
Buenos Aires, dictatorship, city and waste

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Résumé

The year 1976 brought a peace imposed in a burning silence. There was nothing left of that exuberant and contradictory militant spring. I remember the letter V of the peronista's victory painted in a building gate. The building's janitor made a huge effort in cleaning it up, like the person who wants to delete the footprint of a forbidden past. Our corner, Cordoba and Callao streets, was changing following a rhythm of the new waves. The times of the military boots were adverse to the popular markets, like the traditional market San Nicolas, where we used to make purchases. The local markets were opaqued by the brilliant business posters of the delivery and fast food stores, such as The "Pollos Trak", Pumper Nic and The Embers.

In a corner of Santa Fe and Callao streets there was a branch of Scioli Appliances store, one of the outlets selling of the products of import The Scioli and Fravega stores plus the Capitol and America cinemas and the dress stores, had created a quiet and peaceful shopping trip that prepared the landing of the "Shopping Centers". In this way, the city had enhanced the attraction of consumption. Nobody knew the fate of the waste and the increase of the packaging and plastics, which in some periphery of the city would fill the earth.

Going up Callao Avenue to the north, shops became exclusive and prohibitive, such as Callao Marine, which showed wetsuits, surfboards, skateboards, t-shirts and tights, which laughed of our thin wallet. There, in the depth of the Recoleta and North neighborhoods the waves of time did not feel. Everything seemed to have stopped after the urban reconstruction after the yellow fever epidemic at the end of the nineteenth century. Only the earthquake of Cauçete, in Andes the Mountains in 1977, had awakened the stillness of those neighborhoods. The hanging chandeliers started to move. "Come in", said Mrs. Elida in her room in Alvear Avenue believing that someone was knocking at her door when the earth was shaking.

Further north, Libertador Avenue had the beauty of the French parks and the elegance of the immutable geographies. It has always been a land of sculptures. Along it passed the sumptuous military parade of July 9, 1976. The blue tide of the historic Horse Grenadiers was followed by the olive green of the soldiers and the tanks were confused with the colors of the 3 Febrero Park. It was the visible march; the other one was nocturnal and underground. There the Falcon Ford cars went to the clandestine centers, where workers and students were kidnapped, they picked them up as human waste.

The parade was the monochromatic spectacle that the military would offer to our society. It was a manifestation of order against chaos. The march established the rhythm; the berets looked North while the military plan aimed to the far and unknown south. They looked to

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the South Region, where the fatherland got big killing native communities and conquering supposed deserts. They pointed to the south in their minds, where the Pampa was blue.

The urban march bordered the big military regiments and the imposing sculptures of the northern area of the city. While in the south of the city the famous sculpture of Lola Mora, "Las Nereidas", was secluded by the navy. That sculpture was forbidden because it was considered pornographic. In the same way, thousands of bodies were secluded. Those inert bodies were also subversive.

Walking down Callao to the South was Corrientes Avenue. It had always been the different one, and it was the way of bohemia, the lost readers and writers. It was a place of theaters and coffees. By then, the marquees were covered by the entertainment of the time. There it was the roguish and depoliticized humor of Olmedo and Porcel and the fashionable showgirls. There, those bulky bodies and the smile of the humorists were the curves of concealment; they were the bodies of the entertainment.

Some steps beyond, Rivadavía Avenue was the border between the north and the south, between Sandro's pelvis and the narrow throat of Cesar Banana Pueyrredón[1]. It was the zero of the Argentinian routes with the Parliament frozen in its source. It was replaced by a harmonic fountain with colored lights and dancing waters following the rhythm of classical music. Imposed music had absorbed the silence, it was the eternity of the classic against the turbulence of the popular, and it was the qualified vote of the high culture.

Further south, the motorway 25 de Mayo, which was inaugurated towards the end of 1980, coated the city of gray. In its bowels, the highway had parking lots, tennis and paddle courts. As time passed, we knew that under the motorway there was a clandestine detention center called El Atlético. The few people who survived identified that hell because that place was in the way to the Boca Juniors Football stadium. The songs of the football supporters were heard under the floor tiles.

The highway was the military fascination; it had the magic of ordering the territory. It established the circuit of the quick and beautiful city, where the modern cars would circulate. They had the power to demolish and to make debris. Mayor Cacciatore's plan was to make urban land throwing debris into the river. He wanted to build a neighborhood for the elite: Puerto Madero. By will of the environmental movement that place became a nature reserve. There ancient port barracks were recycled and apartments, restaurants and universities were built. Cacciatore's dream landed there.

Motorways also intended to limit the city by establishing its borders. In particular, the Camino del Buen Ayre aspired to surround the city by establishing a limit to its growth, like a green belt. However, our urban chastity belt could not contain the promiscuous growth of the metropolis.

From Córdoba Avenue to the West, the cement had disciplined the lawn of public spaces. The gray racks encapsulated the green, which created an atmosphere of insipid modernity.

The buildings had grown like mushrooms after rain. New towers were dethroning emblematic buildings such as the Alas and the Cavanac. The air of the city was changing, old waste incinerators were forbidden.[2] The rubbish went to some unknown place. It was carried by a white truck with the legend "Keep Buenos Aires Clean". The sky was invaded by the towers and the slums taken out by bulldozers together with the waste.[3] The last military Mayor said: "To live in Buenos Aires you should merit the City"[4]

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Sandro and Cesar Banana Pueyrredón were two famous singers of that time.

Mots-Clés: Buenos Aires, Dictatorship, City, Waste, Memories