

further to include the issues of poverty and redistribution. By neglecting these developments, the author has provided us with a rather incomplete account of the shifting relationship between the IMF and Latin America.

Despite these weaknesses, the author's historical analysis provides important insights into the acute policy dilemmas confronted by both the Fund and national officials as Argentina's economy began unraveling in the late 1990s. The problem was not merely the overvaluation generated by the currency board arrangement adopted in 1991 and the resulting vulnerability of the economy to external shocks. The possibility of developing a successful program of economic adjustment was also undermined by five decades of policy failures, recurrent economic crises, and international borrowing documented by Professor Kedar, which not only contributed to high levels of dollar-denominated debt but generated deep domestic and international pessimism about the future of the economy.

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**KAREN FAULK: *In the Wake of Neoliberalism: Citizenship and Human Rights in Argentina*.** Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013; **EMILIO A. CRENZEL: *The Memory of the Argentina Disappearances: The Political History of Nunca Más*.** London: Routledge press, 2011.

Together, these excellent books tell the story of the most profound transformation in urban, middle class Argentine political cultures since the fall of the last military dictatorship in 1983. Middle class Argentines created, defined, and then sharpened a human rights regime that asserted shared societal moralities and norms, integrating political, cultural, and juridical components. Nobody invented human rights in the 1980s. But before the early 1970s, "human rights" in Argentina existed in narrow judicial and diplomatic contexts, not as a popular middle class notion of rights. That changed with the 1973 coup d'état in Chile and the linked rise of Amnesty International and other human rights groups, the 1976 military take-over in Argentina, the unprecedented ferocity of *proceso* state terror, and the ways by which Argentine rights groups understood, cast, and explained that terror. Middle class Argentines emerged from dictatorship in 1983 with a sense that human rights were their last, best defence against the primary abuses of military rule – torture, killing, disappearance, kidnapping, and related violent manifestations of state terror.

While the lionization of human rights in Argentina took multiple artistic, monument-making, literary, and political forms, none was more important than

*Nunca Más*, the meticulously documented book of dictatorship-inflicted violence produced by the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (CONADEP) – the first of (and model for) many truth commissions around the world set up in the aftermath of periods of gruesome political violence. Emilio Crenzel has written a terrific history of *Nunca Más* that charts the work of CONADEP, but more important, the multiple political uses and reception of the volume. In part, Crenzel sets out to knock *Nunca Más* off its pedestal. It is not, as many have suggested, an immutable, scripture-like document. Crenzel shows that, in keeping with emerging and shifting political and judicial understandings of human rights, *Nunca Más* came to occupy different political spaces over time.

Perhaps *Nunca Más*' most vital moment came in 1985 with the successful prosecution of a handful of the most prominent dictatorship-era generals. We've long known that *Nunca Mas* provided the raw data used by prosecutor Julio Strassera in the criminal cases. What Crenzel explains effectively is that the volume contributed in two additional ways to the conviction of the *represores*. It helped establish "human rights" as a legally violable category. And it offered a judicial pathway by which the generals could be prosecuted for newly defined crimes, including "disappearance." Strassera's first goal was not to prosecute for murder, but to establish guilt in a manner that entrenched human rights as an identifiable legal and political regime – to prove that the *juntas* were accountable for "a power apparatus used to perpetrate countless illegal detentions and to systematically torture and murder the prisoners held in clandestine captivity, whose property had been pillaged, while these actions were denied by the *juntas*" (pp.103-104). In proving that legal mouthful and in convicting the generals, Strassera used *Nunca Más* as an evidentiary and conceptual roadmap. The convictions may well have been the most significant in Argentine history.

In charting the twists and turns of *Nunca Más* as a cultural touchstone, Crenzel takes us from triumph in 1985 to political wasteland a few short years later. In 1990, President Carlos Menem pardoned the convicted generals. At the time, 38 per cent of Argentines identified the pardons as "the worst measure of the Menem administration" (p. 118). A year later, though, that number had dropped to 7 per cent (more on this later). "The present began to be read," writes Crenzel, "as the spectral image of the past without rights." And while, *Nunca Más* would re-emerge as a tool with which to fight new forms of political abuse and corruption, and through which to assert new political relationships with human rights (under Néstor Kirchner's presidency, for example), if one event came to mark Crenzel's notion of a spectral image of a past without rights it was the 1994 bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) headquarters that left 85 dead.

This is where Karen Ann Faulk picks up the story chronologically, theoretically, and methodologically. The linked problems at issue in *In the Wake of Neoliberalism* are crucial to our understanding of Argentina's recent past because of what *Nunca Más* did to and for the political landscape. If Crenzel wonders what happened in his 1990s spectral image inversion, Faulk answers expertly by joining threads of memory, culture, and street politics in analysing the aftermath of the AMIA bombing and what, on first blush, might seem to be an unrelated political action – the functioning of the *Cooperativa BAUEN* (Buenos Aires, Una Empresa Nacional), founded by former employees of the Bauen Suites hotel in the post-2001 Argentine economic crisis. *Memory of the Argentina Disappearances* posits key questions about human rights politics and the shaping of Argentine society in the transition from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s. In bridging the 1990s to the post-2001 crisis in Argentina, Karen Faulk gives us a compelling set of answers.

Crenzel's 1990s spectral image of dictatorship underlines, but only begins to explain the limits of *Nunca Más*. Karen Faulk squares that circle. She brings analytical order to a sometimes hazy but passionate Argentine concern that while *Nunca Más* and the 1985 prosecutions drove a stake through dictatorship, it rose again in the 1990s with Argentina's descent into the re-emergence of an authoritarian legacy of corrupt politics, a growing divide between rich and poor, abusive police power, judicial incompetence, and a culture of impunity. In the way that most of us recognize "good art," Argentines know each of these devastating categories when they see them. But what are they exactly and what's the connection to the problems that Crenzel addresses?

*In the Wake of Neoliberalism* tackles two theoretical problems to answer that question – corruption and impunity. As understood in popular politics, corruption places personal interests before the public good. "This limited and specific usage," Faulk maintains, "is what allows its application across such a broad sector of society, indicting all those who hold positions of power and are expected to act for collective benefit" (p. 20). It links Memoria Activa to BAUEN and to other social actors after 2000. In their unwillingness to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the AMIA bombing, both state and Jewish community officials were corrupt in their failure to advance the interests of those people they were supposed to represent. BAUEN accused business owners of having failed in their moral obligations where their "business" should have meant not just a harsh money-making operation, but an ethical responsibility to workers. For both groups, corruption marked "a predominant form of rights violations" (p. 20).

Faulk writes that in both a practical and a semiotic sense, corruption and impunity are linked. "Widespread impunity meant that the business elite and state actors could commit corrupt acts and get away" with them (p. 21). As it

had during dictatorship, in some of the same ways and with some of the same consequences, impunity shielded corruption while corrupt political networks blocked the resolution of illegal acts like the AMIA bombing and the violation of business and labor law protested by BAUEN. In this context, post-2001, some protest politics evolved to work within the system (as plaintiffs or in the filing of judicial petitions, for example) while at the same time pressuring for fundamental systemic reform.

But what of that 7 per cent of the public in 1991 who were still impressed with Menem's pardon of the dictatorship generals, but more poignantly, the 93 per cent who were no longer much interested? At the same time that Crenzel and Faulk offer dynamic new analyses of the legacies of dictatorship and human rights, their stories are confined for the most part to urban, middle class and narrow working-class sectors. During Carlos Menem's second presidential term, Argentines famously held their noses and stated repeatedly "*¡yo no le vote!*" But many did, in fact, vote for him despite his having presided (as president) over what one federal judge later called an illicit criminal association in the affirmation of the dictatorship's legacy of corruption and impunity. Why did people vote for him? The Argentine political consensus that Crenzel and Faulk ably explain excludes many working people of color in the impoverished, sprawling suburbs of Buenos Aires; the thousands of Bolivian and Paraguayan immigrants (and their adult, Argentine children) in neighbourhoods that ring Rosario; and many more.

When Argentines elected Raúl Alfonsín president in 1983, they did so in part to register their confidence in the newly emerging human rights regime and Alfonsín's role in the promotion of human rights during the dictatorship. No individual is more closely tied to the defeat of dictatorship or remembered (by some) as a heroic defender of human rights. He died in March 2009 and on the day of his funeral, one working Argentine wondered aloud, matter-of-factly, "*¿no hubo nadie en el velatorio que le habría gritado, 'che Alfonsín, y el precio de la leche?'*." Ironically, that memory of Alfonsín's "failure" to reign during the late 1980s period of rampant inflation evokes precisely the broad notions of impunity and corruption that Faulk outlines – authorities unable or unwilling to respond to their moral obligations to those they represent. This contrasts the memory of Alfonsín as a human rights hero with a popular memory of Alfonsín as part of a governing apparatus that failed Argentines. There are important alternative memories and understandings of rights, dictatorship, and democracy. Crenzel and Faulk have opened the door for a new round of research into the "other" Argentina, at a distance from the post-1983 consensus on impunity, human rights, dictatorship, and corruption.

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