

eventually, on condition that you keep quiet and be patient. Months passed in an atmosphere that can well be imagined. Once in a while, a police officer came by to collect five or ten thousand pesos for meager and illusory "information." Then, one day, at the end of his rope, tired of trusting and hoping, Giudice cracked and, without a word to anyone, decided to make contact with the Ecumenical Commission on Human Rights. The reaction was immediate.

Giudice was kidnapped a week later, taken blindfolded to an abandoned house on the outskirts of the capital. There, he saw his daughter again: she was scarcely recognizable, battered, half her teeth missing, her body covered with bruises, gashed on the neck, the loins, the breasts where the torturers attached the electrodes. And then began a nightmare before his very eyes, the eyes of a father sick with pain and despair: a rat introduced through the vagina into the girl's womb.

I have been assured that there have been thousands of such tragedies in the past two years. There is not a single Argentinian, I was told by an architect in Rosario, who has not been affected in some way or other. And yet it is rare for anyone to speak to you spontaneously about it. It is difficult to bring the subject up without seeing even the most open faces close up immediately. "No. I don't know anything. I don't want to talk about it." A determination to forget; a passion for ignorance. This is what strikes me most in the men and women I meet. And this is true of all of them, *Videlistas* as well as those in the opposition, the young and the old, intellectuals and simple people.

It's tough nowadays in any case to get a "progressive" to talk; most bury themselves, brooding, ruminating in silence on their share of the shame and the disgust. Only a troublemaker tries to talk politics to a taxi driver, who is well-informed but icily noncommittal, his eyes dark and his expression tense as soon as the matter is brought up. This is not pre-war Germany where some people probably didn't know the extent of the Nazi atrocities. This is something else, a more complex sentiment, a deaf determination to repress the horror, to live inside oneself without dreaming, to live as if this were only a bad dream that didn't concern you. The result is a climate of somewhat forced gaiety, an impression of an easy and artificial life which the passing tourists find so evident. It is true that the streets of Buenos Aires are

crowded until dawn, that the cafés and restaurants remain open all night. But I believe that, behind the clamor, in the dark caves of this cellophane-wrapped dictatorship, there resides a prodigious, painful opposition.

In Buenos Aires, the people are afraid; afraid of themselves, afraid of others, afraid of today and of tomorrow. It is an undefinable fear, without any object and without any "reason," like a cancer that gnaws at them, that twists their bodies and faces. For example, they are afraid to talk: I was having dinner one evening with a famous physician, close to one of the members of the governing *junta*, probably untouchable, and in any case a *Vidalista*. I told him about my visit to San Justo, asked his advice, suggested he might even intervene, when all of a sudden, right in the middle of dinner, he pretended to have an urgent call and left me without warning, his expression drawn and rigid. He had become pitiable, a man suddenly afraid of talking too much, afraid of words as such, of their strange and malevolent powers.

Thus, a professor of philosophy, an original *Peronista*, told me about the deceitfulness with which he masked his courses; of how he surprised himself sometimes by saying Aristotle instead of Marx, Shakespeare instead of Lenin. There is a fear of thinking, yes even of thinking, as if even then this "subversive spirit" that the generals of Videla are laboring to run into the earth might come out.

An even more telling experience: I met and talked at length with a young industrialist, somewhat to the left, who made the strangest, the most incredible request: that I agree to record a false interview in which he would praise the military regime. Not for publication, of course, but just in case, you never know, if something unfortunately might happen to him.

I also saw a politician, close to Admiral Massera, expounding and discoursing like an expert, suddenly go to pieces, flush and look haggard because the waiter had just told him that a plainclothes policeman was seated behind him. When a people has reached the point that survival of one man has to depend on a talisman he would carry and the pride of another is based only on superstition, fascism has already triumphed.

In Buenos Aires, the police force is everyone and no one. It is in the streets, and in people's heads. It is the pretty waitress who lowers her voice when you approach. It is the neighbor beyond the

apartment wall, who may be listening to you and may one day save his skin by handing you over to the torturers. It is that mass of men and women who have swapped their sidearms and gold braid for civilian clothes for 1000 or 2000 pesos . . . their misery in the midst of misery, an almsgiving for their humiliation. The police force is also this anonymous passenger, a would-be informer probably, on the plane from Paris, who pretends to have seen me hide some compromising documents, and who hastens to make this known on landing. Are these details? Yes, details without importance perhaps, but taken together they form the tissue of a police state.

At the airport, to welcome me, there were five policemen who questioned me for five hours. They were correct, very correct. They were search zealots, simply, in the freezing main room of the police headquarters at Ezeiza where, between the cold and the length of time, I almost lost my assurance. They were suspicious zealots also: "Ah, your name is Lévy? And your nationality, French, you say? But Lévy is a Jewish name. . . ." There are signs that can't be contradicted. For example, in Buenos Aires the *Nouvel Observateur* and the reports of Amnesty International are "subversive and compromising" documents. A member of the French embassy told me that the secret police probably followed me from Paris, watching my moves, the places I went, my contacts with my friend Marek Halter who tried to organize a worldwide boycott of World Cup soccer matches in Argentina. The details don't make any great difference; they are routine undoubtedly, but they establish the atmosphere.

In general, terror in Argentina is not as massively and horrifyingly evident as it is seen to be from afar. It is an infinitely more diffuse system, refined and hidden. My interviewee V. seemed to know all about it. He even claimed to have had a hand, at the beginning of his career, in building the famous School of Maritime Engineering, 300 yards from the stadium. "Here is where the prisoners are kept in small, highly mobile units. They are never tortured for long in the same place. The same thing for the torturers; they aren't allowed to torture the same prisoners for too long. There is constant turnover. Because some day we'll have had enough. They don't want to allow us the possibility of knowing each other too well, of getting together, of talking about it."

This is what could be called the Ar-

gentine model. No concentration camps like Pinochet's in Chile; no crowded, barbed-wired stadium. But small installations, caves or apartments, 60 in all for Buenos Aires, scattered in the outskirts. And floating torture chambers, like the ship *Bahia Aguirre* in the harbor. In short, a kind of archipelago whose geography grows more and more sophisticated.

Not infrequently, in order to confuse the trail, prisoners are transferred, in small groups, without any apparent reason, from one center to another. Sometimes they are even "freed" in twos or threes, only to be met at the gate of

the prison by a new team that takes them to a new center. The penal administration can then prove, on the basis of the records, that the missing persons left their cells safe and sound. Even though at that very moment they are rotting in some cave under constant torture.

This is what probably happened to two French nuns, Sister Léonie and Sister Alice, when first arrested, were taken to a detention center under the jurisdiction of General Suarez Massone's first army corps. A week later, they were transferred to the School of Maritime Engineering. From there, they

were very quickly moved to an unknown destination. According to V., this truth in prisoners is based on the reality that presently affects the governing groups in the *mobilis*. The various groups trade prisoners like pledges, signs of war or friendship, depending on your point of view.

Bernard-Henri Lévy

Bernard-Henri Lévy is the author of *La barbarie à visage humain* (Grasset) and leader of the "new philosophers." This article was translated from the French by Leonard Maltine.

It's time for America to re-invent Europe.

The Old World in Washington

by Henry Fairlie

It was curious to snoop around the recent NATO meetings in Washington: like taking a journey back, not 3000 miles across the Atlantic, but over almost three decades to the 1950s. The more I looked from afar at the ministers and officials and from closer up at some of the journalists who were accompanying them, the more they all seemed to be men of pale blue eyes and steel gray hair, with the wintry gaze of those who have seen too much of fear and failure at the heart of the Old World, all of them carrying briefcases so thin that they must have contained only one *very important* document. I had especially forgotten how much the European journalist is like the European official. They seem to be interchangeable; and given the press in Europe, as likely as not they are.

Why do the German journalists always go about in pairs, like the German officers in old war movies, talking intently to each other but looking straight ahead, as if they are always ready to come to attention? Why do the French journalists look as if they all went to the *École Nationale Supérieure*, and now belong to the *Quart d'Orsay* rather than report on it, speaking excitably to each other as if reading communiqués that announce yet another *démarche*? Why do the Italian journalists all appear to be so impeccably dressed, with the odor of Roman after-shave clinging to them, but also with an air of moral disreputableness, as if they had taken just

one more bribe than was really necessary? As for the Canadian press room at the Capital Hilton, no one in it ever seemed to talk to anyone else, which I put down to the failure of Mr. Trudeau's policy of bilingualism. But the main impression throughout was of *déjà vu*.

This is not surprising. Not much in Europe has changed in the 20 years since the Common Market was founded or even the 30 years since NATO was created. (This is a considerable tribute to Europe's success in foiling the Russians.) Europe has recovered from the devastation of war; its various countries have worked in different degrees their economic miracles; it generally shares the affluence of the developed world. But that is really all. It is odd today to think that Britain once pleaded and wheedled to gain entry to the Common Market, and that Charles de Gaulle used all his Gallic effrontery to keep Britain out. What did it all matter? Today there is no European Community in the sense that was envisaged, in spite of the proliferation of the organizations: the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Defense Community, the European Economic Community, the European Community for Atomic Energy. The one organization that has unquestionably been a success is NATO, and that is because the United States is a member of it and its leader.

Yet we cannot conceive of the world without this

Still, Martinez de Hoz's sensible prescriptions are not popular with the people, who continue to prefer Perón's peculiar schemes. Martinez de Hoz is dispensing real medicine to a society addicted to laetrile. This may explain why Juan Perón continues to be venerated by most of his countrymen. He understood their penchant for symbolic gestures, and for almost 30 years—as an active figure in Argentine political life and as an exile—he pandered to their needs.

Today his leninized mummy rests in a secret vault outside of Buenos Aires, next to the expertly embalmed corpse of Evita. The Argentines, with their almost Slavic passion for necropolitics, speak of these two cadavers as if they somehow possessed the power to

influence the Argentine scene today. Perhaps they do. Before Isabelita's ouster, the authorities planned to house Juan and Evita in a massive Peronist shrine, not unlike the great tomb constructed by the Soviets to house Lenin's corpse. The two tyrants were to be joined by the body of Juan Manuel Rosas, a brutal 19th century gaucho despot whose career was, in many ways, similar to Perón's. It was to have been one more reminder to the *descamisados* that their leader was still with them. The Argentines tolerate General Videla, but they will never love him the way they continue to love Perón. They want the thieves back, and they are prepared to bide their time until the moment is right for Peronism to return.

Argentina Today, II: The People are Afraid

Buenos Aires

San Justo is a ravaged, desolate suburb on the west side of Buenos Aires, a single large ruin made up of vacant lots, scrap metal dumps and heaps of garbage. Here and there lie the *complejos*, improbable structures, half housing projects, half shanty towns, planted seemingly by accident between two rock piles.

For a long time now, about 500 squatters have set themselves up there as best they can, mostly families of poor workers or the unemployed who subsist on \$20 to \$40 a month. In spite of this, they heroically resisted the intrusions of the police for a long time. Last March, for the first time, things went wrong and fascism made its way into the *campesiniento*.

Anna M. is barely 30 years old, has a host of children; her face is already withered, pained, pathetic. She receives us in the tiny room into which the entire family is squeezed since the disappearance of her husband. "One day they came . . . not the police but men in civilian clothes with hoods over their faces. They smashed down the doors or blew up the locks with dynamite. Each time, they forced the women to strip. Sometimes they raped them, not all of them, only the young ones, always in front of their husbands and children. Then, they beat up everybody, brutally, as if they wanted to kill us, even the children, when they cried, or couldn't hold their hands up any longer, the poor things. And then, when they were through, they took away the man, one

each time, 22 in all. That went on every day. They must have enjoyed coming back and frightening us again and again. It was terrible for us. You found yourself waiting for them, like friends you expect to visit on Sunday. And every time, you wonder if it is over this time, or will it happen again tomorrow. In the *complejo* we don't much like the police, but once a woman went to them to report what was going on. She never came back. Now, we simply wait. And we wait for her to come back. If you keep saying that, maybe it will help."

Where are these men and women today, these workers, simple people, who have become shadows since they were carried off by the private militia? They haven't been officially arrested; they have swelled the ranks of the phantom army that haunts the beautiful residential neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. Snatched out of their homes, from their families and tribes, already grown old in all probability, nameless and faceless, they literally no longer exist, except perhaps on some secret register in a jail infested with disease. This is approximately what I was told when I went with a list of names, accompanied by two lawyers, to the district police inspector. The police officer who saw us put on the most aggrieved air as he told me that I was talking about a band of terrorists who had gone underground. This is what I was also told by the publisher of a government-owned daily newspaper to whom I brought the same list. He was

amused, however, a knowing expression on his face. For him there were no two ways about it: these guys from *Complejo 17* were skirt chasers; they had simply taken off to take up their boyhood way of life again someplace else.

Robert Giudice, 50 years old, a businessman by profession, lives on Paraguay Street. He asked to see me and, despite my hesitations, begged me to use his name. We talked at the Sheraton Hotel, in a room that a Japanese sportswriter put at my disposal for important occasions when I preferred to avoid being overheard by indiscreet witnesses. He sat across from me, slumped in an armchair. I had the odd feeling that all the time he was speaking to me he neither saw me nor heard me. His voice was dull, monotonous, as if he were telling an anonymous story, separate from himself. And yet, he came to tell me his own experience, a horrifying story, almost beyond belief. It is the testimony of a dead man.

It all began one night last winter when a group of men burst into his house on Paraguay Street. Everybody was herded into a central room: Giudice and his wife, the three younger children, ages eight, nine and 11, and the oldest daughter, aged 22, whom they had come to find. The next day, when Giudice went to the police, they were barely willing to register his demand for *habeas corpus*. Your daughter, they told him, has undoubtedly been kidnapped by an underground group. We will find her