uninterrupted rise of fascism and Nazism loomed large on the continent's "political horizon" post-war, artists of the pro-boycott groups "recycled themes from the imaginary created by the two great conflicts," appealing to their own past and imploring their compatriots and neighbors not to let the same mistake happen again.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Marina Franco, "Derechos humanos, política y fútbol," (*Entrepassados* XIV 28, 2005): 29.

<sup>75</sup> "Argentina 78: Le massacre continue...place au foot!" in *L'Épique* n°4, June 1978 (Paris: Comité de Boycott du Mondial de Football en Argentine), front page.

<sup>76</sup> Franco, "Derechos humanos, política y fútbol," 29.

<sup>77</sup> Almeida, "Temas pendientes," 26. "Una primera cuestión debe estar vinculada, necesariamente, con el contexto histórico europeo. Luego de 1948, el fascismo y el nazismo formaban parte del horizonte político: la izquierda europea ya había tenido que lidiar contra la violencia de Estado y el autoritarismo. Las imágenes del boicot francés y la denuncia alemana apelaron, precisamente, a su propio pasado, reciclando temas del imaginario dejado por las dos grandes guerras para construir un discurso nuevo, esta vez, contra una dictadura latinoamericana." Intriguingly, however, the memories of World War II proved more relevant, although the horrors of World War I nominally lingered in the European imaginary.

This section focuses on the development and reception of a shared European iconography of totalitarianism. The anti-Mundial imagery that sprung from France and West Germany, in particular, leaned heavily on distinct tropes: first, the militant cult of personality surrounding dictators (particularly in depictions of Adolf Hitler and Jorge Rafael Videla); and second, the Holocaust-informed conception that state terror equaled concentration camps, plus the architecture that comprised them. These stereotypes carried explicit associations with Nazism and the atrocities of World War II. Despite the inaccuracies vis-a-vis the reality of state terror in Argentina, these images may have had a highly persuasive effect in terms of drawing attention to the junta's manipulation of the Mundial.

Given the boycott's explicit denunciation of the junta's fascist tendencies as far back as Marek Halter's letter in October 1977, it is no surprise that General Videla became one of the most heavily satirized figures as the movement's graphic output accelerated, increasingly compared to the Nazi leader. It was Videla who would eventually deliver the opening address of the 1978 World Cup under a darkly ironic "sign of peace," and it was Videla who would eventually occupy the role of the junta's "fourth man," officially taking on the mantle as the President of Argentina in 1981. The military man from Mercedes was the foremost face of the junta, and both at home and abroad, the Mundial arguably came to be known as Videla's Mundial.<sup>78</sup>

One of the earliest images of note disseminated by COBA was not produced in-house, but reproduced from the Spanish current affairs magazine *Cambio 16*, which

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<sup>78</sup> Bauso 204.

routinely covered news of the boycott.<sup>79</sup> The political cartoon by illustrator Enrique Ortega, titled “Hitler 36, Videla 78; or sport in service of political propaganda,” set the tone for most of the imagery that advocated for the European boycott. The image takes the fascist parallels between Nazi Germany and Proceso Argentina literally, with Adolf Hitler standing on a podium and performing the Nazi salute. Jorge Rafael Videla kneels next to him, but unlike Hitler he is not dressed in ceremonial military attire—instead, the general wears Argentina’s traditional striped football kit and cleats. **(fig. 23)** Ortega’s illustration is powerful, and it cuts directly to the heart of the most pressing question posed by COBA: who is ultimately the winner when sport is allowed to legitimize an authoritarian regime?

Both dictators are rendered with outrageously large heads and exaggerated facial features, but the differences in their representation are telling. Hitler is at the top of the hierarchy as the first offender and, reasonably, the worst: the podium and the cartoon’s caption are both references to the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. Videla’s pose is reminiscent of a footballer’s during a pre-match photograph, but it is difficult to argue that he is the main focus of the image, despite Argentina ’78 being the pertinent issue. Ortega’s choice of uniform for both caricatures, too, is conscious. While Hitler wears his chancellor’s uniform and Nazi medal, perhaps an allusion to Germany’s prioritization of military expansion throughout the 1930s and 40s, the Argentinian general is given neither his military regalia nor the crisp suit that he increasingly came to wear during the latter part of the decade. We might infer that the *albiceleste* shirt represents Videla’s form of nationalism: after all, most of his and the junta’s bets were placed on the impeccable

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<sup>79</sup> *Cambio 16*’s journalists were banned from the Mundial due to their perceived negative coverage of the military junta, and the magazine was also one of the foreign publications targeted by *Para Ti* in its post-Mundial “Defienda su Argentina” postcard campaign. See Bertoia, “El boicot al Mundial 78.”

execution of the Mundial, the exemplary behavior of the Argentinian fans and public, and finally, the success of the national team.<sup>80</sup> A week before the tournament, Videla invited Argentina's 22-man squad to the *Casa Rosada* (the Argentinian presidential palace). Likening himself to a commander addressing his troops, he urged Cesar Luis Menotti's players to preserve the "nobility" of the Argentinian man and the "humane quality" of Argentinians at large through their comportment on the field.<sup>81</sup>

Other political cartoons continued to mock Videla as a pale, though still manipulative and cruel, imitation of Adolf Hitler. The aforementioned *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* featured the general not only in its title but in a number of the cartoons contained therein. The cover image, unsigned by its artist, features a grim visage of Videla who is yet again rendered with a large head and highly exaggerated facial features, and a lip-curling sneer (**fig. 24**). The general wears his ceremonial military cap in this illustration, but a pair of pliers (in the form of a brooch) replaces the customary Argentinian coat of arms, accompanied by a small pin taking the shape of a skull. Videla is otherwise outfitted in a dark football kit emblazoned with a "78" patch on the left breast. As in Enrique Ortega's earlier image, Videla carries a football—only this time the "ball" is a skull missing its lower jaw and marked with the familiar alternating pattern of black pentagons and white hexagons that define the appearance of a football. Videla appears to be standing among a mound of several of these skulls, imbibing in the death of

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<sup>80</sup> This notion is reaffirmed by Bauso, who remarks that the only other event during the six-year rule of the Proceso that provoked a similar explosion of nationalism was the failed war to retake the Falklands (*Islas Malvinas*) in 1982, under the stewardship of Leopoldo Galtieri. Ironically, that conflict coincided with Argentina's failed defense of their title at the World Cup in Spain. See Bauso 204.

<sup>81</sup> Bauso 199. "*Jorge Videla, mensaje al plantel argentino*: Señores, así como el comandante arenga a la tropa, así como el presidente saluda y despide embajadores, así quiero exhortarlos a que se sientan y sean ganadores, ganadores del torneo, ganadores de la amistad, ganadores de la hidalguía y demuestren la calidad humana del hombre argentino."

others to support the '78 Mundial. Every illustration containing a caricature of Videla thereafter retains this hyper-stylized, almost comically morbid characterization of the general. One image by an illustrator named Bellenger sees Videla dressed in his ceremonial military uniform, running a cup filled with water (in reality more of a fountain or basin, as it bears no resemblance to the real FIFA World Cup trophy) in order to wash the blood off his hands (**fig. 25**).

Why would the artists of the boycott rely on tropes that communicated such outlandishly indiscriminate levels of sadism and murder? For many, the specters of Berlin 1936 materialized again with the controversy surrounding the Mundial. Both Almeida and Franco have argued that for activists in France and West Germany, the failure to denounce the 1936 Berlin Olympics was unfinished business, resulting in a “responsibility” among all Europeans to set the record straight where possible. Almeida, too, suggests a latent sense of frustration among the French sector of the boycott at the May 1968 student protests in Paris, which had failed to provoke radical social change.<sup>82</sup> With Hitler’s Olympics as their reference—along with the horrors of the war and genocide that would eventually follow—the anti-Mundial movements found a compelling visual strategy, as well as the possibility of “catharsis” from revisiting their own political past.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Almeida, “Temas pendientes,” 28. “De allí es que los activistas franceses y alemanes hayan homologado la dictadura argentina con los totalitarismos europeos, lo que también expone acaso un sentimiento de culpa acerca del grado de responsabilidad que la izquierda europea había tenido en dos acontecimientos puntuales: los Juegos Olímpicos de 1936, celebrados en Alemania bajo el régimen nazi, y la crisis de la izquierda europea posterior a Mayo del 68. Es posible conjeturar sobre el hecho de que estas cuestiones todavía estaban latentes en el 78 y que la izquierda europea —en particular la francesa— haya tomado como propio el boicot al Mundial... El recuerdo del 36 revivió en el 78, y despertó en los miembros del caba una “responsabilidad pendiente para todos los europeos”. See also Franco, “Derechos humanos, política y fútbol,” 30.

<sup>83</sup> Almeida, “Temas pendientes,” 28.

## Football Makes Us Free: The Typology and Familiarity of Concentration Camps

One anonymously designed flier from West Germany particularly drove home the tournament's resonance with fascism and the Holocaust in Europe. A disheveled prisoner, chained to a giant ball, struggles to hoist its weight over his head while an Argentinian military officer—presumably Videla, recognizable because of his moustache despite not being named in the image—paints the black hexagons of a football onto the enormous sphere (**fig. 26**). “Argentinien WM 78” (an abbreviation of *weltmeister*, the German phrase for World Championship) is emblazoned across the top of the image, but more intriguing are the two subcaptions at the bottom of the frame: first, “Fussball macht frei” (“Football makes us free”), an ironic declaration that Almeida directly links to the words above the entrance to Auschwitz, “Arbeit macht frei” (“Work makes us free”). And then, beneath it, a phrase that immediately underlines the associations with Nazi Germany: “In Argentinien sind 10,000 menschen in konzentrationslagern” (“In Argentina, there are 10,000 people in concentration camps”).

References to concentration and extermination camps were a mainstay in the boycott's illustrations and posters, as discussed previously with images such as COBA's “Pas de football entre les camps de concentration” (**fig. 14**) and SKAN's “Argentina '78: VOETBAL en FOLTERLING” (**fig. 17**). When not explicitly rendered, as in COBA's image, the Argentinian dictatorship's herding of its own civilian population into camps could be intimated by the use of barbed wire, skulls, or soldiers. Yet the methodology of state terror in Argentina were quite removed from these stereotypes. While rural *centros clandestinos de detención* certainly existed and sprung up around the country, methods of detaining and punishing prisoners differed greatly from those during the Holocaust,



particularly in Buenos Aires and its suburbs. Almeida notes that because the barbed-wire fence carried longstanding nonviolent rural associations in Argentina, torture centers lacked the “common physiognomy” of Nazi camps.<sup>84</sup>

The Escuela Mecánica de la Armada, by far the most notorious site of genocide in Argentina, was stationed along the major thoroughway Avenida Libertador in Nuñez, not far from the Estadio Monumental. There was no barbed wire marking ESMA’s perimeter: iron fences surrounded the premises, as they still do, and the surrounding city blocks were heavily policed, but it was a site fully integrated into a bustling urban landscape.<sup>85</sup> Neither the main reception building nor the premises look like a prison, and it is here where we can identify arguably the most important divergence of the European boycott’s imagery from real life: the arrests, imprisonment, torture, and disposal of *desaparecidos* had little to do with the Nazi concentration camps.<sup>86</sup> Argentina’s systematic elimination of supposed “subversives” and “terrorists” moved along a far different, though no less brutal, conception of efficacy. Graciela Daleo’s ordeal after Argentina beat the Netherlands in the World Cup final, trapped in a car with her torturers and unable to call

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<sup>84</sup> Almeida, “Temas pendientes,” 32. “En la Argentina, el alambre de púas siempre estuvo vinculado al ámbito rural, sin un uso bélico específico. Por este motivo, la metáfora del alambre para referir al genocidio argentino es, de alguna manera, ajena. Los centros clandestinos de detención argentinos no tuvieron la fisonomía común de los campos alemanes, donde se pueden reconocer un conjunto de elementos distintivos, como la valla doble de alambre electrificado, por ejemplo. La antigua Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA), el centro de exterminio quizás más reconocible, tiene un enrejado característico, que funciona como espacio intermedio entre el encierro y la libertad, entre el afuera y el adentro”

<sup>85</sup> This fact, incidentally, complicates the assassination of the EAM’s first president, General Omar Actis, who was ambushed and shot dead while en route to a press conference detailing EAM’s austere roadmap for the Mundial in September 1976. The close monitoring of the area surround ESMA has given rise to the theory that Captain Lacoste was responsible for Actis’ murder, thereby allowing him to take command of the organizing body, as detailed in Chapter II. See Eugenio Méndez, *Alte. Lacoste, quién mató al Gral. Actis?* (Córdoba: El Cid Editor, 1984).

<sup>86</sup> In addition to Sutton’s examination of female survivors’ testimonies, see Graciela Daleo, “Relato de una celebración forzada en la ESMA: Cuando ganar no es una victoria,” in “Papelitos, 78 historias sobre un Mundial en dictadura.”

for help despite being in the presence of hundreds of witnesses, would have played out much differently—if at all—had ESMA been a camp-like prison.

Using Europe's recent continental genocide to engage with an ongoing Latin American one, these images predated what Andreas Huyssen has termed the "globalization of Holocaust discourse" by several years, perhaps accounting for the disparity and loss of Argentina's political context (beyond the junta) in the images.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps the most conspicuous omission from the European political cartoons, to this effect, is precisely that *the presence of an absence* is left unacknowledged. The graphic examples of mayhem, torture and detention based on the Holocaust do not begin to capture the hole left in Argentinian society as a generation of people were decimated, or marked by, the systematic abductions. In terms of artworks that spoke to the everyday experiences of citizens under the Proceso, the illustrators in support of the boycott opted largely for brutal shocks, explicit images of death and disfigurement—not the creeping dread that would have set in as members of local communities inexplicably disappeared, never to return.<sup>88</sup>

Memories of the Holocaust conjured far different visual interpretations of bodily presence and injury in Europe than they did in Argentina; in the latter, these tropes responded directly to the visible (non)existence of the *desaparecidos*. Just a month before the return of democratic elections, in September 1983, came the *Siluetazo* ("silhouette

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<sup>87</sup> Andreas Huyssen, "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia" (*Public Review* 12.1, 2000), 22.

<sup>88</sup> Sociologist Estela Schindel notes that memorial artworks more accurately attesting to the feelings of societal discomfort, loss, or trauma sparked by the *desapariciones* only really emerged with the advent of democratic elections in 1983. These include the September 1983 aesthetic action *el Siluetazo*, which "revived" the disappeared using traced outlines of human bodies, and the ongoing practice of publishing missing persons notices in the newspaper *Página/12*. See Schindel, "Grasping the Global and the Local in Memorialisation Practices. Some Dialogues and Tensions between Latin America and Europe" (*European Review* 22.4, 2014).

action”). The massive part-installation, part-protest action sprung conceptually from Polish illustrator Jerzy Skapski’s artwork *Każdy Dzień Oświęcimia (Every Day at Auschwitz)*, using that artwork’s memorialization of the Holocaust as a basis for articulating the nature of genocide in Argentina.<sup>89</sup> Skapski created the image as an inset for the October 1978 issue of the *UNESCO Courier*, which fittingly focused on the theme of international human rights law and education. The print comprised a black background and exactly 2,370 small human silhouettes of varying size, traced in white, resembling twenty-four rows of seams or scars at first glance (**fig. 27**). Skapski’s caption contextualizes why so many “bodies” are packed into the frame, explaining: “Every day at Auschwitz brought death to 2,370 people, and this is the number of figures represented above. The concentration camp at Auschwitz was in existence for 1,688 days, and this is the exact number of copies of this poster printed. Altogether some four million people died at the camp.”<sup>90</sup> The Pole was deeply concerned with the human toll—at least in numerical terms—of the Holocaust. Unlike images such as “Argentinien WM 78: Fussball macht frei,” which simply estimated the number of disappeared persons in Argentina, Skapski’s print illustrated the corporeal lives lost to the machinery of Nazism: though the silhouettes are anonymous, too small to bear any distinctive identifying features, the presence of women and children among the dead is a poignant marker of the indiscriminate violence.

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<sup>89</sup> María Guillermina. "Extrañamiento, despolitización y memoria social en la arte argentino de inicio de los 80" (*Nómadas. Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas* 37.1, 2013), 8. “La intervención tomaba como referente una obra publicada por ese entonces en el correo de la UNESCO y que se proponía reflexionar sobre el holocausto judío. Se establecía, en la producción de la obra, el referente del genocidio judío para comprender lo que había sucedido en nuestro país.”

<sup>90</sup> *UNESCO Courier*, October 1978, 22.

In Argentina, with the euphoria of the 1978 Mundial all but subsided and the Proceso's grip on the nation weakening after 1982's disastrous campaign in the Falkland Islands, recognition of the military's heavy-handed methods turned increasingly vocal. Skapski's *Every Day at Auschwitz* especially resonated with three Argentinian visual artists: Rodolfo Aguerreberry, Julio Flores, and Guillermo Kexel. The trio were aware of Skapski's illustration for UNESCO and planned to upscale the human silhouettes for an exhibition in 1982. But the project was pushed back due to logistical difficulties, eventually finding an opening with the Third March of Resistance in Buenos Aires, on September 21, 1983, incorporated into the event's proceedings with the last-minute assistance of the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo.<sup>91</sup> Aguerreberry, Flores, and Kexel were taken by Skapski's exploration of the sheer number of lives lost to genocide, but their project was altogether more ambitious. The *Siluetazo* aimed to recreate the silhouettes at one-to-one human scale, with volunteers lying down on long rolls of paper to provide their bodies for tracing (**fig. 28**). The resulting "aesthetic action"—more of a workshop, which unexpectedly gathered thousands of participants making their own traces—was overwhelmingly popular, and when finalized, disquietingly visible.

After the event, the silhouettes "were later fly-posted throughout the city center as a way of representing 'the presence of an absence';" as art historian Ana Longoni asserts, "the key to [the] gesture is quantification: pointing to the empty space that the 30,000 absent bodies left among us."<sup>92</sup> Moreover, it was also fundamentally about restitution, providing bodies to the *desaparecidos* whose physical existence was degraded and then

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<sup>91</sup> Roberto Aguerreberry, Julio Flores, and Guillermo Kexel, "Las siluetas," in *El Siluetazo*, compiled by Ana Longoni and Gustavo A. Bruzzone (Buenos Aires: Ana Hidalgo, editor, 2008), 74-75.

<sup>92</sup> Ana Longoni, "Photographs and Silhouettes: Visual Politics in the Human Rights Movement of Argentina," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 25 (Autumn 2010), 9.

denied altogether by the dictatorship: “The gesture of lending one’s body carries a certain ambiguity, as to take the place of the missing person is to accept that anyone could have taken the place of the disappeared, that anyone could have suffered the same uncertain and sinister fate,” Longoni explains. “On the other hand, a corporality, a body and a life — however ephemeral—is returned to the disappeared.”<sup>93</sup> The *Siluetazo* recognized that the *desaparecidos* were not an anonymous group, that they had faced unknown horrors, and that their *absence* could not be swept under the rug.

Crucially, it also (literally) drew from the trauma of the Holocaust in a manner that did not rely on scenes of destruction, treating the depiction of lost bodies with a sensitivity that is altogether lacking in images of the European boycott of the Mundial. Such a comparison is tempered by the *Siluetazo*’s function as an outlet for local discontent, built up over seven long years of military rule, and the event’s mantra of “Aparición con vida” (“Found alive”), a hopeful demand expressed by the Madres and Abuelas during the Third March and ever since. The Mundial and its controversy were subsumed into the wider backlash against the Proceso, but both the *Siluetazo* and Skapski’s original silhouettes provided alternate roadmaps for how artworks could have reconciled their memorial and activist purposes vis-à-vis the Argentinian and European genocides.

This, however, is not meant as a ridicule of the artists working for COBA, SKAN, and other European collectives. James Young, in his discussion of public art and Holocaust memorials, has pushed back against the notions of good taste (or lack thereof) dictating the usefulness of those sites and artworks of memory accessible to all: “we must recognize that public taste carries weight and that certain conventional forms in avowedly

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<sup>93</sup> Longoni 11.

public art may eventually have consequences for public memory—whether or not we think they should.”<sup>94</sup> While Young is referring to public Holocaust memorials and monuments in this sense, I suggest that the same principle is easily applied to the illustrations emerging from the boycott of the Mundial. Though they were thoroughly divorced from the experiences of prisoners at Argentinian CCDs, and the sense of loss felt by those *not* disappeared, the symbols of concentration camps and mass extermination were nonetheless evocative and stirring images that effectively and instantly conveyed the gravity of the situation in Argentina to European audiences.

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<sup>94</sup> James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 12.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION: THE STRENGTHENING OF PEACE

Commenting on the fractured nature of the 1978 World Cup in the Argentinian public consciousness, Matias Bauso argues that while now it “is impossible to explain the Mundial without the dictatorship...it is also impossible to explain it via the dictatorship alone.”<sup>95</sup> He suggests that the Mundial was not so much a deliberate smokescreen to cover up the murder of Argentinian civilians on the military government’s part; more accurately, the decision to proceed with the tournament was one last throw of the dice to improve international public relations. The World Cup, Bauso hypothesizes, probably would have enjoyed just as much popular support in Argentina no matter who facilitated it *so long as the football took place*.

In such a context, it is not unreasonable to think that any serious effort to boycott the tournament on COBA’s part would have been doomed to fail, insofar as it attempted to force other nations to withdraw from Argentina. But as Marek Halter has argued, the boycott was never about pressuring other teams to back out, let alone stopping the tournament altogether. “We never thought that we could keep the tournament from being played. Our intention was to spark a great international mobilization so that the whole world could see the true face of the military regime,” Halter remembers. “In that sense, it was a positive result... The Mundial went ahead, but the European press talked about torture and disappearances every day.”<sup>96</sup> The goal of the protests, political cartoons, and

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<sup>95</sup> Bauso 16.

<sup>96</sup> Bauso 215. “*Marek Halter*: Nunca pensamos que podríamos impedir que se jugará el torneo. Nuestra intención era crear una gran movilización internacional para que todo el mundo viera la verdadera cara del régimen militar. En ese sentido, el resultado fue positivo... El Mundial se jugó, pero la prensa europea hablaba todos los días de las torturas y desapariciones.”

denunciations, a systematic saturation of European sports pages with outrage, was to make the topic of human rights utterly unavoidable.

This, ultimately, is the caveat to Bauso's hypothesis that the Mundial would have been immensely popular regardless of the political situation in Argentina. Some have taken the '78 Mundial as one of the great successes of the dictatorship—author and attorney Pablo Llonto, for example, has called the tournament “the first massive seal of approval for the dictatorship” by the Argentinian public, and in turn the government's first truly fascist act;<sup>97</sup> similarly, Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo have postulated the aftermath of the Mundial as the junta's most triumphant hour.<sup>98</sup> But there is also the argument that the Mundial was really the beginning of the end for the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional. The international scrutiny the dictatorship invited onto itself by hosting one of the world's most important sporting events was unbearable in the long term, and Bauso argues that the European boycott—the “successful failure” that erupted in the autumn of 1977—was a major contributing factor to the dictatorship's embattled international relations over the next six years.<sup>99</sup>

Given the highly publicized war of images and propaganda surrounding the Mundial, the unique ramifications that arose as a result of Argentina's first world title can be aptly filtered through the lenses of visual and material culture. In Chapter III, I established that European responses to state violence borrowed heavily from regional memories of the Second World War in order to illustrate the connection between sport

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<sup>97</sup> Llonto 6. “El Mundial aparece como el primer símbolo de aprobación masiva a la dictadura: Videla recibió seis veces el aplauso de las multitudes en estadios repletos.”

<sup>98</sup> Novaro and Palermo 166. “Quizá con el Mundial el régimen vivió sus mejores horas. Sus bases más firmes encontraron auténticos motivos para festejar: el triunfo coronaba el orden y el trabajo correctivo que debía hacerse.”

<sup>99</sup> Bauso 215.



and repression. Now, with the benefit of hindsight and memorial strategies geared to a distinctly Argentinian social history, local initiatives have begun to interrogate the uneasy tensions between football and human rights more pointedly than foreign groups such as COBA could have ever hoped for prior to 1978. Projects such as the exhibition *Memorias del Mundial 78: una reflexión sobre deporte, DDHH y dictadura* (A Reflection on Sports, Human Rights and Dictatorship) and “Papelitos, 78 historias sobre un Mundial en dictadura” (78 Stories About a Mundial under Dictatorship) precisely reframed the Mundial’s lasting character in the public consciousness as one that revolves around *images and material objects*, just as much around methods of repression and written rhetoric.<sup>100</sup> “Papelitos” was particularly ambitious in this regard: a multimedia retrospective developed between arts and culture magazine *NAN*, the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, and Memoria Abierta, the project commissioned a series of columns and interviews from journalists, scholars, and survivors on several aspects of the tournament—from modes of repression, the boycott (including its illustrations), and media and communications, to human rights and the outcome of the football itself.

“Papelitos” was accompanied by the exhibition *Tiren Papelitos: Mundial 78, entre la fiesta y el horror*, staged in July and August 2018 at the Parque Nacional de la Memoria in Buenos Aires. The exhibition featured full-color reproductions of pamphlets from the boycott, as well as magazine covers on the topic of the Mundial and contemporary installations that spoke to the traumatic intersection of football and dictatorship. Yet, while the exhibition incorporated audio and video testimonies from

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<sup>100</sup> *Memorias del Mundial 78*, shown at Argentina’s Archivo Nacional de la Memoria, did so by showcasing materials from EAM 78’s official archives (including infrastructural plans, internal communications, and officially published tourist guides), as well as images reproduced from the COBA boycott.

survivors of state terror in addition to the gamut of visual and material images on display, it is difficult to shake the feeling that the European boycott continues to impact the terms of discourse surrounding the Mundial today, even when it was initially directed at European audiences in 1978: propagating old tropes of violence, sensationalizing the horrors that today would otherwise be characterized by silence, anger, mourning, and reflection.

There are still lessons to be learned from the war of images, and the wider climate of political manipulation and outcry, that so marked Argentina '78. On an international scale, football's ability to attract an audience is unparalleled; the FIFA World Cup remains one of the most viewed and most lucrative sporting events on the planet, and it is as susceptible as ever to employment as a quasi-smokescreen. The last edition of the tournament, Russia 2018, came under scrutiny for the host nation's shock victory in the bidding process, the application of financial leverage therein perhaps sanctioned by Vladimir Putin himself.<sup>101</sup> The next, Qatar 2022, has been marred by the exploitation and forced labor of migrant workers in dangerous conditions, as well as bribery accusations during the bidding process. Both issues have been addressed with what could generously be called half-hearted measures, despite pressure from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and others.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ken Bensinger, "Did Russia Steal the World Cup?" *New York Times*, June 7, 2018. Retrieved from <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/07/opinion/sunday/world-cup-fifa-corruption-russia.html>>

<sup>102</sup> In 2017, Human Rights Watch released an assessment documenting Qatar's failure to make construction site conditions safe for its workforce and urged both the Qatari government and FIFA to ensure minimum safety protocols, as well transparency when reporting the cause of migrant worker deaths. See Human Rights Watch, "Qatar: Take Urgent Action to Protect Construction Workers." September 27, 2017. Retrieved from <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/27/qatar-take-urgent-action-protect-construction-workers>>

For Argentina, too, the impulse to remember and reflect is pressing. Conservative president Mauricio Macri caused widespread dismay in August 2016 when, in a live interview with BuzzFeed Español, he skirted questions about human rights. On the subject of ongoing tribunals against ex-military officers, the president made overtures towards the preservation of human rights, acknowledging that while it was “important to clear up the truth” about the dictatorship, it equally critical to preserve human rights “in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>103</sup> When asked by an online viewer if it was important to quantify the number of people disappeared by the Proceso, Macri offered that “it’s important to understand what happened, to give the families the right to know definitively what happened after the horrible tragedy that was the Dirty War.” Asked directly by another viewer if the number of *desaparecidos* totaled 30,000 people, Macri responded, “It’s a debate that I won’t get into. I don’t know if it was 9,000 or 30,000, if it’s the number of names etched into a wall [at Parque de la Memoria] or many more. It’s a discussion that doesn’t make any sense.”<sup>104</sup>

Macri’s remarks drew widespread condemnation from activists, scholars, and left-leaning columnists. Though not quite tantamount to denialism, the president’s marginalization of the issue was enough to suggest that the sector of Argentinian society that approved of the military dictatorship’s actions could feel emboldened once again. Sociologist Guillermo Levy, writing in *Página/12*, lambasted the president’s use of the phrase “Dirty War” and defended the figure of 30,000 *desaparecidos*, imploring that the justifications for that number not be lost in subsequent debates: “the number... was

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<sup>103</sup> Mauricio Macri interviewed by Karla Zabulovsky. BuzzFeed Español. August 10, 2016. Retrieved from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8UXK5F14o4>

<sup>104</sup> Mauricio Macri interviewed by Karla Zabulovsky. BuzzFeed Español. August 10, 2016.

established in a time of struggle against the dictatorship and the impossibility of accessing any other records than the thousands of reports from around the country, and the valiant and militant work of hundreds of family members and friends who are always placed under suspicion.”<sup>105</sup>

More troubling for Levy, however, was the possibility of losing or criminally under-valuing the revelatory testimonies that had come to light in the post-dictatorship era. In the same column, he referred to the experiences of those who survived the Nazi concentration camps during World War II, noting that those who did not testify “20 or 30 years later” would never do so. Argentina’s stories, similarly, were in danger. “We have the disappeared who never returned, and we have those that that passed through hell...and came back. They came back to a society that didn’t want to hear their testimony, so fundamental for understanding the horror.” Likening the experiences of Argentinian survivors of CCDs to those who survived the Nazi camps, including the lingering sensations of survivor’s guilt, Levy poses a pair of damning questions with few clear answers: “How many do they number? Who counts the number of *desaparecidos* that survived?”<sup>106</sup>

In closing, I will turn to one final artwork, a video installation exhibited as a part of *Tiren Papelitos* in 2018. Staged two years into the Macri administration, with the need to preserve the memory of the Argentinian genocide as relevant as ever, the exhibition was a timely intervention aimed at teasing out the more nuanced historical narratives

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<sup>105</sup> Guillermo Levy, “No sólo números,” in *Página/12*, August 15, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-306895-2016-08-15.html>. “El número de desaparecidos se estableció en 30 mil en momentos de lucha contra la dictadura y de imposibilidad de acceder a más datos que las estimaciones provenientes de miles de denuncias en todo el país y la labor valiente y militante de cientos de familiares y amigos, que es puesta siempre bajo sospecha...”

<sup>106</sup> Guillermo Levy, “No sólo números,” in *Página/12*, August 15, 2016.

about Argentina '78's place in popular culture. The video work in question, *Ceremonia Nacional*, is particularly indicative of a more sensational approach, however. At the opening ceremony of the 1978 World Cup, Videla gave a brief inaugural speech, avoiding the issues of Argentina's political climate, as well as its diplomatic tensions with the rest of the world. The general—succinct and at his most presidential, before ever assuming the office itself—welcomed “the men and women of the most diverse regions of the Earth,” bringing with them “a climate of reciprocal respect.” He continued:

...it is precisely the confrontation in the playing field and the friendship in the field of human relations what allow us to assure that it is possible, even today, to coexist in unity and diversity, which is the only way to build peace... that is why I ask God, Our Lord, for this event to be truly a contribution to the strengthening of peace, that same peace we all wish onto the whole world and onto all men of the world. This peace inside of which man can be fully realized as a person with dignity and in liberty.<sup>107</sup>

Forty years later, the Argentina '78 opening ceremony, Videla's speech, and the rapturous applause it garnered were shown again as a part of *Tiren Papelitos*, projected onto the walls of an intimate darkened room in Parque de la Memoria's PAyS Gallery (**fig. 29**). Yet the installation's creator, photographer and video artist Adriana Bustos, applied the simplest of twists to frame Videla and the Mundial as transgressors against Argentina and global human rights. On an adjacent wall, Bustos projected grainy black-and-white footage of a procession of flags and athletes, cheering crowds, and the Olympic Cauldron, burning brightly: it is an excerpt from Leni Riefenstahl's film *Olympia*, the official documentary of the Berlin '36 Summer Olympics, hosted by Nazi

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<sup>107</sup> Ailín Bullentini, “Apertura del Mundial 78: El discurso inaugural de Videla,” in “Papelitos, 78 historias sobre un Mundial en dictadura.”

Germany.<sup>108</sup> In Bustos' appropriation of the German footage, the Olympic cauldron is lit just as the whimsical, colorful choreography of the dancers converge on the center circle of the Estadio Monumental's football field in the other film. The video piece concludes with familiar sights: simultaneous panoramic shots of the Monumental and Berlin Olympiastadion packed to the rafters, and coinciding with the beginning of Videla's address, a close-up shot of Adolf Hitler.

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<sup>108</sup> Eloisa Otero, "MUSAC / Adriana Bustos o el relato crítico de una artista observadora de la historia," in *Tam Tam Press*. León: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León. June 16, 2017.

APPENDIX



**Fig. 1.** Guillermo Gonzalez Ruiz and Ronald Shakespear, Argentina '78 official logo, 1973. (*Summa*, iss. 117, October 1977)



**Fig. 2.** Lance Wyman, Games of the XIX Olympiad Mexico '68 official logo, 1968. (Almeida 2013)

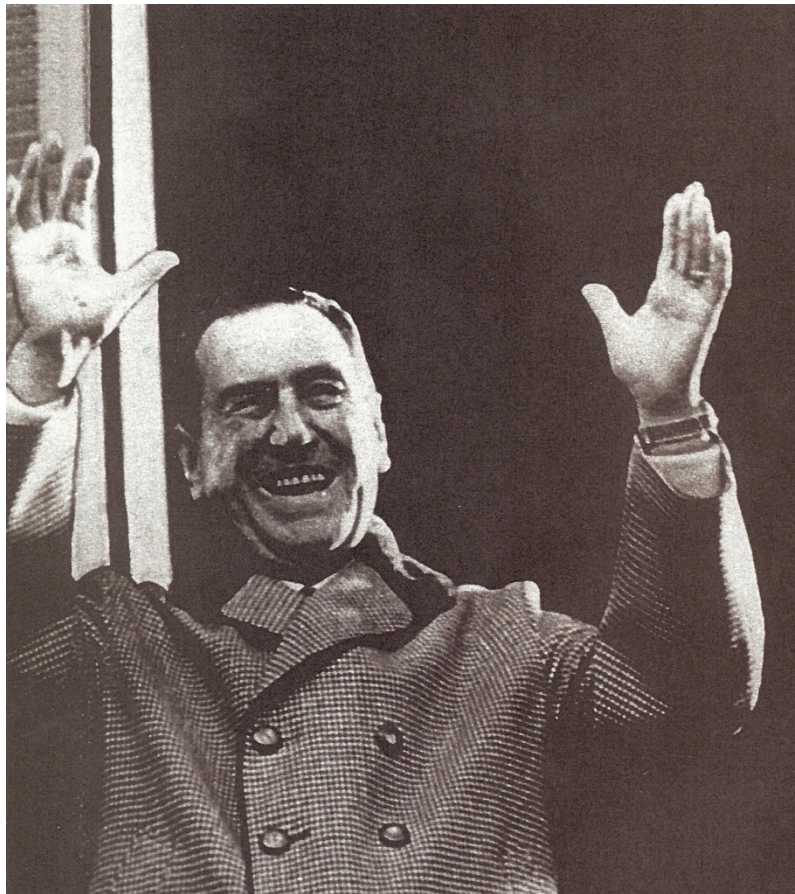


Munich1972

**Fig. 3.** Otl Aicher, Games of the XX Olympiad Munich 1972 official logo, 1972. (Almeida 2013)



**Fig. 4.** Luis Riera, Argentina '78 official logo (2nd version), 1974.  
(Almeida 2013)



**Fig. 5.** Juan Domingo Perón, deceased former president of Argentina (1973-1974).





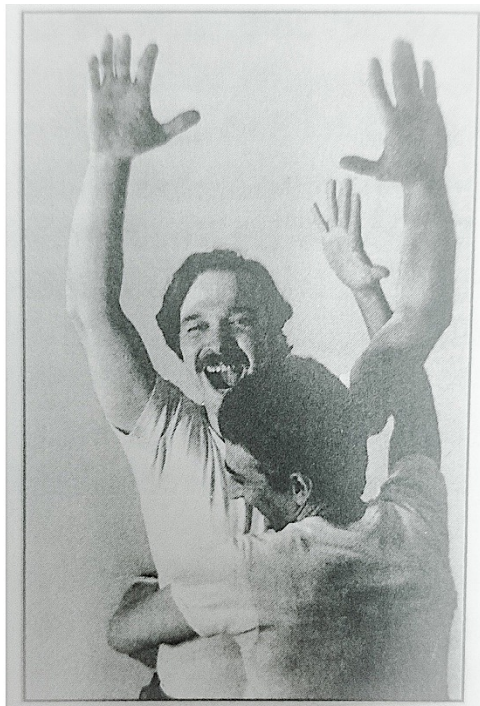
**Fig. 6.** *Mundialito* (also known as *Gauchito*), official mascot of the 1978 World Cup. (Almeida 2013)



**Fig. 7.** Manuel García Ferré, Redesigned *Mundialito* (also known as *Gauchito*), official mascot of the 1978 World Cup. (*Summa*, iss, 177, October 1977)



**Fig. 8.** Eduardo Lopez, *Argentina '78 / XI Campeonato Mundial de Fútbol* official poster, 1977. (Bauso 2018)



**Fig. 9.** Eduardo López, model photograph for *Argentina '78* poster, 1977. (Bauso 2018)



Fig. 10. Burson-Marsteller & Associates, “Los argentinos somos derechos y humanos” sticker, 1979. (Almeida 2013)



Fig. 11. Front cover of *Somos*, April 14, 1978: “Desde Europa: COMLOT CONTRA LA ARGENTINA.” (Left: Almeida 2013; right: image taken by author)



Fig. 12. “Defienda su Argentina” advertisement with detachable postcard, *Para Ti*, August 1978. (Bauso 2018)



Fig. 13. “Mostremos al mundo como somos los argentinos” Mundial ‘78 advertisement, 1978. (Video courtesy of *Raro VHS*)



Fig. 14. COBA, *Boycott de la Coupe du Monde 78 / Pas de football entre les camps de concentration*, 1978.



Fig. 15. Anonymous. “ARGENTINA 78: Fußball ja—folter nein!” 1978.



Fig. 16. Zille-Kollektiv, “Argentina ‘78,” 1978

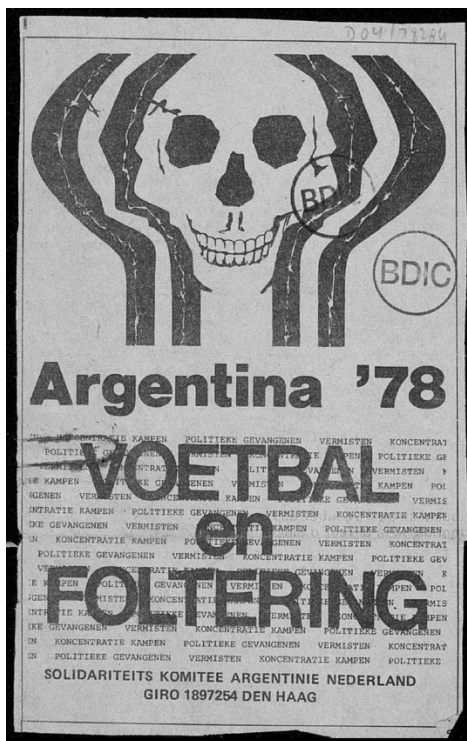


Fig. 17. SKAN, “Argentina ‘78: VOETBAL en FOLTERING.” 1978.



**Fig. 18.** Plantu. “Logo officiel” cartoon, in *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* 1978. (Image courtesy of Archivo Nacional de la Memoria)



**Fig. 19.** Movimiento Peronista Montoneros, “Argentina campeón sin milicos ni orejon,” 1978. (Image courtesy of Archivo Nacional de la Memoria)



**Fig. 20.** Lesueur, “Et paf! Deux zero!” in *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* 1978.  
(Image courtesy of Archivo Nacional de la Memoria)



**Fig. 21.** Puig Rosado, “El parto de La Justicia,” in *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* 1978.  
(Image courtesy of Archivo Nacional de la Memoria)



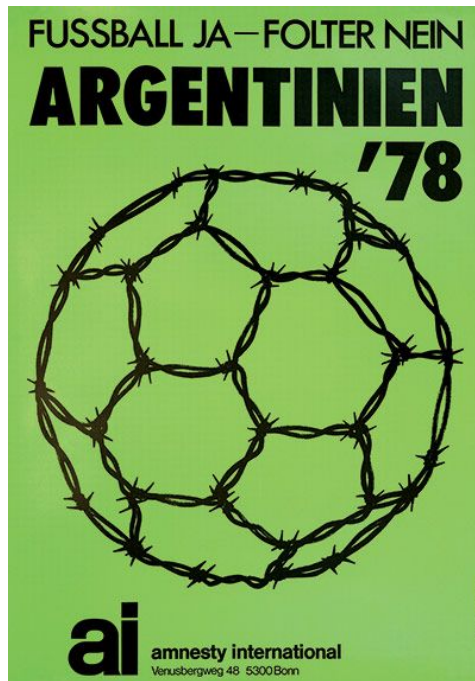


Fig. 22. Amnesty International. “Argentinien ‘78: Fussball Ja—Folter Nein.” 1978.

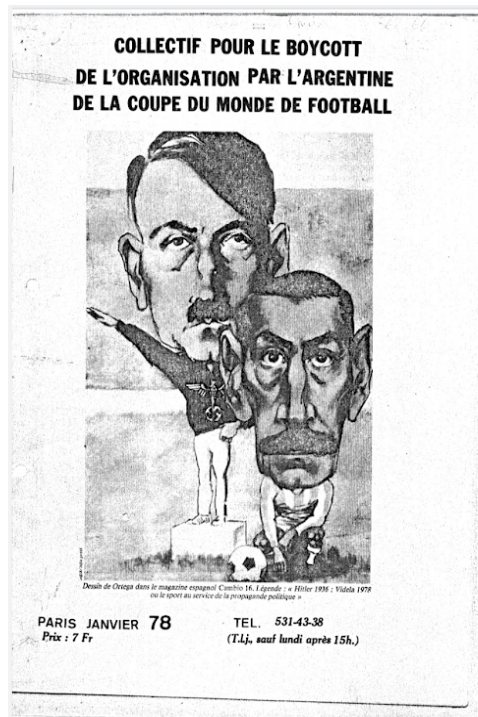


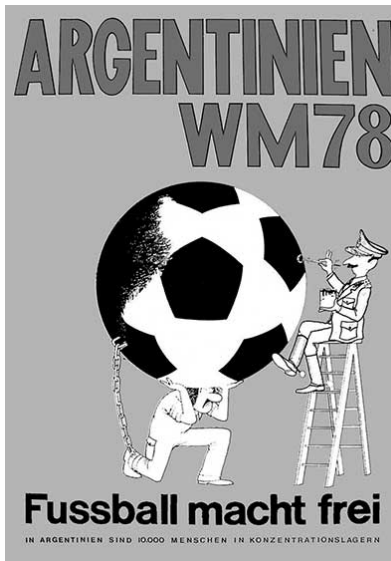
Fig. 23. Enrique Ortega, “Hitler 36, Videla 78; or sport in service of political propaganda,” in *Cambio 16*, 1977. (Image courtesy of Archivo Nacional de la Memoria)



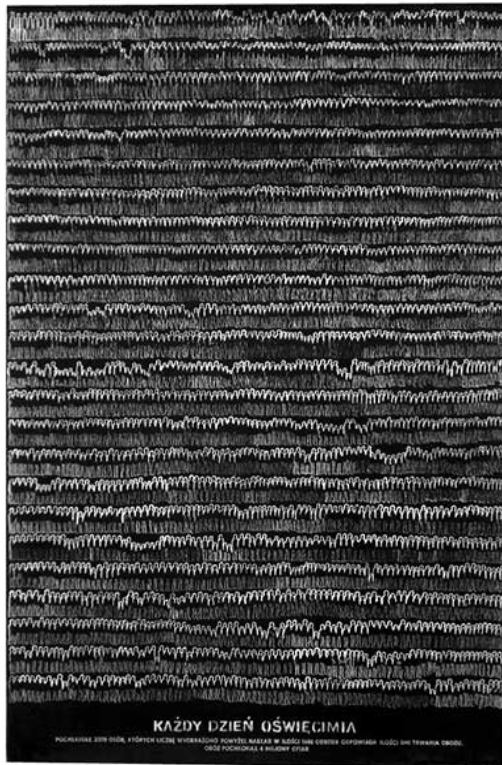
**Fig. 24.** COBA, *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* 1978.  
(Image courtesy of Archivo Nacional de la Memoria)



**Fig. 25.** Bellenger, untitled illustration, in COBA, *La Coupe déborde, Videla!* 1978.  
(Image courtesy of Archivo Nacional de la Memoria)



**Fig. 26.** Anonymous. “Argentinien WM 78: fussball macht frei.” 1978. (Almeida 2013)



**Fig. 27.** Jerzy Skapski, *Każdy Dzień Oświecienia* (*Every Day at Auschwitz*), 1978. (Almeida 2013)



**Fig. 28.** Rodolfo Aguerreberry, Julio Flores, and Guillermo Kexel. *El Siluetazo*. Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 21, 1983. (Photograph by Eduardo Gil)



**Fig. 29.** Adriana Bustos, *Ceremonia Nacional*, 2016.

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