

The Collapse of the Federalists: Rural Revolt in Argentina 1863-1876

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The lengthy political party conflicts in Argentina following the wars of independence concluded in the early 1870s when the *Unitarios*, now more commonly known as the Liberals (*Liberales*), defeated the last of four major rebellions by the Federalists (*Federales*). Of the four insurrections, the first two—in 1863 and 1866-1867, led by Ángel V. Peñaloza and Felipe Varela—occurred in the western provinces, and the second two, in 1870 and 1873, under Ricardo López Jordán, in the eastern province of Entre Ríos. The origins of all four movements lay in the country's turbulent political history during the previous fifty years since the outbreak of the wars of independence. In part, the rebellions reflected resentments against the rulers of the province of Buenos Aires for monopolizing the revenues from foreign trade. They became constitutional disputes between the Liberal supporters of national state-building and the Federalist proponents of provincial autonomy. On a local level, they became struggles between town and country, and ethnic and class conflicts between the white Liberal urban elite and the Federalist rural *mestizo gauchos*. Above all, the rebellions of the 1860s and early 1870s became reactions to the aggressive Liberal movement based in Buenos Aires. In 1861 an English visitor argued that the construction of railroads would spontaneously effect the social and political changes desired by the Liberals. "But the unquiet spirit of these intriguing doctores," as he called the leaders of the Liberals, "is not content to let nature work in her own fashion: they imagine they have a holy mission to redeem the provinces from barbarism and caudillos."¹

Dominant in earlier decades, by the 1860s the Federalist movement was declining steeply. The Federalists were weakest in the province of Buenos Aires, where the Liberals steadily consolidated their power following the overthrow of Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1852. After 1852, resistance

by the Federalists lapsed into sudden acts of violence, tinged with millenarian features, mostly directed against European immigrants. In the frontier town of Tandil, in the early hours of New Year's Day, 1872, the followers of "Tata Dios" massacred more than thirty immigrant farmers and their families. Tata Dios, the sobriquet of a Chilean-born mystic named Gerónimo E. Solané, was translated by the English language press in Buenos Aires as "Father Almighty." Solané became famous in Tandil "for the wonderful character of his cures and the peculiarity of his habits." He preached to the gauchos "in mystical language...giving them [Federal] red-and-white flags, and scarlet ribbons for their hats. His watchword was 'Death to all Foreigners.'"²

In the provinces of Córdoba, Corrientes, and Santa Fe, the Liberals now held the upper hand, although the Federalists were still capable of sporadic acts of force. In December, 1867, for example, two thousand gauchos rode into Rosario, then a city of around ten thousand people. For several days the invaders galloped through the streets firing carbines and revolvers, and terrorizing the population.³ The invaders posted a manifesto in the streets proclaiming the "The Splendid Triumph of the People," that concluded with the old Federalist slogan: "Death to the Savage Unitarios!"⁴ In Corrientes, remnants of Federalism survived into the 1880s, as the diplomat Sir Horace Rumbold noted during a tour of the province in 1880. "We were crossed on the square," he wrote, "by a number of mounted gauchos armed with lances, and booted and spurred, all adorned with sashes and ribbons round their hats of the bright crimson which, in the days of Rosas, was the badge of federalism."⁵

Elsewhere, the Federal movement remained strongest in the provinces in which cattle ranching predominated over peasant agriculture. In the 1860s its chief bastion lay in the province of Entre Ríos, under General Justo José de Urquiza, the conqueror of Rosas in 1852, in a society built on cattle and meat-salting. A second center of Federalism lay in the similarly pastoral but much poorer western provinces.⁶ The western region illustrated the strong association between Federalism and *mestizaje*. In this area, the small, white cliques of merchants in the towns supported the Liberals, but the rural population of mestizo herdsmen, *labradores*, and female domestic textile workers remained solidly Federalist. In rural Mendoza, for example, the population was described as a mixture of Spaniards and the "Guarpe tribes," but in the city of Mendoza whites predominated.⁷ Similar patterns became visible in adjacent provinces.⁸

Federalism was weak in northwest Argentina, in the provinces of Santiago del Estero, Tucumán, Salta, and Jujuy. Salta, for example, "never belonged to the federal system," while in Tucumán, "membership of the Liberal party was almost a religion."⁹ Socially, this area differed from the west in that the

gauchos were smaller in number and far less significant politically. The economy of the northwest was based on peasant agriculture as opposed to cattle, a difference reflected in its denser population, the existence of a larger number of indigenous peasant agricultural communities (as opposed to the gaucho herdsmen), and the prevalence of Quechua.¹⁰ A white ruling class governed the peasant population of the northwest, headed by Manuel and Antonino Taboada, the dominant figures in Santiago del Estero. Manuel Taboada served as governor of that province five times, while his brother commanded the provincial militia. A third brother, Gaspar Taboada, took little part in politics but became widely known as the province's wealthiest merchant. The Taboadas were descended from a Spanish merchant who settled in the region during the late eighteenth century. They gained control over the province on the death of their uncle, Juan Felipe Ibarra, one of the caudillos of the Rosas era, and ruled the province for more than twenty years by establishing close ties with the Quechua-speaking peasants farming irrigated lands along the banks of the rivers Dulce and Juramento.¹¹ The Taboadas became Liberals chiefly because they became enemies of the Rosas regime in Buenos Aires. A veteran of the civil wars against Rosas, Antonino Taboada maintained a strong personal link with Bartolomé Mitre, the Liberal governor of Buenos Aires and later president of Argentina, whom he met in exile in Chile in 1852.¹²

Rather than ruling the peasants of Santiago del Estero directly, the Taboadas became the informal patriarchs of loosely-knit and independent peasant communities. In 1863 Thomas J. Hutchinson, an Irish businessman and later the British consul in Rosario, visited Santiago del Estero in a search for land for cotton plantations. Antonino Taboada expressed enthusiasm for the project and offered to donate some of his own land, but not supply any labor, and suggested hiring immigrant farmers, since local workers would demand two months' wages in advance.¹³ In October, 1871, *La Prensa* expressed surprise at the genuine sense of loss the death of Manuel Taboada provoked among the people of Santiago del Estero, concluding that his family's popularity sprang from its paternalistic support for the poor.¹⁴ The support the Taboadas offered their clientele included the plundering expeditions to nearby provinces, led by Antonino Taboada, that resulted in his men being dubbed the *montoneros celestes*, the "Blue" or Liberal guerrillas as opposed to the "Reds" or Federalists. In 1867, for example, having occupied the town of La Rioja, Taboada and his men departed with everything they could muster: cattle, horses, blankets, even captive men and women in "cuffs and fetters."¹⁵ Later that year, while supposedly defending the province against the Federalists led by Varela, Taboada's army pillaged Salta, prompting the governor to complain that "the people of Salta do not

know whom to fear most, Varela's hordes or those from Santiago del Estero."¹⁶

Both political parties continued to employ violence, but by the 1860s they were becoming identified with specific regions, economies, and types of society. Occasionally, their respective forces roughly balanced, provoking a struggle for supremacy between them. One such conflict occurred in the city of San Juan in late 1860 and early 1861. Although located in the Federalist west, San Juan possessed a larger agricultural population, more trade, and a stronger Liberal party than in the surrounding provinces. In December, 1860, an armed band of Liberals instigated by Antonio Aberastain, a prominent merchant of San Juan, attacked the residence of the Federalist governor, José Antonio Virasoro, killing him and fourteen of his followers. In January, 1861, Juan Saá, the Federalist governor of neighboring San Luis, led his forces into San Juan to exact revenge. Saá's cavalry routed the small force of townsmen raised by Aberastain. Those who escaped being lanced by the cavalymen while attempting to flee were taken prisoner, stripped of their clothing, and, at the height of summer, forced to march on foot toward the town. Aberastain himself collapsed from heat exhaustion, and was shot. Once they reached the town, Saá's men began killing men and assaulting women, some of whom, Liberal propagandists claimed, were roped by the neck to the tails of horses and dragged through the streets. In San Juan, Saá was blamed for the death of four hundred people.¹⁷ The events of San Juan illustrated the class roots of the party conflicts. Following the attack on Virasoro, numerous witnesses identified the Liberals as members of the upper class, composed mostly of "merchants, wealthy householders, and artisans."¹⁸ In an episode that suggested the strong popular base of Federalism in San Juan itself, following Saá's arrival, a mob of poor sacked Aberastain's home and sexually assaulted his three daughters.¹⁹

Peñaloza: The Liberal Conquest of the West

In the early 1860s the Liberals, led by Mitre, imposed control over the whole country and, as part of this process, defeated the rebellion of 1863 led by Ángel Vicente Peñaloza. Born in 1796 and now in his sixties, Peñaloza was known throughout Argentina as *El Chacho*, "The Boy." He embodied the term *caudillo*. In one definition, a *caudillo* was "a man born in the province who wins the trust [of the people] by bravery or skill, and [to whom] they remain devoted to the death."²⁰ Peñaloza had thousands of enthusiastic followers, conceded *El Nacional*, a leading Liberal newspaper in Buenos Aires, adding a typically disparaging comment: "As soon as his filthy crowd of poor appeared, the people began to round up horses for the montonera."²¹

Attempting to explain the prestige he commanded, Peñaloza himself emphasized the long years he had supported men and women sunk in poverty, "less as a [military] chief than as a father begging for bread...a protector of the dispossessed."²² As a small landowner and a member of a well-established family, he was socially superior to most of his followers, but he deliberately lowered himself to their rank, calling himself a mere gaucho: "I do not know why the people of my class love me, or why they follow me. I don't know how to dress, or wear a uniform. I know nothing of tactics and military ceremonies."²³ Peñaloza's power base lay in the Llanos district of La Rioja, one of the poorest, driest, most inaccessible and underdeveloped areas of the entire western region, but his influence extended throughout the west. "The people of La Rioja adore Peñaloza," observed one of the Liberal generals. "Without him no one will lift a finger. [But] do not believe that his influence is restricted to this province, because all its neighbors are the same...He controls all the governments [of the western provinces] because the people will follow no one but him."²⁴

Peñaloza's rebellion occurred shortly after the revolutionary shift in national politics of the early 1860s. In September, 1861, Mitre, the Liberal governor of the province of Buenos Aires, defeated Urquiza in the battle of Pavón, provoking the collapse of the *Confederación Argentina*, the Federalist dominated alliance of the provinces established in 1854. Eleven months after the battle of Pavón, in October, 1862, Mitre became the president of the newly founded *República Argentina*. During the interval between Urquiza's defeat and Mitre's assumption as president, all the provinces except Entre Ríos fell under the control of Mitre's generals. In the northwest, where the Liberals were strong, the transition was achieved easily.²⁵ In the strongly Federalist west, by contrast, the change of regimes proved more difficult to consolidate. The military occupation of the west led to widespread looting of horses and cattle by the Liberal armies and the imposition of unpopular Liberal governors. In western Córdoba, for example, "the country districts are in a state of complete demoralization, the lives and prosperity of its inhabitants made the sport of infamous judges and commandants...The shooting of men in cold blood, without even the form of a trial, and for no offence recognisable by the law, still goes on at the will of the Commandant."²⁶ Travelling through La Rioja in early 1863, a visiting Liberal from Buenos Aires encountered a population terrorized by the Liberal troops under General José M. Arredondo.²⁷

Peñaloza's proclamations and correspondence constantly illustrated the defensive nature of the struggle he was waging. He fought to protect what he called the "sacred rights and liberties" of his people, that the Liberals had violently taken away.²⁸ He denounced the new Liberal governors as

"dictators [who were] terrorizing their own brothers, banishing them, and confiscating their goods. The whole people demands action to restore the liberties usurped by a handful of wayward men who have no principles but absolutism."²⁹ "It was never our intention to rebel," he claimed when skirmishes began between his men and the Liberals, "only to defend our homes and lives."³⁰ When Peñaloza formally proclaimed a rebellion in April, 1863, he denounced "the arbitrary conduct of the [Liberal] rulers who have thrown away the law, destroyed property, failed to protect the lives of the people. [His followers were] tired of despotic and arbitrary domination, and now propose to mete out justice. All the men have nothing else to lose but their lives, and are willing to sacrifice themselves on the battlefield, defending their liberties and laws."³¹ In the rebellion of 1863, Peñaloza repeatedly demonstrated the swift mobility that characterized the montonera, but could rarely defeat the better armed Liberal forces. At the height of the rebellion, he attacked and took Córdoba, but suffered total defeat and heavy casualties when the Liberals counterattacked.³² Arredondo and other Liberal commanders then pursued Peñaloza back into La Rioja, and in November, 1863, finally tracked him down and killed him.³³ Before his death, *El Chacho* issued a last defiant indictment of the Liberals. "In the name of the Constitution," he charged, the Liberals "burn the huts [of the people]. They drag the wretched families off with their regiments...leaving the land strewn with the corpses of the unfortunates who perish of hunger and want...They shoot their prisoners mercilessly without any form of trial. They lay waste the land, and destroy the water supplies...This way, by the bullet, they enforce the Constitution...They treat as barbarians simple and ignorant communities that do not even understand what a constitution is."³⁴

Varela and Saá: The Consolidation of Liberal Dominance

Three years later, in September, 1866, during the war of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay, the allied army led by Mitre suffered a heavy defeat in the battle of Curupaití, sparking a second rebellion in the Argentine west.³⁵ On this occasion, the leaders of the rebellion were Saá, the former governor of San Luis who led the attack on San Juan in early 1861, and Varela, a former lieutenant of Peñaloza.³⁶ The rebels had extensive support from the Chilean government. At the height of the rebellion, Saá declared that his objective was to remove the three Cuyo provinces —Mendoza, San Juan, and San Luis— out of Argentina and restore the Chilean jurisdiction over this region that prevailed until the late eighteenth century.³⁷ In 1863 Peñaloza fought defensively to protect the "rights" of the gauchos of La Rioja and its neighbors, but Saá and Varela waged a more positive and strategically

planned campaign. Saá wanted to inflict a blow not only on the Liberal government of Argentina, but also on the imperial government of Brazil, its ally in the Paraguayan war. Describing himself as a "man who defends the rights of South America," Varela rejected the Liberal nation-state and proposed a confederation of autonomous provinces throughout Andean America.³⁸ The rebels adopted the following slogan as a synthesis of their objectives: "Federation or Death! Long Live General Urquiza! Down with the [Brazilian] Slavers who Oppose Him! Long Live the Union of the Americas!"³⁹

The revolt erupted in late 1866, following a mutiny in Mendoza by impressed troops about to be sent to the battlefields of Paraguay. A military force under the command of Saá and Varela, including two battalions of Chileans, then crossed the Andes to support the mutineers. Searching for broader support in Argentina, the rebels divided their followers into two groups. Saá took his forces eastward into his home province of San Luis, while Varela turned north toward San Juan, La Rioja, and his native province of Catamarca. As he embarked on his mission, Varela issued the *Manifiesto del Jeneral Varela*, a document written in Chile before the rebellion to mobilize Federalist support throughout the country.⁴⁰ The proclamation justified the rebellion on the grounds of the depredations of "odious centralism...Mitre and his band of sycophants." The Liberals of Buenos Aires monopolized the revenues from foreign trade to the point that "to come from the country (*provinciano*) is to be a beggar, with neither country, liberty, nor rights." Other parts of the statement echoed the allegations made by Peñaloza three years previously. The Liberals terrorized and tyrannized the provinces, leaving its peoples "desolate, plundered and guillotined [by] professional executioners." The concluding sentence of the manifesto encapsulated the intense hostility of the Federalists toward Buenos Aires: "Down with those who usurp the revenues and the rights of the provinces for the benefit of Buenos Aires, a vain, despotic, and indolent people!"⁴¹

In March, 1867, the Liberals counterattacked with forces brought from Paraguay and soon overwhelmed the rebels. In San Luis, Arredondo destroyed a large force of montonera under Saá's brother, while a second Liberal army under Antonino Taboada defeated Varela's forces at Pozo de Vargas, near the city of La Rioja. The Liberal victories quelled the rebellion in the west. While Saá and the remnants of his army fled to Chile, Varela turned northward. Although he briefly captured the city of Salta, his campaign in the north, in late 1867, repeatedly illustrated the weakness of the Federalists in that region. Unlike the gauchos who flocked to join Varela's forces in the western provinces, in the north most of the peasants of Salta fled on his approach.⁴²

López Jordán: The Subjugation of Entre Ríos

In the late 1860s the eastern province of Entre Ríos became the second wealthiest in the country after Buenos Aires. A region of cattle ranches and gauchos, the province also possessed numerous small towns and a total population of one hundred and forty thousand, including twenty thousand European immigrants. Its three largest counties —Paraná in the west, facing the city of Santa Fe, Gualeguaychú in the southeast, on the Río Uruguay, and Gualeguay in the south— each had growing populations of between fifteen and eighteen thousand.⁴³ The political divisions of Entre Ríos were similar to those in the western provinces. Once more, urban Liberals confronted rural Federalists, except that in Entre Ríos the Liberals were stronger than in the west, as a reflection of the province's larger towns and more highly developed economy. The city of Gualeguaychú contained an affluent Liberal merchant class closely connected with markets and suppliers in Buenos Aires. Liberal ideas influenced the Federalists of Entre Ríos to a much greater degree than the Federalists in the west. While Peñaloza referred to the "sacred rights and liberties" the western provinces had lost, the eastern Federalists of Entre Ríos looked forward to a "future of liberty, progress, and civilization."⁴⁴ "We detest war," claimed Ricardo López Jordán, "because it is the enemy of colonisation, railways, telegraphs, and public education."⁴⁵

In early 1870 the province of Entre Ríos remained under the control of Urquiza, the former conqueror of Rosas in 1852 and later the leader of the Federalists against Buenos Aires. After the battle of Pavón in 1861, Urquiza struck a bargain with Mitre that allowed him to remain in control of Entre Ríos on condition he made no attempt to challenge the control of the Liberals over other parts of the country.⁴⁶ Urquiza kept to this agreement. In 1863 and 1867 he rejected numerous pleas for assistance by Peñaloza and Varela, and he backed Mitre during the Paraguayan war. For several years Urquiza managed both to placate the Liberals and to preserve his standing among the Federalists. In late 1869 an Italian diplomat described him as "a great and feared feudatory," but in fact his prestige had finally collapsed.⁴⁷ In Entre Ríos, cattle ranchers accused him of land-grabbing and monopolizing the meat-salting plants. In late 1868 he provoked discontent when he helped to suppress a Federalist uprising in Corrientes.⁴⁸ Another conflict erupted in 1869, when he instituted a tax-farming scheme in Entre Ríos known as the *Contrato Frageiro*, that was strongly opposed by the landed classes.⁴⁹

In mid-April, 1870, a gang of Urquiza's opponents invaded his estancia and assassinated him.⁵⁰ The assassins were followers of López Jordán, who formerly served as Urquiza's military commander in Entre Ríos but in recent years had emerged as the leader of the local opposition to him.⁵¹ Following

Urquiza's death, the provincial legislature elected López Jordán governor of Entre Ríos, but the national government refused to recognize the election and sent troops into the province to depose him. López Jordán then declared a rebellion, gathered an army of gauchos, and retreated with his forces into the heartland of Entre Ríos.⁵²

López Jordán commanded an alliance of landowners and gauchos that gave him an unlimited supply of cattle and horses, and enabled him to finance the rebellion by selling hides in Uruguay.⁵³ The mounted rebels were constantly disappearing into the inland areas of the province, where numerous rivers and streams protected them from pursuit by the government's infantry. In an illustration of the social base of the rebellion, most of the rebel prisoners who arrived in Buenos Aires from Entre Ríos in early 1871 were identified as members of upper class families.⁵⁴ As the leader of the rebellion, López Jordán presented a different figure from the western caudillos of the previous decade. Peñaloza and Varela made themselves indistinguishable from the gauchos, but López Jordán prided himself on his membership of the provincial political and social elite. Descended from a former governor of the province, he was educated at the Jesuit College of Buenos Aires with other students who later became leading Liberals.⁵⁵

While commanding the support of many landowners in Entre Ríos, the rebellion met strong resistance in many of the towns, particularly in Gualaguaychú, which became a funnel for troops and supplies from Buenos Aires. Following the outbreak of the rebellion, the national government named Apolinario Benítez, a leading merchant and financier of Gualaguaychú, as the provisional governor.⁵⁶ The newspaper in Gualaguaychú warned that López Jordán would massacre its inhabitants if he ever succeeded in capturing the town.⁵⁷ The rebellion was not exclusively rural, however, since López Jordán received strong support in the city of Paraná, the birthplace of his wealthy wife. On these grounds, some local observers interpreted the rebellion partly as a contest within Entre Ríos between the city of Paraná, the declining former capital of Urquiza's confederation, and the ascending city of Gualaguaychú, linked more closely to Buenos Aires.⁵⁸

The 1870 rebellion in Entre Ríos resembled the western insurrection of 1867 in being tied to issues outside Argentina. Like the links between Saá, Varela, and the Chileans, López Jordán possessed close relations with the Blancos, the Uruguayan counterparts of the Federalists. Indeed, some blamed the Blancos rather than López Jordán for the assassination of Urquiza.⁵⁹ Unlike the well-chronicled movement led by Saá and Varela, however, the rebellion in Entre Ríos became an obscure, unspectacular episode largely consisting of small guerrilla skirmishes and shrouded in secrecy by government censorship. López Jordán claimed an army of nine thousand men, but it achieved little

more than occasional raids against the towns.⁶⁰ After several initial indecisive military clashes, the rebellion drifted on for several months until, in early December, López Jordán finally took Gualeguaychú, spurring the national government into action.⁶¹ President Domingo F. Sarmiento appointed Arredondo commander of the national forces in Entre Ríos, granting him "unlimited power to pacify the Province at all cost." The appointment indicated the government's determination to defeat the rebellion. Arredondo's "violent character," commented a diplomat, "coupled with his reputation of cruelty and brutality bespeaks a sad fate for the Province already brought to the brink of ruin."⁶² Harassed by Arredondo, in January, 1871, López Jordán first made an unsuccessful attempt to extend the rebellion into Santa Fe, and then turned north into Corrientes, where his forces suffered a total defeat. With around seven hundred of his men dead, López Jordán fled to Uruguay.⁶³

Toward mid-1873 López Jordán returned from Uruguay to lead a second rebellion in Entre Ríos that had many of the features of its predecessor. Once more, his men largely monopolized the horses and controlled most of the rural areas of the province.⁶⁴ He again used guerrilla tactics, "always hidden, fleeing his enemy...robbing, slitting throats."⁶⁵ He prolonged the movement for around six months, until it collapsed in late 1873 under circumstances similar to those of the first rebellion. López Jordán led his gaucho cavalry into another futile frontal combat against army regulars armed with Remington rifles, an encounter which ended in the total defeat of the rebels.⁶⁶ The rebellion of 1873 highlighted the obsolescence of the Federalists. Far inferior to their adversaries militarily, they were now losing their following among the gauchos. The alliance commanded by López Jordán was changing. This time he received some support from the urban upper classes of Entre Ríos, particularly in the city of Gualeguay. He made alliances with politicians in Buenos Aires. Rumor linked López Jordán with Adolfo Alsina, the leader of the Autonomist party of Buenos Aires, who was preparing a bid for the presidency in 1874. Unlike its predecessor, the rebellion therefore seemed closely linked to trends in national politics.⁶⁷

The Demise of the Federalists

In late 1876 López Jordán made a third attempt to capture Entre Ríos by again invading from Uruguay. Forced once more to seek broader support, on this occasion he made an alliance with his old enemy, Arredondo, the Liberal general who played a major part in his first defeat in early 1871. "López Jordán and Arredondo are agreed to coordinate their efforts," wrote the French minister, describing Arredondo as a "restless adventurer, ambitious to

be the head of the government."⁶⁸ The movement proved a complete failure. The rebels briefly captured the town of Gualeguay, but on this occasion failed to raise an army of gauchos.⁶⁹ The government defeated the rebellion in less than two weeks, taking López Jordán prisoner.⁷⁰ These events exemplified some of the salient political shifts in Argentina during the 1870s. López Jordán could no longer operate as an independent provincial caudillo, only in conjunction with politicians and military leaders operating at the national level. He no longer had the support of traditional, inward-looking landed classes, which were becoming increasingly tied to national and international markets. In 1876 the recent expansion of railroads and the telegraph system enabled the government to deploy troops quickly and effectively. "The frustration of López Jordán's hopes," reported an observer, "his incapacity to recruit adherents [shows] that with the railroads and the telegraphs, the era of the caudillos has come to an end. This time only five hundred men were needed for just ten days to defeat an insurrection that before took the regular army more than a year."⁷¹

The national government was becoming much stronger. In the 1860s, under Mitre, the government relied heavily on the support of the Taboada brothers, whose power remained largely independent of the central government. By the following decade, having a much stronger army and growing powers of patronage, the national government no longer needed the Taboadas. Liberal generals and governors dependent on the central government succeeded the caudillos as the masters of the Argentine provinces. A decade after the death of *El Chacho*, a new political structure became visible in his native province of La Rioja. No longer a hotbed of Federalism, the province was now the venue of intense struggles between rival factions of Liberals seeking the support of the central government.⁷² Elsewhere, the Liberals co-opted former Federalist families. By the late 1870s, for example, two members of the Saá family of San Luis, including Juan Saá Jr., the son of the former caudillo, were again serving in the provincial government. Later that year Felipe Saá, the ex-caudillo's brother, profited by supplying the national government with two thousand horses for the planned "conquest of the desert" led by General Julio A. Roca.⁷³

The new provincial political structures also emerged as an outcome of conflicts between rival family networks. In the 1860s and early 1870s the Daracts and the Barbeitos, the leading Liberal families of San Luis, succeeded in destroying the Barrosos, a clan-like lineage that earlier dominated a considerable part of the province. Guillermo Lallemon, a former land surveyor working in San Luis, described the Barrosos as "the sons of the Spanish conquerors," whose origins stretched back to 1690 when the clan's founder took possession of a Crown land grant (*merced*). In subsequent

generations, the Barrosos expanded in number under a tenure system Lallemonet described as "communist and patriarchal," in that the land was held in common rather than in private ownership. In the late 1860s and early 1870s the Barrosos lost their land, mainly to the Barbeitos. At that time, wrote Lallemonet, "the ancient [royal land grants] were little respected. Although the Barrosos had used and lived on the land for a hundred and seventy years...lawsuits were made against them on the most frivolous grounds because they lacked [documented] titles. In that way many families were thrown out of their homes." Having first purchased the land from the provincial government as state land (*tierra fiscal*) at nominal prices, the Liberal families used their control over the judiciary to expel the Barrosos.

In 1871 Lallemonet attended a gathering of the Barroso clan headed by Teresa Villegas, "the head of the family, [who] enjoyed the respect of all as president of the family council." Villegas provided a rare illustration of the links between the fate of the old extended families like the Barrosos, the decline of the Federalists, and the rise of the Liberals. She reminded those present of the actions of Mitre's generals around ten years earlier. Arredondo in particular robbed thousands of sheep from the Barrosos, provoking many of them to support the rebellions led by Peñaloza and Saá. The defeat of the rebellions spelled the end of the *merced* system of land tenure, as the judicial system fell under the control of Liberals closely linked with the Barbeito family. Henceforward, the judges allowed the Barrosos to remain on the land only as tenants. According to Lallemonet, they became "peons or sharecroppers, poor and depressed subjects, typical of the people the sharecropping system produces everywhere, such as in Sicily and Andalusia."⁷⁴ The chief results of the civil wars of the 1860s, he concluded, lay in the transition from communal to private property. Land fell into the hands of a Liberal landed elite, having been taken away from "free shepherds, who not having full land titles, possessed their wealth and property in the form of the [freedom to utilize] the open range."⁷⁵

In underdeveloped western provinces like La Rioja and San Luis, the *montonera* survived during the 1870s, but without caudillos or a political cause they became indistinguishable from the bandits and rustlers known as the *matreros*. In 1878 the governor of San Luis reported numerous "incorrigible bandits and highwaymen" in the province, whom he blamed for recurrent random homicides in rural areas. San Luis, he contended, remained exposed to "the gaucho rising that devastates the countryside, plundering and murdering on a daily basis in almost the entire province."⁷⁶ The links between such movements and Federalism, however, were no longer visible. Santos Guayama of La Rioja, widely known as a leading Federalist rebel in the 1860s, lapsed into a bandit and a mercenary in the 1870s. In the

presidential election campaign of 1874 in La Rioja, he aided a faction supporting the candidacy of Nicolás Avellaneda as president.⁷⁷ When he was captured and shot in San Juan in 1879, *La Prensa's* digest of his career made no mention of any political activities, describing him as a "highwayman who pillaged the villages in four provinces for the past twelve years."⁷⁸ As Rumbold noted in 1880, "the wielder of the long knife and the lasso has almost ceased to play a prominent part in the history of the country."⁷⁹ In 1885 a brief and unsuccessful revolt occurred in Corrientes that attracted attention only because it appeared entirely obsolete. A "caudillo" reportedly led the movement and enlisted "gauchos" to support him. No one now feared the gauchos. The subjects of powerful but nostalgic poetry, they had become a people "deprived of their scarce means of subsistence, the sad victims of progress."⁸⁰

NOTES

1. Thomas Woodbine Hinchliff. *South American Sketches; or A Visit to Rio de Janeiro, the Organ Mountains, La Plata, and the Parana*. London: Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863, 76.
2. *The Standard*, 9 January, 1872.
3. Hutchinson to Gould, 27 December, 1867. FO 118-125 (Taken from British Foreign Office).
4. Astengo to Foreign Ministry, no. 47, 12 January, 1868. Archivio Storico Ministero degli Affari Esteri (henceforward ASMAE), Pacco 1248.
5. Sir Horace Rumbold, Bart., K.C.M.G. *The Great Silver River. Notes of a Residence in Buenos Aires in 1880 and 1881*. 2nd ed. London: John Murray, 1890, 220.
6. Observers writing in the early 1860s characterized this region as one in which the Federal "party of tradition [and] the rule of the gaucho" prevailed, but "the Liberal party does not amount to fifty." Spanish Minister to Madrid, 26 March, 1868. H 1349. Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madrid; also Paunero to Mitre, 18 March, 1862. In Archivio del General Mitre, vol. 11, *Pacificación y Reorganización Nacional*. Buenos Aires: Biblioteca de "La Nación," 1913, 52.
7. Argentine Republic, *Primer censo de la República Argentina. Verificado en los días 15, 16, y 17 de setiembre de 1869*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta del Porvenir, 341.
8. V. Martin de Moussy. *Description Géographique et Statistique de la Confédération Argentine*, vol. 3. Paris: Librairie de Fermin Didot Frères, Fils et Cie., 1864, 373, 399.
9. *El Nacional*, 17 May, 1852; Rígulo Martínez. *Un viaje a las provincias del norte de la República Argentina a principios de 1861*. In *El Nacional*, 11 July, 1861.
10. As an indicator of population density, the western provinces each had populations of around 50,000, but in the north-west (with the exception of Jujuy) the range was roughly 90,000 to 130,000. The least populated provinces were Mendoza, San Luis, Catamarca, and La Rioja. Argentine Republic, *Primer Censo*, xvi-xviii. In Santiago del Estero "nine tenths [of the people] are of Peruvian origin and speak only the Quechua language." Gordon to Stuart, 25 June, 1869. FO 118-136.
11. Ibarra established the system, later continued by the Taboadas, of ruling through a militia whose official purpose lay in protecting the Indian frontier. On the rise of Ibarra, see Tulio Halperin Donghi. *Politics, Economy and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 326.

12. See Gaspar Taboada. "Los Taboada." *Luchas de la organización nacional*. Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: López, 1929, 83; also vol. 2, 19, for a biography of Antonino Taboada based on *La Nación*, 6 March, 1883. Addressing Mitre in November, 1861, Manuel Taboada described his native province as a "powerful bulwark of support for the civilizing doctrine" of Liberalism. Taboada to Mitre, 7 November, 1861. In Taboada, "Los Taboada", 5: 105.
13. Thomas J. Hutchinson. *Buenos Ayres and Argentine Gleanings: with Extracts from a Diary of Salado Exploration in 1862 and 1863*. London: Edward Stanford, 1865, 190, 215, 226.
14. *La Prensa*, 13 October, 1871.
15. Félix Luna. *De comicios y entreveros*. Buenos Aires: Schapire, 1976, 15.
16. Ovejero to Paz, 21 November, 1867. Archivo del General Mitre, vol. 3. *Guerra del Paraguay*, 380.
17. "Women have been lashed, subjected to the final ignominy, had their throats slashed, and shot." *El Nacional*, 1 February, 1861.
18. *El Nacional*, 12 December, 1860; Nicolás Sotomayor to Derqui, 11 November. Archivo del General Mitre, vol. 7, *Antecedentes de Pavón*, 37.
19. The three women were "dragged by these brutes inside (the house), and, oh! you will understand the rest." *El Nacional*, 1 February, 1861. See also David Rock. "Civil war in Nineteenth Century Argentina: San Juan 1860-1861." Mimeo.
20. Martin de Moussy, *Confédération*, 3: 401.
21. *El Nacional*, 15 December, 1863.
22. Letter to Marcos Paz, 29 March, 1862. Quoted in Felipe Cárdenas. *El Chacho. Vida, muerte, resurrección*. Buenos Aires: Colección Liberación, 1974, 60.
23. José Hernández. *Vida del Chacho*. Buenos Aires: Coyoacán, 1962, 1. (Originally published in *El Ferrocarril* of Paraná, in November, 1863.) Peñaloza's career is described at length in Ariel de la Fuente. "Caudillo and Gaucho Politics in the Argentine State Formation Process." Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1995.
24. Rivas to Mitre, 15 June, 1862. Archivo del General Mitre, vol. 11, *Pacificación y Reorganización Nacional*, 261, 262.
25. "We shall not need to burn a grain of gunpowder," predicted a Liberal in Salta in February, 1862, because the Federalists "are disintegrating on every side." Del Campo to Antonino Taboada. In Taboada, "Los Taboada", 2: 552.
26. Gordon to Thornton, in No. 85, 17 September, 1863. FO 6: 245.
27. The local gauchos, he wrote, "probably thought that my people were the vanguard of the terrible commander Arredondo, the nightmare of the poor folk (*chusma*) of these parts." Martínez to Mitre, 14 and 24 January, 1863. Archivo del General Mitre, vol. 12, *Presidencia de la Nación*, 269.
28. Del Campo to Mitre, 5 April, 1863. Archivo del General Mitre, vol. 26, *Presidencia de la República*, 79.
29. Quoted in Domingo F. Sarmiento. *Aldao y El Chacho*. Buenos Aires: Tor, n.d., 109.
30. *El Nacional*, 12 June, 1862. Peñaloza's communications were probably written by so-called secretaries who were often priests, but possessed a rare poignancy.
31. Peñaloza to Mitre, 12 April, 1863. Archivo del General Mitre, vol. 27, *Presidencia de la República*, 193.
32. *El Nacional*, 3 July, 1863. The British minister in Buenos Aires charged that Paunero's troops chased and massacred the retreating gauchos. Thornton to Russell, no. 62, 21 July, 1863. FO 6-245.
33. *El Nacional*, 15 December, 1863. A detailed account of Peñaloza's death appeared on 25 November.
34. *El Nacional*, 24 November, 1863.
35. On resistance to the draft in La Rioja through the trial of Aureliano Zalazar, one of the leaders of the resistance, see Pedro de Pauli and Manuel G. Mercado. *Proceso a los*

- montoneros y guerra del Paraguay*. Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1973.
36. Varela's background is described in Fermín Chávez. *El revisionismo y las montoneras*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Theoria, 1966, 15-20; Félix Luna. *Los caudillos*. Buenos Aires: Jorge Álvarez, 1966, 219. He was born in Catamarca in 1821 and died of tuberculosis in Chile in 1870.
 37. *El Nacional*, 17 May, 1867, quoting *La República* of Santiago. Varela has also been interpreted as pro-Chilean. "To unite with the Chilean flag/That was his ambition/For the formation of two sister republics." Popular song quoted in Ariel de la Fuente, *Caudillo*, 525.
 38. "Long ago I revealed my [true] face," he declared, "which represents not the Argentine Republic but South America, so as never to be humiliated by the savage Unitarios of Buenos Aires, who want to bury the whole American continent." The statement also contained hostile references to the "Goths," as Varela called Spaniards, because in this period the Spanish navy bombarded some of the ports of Chile and Peru. Varela to Comisionado de Pastos Grandes, n.d. (late 1867). Quoted in Roberto Zavalia Matienzo. *Felipe Varela a través de la documentación del Archivo Histórico de Tucumán*. Tucumán, 1967, 285.
 39. Quoted in *El Nacional*, 22 April, 1867.
 40. The prior printing of the manifesto in Chile was reported by the acting governor of La Rioja on December 22, 1866. See San Román to Córdoba, in Zavalia Matienzo, *Varela*, 14. The manifesto was published in Buenos Aires by *El Nacional*, 4 January, 1867. For a discussion of its authorship, see Fermín Chávez, *El revisionismo*, 27.
 41. *El Nacional*, 4 January, 1867.
 42. Zavalia Matienzo, *Varela*, 302.
 43. Argentine Republic, *Primer Censo*, 145.
 44. *La Prensa*, 18 April, 1870.
 45. *The Standard*, 8 June, 1870.
 46. For details, see *El Nacional*, 13 February, 1862.
 47. Della Croce to Rome, no. 58, n.d. (December, 1869), vol. 6, ASMAE, Pacco 867.
 48. *El Nacional*, 9 November, 1868.
 49. Fermín Chávez. *Vida y Muerte de López Jordán*. Buenos Aires: Nuevo Tiempo, 1970, 167-172.
 50. The assassination was reported in *El Nacional* 16 April, 1870. Several secondary accounts deal with the background to the assassination of Urquiza and the subsequent rebellion. See María Amalia Duarte. *Tiempos de rebelión 1870-73*. Buenos Aires: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1988; Manuel E. Macchi. *Urquiza: Última etapa*. 3rd ed. Santa Fe, 1971.
 51. Rivalries between Urquiza and López Jordán were reported as early as 1863, soon after the battle of Pavón. See *El Nacional*, 3 November, 1863. Liberals considered López Jordán "an intolerant and ambitious caudillo...Always the friend of the out-and-out Reds [Federalists]...the most determined and ruthless enemy of the national government and Buenos Aires." *El Nacional*, 19 February, 1869.
 52. "I have granted you liberty and law," he claimed in a proclamation to the people of Entre Ríos, "but your eternal enemies [in Buenos Aires] have refused to acknowledge them and instead declared war against you." María Amalia Duarte. "Gestiones de paz durante el gobierno de López Jordán en Entre Ríos." *Revista de Historia Americana y Argentina*. Vol. 1, Mendoza, 1956-1957, 351.
 53. The invading national army, by contrast, was "unprovided (*sic*) with cavalry, and has neither the means nor the resources of creating any." MacDonnell to Clarendon, no. 99, 28 July, 1870. FO 118-141.
 54. *La Prensa*, 25 February, 1871.
 55. A brief biography of López Jordán appears in *The Buenos Aires Herald*, 19 December, 1876. An earlier source mentioned that López Jordán was educated at the National College in Concepción del Uruguay. See *La Reforma Pacífica*, 24 February, 1865.

56. Duarte, *Tiempos de Rebelión*, 35.
57. *La Libertad*, 7 May, 1870. Enclosed in FO 118-136.
58. Carrera to Gainza, 30 April, 1870. Archivo de Martín Gainza, Legajo 36.
59. *La Prensa*, 16 April, 1870; MacDonnell to Clarendon, no. 38, 16 April, 1870. FO 118-141. Urquiza was disrupting preparations for the uprising of 1870 in Uruguay known as "Revolution of the Lances."
60. Spanish minister to Madrid, no. 43, 29 May, 1870, H 1349. Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madrid.
61. Spanish minister to Madrid, no. 119, 14 December, 1870. H 1349. Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madrid.
62. MacDonnell to Granville, no. 50, 24 December, 1870. FO 118-141.
63. The rebellion sparked many accusations that until the appointment of Arredondo, the Liberal generals made no attempt to defeat it because they were receiving commissions for the supplies to their troops, suspicions shared by President Sarmiento. See Sarmiento to Gainza, 1 February, 1871. Archivo de Martín Gainza, Legajo 39.
64. "All the horses in the Province are in the hands of the [rebels], and they are completely masters of the surrounding country," reported the local British consul. Wells to West, 18 September, 1873. FO 118-149.
65. *La Prensa*, 16 December, 1873.
66. *La Prensa*, 13 December, 1871.
67. In 1875 former rebels from Entre Ríos were seen in the streets of Buenos Aires, apparently under Alsina's protection. "Alsina has even awarded some of them their medals from the Paraguay campaigns." *La Prensa*, 28 February, 1875.
68. Ducros to Paris, no. 3, 9 December, 1876. Correspondance Politique, vol 53. (Foreign Ministry Archive, Paris).
69. West to Derby, no. 130, 29 November, 1876. FO 6-334.
70. López Jordán was held prisoner for two years in Rosario before escaping disguised as a woman. After ten years of exile, he returned to Buenos Aires under a government amnesty. There, in 1889, he was assassinated in the street by the son of one of his victims. (*La Prensa*, 23 June, 1889).
71. Ducros to Paris, no. 3, 9 December, 1876. Correspondance Politique, vol. 53. (Foreign Ministry Archive, Paris).
72. *La Libertad*, 20 February, 14 March, 1874.
73. Mendoza to Roca, 28 May, 12 November, 1878. Archivo Roca, Legajo 5, Correspondencia 1878.
74. This rare and unusually detailed account of San Luis written by Lallemon, a prominent Socialist of the 1890s who signed himself "un agrimensor," appeared in *La Vanguardia*, 19 September, 1894.
75. *La Vanguardia*, 16 June, 1894.
76. Mendoza to Roca, 28 May, 3 June, 1878. Archivo Roca, Legajo 5, Correspondencia 1878.
77. *La Libertad*, 14 March, 1874.
78. *La Prensa*, 18 February, 1879.
79. Rumbold, *Silver River*, 91.
80. *La Prensa*, 19 July, 1885.