

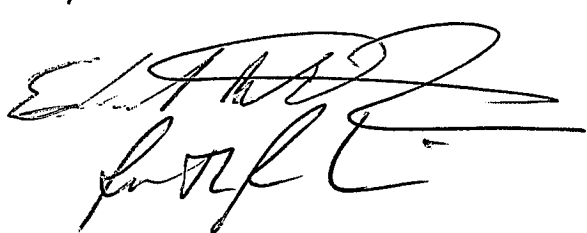

Kicking Old Habits: How the World Cup Memories of Argentina's 1978 National Team are Crossing Cultural Divides and Scoring in the Field of Reconciliation

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Para los chicos de Florencio Varela

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Introduction

On June 25th, 1978, Mario Kempes beat Dutch keeper Jan Jongbloed with a shot in the fourteenth minute of extra time of the World Cup final, giving Argentina a two to one lead they would not relinquish on the way to winning the nation's first ever World Cup trophy. As hundreds of thousands of Argentines poured onto the streets of Buenos Aires and cities across the country to celebrate, patriotic chants filled the winter night. They reflected the collective joy of a soccer-mad nation and, briefly, drowned out the cries of thousands of Argentines tortured and held at detention centers across the country.¹ Hosted by a country controlled by a repressive authoritarian regime, carried out in the midst of domestic upheaval and repression of human rights, covered by a press corps handcuffed by national restrictions on freedom of speech, and, ultimately, won by a national team accused of bribing its opponents and doping its players to enhance their performance, the 1978 World Cup is mired in controversy. The tournament is also a study of paradoxes. While suffering under the yoke of the military *Junta*, the nation nevertheless rejoiced as *La Albiceleste* captured the once elusive World Cup title and confirmed Argentina's place at the pinnacle of the world's most popular sport.

The 1978 World Cup is a focal point of historical research in Argentina and abroad. In his important book on soccer and politics, *Soccer Against The Enemy: How the World's Most Popular Sport Starts and Fuels Revolutions and Keeps Dictators in Power*, Simon Kuper describes the study of the tournament as "a respected academic field [within Argentina], almost like particle physics or neurology."² This analysis is accurate, and reflects the attention paid to

¹ "First Title Ignites Wild Celebration," the *Washington Post*, June 26, 1978.

² Simon Kuper, *Soccer Against The Enemy: How the World's Most Popular Sport Starts and Fuels Revolutions and Keeps Dictators in Power* (New York: Nation Books, 2006), 208.

the tournament since Argentina's return to democracy in 1983. In analyzing the 1978 World Cup, scholars have focused mainly on the relationship between General Jorge Rafael Videla's military *Junta* - the first of four military governments that controlled Argentina between 1976 and 1983 - domestic constituents, and the international community. Specifically, research focuses on the military government's manipulation of the press, the human rights abuses committed by the *Junta*, and the propaganda orchestrated by the regime to portray Argentina as a modern, "peaceful" nation.³

While the tournament itself remains a popular and important topic, research largely ignores the memories of the tournament's central actors, the Argentine national soccer team. Studies of the evolving relationship between history and memory, specifically memories of state repression and traumatic memory, are numerous and often focus on the effects of democratic transitions in South America's Southern Cone. These surveys, like scholarly studies of the 1978 World Cup, do not adequately address the stories of the 1978 national team.⁴

³ Abel Gilbert and Miguel Vitagliano, *El terror y la gloria: La vida, el fútbol y la política en la Argentina del Mundial '78* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma S. A., 1998); J.C. Cernadas LaMadrid and Ricardo Halac, *Yo fui testigo: Los militares y el mundial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Perfil, 1986); *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*, DVD, directed by Gonzalo Bonadeo, Diego Guebel, and Mario Pergolini (Buenos Aires: TELEFE, 2003), accessed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3_SdvPwyj4; Bill L. Smith, "The Argentinean Junta and the Press in the Run-up to the 1978 World Cup," *Soccer and Society* 3, no. 1 (2002); Eduardo P. Archetti, "Argentina 1978: Military Nationalism, Football Essentialism, and Moral Ambivalence," in *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*, eds. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

⁴ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); David Middleton and Steven D. Brown, *The Social Psychology of Experience: Studies in Remembering and Forgetting* (London: Sage Publications, 2005); Qi Wang and Martin A. Conway, "Autobiographical Memory, Self, and Culture," in *Memory and Society: Psychological Perspectives*, eds. Lars-Goran Nilsson and Nobuo Ohta (New York: Psychology Press, 2006); Susana Kaiser, *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the "Dirty War"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, trans. Judy Rein and Marcial Godoy-Anatívia, vol. 18, *Contradictions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Liria Evangelista, *Voices of the Survivors: Testimony, Mourning, and Memory in Post-Dictatorship Argentina (1983-1995)*, trans. Renzo Llorente (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998); Andrés Jaroslavsky, *The Future of Memory: Children of the Dictatorship in Argentina Speak*, trans. Niki Johnson (London: Latin America Bureau, 2004); Ludmila da Silva Catela, "Desaparición, violencia política y dictadura en Argentina: Mapas de la violencia, políticas y ciclos de las memorias," in *Memoria e historia: Seminário internacional em homenagem a Myrna Mack*, ed. Gustavo Palma (Ciudad de Guatemala: AVANCSO, 2006); Antonius C.G.M. Robben, "How Traumatized Societies Remember: The Aftermath of Argentina's Dirty War," *Cultural Critique* 59 (Winter, 2005).

This thesis addresses this lacuna in the scholarship on the 1978 World Cup. Grounded in studies of both the 1978 tournament and the development and role of memory in contemporary Argentina, this thesis reaches two crucial conclusions: First, that the members of the 1978 national team - and their memories - neither belong entirely to the category of those who perpetrated crimes and actively collaborated with the military regime, nor the category of those who were victims of the military's repressive rule. Rather, the national team members, and their recollections of the 1978 World Cup and the dictatorship, occupy a specific niche within Argentina's social structure. Through their ability to connect the institutions and memories of human rights organizations on one hand to those of the military on the other, these players are a pacifying conduit for disparate memories in a country divided by conflicting visions of its past.

Having established the importance of the 1978 national team in linking disparate elements of Argentine society, this thesis reaches a second conclusion: The testimonies of the World Cup's central actors do not passively exist in a void of memory, but are in fact actively driving processes of dialogue creation in Argentina. The importance of soccer in Argentina, a general societal trend towards a more open dialogue about the dictatorship era, and the rising significance of place in memory recollections have all combined to allow members of Argentina's 1978 World Cup team to capitalize on their unique position in society to help drive the establishment of public dialogues about the nation's past. The 30th year anniversary of the 1978 World Cup Final is instrumental in this process. This thesis contends that this event has not only catalyzed the creation of new dialogues, but has succeeded in making these conversations about the past both culturally and socially relevant, a crucial step in fostering broader processes of national reconciliation in Argentina.

Foundations and Theories

In supporting these important claims, this thesis draws on two central categories of scholarly material: Works that discuss the 1978 World Cup, and works that discuss processes of post-coup reconciliation and memory construction in Argentina. Important works on the 1978 World Cup which form the foundation of this thesis include Abel Gilbert and Miguel Vitagliano's *El terror y la gloria: la vida, el fútbol y la política en la Argentina del mundial '78*, J.C. Cernadas LaMadrid and Ricardo Halac's *Yo fui testigo: Los militares y el mundial*, and the documentary film *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.⁵ These sources examine the details of the 1978 tournament at length, and propose that General Jorge Videla's military *Junta* sought to use the World Cup - and an Argentine victory - as a means of affirming the nation's new direction under military rule. The military government's fundamental role in the planning and prosecution of the World Cup is an important baseline for an analysis of the memories of the 1978 World Cup's central actors.

A second category of scholarly works on the 1978 World Cup analyses the tournament from a broader, continental perspective. Simon Kuper's *Soccer Against the Enemy: How the World's Most Popular Sport Starts and Fuels Revolutions and Keeps Dictators in Power*, Tony Mason's *Passion of the People? Football in South America*, Joseph L. Arbena's "Generals and Goals: Assessing the Connection Between the Military and Soccer in Argentina," Osvaldo Bayer's *Fútbol Argentino: pasión y gloria de nuestro deporte más popular*, Pablo Alabarces' *Fútbol y patria*, Chris Taylor's *The Beautiful Game: A Journey Through Latin American Football*, and Roberto Di Giano's *Fútbol y cultura política en la Argentina: Identidades en crisis*

⁵ Gilbert and Vitagliano; LaMadrid and Halac; *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

form the backbone of this category.⁶ In examining the 1978 tournament as part of a greater relationship between soccer and politics in both Argentina and South America as a whole, these sources provide a wide scope with which to analyze the competition. This thesis draws on these works to establish the importance of soccer in Argentine society, and thus the political relevance of the 1978 national team's memories.

Bill L. Smith's "The Argentinean Junta and the Press in the Run-up to the 1978 World Cup," and Eduardo P. Archetti's "Argentina 1978: Military Nationalism, Football Essentialism, and Moral Ambivalence" deserve special recognition for their unique contributions to scholarship.⁷ While both sources propose that Argentina's military dictatorship used the 1978 World Cup for political benefit, and that soccer and politics are integrally intertwined in contemporary Argentine society, each work offers novel perspectives on these important themes. Smith's study focuses on state repression of domestic and foreign media both before and during the tournament. This thesis relies heavily on Smith's work to discuss potential public knowledge of disappearances and human rights violations during the military era, issues which have taken on greater importance in discussions of historical memory and societal reconstruction in post-dictatorship Argentina.

Moving away from questions of press censorship, Eduardo Archetti examines "the [current] moral ambivalence over the victory of the national team, a victory that has stimulated continuous discussions on what was right and wrong in Argentina." Archetti discusses the

⁶ Kuper; Tony Mason, *Passion of the People? Football in South America* (London: Verso, 1995); Joseph L. Arbena, "Generals and Goals: Assessing the Connection Between the Military and Soccer in Argentina," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 7, no. 1 (1990); Osvaldo Bayer, *Fútbol Argentino: Pasión y Gloria de nuestro deporte más popular* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1990); Pablo Alabarces, *Fútbol y patria: El fútbol y las narrativas de la nación en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo libros, 2002); Chris Taylor, *The Beautiful Game: A Journey Through Latin American Football* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998); Roberto Di Giano, *Fútbol y cultura política en la Argentina: Identidades en crisis* (Buenos Aires: Leviatán, 2005).

⁷ Smith; Archetti.

relationship between the military dictatorship and the World Cup, and then comments on the role of players as "collaborators." Taking the twenty-fifth year anniversary of the World Cup triumph as his base, Archetti places the memories of Argentine players and coach César Luis Menotti within the landscape of "remembering" in Argentina. Archetti crucially concludes that "[Julio] Villa, [Oscar] Ortiz, and the rest of the players were part of a people that preferred to adhere to the logic of innocence." Further, according to Archetti, these players and coaches "symbolized a traumatic epoch that will never be forgotten, and in the middle of which they are like a dark diamond, the names and bodies of the first great victory of Argentine football."⁸

This thesis builds on Archetti's analysis and acknowledges the importance of selective memory in player and civilian recollections of the coup, and in the existence of conflicting narratives and memories of the 1978 World Cup. I disagree with Archetti's final conclusion, however, and propose that the divisive nature of the World Cup win and its controversial place in history will not relegate the testimonies of the 1978 national team to the background of Argentina's reconciliation process. Rather, the emergence of a growing national dialogue regarding the military dictatorship requires the active participation of this core group of actors, individuals whose stories are at the epicenter of the narratives of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders alike. The centrality of these narratives resonates with the majority of Argentine citizens who lived through the military regime, and for this reason the role of the 1978 national team will become increasingly important in moving Argentina towards a greater acceptance of its past.

⁸Archetti, 134, 144-146.

The nature of this past is both important and controversial. Just as any analysis of the testimonies of the 1978 national team requires an understanding of the events surrounding that year's World Cup, so too does it require an examination of theories of reconstruction and memory in post-coup Argentina. Sources covering historical memory are numerous. For the purposes of this thesis, they are divided into three major categories: Works that discuss the effects of trauma on memory, sources that discuss cycles of reconciliation in Argentina, and materials that analyze the important - and fluid - relationship between place, ceremony, and memory.

Analyzing memory creation requires an understanding of the social characteristics of recollection, and how such processes are altered by periods of trauma. Played during an era of intense repression, and actively manipulated by a despotic regime, the 1978 World Cup is a clear source of such trauma. In discussing the memories of the 1978 national team, this thesis draws heavily on Geoffrey Cubitt's *History and Memory*, David Middleton and Steven D. Brown's *The Social Psychology of Experience: Studies in Remembering and Forgetting*, Martin A. Conway and Qi Wang's "Autobiographical Memory, Self, and Culture," and Susana Kaiser's *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes With the Legacy of the "Dirty War."*⁹ While each work differs in its scope, all argue that episodes of trauma, regardless of the individual's participation in the episode, often produce memories that are difficult to assimilate and articulate.

In her study of second generation Argentines, author Susana Kaiser asserts that the knowledge Argentine youth have of the dictatorship suggests a discrepancy between public statements of ignorance and a drastically different private reality. This thesis builds on the academic analysis of Cubitt, Conway and Wang, as well as the case study produced by Susana

⁹ Cubitt; Middleton and Brown; Conway and Wang; Kaiser.

Kaiser, to analyze processes of memory suppression among national team members. As seen in Chapter Two, such an analysis reveals a strong similarity between player and civilian memories regarding the events of the World Cup, a connection that allows the 1978 national team to forge a dynamic bridge between disparate memory groups in Argentine society.

The ability to link such different memories would be impossible without the emergence of a society open to discussions of its past. In proving this point, this thesis draws on a second section of scholarly works, led by Ludmila da Silva Catela's "Desaparición, violencia política y dictadura en Argentina: Mapas de la violencia, políticas y ciclos de las memorias."¹⁰ Catela proposes a four-stage framework in which to examine Argentine memories of the coup and the *Junta*, and argues that entry into the fourth phase, a crucial cycle of "state consolidation of memory," has promoted a renewed interest in discussions of the military regime. Conway and Wang's "Autobiographical Memory, Self, and Culture," and Cubitt's *History and Memory* argue that such conditions are necessary for the retrieval of traumatic memories, which lie dormant until social conditions provide an acceptable framework for their consumption and analysis. This thesis builds upon Catela's four-step model of reconciliation efforts, as well as the theories of Cubitt, Conway and Wang, to demonstrate that renewed efforts to remember and discuss the 1978 World Cup are increasing interest in Argentina's past.

Significantly, the emergence of ceremonies commemorating important dates from the military era has accelerated the reemergence and consumption of such memories. In examining this trend, this thesis draws heavily on a third category of historical memory works. Here again the arguments of Cubitt and Catela figure prominently. Both scholars argue that the linking of

¹⁰ Catela.

place, ceremony, and memory has had a positive effect in bringing together differing views on the dictatorship, even if some of these views take a back-seat to a singular, dominant narrative. Scholar Antonius C.G.M. Robben disagrees. Robben argues that commemorative ceremonies in Argentina only confirm the voices of dominant groups, and have thus weakened instead of strengthened reconciliation efforts.¹¹ This thesis agrees with the analysis provided by Cubitt and Catela, and demonstrates that the 25th and 30th year anniversaries of the 1978 World Cup help create a critical yet publicly acceptable narrative of the dictatorship. Driven by the 1978 national team, whose memories are at once unique and intimately connected to the populace as a whole, these ceremonies offer Argentines a vehicle for remembrance that incorporates the entire population and their dialogues.

The accounts of members of Argentina's 1978 national team form the backbone of this thesis. These interviews are featured in newspaper articles, a 2003 documentary entitled *Mundial '78: La historia paralela, or World Cup '78: The parallel story*, the program for *La Otra Final*, head coach César Luis Menotti's *Fútbol sin trampas*, as well as various secondary sources. The recollections of these crucial actors are featured throughout this work to allow analyses of the importance of the 1978 national team in contemporary Argentina, and thus the squad's potential to drive reconciliation efforts, embodied in the growing influence of the World Cup anniversary ceremonies.¹² To support the important memories of the 1978 national team, this thesis draws on the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association*, or FIFA's, official

¹¹Robben, 153-154.

¹² Unless otherwise noted, all primary and secondary sources in Spanish have been translated into English by the author. *La Nación*, 2003, 2008; *El Clarín*, 2003, 2008; *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*; Instituto Espacio para la Memoria a 30 años del Mundial de Fútbol 1978, *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos* (Buenos Aires: 2008); César Luis Menotti, *El fútbol sin trampas* (Barcelona: Muchnik editores, 1986); Alabarces; Archetti; Daniel Arcucci and Juan Sasturain, *La Argentina en los mundiales: Uruguay 1930 - Corea-Japón 2002* (Buenos Aires: Editorial El Ateneo, 2002); Bayer; Di Giano; Gilbert and Vitagliano; LaMadrid and Halac.

report on the 1978 World Cup and *Nunca más: informe de la comisión nacional sobre la desaparición de personas*, the famous government report published in 1984 outlining the four *Juntas'* human rights abuses. This thesis also utilizes Argentine, Spanish, and American newspapers from the dictatorship era - mostly quoted from secondary materials - recent newspaper accounts from Argentina's leading newspapers *La Nación* and *El Clarín*, and, finally, interviews with Argentine civilians taken from Argentine newspapers, *La Otra Final's* program, and key secondary sources.¹³

Layout and Structure

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One examines the details of the 1978 World Cup, and analyzes key questions of government intervention, censorship, bribery, and doping in order to establish a foundation on which to examine the national team's memories. Chapter Two analyses these memories in depth. The chapter compares players' recollections to those of their civilian counterparts, and describes the unique function of the members and memories of the 1978 national team in Argentine society. The final chapter briefly outlines Argentina's democratization since 1983, and argues that conditions are now ripe for the emergence of new dialogues regarding the dictatorship. This thesis concludes by examining the 25th and 30th year anniversaries of the World Cup final. This thesis proposes that these

¹³ René Courte, ed., *Official FIFA Report: World Cup Argentina 78* (Munich: proSport GmbH & Co., 1980); La Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas, *Nunca Más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional Sobre La Desaparición De Personas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1984); *La Nación*, 2003, 2008; *El Clarín*, 2003, 2008; *Buenos Aires Herald*, 1976; *El Gráfico*, 1978; *La Prensa*, 1976-1978; the *Washington Post*, 1978; *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos*; Kaiser.

ceremonies not only confirm Argentina's shift towards a more open discussion of its past, but are in fact nurturing the emergence of the dialogues needed to bring this shift to fruition.

Chapter 1: “The World Cup of Peace”

“The day that 25 million Argentines aim for the same goal, Argentina will be a winner not once, but a thousand times over.”¹⁴

- José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, Argentine Minister of Economy during the 1978 World Cup

Preparing the Victory

Argentina’s “World Cup of Peace” started and ended triumphantly, at least for those in charge. The three-week long tournament culminated on June 25th, 1978, when the hosts defeated The Netherlands three to one to bring the World Cup trophy to Argentina for the first time in the nation’s history. The triumph prompted massive celebrations across the country, as a nation loudly, if not collectively, rejoiced in *La Albiceleste*’s victory on the biggest stage in world soccer. It also prompted complex questions with few immediate answers. While mothers and relatives searched in vain for their “disappeared” relatives, international news sources openly doubted the validity of Argentina’s on field triumphs, and wondered what lay beyond the propaganda curtain drawn over the nation by its military rulers. Thirty years after the tournament, Argentines still define and discuss the tournament in myriad ways. This chapter examines the paradoxes of the 1978 World Cup, and establishes the historical foundation needed to critically analyze the memories of 1978 national team, and their role in reconciling Argentine society with its past.

In 1966, FIFA selected Argentina to host the 1978 World Cup, the 11th edition of the quadrennial tournament.¹⁵ One decade later, on March 24, 1976, the Argentine military rose up under the leadership of the Commanders of the Armed Forces and took control of the

¹⁴ Kuper, 215.

¹⁵ Smith, 69.

government. The military coup was Argentina's sixth of the twentieth century, and followed an established national and continent-wide tradition of military intervention in times of domestic and economic distress.¹⁶ The coup was not a spontaneous event, but rather the culmination of a lengthy process that originated as early as the autumn of 1975.¹⁷ As a March 25th, 1976, article in Buenos Aires' *La Nación* read, "yesterday morning the Government finally crumbled... [and t]his was not a surprise... [as] the Government had been dead long before [the coup]."¹⁸ While the military's response to Argentina's lagging economy and political turmoil was far from a shock, the widespread and ruthless repression that followed dwarfed any measures previously employed in Argentine politics.¹⁹

Following the coup, the Argentine military *Junta* immediately targeted leftist guerrillas, politicians, writers, and other "dangerous" elements in society. During the Peronist administrations, paramilitary groups such as the Triple A, or *Alianza Argentina Anticomunista*, had battled armed leftist groups such as the *Montoneros* and *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*, or ERP. Once in power, the *Junta* expanded anti-subversive operations even further.²⁰ Some 340 detention centers sprang up across the country, where detainees "disappeared" by the government underwent brutal forms of torture, including electrocution, suffocation, psychological trauma, and rape. Many prisoners lived to tell their stories after Argentina returned to democratic rule in 1983. Those less fortunate met with gruesome deaths: in one

¹⁶ Alberto Dearriba, *El Golpe: 24 de marzo de 1976* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2001), 19; Archetti, 135; Brian Loveman, "When You Wish Upon The Stars: Why the Generals (And Admirals) Say Yes to Latin American 'Transitions' to Civilian Government," in *The Origins of Liberty: Political and Economic Liberalization in the Modern World*, eds. Paul W. Drake and Mathew D. McCubbins (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 122.

¹⁷ Guido Di Tella, *Argentina Under Perón, 1973-76: The Nation's Experience with a Labour-based Government* (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1983), 81.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁹ Archetti, 19.

²⁰ Deborah Norden, *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 48.

popular execution tactic, torturers dropped prisoners into the River Plate from high altitudes. In other cases, guards killed detainees and buried them in mass, unmarked graves throughout the country.

The number of disappeared victims remains unconfirmed – Argentina’s first domestic report regarding the *Juntas*’ abuses, *Nunca más*, placed the number of *desaparecidos* at around 9,000, while other human rights organizations and political groups claim closer to 30,000 victims – but the seven years of terror promulgated under the military *Juntas* have affected post-dictatorship societal reconstruction in myriad ways.²¹ This thesis focuses on the memories of the 1978 Argentine national team as a means of analyzing this process of societal change.

The 1978 World Cup took place just over two years after the first *Junta* took power, and the manner in which it was planned and carried out reflected the military regime’s transformative plans for the nation. General Jorge Videla’s military government quickly realized the importance of the World Cup. Athletically, it served as yet another opportunity for soccer-mad Argentina to win the most prestigious, and to that time elusive, international title on the planet. Off the field, hosting the World Cup emerged as a means of demonstrating the military regime’s progress in transforming Argentina into a “peaceful, modern nation.” The World Cup also provided Argentina with an opportunity to challenge Mexico’s international and regional prestige, which

²¹ Donald C. Hodges, *Argentina’s “Dirty War:” An Intellectual Biography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 176-179; Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The “Dirty War” in Argentina* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 151-153; La Comisión Nacional Sobre La Desaparición De Personas, 16. Much has been written both on the goals of the military regime and the widespread human rights violations carried out under its watch. Some of the best sources for further research include Alberto R. Jordán’s *El Proceso 1976/1983* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1993); James Neilson’s *En Tiempo de Oscuridad: 1976/1983* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2001); and Ian Guest’s *Behind the Disappearances: Argentina’s Dirty War Against Human Rights and the United Nations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

had risen in the wake of its hosting of both the 1968 Summer Olympics and the 1970 World Cup.²²

In order to ensure that the World Cup elevated Argentina's international reputation on and off the field, the military government expanded plans for the tournament and declared the competition a "national priority."²³ The previous regime under Isabel Perón had done little to prepare the country to host one of the largest sporting spectacles in the world, so General Jorge Videla's *Junta* quickly organized the *Ente Autárquico Mundial '78*, or EAM, to oversee the construction of facilities and to overhaul the nation's image with the help of American-based consulting group Burson-Marsteller.²⁴ During the two years leading up to June 1978, the *Junta* built stadiums in Córdoba, Mar de Plata, and Mendoza, and renovated grounds in Buenos Aires and Rosario, including *El Monumental*, the site of the opening ceremonies and the final. Per FIFA regulations, Argentine authorities installed color television capabilities for broadcasts of the matches.²⁵ The host nation treated journalists to a newly minted press center, and completely renovated Buenos Aires' international airport.²⁶ To further assist the 50,000 expected international fans, authorities also provided bilingual hostesses outside stadiums.²⁷

Estimates of government spending on the World Cup differ. Official government reports placed expenditures at \$521,494,931 USD, with the \$9,642,360 revenues from the tournament bringing the final spending balance to \$511,852,571.²⁸ The *Junta*'s Financial Minister, Juan Alemann, however, asserted that government corruption brought the overall total to almost \$700

²² Arbena, 120-122.

²³ Archetti, 136.

²⁴ Taylor, 66; Kuper 213; Mason, 71.

²⁵ Mason, 71.

²⁶ Charles A. Krause, "World Cup has Political Tint," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 1978.

²⁷ Mason, 71; Smith, 76.

²⁸ Alabarces, 125-126.

million USD.²⁹ According to this figure, the cost of the World Cup represented a tenth of Argentina's entire 1978 budget. It was four times greater than Mexico's expenditures for the 1968 Summer Olympics, and an astonishing six times more than Spain's budget for the 1982 World Cup.³⁰ As the cost of the tournament reached unprecedented levels, Argentines joked that the competition's motto was in fact "Twenty-five million Argentines will pay for the World Cup" instead of the official slogan "Twenty-five million Argentines will play in the World Cup."³¹

Out of the public eye, another set of more sinister plans was also under way. On the eve of the tournament, security forces initiated "*El Barrido*," a security "operation" that sought to further cleanse the nation of government labeled "subversives" who might stage attacks during games and events, or even have the audacity to speak out against the military regime.³² A declaration by the leftist guerilla group, *Montoneros*, promising an end to attacks during the World Cup did little to prevent the government's actions to quell dissent.³³

So called subversives were not the *Junta*'s only targets. Presenting a modern Argentina to the world meant denying the poverty that wracked areas of the country. To prevent foreigners from viewing the *villas miserias*, or shantytowns, on the road to Rosario, the military government constructed a wall with middle-class residences painted on.³⁴ Even members of the military *Junta* suffered during preparations. Jorge Actis, the first head of the *Ente Autárquico*

²⁹ *Ibid.*; *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

³⁰ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 29; Mason, 71; Eric Zolov, "Showcasing the 'Land of Tomorrow:' Mexico and the 1968 Olympics," *The Americas* 61, no. 2 (2004), 167.

³¹ Kuper, 211, Mason, 71.

³² Kuper, 213.

³³ Karen De Young, "Guerillas Vow Not to Halt World Soccer," *The Washington Post*, March 26, 1977, sec. D.

³⁴ Kuper, 213.

Mundial, died shortly after he took charge of the commission, most likely assassinated for political reasons by fellow members of the ruling *Junta*.³⁵

Modern facilities and denials of social inequality could not entirely ensure the positive depiction of Argentina that the military *Junta* sought. Argentina's World Cup makeover required strong control of domestic and foreign media alike. General Videla's government was not the first Argentine regime to restrict freedom of the press, but its efforts to control journalists and mass media dwarfed the restrictions imposed by prior administrations. Following the coup in 1976, the *Junta* quickly imposed censorship regulations. On April 22nd, 1976, the military government declared, "it is forbidden to inform, comment or make reference to...subversive incidents, the appearance of bodies and the death of subversive elements...includ[ing] victims of kidnappings and missing persons." As the World Cup neared, censorship expanded from discussions of "disappeared" persons to commentary on *La Selección*, coach César Luis Menotti, and depictions of Argentina in foreign news sources.³⁶ In detention centers such as the *Escuela Mecánica de la Armada*, or ESMA, *desaparecidos* sorted foreign news articles under the watchful eyes of their captors, searching for articles and clippings with an "anti-argentine" spin.³⁷

During the *Junta*'s seven years in power, roughly seventy journalists "disappeared." Tellingly, in 1977 the *Junta* disappeared twenty-one journalists, roughly twice the yearly average.³⁸ It is certainly possible that the number of press members who "vanished" is higher in 1977 due to the efforts of the military government to consolidate control after the coup, but it

³⁵ Taylor, 66; Gilbert and Vitagliano, 19; *Mundial '78, La historia paralela*.

³⁶ Smith, 72-73.

³⁷ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

³⁸ Smith, 71.

seems just as likely that the press crackdown had its roots in the *Junta*'s desire to control domestic popular opinion leading up to the World Cup.³⁹

Yet controlling domestic mass media outlets was only half the battle: Videla's *Junta* also needed to neutralize foreign press sources. In the run-up to the World Cup, both Amnesty International and several European organizations condemned Argentina's human rights violations. While Amnesty promoted an information campaign aimed at educating the foreign press, groups in France, Sweden, and Holland openly campaigned for their national sides and other teams around the world to boycott the tournament.⁴⁰ It was the *Comité de Boycott du Mondial de Football en Argentine*, or COBA, that led the charge, however, by publishing literature that visually depicted the 1978 World Cup's official seal, two hands holding a soccer ball, surrounded by barbed wire fences reminiscent of Nazi detention centers and concentration camps.⁴¹

Although Europe's national teams did participate in the World Cup, individual players nonetheless voiced indignation over Argentina's domestic situation. On the tournament's opening day, Swedish goalie Ronnie Helström participated in a demonstration orchestrated by *las Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, protesting the *Junta*'s repressive policies alongside women who had lost their children to government orchestrated violence and kidnappings.⁴² Three weeks later, on the eve of the final, Dutch forward Joan Nicolass Rep admitted to one Argentine journalist that "[he was] afraid of winning." Twenty years later, Rep qualified his answer by admitting that he and his teammates were afraid of the way Argentine citizens and the military

³⁹ Arbena, 123.

⁴⁰ Smith, 72; *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos*.

⁴¹ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos*. Other similar cartoons depicted Videla with Hitler.

⁴² Gilbert and Vitagliano, 85.

Junta would respond to a Dutch victory.⁴³ Further, following its defeat in the final, The Netherlands refused to accept its second place medals as a protest against Videla and his fellow military leaders.⁴⁴

While unable to prevent these individual protests, Argentine newspapers nonetheless responded to foreign criticism by publishing scathing attacks on the “campaign[s] of lies” perpetrated outside the nation, and by trumpeting the pre-destined victory that awaited Argentina’s national team on June 25th, 1978.⁴⁵ Argentine newspaper *La Prensa*’s World Cup preview named Argentina one of the “cultural center[s] of unquestionable world focus,” a nation that “could not escape the responsibility to host an international soccer encounter, no matter...its magnitude.”⁴⁶ Other articles simply asserted, “Argentina has already won the World Cup.”⁴⁷

This monitoring of foreign news reports was not enough. Although the *Junta* awarded close to 7,000 press credentials to foreign and domestic journalists, the Argentine government closely supervised who arrived in Argentina and what they subsequently wrote and said.⁴⁸ Videla’s regime briefly jailed a “leftist” French journalist, and other members of the foreign press corps found themselves similarly threatened. In one instance, Argentine journalists attacked a foreign reporter who described hearing gunshots close to *El Monumental* stadium.⁴⁹ The combination of domestic censorship and foreign intimidation certainly did not quell all criticism of Argentina’s World Cup, but it did manage to quiet some of the most damaging

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 211-212.

⁴⁴ Bayer, 132-133.

⁴⁵ “*El Gráfico*,” quoted in Mason, 72.

⁴⁶ Smith, 75.

⁴⁷ “*El Gráfico*,” quoted in Mason, 72.

⁴⁸ Smith, 75.

⁴⁹ Kuper, 214.

attacks.⁵⁰ As preparations wound down, the focus of the *Junta*, the nation, and the world turned to the opening ceremonies.

The Price of Glory

Argentina started its run to World Cup glory on June 2nd, 1978, with a two to one victory over Hungary. The previous day, in a speech given prior to the tournament's inaugural match between West Germany and Poland, General Jorge Videla declared the competition to be the "World Cup of Peace."⁵¹ Off the field, government repression had already turned this statement into a lie. Soon enough, on-field events in Rosario would call into question the good will of both the Argentine government and the national team as well.

Despite a one to zero loss to Italy, Argentina's victory over Hungary, coupled with a two to one triumph over France, proved enough to send *La Albiceleste* into the second round of the World Cup. The four group winners and runners up from the first round made up this second, elimination round. Teams competed in round robin play in two groups of four, with the winners of each group advancing to play one another in the World Cup final on June 25th in *El Monumental* stadium in Buenos Aires. After the first round, Argentina faced a mostly South American gauntlet of Poland, Peru, and Argentina's traditional nemesis, Brazil. After defeating Poland and drawing with Brazil, Argentina closed group play against Peru. A win would leave Argentina level on points with its northern rivals, but *La Albiceleste* needed to beat Peru by at least four goals to overcome Brazil's lead in goal differential and secure a place in the final. In

⁵⁰ Smith, 76.

⁵¹ Mason, 72.

each of its five previous World Cup games, Argentina had failed to score more than twice.

Advancing to the final appeared a herculean task.⁵²

Nonetheless, on June 21st, 1978, Argentina decisively, and controversially, won a spot in the 1978 World Cup Final. *La Albiceleste*'s six to zero demolition of their Peruvian counterparts speaks to the military *Junta*'s efforts, perceived or real, to control the World Cup and guarantee Argentina a victory. According to multiple sources, Argentine officials bribed Peru to throw the game, enticing collaboration with an offer to the Peruvian government of thousands of tons of grain and \$50 million dollars.⁵³ Neither side has ever admitted to fixing the game, though abundant evidence supports the conspiracy theories. Despite the protests of Brazilian head coach Claudio Coutinho, Argentina's match kicked off *after* the conclusion of Brazil's game against Poland, ensuring that *La Albiceleste* - and the *Junta* - would be well aware of the exact number of goals Argentina would need to advance to the final.⁵⁴ Although Peru played well at the start of the match - hitting the Argentine post twice from close range - their defense imploded in the second half. In the game's fiftieth minute, Argentine forward Leopoldo Luque struck home Argentina's all-important fourth goal.

At the same time as Luque's goal, at roughly 8:20 PM in Buenos Aires, a bomb exploded outside the house of Argentina's Secretary of the Treasury, Juan Alemann, an official who had publicly criticized the regime's enormous budget for the tournament.⁵⁵ Alemann confirms, "[The *Junta*] put a bomb in my house at precisely the same moment as Argentina scored the 4th goal against Peru." The former treasury official believes that the timing of the bomb was not a

⁵² Kuper, 211.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 211-212. The documentary *Mundial '78: La historia paralela* mentions an Argentine donation of wheat to Peru given fifteen days after the World Cup's conclusion.

⁵⁴ LaMadrid and Halac, 76.

⁵⁵ Alabarces, 125; LaMadrid and Halac, 91-93.

coincidence, and blames Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera for orchestrating the attack.⁵⁶

Whether or not such an influential member of the *Junta* ordered the bombing is open to speculation. Nonetheless, it is revealing that only *one* Argentine paper - *La Prensa* - reported the incident, that it appeared only on the issue's fourth page, and that the bomb in front of Alemann's house exploded within 150 feet of a police station.⁵⁷

The lack of coverage of the bombing paled in comparison to widespread reports of Argentina's six to zero victory over Peru, a win that raised eyebrows across the soccer world. The Brazilian paper, *O Globo*, immediately labeled Argentina's win "a shameful day for soccer," a sentiment echoed by news outlets across both Brazil and Peru.⁵⁸ Brazilian coach Claudio Coutinho went one step further, and accused Peru's national team of "losing its international prestige" by fixing the match.⁵⁹ Coutinho's counterpart, Peruvian head coach Marcos Calderón, refused to allow his team to speak with the media following their defeat.⁶⁰ Suspicions of foul play remained, however, and focused on Peruvian goalie Ramón Quiroga, a naturalized Argentine who had declared before the game that he believed Argentina would win the tournament.⁶¹

In an effort to deflect such accusations of match fixing, Quiroga published a statement in Argentine newspaper *El Clarín* shortly after the World Cup denying that his team threw the game. According to the goalie, "the allegations [of bribery] have hit us hard and I know that they will worsen when we arrive [home] in Lima... we did what we could... we played against Argentina with the same desire as we did against Scotland," a team whom Peru defeated three to

⁵⁶ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

⁵⁷ LaMadrid and Halac, 92; Alabarces, 126.

⁵⁸ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 206.

⁵⁹ LaMadrid and Halac, 93-94.

⁶⁰ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 205.

⁶¹ LaMadrid and Halac, 88.

one in the first round.⁶² Several years later, after reports circulated that he had admitted to throwing the match, Peruvian defender Rodolfo Manzo also publicly denied collaborating with Argentine officials, claiming that “[he] never received money, [and] neither did [his] teammates.”⁶³

Neither Quiroga nor Manzo’s appeals succeeded in silencing reports of foul play, which still center on the former national team defenseman and goalie. Former Peruvian national team member Juan Carlos Oblitas points to General Videla’s appearance in Peru’s dressing room both before and after the match as a sign of a pre-arranged deal between the two countries. According to the Peruvian forward, “[General] Videla came in to talk to us with a group of people, including Henry Kissinger.” The appearance of the *Junta* leader, coupled with Quiroga’s performance, cemented Oblitas’ suspicions that “[this] game was not normal.”⁶⁴

In addition to charges of bribery, allegations of doping among key Argentine players before both the game against Peru and the final against Holland have also surfaced.⁶⁵ It is certain that steroids played a role in the World Cup: Scottish winger Willie Johnston tested positive for a banned stimulant following his side’s loss to Peru.⁶⁶ What is less certain is the extent of steroid use, and whether such substances ever found their way into Argentina’s locker room.

Nonetheless, Brazilian reporters accused Argentine star Mario Kempes of doping following Argentina’s six to zero victory over Peru. Argentine team doctor Rubén Oliva, after publishing an article in *El Clarín* several days before the match detailing the relationship between steroids and athletic performance, publicly declared “none of [the] players [on the national team] use

⁶² Gilbert and Vitagliano, 206.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 205-207; *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

⁶⁴ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

⁶⁵ Kuper, 219.

⁶⁶ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 115; Sergio Ferraro, *Argentina en los mundiales* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998), 114.

steroids.”⁶⁷ Allegations of doping also tainted the final game against Holland. The official FIFA report stated, “Argentina... seemed fresher and stronger in extra time [of the game],” while author Simon Kuper quotes an unnamed source as asserting that one of the Argentine player’s post-game urine-based drug tests yielded positive results for pregnancy. Such results would only have been possible if the players had swapped their own urine samples with clean samples brought in from outside the locker room. The pregnant sample thus strongly points to the presence of doping among the Argentine squad.⁶⁸

Whereas Argentina’s run to the World Cup Final provided controversy, the game itself provided drama and, albeit tainted, an Argentine victory. On June 25th, 1978, extra time goals from tournament stars Mario Kempes and Daniel Bertoni spurred *La Albiceleste* to a three to one victory over The Netherlands. As the scoreboard on the northern side of *El Monumental* proclaimed “Argentina, World Champions!” fans and players alike celebrated on the field and across the country.⁶⁹ According to one eyewitness, “there was an explosion of ecstasy and hysteria [in Buenos Aires]... [a]ll the country was on the streets.”⁷⁰ The *Washington Post* compared the party to similar scenes that had played out after Argentine victories throughout the tournament.⁷¹ The celebrations continued throughout the night and into the following day, when thousands of Argentines gathered in the heart of Buenos Aires at the Plaza de Mayo to commemorate the victory with songs and patriotic chants.⁷² In a speech to the nation, General Videla declared that the celebrations were “the collective joy of a people, who, more than celebrating a successful athletic triumph, are celebrating a reunion with their traditional values...

⁶⁷ LaMadrid and Halac, 64, 72.

⁶⁸ Courte, 119; Kuper, 219.

⁶⁹ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 227.

⁷⁰ Kuper, 209.

⁷¹ “First Title Ignites Wild Celebration.”

⁷² Mason, 72-73; “First Title Ignites Wild Celebration.”

[a people] who feel pride in their past, and who are optimistic about their future.”⁷³ Three and a half weeks after the start of the tournament, and two years after the military coup, the *Junta* had its victory, and Argentina had the World Cup.⁷⁴

The roller-coaster events on and off the field before, during, and immediately following the conclusion of the 1978 World Cup have greatly affected Argentina’s collective memory of the tournament. The day after the World Cup final, an article in the *Washington Post* declared, “The celebrating may never stop.”⁷⁵ The celebrations did stop, however, and, although they started once again in 1986 after Diego Maradona led a new wave of national stars to the World Cup title in Mexico, Argentines now view the 1978 World Cup with varying degrees of confusion and anger.

This thesis will not argue for or against the myriad theories of bribery, doping, and military meddling surrounding the 1978 World Cup, nor will it outline in depth the processes of political and legal reform in post-coup Argentina, topics which are extensively covered in the excellent works noted in the Introduction. Rather, this thesis will explore the unique position that members of the 1978 national team occupy in Argentine society. In memory, as in the World Cup itself, the national team is at once both perpetrator and victim, and thus at the center of competing narratives about the tournament and the dictatorship. In the two chapters that follow, this thesis will demonstrate that, rather than breeding entrapment, this unique position is in fact

⁷³ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela.*

⁷⁴ “First Title Ignites Wild Celebration.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

driving a broader shift towards public accountability and an open dialogue concerning both the 1978 World Cup and the dictatorship era as a whole.

Chapter 2: Voices from the Field

As the sun set on June 29th, 2008, a familiar scene played out on the field of *El Monumental* stadium in the northern suburbs of Buenos Aires. Urged on by the chants and cries of thousands of fans in attendance, twenty-two men jostled and fought one another for possession of a soccer ball, with only the occasional gray hair and slow first step betraying the fact that this game, unlike other Sunday matches, was merely an exhibition. The match marked the close of the 30th year anniversary of Argentina's 1978 World Cup win. Known as *La Otra Final*, the event began with a march from one of Buenos Aires' most infamous detention centers, the *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada*, or ESMA, to the stadium, and concluded with a match starring Leopoldo Luque, a important member of Argentina's 1978 World Cup team, as well as individuals from human rights organizations and members of Argentina's junior national teams. Held on the same pitch as the 1978 final, *La Otra Final* connected modern Argentina with its haunted past. In its tribute to the 30,000 individuals disappeared during the most recent military dictatorship, *La Otra Final* represents history as memory, the attempts of a nation to assimilate and process one of its darkest eras.

While shared by all Argentines, this history is especially poignant for the players and coaches of the 1978 national team. Their testimonies are an essential and overlooked area of memory which provide a ground level view of the controversies and paradoxes of the 1978 World Cup. The accounts of the 1978 national team demonstrate documented processes of "self-denial" and selective reconstruction, trends which are also seen in the Argentine populace as a whole.⁷⁶ Though these testimonies fit within broader trends in Argentine society, they are

⁷⁶ Kaiser, 87.

nonetheless unique. The 1978 national team is both a collaborator to and a victim of the dictatorship, and as such serves as a conduit for disparate memories of military rule. The final section of this chapter supports this point by examining soccer's dynamic position in Argentina, and demonstrates how the sport's high visibility has allowed the 1978 national team to not only carve, but also thrive in its unique historical space.

Campeones, After the Fact?

In their discussions of the events surrounding the 1978 World Cup, the central figures of Argentina's first World Cup championship squad focus on the perceived alliance between the team and members of the military *Junta*, as well as the controversial result against Peru. That these two events form the foundation of player and head coach César Luis Menotti's memories of the 1978 World Cup is not surprising. Memory is fundamentally a social construct, and individuals remember and discuss situations and events that are socially relevant and appropriate.⁷⁷ In a nation in which a string of bad passes during a game elicits cries of *Somos Argentinos!* (We are Argentines!) from a restless crowd appealing to a history of soccer glory as a means of inspiring better play, soccer is weaved into the very fabric of society. The perceived need by the players and Menotti to talk about the controversies of *Mundial '78* speaks to both soccer's and the 1978 World Cup's continued importance in Argentina's national traditions and history. The national team's discussions also cement the World Cup's fundamental role as a trigger for memories of the military regime.

⁷⁷ Cubitt, 237; Wang and Conway, 23.

In their testimonies, Argentine players repeatedly assert that, at the time, the national team was completely ignorant of government repression occurring outside the walls of the nation's training grounds and stadiums. In 2003, Daniel Bertoni gave an interview for the documentary *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*, or World Cup 78: The Parallel History. The documentary's purpose was to reveal the darker side of the 1978 tournament. Bertoni, among others, went on record denying having had any knowledge of the military regimes' activities during the tournament. According to the midfielder, a winger who played in six out of Argentina's seven games and who scored the tournament's final goal, it was only after the World Cup when he learned the extent of state orchestrated repression: "after [the World Cup] I learned what everyone learned, that close by everyone celebrating were people suffering and people disappearing."⁷⁸ Bertoni further stated, "at that moment [the World Cup], I was thinking only of playing soccer...I was not interested in politics...I wasn't with [Generals and *Junta* members] Videla or Massera or Lacoste or anyone."⁷⁹

"El Matador" Mario Kempes, the tournament's leading scorer with six goals, echoed Bertoni's sentiments. In an interview given in 2002, Kempes admitted that the team met periodically with military officials and General Videla, both before and during the World Cup, "but to draw [from contact with the government] that we were with [the generals] all the time, or that we agreed with what they were doing, is incorrect...[w]e played for the people, and we were clear on that from the start." Kempes closed his analysis of the national team's contact with the government by reasserting that he "never felt used by the military," and that "for [him], the only thing that was important was playing."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Arcucci and Sasturain, 96-98.

While other players highlighted Argentina's domestic situation in 1978, it is only to distance their own actions from those of the government. Former striker Leopoldo Luque, whose two goals helped Argentina controversially defeat Peru, lamented in an interview featured in *La Otra Final's* program, "[head coach] Menotti has been discredited, because neither he nor us deserve blame for the fact that the World Cup was played under such circumstances."⁸¹ René Houseman seconded Luque's feelings, asserting after the 30th year anniversary ceremony, "[General Jorge] Videla never took a penalty kick and I never saw Massera go up for a header."⁸² The former midfielder added "I played football and did not know what was happening [around me]."⁸³ Midfielder Ricardo Villa similarly claimed, "I don't think I participated or was an accomplice to the [Junta]," while former midfielder Oscar Ortiz maintained, "it must be clear that [what happened] was not our fault, [and that] we were not the cause of the tyranny...we were not champions of the dictatorship, we just helped to be champions during it, and we played good football."⁸⁴

Denials of personal involvement also focused on Argentina's second round match against Peru. Kempes refuted having any knowledge of government involvement; "I have no idea if this game was bought, or if the government tried to buy it," while Argentine midfielder Osvaldo Ardiles claimed, "I can't say, nor can anyone say, [the military] didn't do anything...[but] all I can say is that I don't know [what happened]."⁸⁵ In an interview featured in the 2002 anthology of the 1978 tournament *El terror y la gloria: La vida, el fútbol y la política en la Argentina del Mundial '78*, or *Terror and Glory: Life, Soccer, and Politics in Argentina's 1978 World Cup*,

⁸¹ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos*; "Un respetuoso homenaje, con muy poca esencia deportiva," *La Nación*, 30 June, 2008.

⁸² "Un respetuoso homenaje, con muy poca esencia deportiva."

⁸³ Archetti, 144.

⁸⁴ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos*.

⁸⁵ Arcucci and Sasturain, 99; *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

Leopoldo Luque asserted that Argentina “played at a speed of a hundred miles an hour” against Peru, suggesting that Argentina won the game with a superior effort on the field, and a superior effort alone. Luque also noted “If anything had happened, [we] would have been the last to find out...we knew absolutely nothing [about any attempts to fix the match], we never had discussions with individuals other than coach Menotti, and no one at the World Cup level is simply going to let another team score six times to win.”⁸⁶ Ubaldo Fillol also denied a pre-arranged agreement. The former goalkeeper highlighted, “Peru had the first two scoring chances,” referring to two shots which hit the post early in the game as proof that the Peruvian team was not bought and was, in fact, trying to win the match.⁸⁷

For the Argentine players, the 1978 World Cup was, and remains, fundamentally separate from the political turmoil affecting the nation in June 1978. While only certain members of the national team explicitly acknowledge - as Bertoni does - later learning about the dictatorship’s campaign of terror and torture, all assert that, in June 1978, soccer, and the quest for the World Cup, took precedence to everything else.

It is impossible to determine exactly what Argentina’s players knew of the 340 odd clandestine detention centers across the country, the long line of political prisoners who passed through their walls, or the exact details of a deal to buy off Peru and send Argentina into the World Cup final.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, it seems likely that information regarding state terror, regardless of its accuracy, passed through the locker room at the national team’s training facilities in José C. Paz, and in the various stadiums in which the national team contested the 1978 World Cup. Silvio Marzolini, a defender who played for Argentine in both the 1962 and 1966 World Cups,

⁸⁶ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 207.

⁸⁷ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

⁸⁸ La Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas, 54.

claims that, based on his own personal experience of the strong link between soccer and politics, it is unlikely that the national team was in the dark as to what was happening in the country.

Marzolini comments, “players try to stay out of politics, though they are used a lot [by politicians],” and adds “players see past their family, their friends, and their fans, and understand what is happening in the country...no one can avoid this and think they are living in a paradise separate from the [country’s] problems.”⁸⁹

Evidence of Argentina’s domestic turmoil likely entered the national team’s locker room long before the start of the World Cup. Daniel Passarella, the captain of *La Albiceleste* during the tournament, inherited the title when then-captain Jorge Carrascosa suddenly quit the team in 1977. While the reasons for Carrascosa’s departure remain unclear, sources claim the player told the team after a friendly match with West Germany that, “[he] refused to be used by the military dictatorship,” and thus could not remain with the national side.⁹⁰ Such a declaration, especially from a player in as a respected position of authority as team captain, would certainly have raised eyebrows within the locker room and among the players. Even if Carrascosa quit for other reasons, his reportedly leftist political stance would likely have brought him into prior contact - and indeed confrontation - with Argentina’s government and afforded him first hand knowledge of the darker side of *El Proceso*. In a team lock room, this knowledge would also likely have spread from player to player.

Outside of Argentina, reports of government repression were common. At the time of the World Cup, twenty of the twenty-two individuals on Argentina’s roster played in Argentina.

⁸⁹ Bayer, 132.

⁹⁰ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 87-88. Other rumors as to why Carrascosa quit include the fact that national team was doping, as discussed in Chapter One, and that it featured players who did not play domestically in Argentina. Carrascosa remains silent on the issue.

While these men lived and worked under the watchful eye of the *Junta* and the controlled reporting of the press, two players, Daniel Carnevalli and Mario Kempes, plied their trades in Spain with clubs Las Palmas and Valencia, respectively. It is impossible to prove whether or not these two players came into contact with the widespread allegations of state terror perpetuated by the European press corps. It is likely, however, that the time Carnevalli and Kempes spent abroad provided exposure, even in a limited form, to news regarding the domestic terror in Argentina. For example, following the conclusion of the World Cup, Spanish newspaper *El País* published an article claiming, “during the last twenty-five days, the problems present in Argentina have been relegated to a secondary level, and the World Cup win is likely to keep them there for some time.”⁹¹ While not particularly critical of the *Junta*’s human rights record, the excerpt nonetheless reveals a different - and critical - perspective on the goals of the regime in hosting and winning the World Cup. Such critiques likely would have included commentary on human rights abuses as well.

Even if members of the national team ignored the politics of Carrascosa and information that may have been shared by Carnevalli and Kempes, it seems unlikely that they were not intimately aware of the politics of their coach, César Luis Menotti. As a member of the Argentine Communist Party who hid rebel “subversives” in his own home during the World Cup, Menotti found himself at odds with the *Junta*, a “government with whom [he]...shared nothing in common...[and] whose values contradicted [his] lifestyle.”⁹² Menotti was well aware of the

⁹¹ Liliana Caraballo, Noemi Charlier and Liliana Garulli, *La dictadura (1976-1983): Testimonios y documentos* (Buenos Aires: Ciclo Básico Común, 1996), 140.

⁹² *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*; Menotti, 27.

dangers of his fundamentally precarious political position, and to protect himself the coach kept a gun with him, even while at the José C. Paz training facility with the team.⁹³

Whether to subtly critique the Junta or remain employed and out of prison, Menotti played political games in his discussions with the press. The coach declared that his team would play a style that represented the true Argentine method of football, labeled such a return to old methods “a process,” and stated that “[Argentina] has to win for those that support this process.”⁹⁴ In his 1986 autobiography, *El fútbol sin trampas*, Menotti claims that he instructed his team to play in a manner that would not “[betray] the sentiments of the public.” According to the coach, the team

“[was] conscious and we knew that we were playing for the people. A people that in this moment in Argentina needed a departure point from which to join together... [w]e played the best we possibly could because we understood that we needed to give back the spectacle to the people, who are its only owners. Give it back in triumph if possible, but, above all, in the spirit of fair play. Each one of us had a personal mantra upon entering the field on the day of the final: look at the people. I told the players not to look at the [presidential] box to salute, but rather to look further up [in the stands]... where each of their fathers could be sitting, because up there were the metal-workers, the bakers, the butchers, and the taxi drivers.”⁹⁵

Menotti’s urging of his players to play for the people of Argentina, “[their] fathers, brothers, friends, communities, and their people” and not the dictatorship speaks directly to the coach’s political views.⁹⁶ The fact that such views formed the centerpiece of Menotti’s pre-game

⁹³ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 217.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 73; Alabarces, 126-127.

⁹⁵ Menotti, 27.

⁹⁶ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

speech before the World Cup final suggests a political dialogue as present in the Argentine locker room as discussions of tactics and strategy.⁹⁷

In his discussion of the World Cup in the 2002 book *El terror y la gloria*, Menotti expressed disbelief at the number of individuals who claimed to be ignorant about what was happening in the country. According to the coach, “we [the national team] did not know the magnitude of [what the government was doing]...[but] what was obvious, [however], was that there were raids, political kidnappings, [and] torture.” Menotti also claimed such knowledge was readily available, both to his players and to the public as a whole. The coach does not believe claims of ignorance, and remarked, “[even] if you did not speak up during...the dictatorship, you cannot say that you simply did not know what was happening, as many individuals do today.” To further exonerate himself from collaboration, Menotti stresses that “it was important to say or do something at that time [in protest]...and so...in 1979... I wrote my name on the list of those disappeared by the regime.”⁹⁸

The intimate relationship between soccer and politics in Argentina, as well as Carrascosa’s, Carnaveli’s and Kempes’ knowledge - albeit unconfirmed - of political events and César Luis Menotti’s references to Argentina’s political situation in his soccer philosophy and speeches to his team, render it likely that the members of the 1978 national team knew about the presence of state terror in the country before and during June 1978. The extent of such knowledge is not important to this thesis. What is important is the creation of selective memory patterns that have emerged in the wake of the World Cup. Such habits of denial are common in

⁹⁷ Menotti’s dialogue is so reminiscent to that of the *Junta* that many authors have questioned his leftist political positions, and instead insinuated that Menotti was, in fact, a supporter of the dictatorship. These authors and works include Pablo Alabarces’ “Mundial ’78: silencios, complicidades y el viejo arte de la injuria,” and Rodolfo Braceli’s “Obscenidad 78,” both written for *La otra final*.

⁹⁸ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 218.

individuals who have survived traumatic situations - the 1978 World Cup certainly qualifying as such - and, in Argentina, are not restricted to members of the 1978 national team. In the next section, this thesis explores similar patterns of memory in the general public, before examining the confusion with which both players and civilians currently view Argentina's 1978 title.

A Traumatic Triumph

Following the return of democratic rule in 1983, Argentines across the country “realized” the extent of military repression perpetrated by the four *Juntas* during the Armed Forces’ seven years in power.⁹⁹ In 1998, author Susana Kaiser surveyed students in the Buenos Aires who were second-generation survivors of the dictatorship, to determine, in part, the extent of civilian knowledge of government repression between 1976 and 1983. According to the author, her work is “[b]ased on oral histories with young people from Buenos Aires who were neither direct victims nor political activists, but who were born during the terror or afterward, and who had an entirely mediated knowledge of it.”¹⁰⁰

In discussing the information they had received from their parents, several students noted the contrast between the apparent lack of knowledge of events during the dictatorship, and the “truth” which came out during the human rights commissions in the early 1980’s.¹⁰¹ Generally, the Argentine youth expressed the sentiment that, while “everybody knows [now about the dictatorship],” in the past, “[n]obody knew what was going on,” and the majority of citizens “really didn’t know anything.” Yet, in her analysis of her interviews, Susana Kaiser proposes

⁹⁹ Kaiser, 86; Archetti, 143.

¹⁰⁰ Kaiser, 3.

¹⁰¹ These reports will be examined more closely in the following chapter, which focuses on questions of timing and place in memory.

just the opposite. Kaiser concludes that, similar to the national team, arguments of ignorance are a created response to memories that are difficult to process and understand.¹⁰²

Based on conversations with their parents, Argentine youth featured in the survey revealed a number of reasons why older generations were ignorant about the level of military repression. Foremost among these reasons was repression of the press. Surveyed students assert that the lack of a free domestic dialogue between 1976 and 1983 ensured that news sources were unable to tear down the *Junta*'s rhetoric of progress, and reveal the dark underside of military rule, torture, and repression. According to Mercedes, a college student, during the dictatorship "most people lived...in a cloud...[and] had a superficial knowledge [of events]...[i]n general, [people] didn't know; newspapers or the television didn't inform." While the *Junta* certainly realized the value of shutting down Argentina's press corps - the relationship between Videla's government and the press in the run up to the World Cup appears in detail in the previous chapter - information nonetheless spread through the country, often in the form of "rumors."¹⁰³

Another reason for ignorance cited by the survivors of the dictatorship is the discrepancy between domestic and foreign coverage of repression. According to these individuals, Argentines were in the dark about what was happening in their country because uncensored foreign news sources never made it into the nation. Once again, the testimonies of Argentine youth refute this claim. According to the young adults interviewed, knowledge from abroad came back to the country in many forms, such as letters from exiles and visitors from other countries, including those who came during the 1978 World Cup. Argentines living, working,

¹⁰² Kaiser, 86-88, 97-99.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

and traveling overseas provided another source of potential information. This group which includes World Cup hero Mario Kempes and teammate Daniel Carnevali.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the amount of information available from others, the extent of government repression ensured that most citizens had either a family member or close acquaintance affected by the cycle of disappearances. Such close proximity to state repression ensured basic knowledge of what was happening, even if some people believed that “[the repression and disappearances] must [have been] for some...[reason].”¹⁰⁵

The availability of information to those both within and outside of Argentina does not guarantee that all Argentine citizens had a direct knowledge of the military government’s activities, but it does point to a certain degree of denial that has emerged in the dictatorship’s wake.¹⁰⁶ This level of self-deception fits into a broader process of memory suppression which often results from traumatic episodes. Under normal circumstances, information stored in the human mind is available for retrieval when certain “cues” are present, clues that direct the brain to certain recollections that are appropriate based on situational and social factors.¹⁰⁷ When attempting to recall a traumatic event or situation, however, memory patterns shift. To effectively deal with difficult memories, humans often opt for silence or what historian Geoffrey Cubitt refers to as a “selective reworking” of events, in order to ensure memories conform to their societal situation.¹⁰⁸ Unpleasant experiences can thus result in distorted ability to remember events clearly, as “voids, vacuums...[and] silences” encroach on the truth.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 87-89.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 87, 97.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰⁷ Wang and Conway, 10, 23.

¹⁰⁸ Cubitt, 109; Jelin, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Jelin, 21.

In the case of the national team and the memories of regular citizens, such a pattern of memory suppression has emerged, leading to an inability to accept one's own actions in light of the situation at the time. Individuals who did not stand up against the government often blame themselves for what ensued, leading into a pattern of forced silence and sometimes outward denial.¹¹⁰ Certainly not all Argentine citizens were aware of what was happening in the country during the World Cup and the dictatorship, but the group of individuals "who didn't want to know" is larger than the category of "[t]hose who knew" or "those who didn't know."¹¹¹

While the central actors of the 1978 World Cup all deny personal involvement in the *Junta's* efforts to manipulate the Argentine people and the World Cup, they are divided on the success of these efforts, and, subsequently, the importance of the tournament in contemporary Argentine society. In recalling the tournament, Ricardo Julio Villa "assume[d] responsibility" for helping the Junta, and admitted feeling "used." According to the former midfielder, "I never doubted we [the national team] were used politically, because sports are important for a lot of people."¹¹² Teammate Osvaldo Ardiles agreed, and noted, "from a distance it is clear we were used as propaganda by the military."¹¹³ Ardiles also acknowledged that "we [the national team] helped them [the military], because by winning we helped them perpetuate their time in power."¹¹⁴ Former midfielder Oscar Ortiz asserted he "would have swapped the title [Argentina] won to stop what happened during the military dictatorship."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Kaiser, 98-99.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹² *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos; Mundial '78: La historia paralela.*

¹¹³ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos.*

¹¹⁴ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela.*

¹¹⁵ Archetti, 144.

In his analysis of the World Cup win, Mario Kempes argued, “it’s inevitable to think of the dictatorship when discussing the World Cup, inevitable and sad, because the two are mixed up too much.” In 2002, the former forward said, “knowing now how things were, I’m against everything that happened, but I would go back and do it [the World Cup] again...because it enabled people to go out, together, [and] hug and celebrate in the midst of such pain.”¹¹⁶ In an interview quoted in *La Otra Final*, Osvaldo Ardiles similarly pointed to the joy the World Cup brought to Argentine civilians; “we...soothed people and allowed them to return to the street shrouded in Argentine flags.”¹¹⁷ Head coach César Luis Menotti, an outspoken opponent of the military regime, is also a staunch defender of the players’ importance in the tournament win. In an 2003 interview, the former coach brushed off allegations of collaboration with the military *Junta* - “I was loyal to the team and the people...I didn’t make compromises with anyone” - and asserted that the tournament belonged to the players, and not those in power; “I don’t understand those who claim we [won] what we [won] because of the influence of the military...these people are traitors.”¹¹⁸ Menotti closed his argument by defiantly asserting, “I don’t have anything to apologize for.”¹¹⁹

The confusion seen in the ranks of the national team regarding the place of the World Cup win in society extends to the civilian population as well. Considering the intense level of state repression and the *Junta*’s attempts to influence the outcomes of games, it is logical that many in Argentina view the World Cup as another terrible chapter in the story of military rule. Pedro Eladio Vázquez, the Secretary of Sports and Tourism under Isabel Perón’s administration and a

¹¹⁶ Arcucci and Sasturain, 98.

¹¹⁷ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos*.

¹¹⁸ *Mundial '78: La historia Paralela*; Gilbert and Vitagliano, 163.

¹¹⁹ *Mundial '78: La historia Paralela*.

prisoner under Videla's *Junta*, described the World Cup as "[a] terrible moment" in his life.¹²⁰ Estela de Carlotto, the president of human rights group *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, lost both her daughter and grandson when the former disappeared while pregnant. When Argentina defeated The Netherlands to win its first World Cup, Carlotto and her husband cried, unable and unwilling to participate in the celebrations.¹²¹

Others in Argentina see the World Cup as a source of both anguish and pride. Roberto Cossa remembers the World Cup as inspiring two conflicting emotions. According to the playwright, "on one hand, I hoped [the World Cup] would be sabotaged...[but] on the other hand, I felt pride...I felt both the hope that the [national] team would win and the fear that the [World Cup] was the result of an explosion of chauvinist, pro-government sentiments."¹²² Cossa's conflicted feelings resonate with coworker Ricardo Halac, the co-author of the important book *Yo fui testigo*. Halac returned from exile shortly before the World Cup, and, despite his own political misfortunes, "[was] ready to die cheering for Argentina." The playwright believes that "[although] many of us Argentines that celebrated did not like the military government, we wanted to be world champions...[and therefore], we came [to the games] we won, and we danced."¹²³

And dance they did. Argentina's victory brought hundreds of thousands of citizens onto the streets in a rare moment of freedom, both to assemble and to celebrate publicly.¹²⁴ Scholars have debated the significance of this outburst of euphoria. Historian Osvaldo Bayer proposes that it was in fact pent up emotions stemming from two years of intense government repression,

¹²⁰ Gilbert and Vitagliano, 205.

¹²¹ *Mundial '78: La historia Paralela*.

¹²² Gilbert and Vitagliano, 118.

¹²³ LaMadrid and Halac, 8-9.

¹²⁴ Bayer, 131; Alabarces, 134.

and not happiness, which inspired people to celebrate in public places.¹²⁵ This thesis, however, agrees with Pablo Alabarces' analysis that the celebrations that swept across Argentina on the evening of Sunday, June 25th, 1978 *were* in fact manifestations of a national joy at having finally won the World Cup. That such a victory could incite a divided nation to take to the streets with largely one voice and one purpose is indicative of soccer's importance in Argentina. The final section of this chapter explores the sport's social and political role, and concludes that soccer's function in Argentina has catalyzed the creation of a unique cultural space for both the members of the 1978 national team and their memories.

In 1978, Argentina's first World Cup triumph bridged a divided and repressed nation, and brought individuals of all social backgrounds onto the streets to celebrate. While the dictatorship stifled voices of dissent, on June 25th, 1978, individuals like Halac chose to celebrate despite knowing about or having directly felt the weight of government repression. The importance of this double standard - disgust towards the dictatorship and an embrace of the soccer trophy won under it - is immense. While in no way diminishing the legacies of those whose experiences under the *Junta* prompted them to cheer for sabotage, Peru, or The Netherlands, the willing participation of those repressed under military rule in a celebration of a *national* victory clearly underlines soccer's importance to Argentines. In 1978, General Videla's *Junta* controlled the nation, but it could not control the World Cup celebrations.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Alabarces, 134-135.

Just over thirty years have passed since June 1978, and soccer remains a cornerstone of Argentine society. While its importance remains, the necessity of understanding the nature of the national team's memories of 1978 has grown. The testimonies of Kempes, Bertoni, Villa, Luque, and the tournament's other stars demonstrate the same characteristics of selective denial and uncertainty as the World Cup memories of Argentine civilians. In claiming ignorance, the memories of members of the national team resonate with those in society who, while not directly affected by state terror, were aware of its presence and have opted for silence. The national team's memories do not belong only to this group, however. They also are part of the memories of those repressed under the dictatorship, those, to quote Ardiles, who "were victims of the manipulation of [their]work [and their lives]...and the fruits of it."¹²⁷ Finally, the testimonies of Argentina's first World Cup champions are also those of repressors. According to Osvaldo Ardiles, "by winning...[the national team]helped [the military] perpetuate their time in power."¹²⁸

The ability of the 1978 national team's testimonies to represent the voices of everyone - victims, repressors, and those simply caught in the middle during the *Juntas*' seven years in power - makes these memories, and *their* authors, unique. The players and their accounts of the tournament are thus a bridge between the narratives of the Armed Forces, focused at that time on cleansing the country of subversive elements, and the dialogues of those tortured, terrorized, and, in some cases, killed by these efforts. Soccer's role in Argentina has allowed the creation of this unique space. The sport's continued importance has ensured that the men who - questions of government bribery and doping momentarily set aside - won the 1978 World Cup on the field

¹²⁷ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos.*

¹²⁸ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela.*

remain not only relevant, but also crucial, to the establishment of a broad dialogue about the past, one that incorporates all sectors of Argentine society.

In the next chapter, this thesis examines Argentina's transition to democratic rule in detail, and proposes that recent political developments have engendered both a renewed dialogue on the dictatorship, and locations and ceremonies in which such discussions can occur. This thesis disagrees with scholarly analysis that portrays the opening of such spaces as having a divisive effect in reconciliation efforts, and proposes instead that the 25th and, especially, the 30th year anniversaries of the 1978 World Cup Final have allowed the members of the 1978 national team to operate in their central role as bridges between competing narratives of the dictatorship era. Rather than being relegated to the back-burner of memory, these players, and their discussions of the 1978 World Cup, are thus actively contributing to the development of a national dialogue and thus national reconciliation.

Chapter 3: Reconciling a Nation and a Win

As the World Cup concluded in June 1978, Argentina remained firmly in the clutches of military control. Over the next four years, however, the Armed Forces' grip on power weakened significantly. A failed war against England in 1982 over control of the Falkland Islands, or *Las Malvinas*, proved to be the final nail in the *Juntas*' collective coffin. Following on the heels of public protests in response to worsening economic conditions and continued levels of government repression, the Falkland Islands defeat left the military little choice but to turn control of the nation back over to civilian hands.¹²⁹ On October 29th, 1983, in the nation's first election in almost a decade, the Argentine public selected Raúl Alfonsín to lead the country out of seven years of destructive military rule.¹³⁰

Argentina's return to civilian rule marked the end of the atrocities, but only the beginning of the battle for memory and reconciliation. In the previous chapter, this thesis established that the memories of the central figures of Argentina's 1978 World Cup team confirm theories about the prevalence of selective omission in recalling traumatic events. The chapter then explored the importance of soccer in Argentine society, and concluded that the memories of Argentina's first world champions occupy a unique place in society.

This chapter builds on this conclusion to demonstrate that the recollections of the 1978 national team not only correspond to theories about the importance of time and location for

¹²⁹ Graciela Speranza and Fernando Cittadini, "War in the South Atlantic," in *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 465; Loveman, 125; Neil J. Kritz, "Argentina: Editors Introduction," in *Transitional Justice, Volume II, Country Studies: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*, ed. Neil J. Kritz (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 323-324.

¹³⁰ Alejandro M. Garro and Henry Dahl, "Legal Accountability for Human Rights Violations in Argentina," in Neil J. Kritz, ed., 326-327.

memory in Argentina, but are, in fact, driving important reconciliatory cycles. To prove this important point, this chapter will first examine the history of reconciliation since 1983, focusing on Argentina's recent shift towards an open dialogue about its past. The chapter will then shift focus to the 25th and 30th year anniversaries of the 1978 World Cup Final to explore how these events confirm the important link between location, commemoration, and memory. This chapter argues that the 1978 national team and their memories are not only uniquely positioned in Argentine society, but are in fact actively driving forward national processes of reconciliation.

Democracy Returns

In order to understand the success of recent attempts to create more public narratives regarding the 1978 World Cup, it is necessary first to closely examine Argentina's efforts at societal reconstruction immediately following the restoration of democracy in 1983. After his October election and December transfer into power, Raúl Alfonsín organized *La Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas*, the National Commission on Disappeared Persons, or CONADEP, to discover the extent of government repression during the previous decade.¹³¹ Based on interviews with former prisoners and the families of *desaparecidos*, the committee drafted a report - *Nunca más* - that provided detailed plans of secret detention centers, described the military's methods of torture, and shared the stories of those detained and abused under military rule. The report established that 8,960 people "disappeared" between 1976 and 1983.¹³² Due to the unwillingness of some individuals to come forth to discuss their experiences, and the

¹³¹ Americas Watch, "Truth and Partial Justice in Argentina," in *Ibid.*, 328-329.

¹³² *la Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparicion de Personas*, 16.

fact that in-country interviews for the report were held only in Argentina's major cities, it is likely that the number of *desaparecidos* was, in fact, much higher.¹³³

In addition to investigating the breadth of military repression between 1976 and 1983, President Alfonsín also initiated legal proceedings against the figureheads of three of the four ruling *Juntas*. The proceedings were initially through military tribunals. After the Armed Forces refused to cooperate, however, they shifted to civilian courts. It is important to note that Alfonsín's efforts were not limited to military officials. The former president viewed Argentine reconstruction as a difficult process that required the prosecution not only of those responsible for atrocities committed between 1976 and 1983, but also of the guerrillas, who, in Alfonsín's own words, "commit[ed] terrible crimes in pursuit of an insane agenda," and "initiated...[t]he violence that stained Argentina with blood during the 1970's."¹³⁴ Alfonsín's theory of "The Two Devils" thus shifted some of the blame for Argentina's "Dirty War" onto guerilla groups, though the president acknowledged that the "kidnapping, torture, and clandestine assassinations" employed by the military *Juntas* "clearly [was] not...morally and juridically justified."¹³⁵

On December 9th, 1985, Argentina's Federal Court sentenced General Jorge Videla, Admiral Emilio Massera, and other leaders of the various military *Juntas* to prison terms that ranged from a life sentence for Videla to a four and half year term for Air Force Brigadier General Orlando Ramón Agosti.¹³⁶ Yet Argentina's legal efforts at accountability stopped soon thereafter. Faced with mounting military pressure and the overwhelming number of potential

¹³³ Americas Watch, 327-329. CONADEP also interviewed exiled individuals in Europe, Mexico, and the United States, and admitted that their established number of 8,960 individuals was most likely low.

¹³⁴ Raúl Alfonsín, "'Never Again' in Argentina," in Neil J. Kritz, ed., 379.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 381.

¹³⁶ Amnesty International, "Argentina: The Military Juntas and Human Rights," in Neil J. Kritz, ed., 356.

legal cases, Alfonsín initiated two legal bills - the laws of “Full Stop” and “Due Obedience” - that stopped all prosecution of the military.¹³⁷

In 1989, Raúl Alfonsín’s successor Carlos Saúl Menem initiated a new approach of reconciliation through amnesty when he offered governmental pardons to those involved in the dictatorship, including the jailed leaders of the first three *Juntas*.¹³⁸ The laws of “Full Stop” and “Due Obedience” remained in effect until March 2001, when a federal judge ruled that they were unconstitutional.¹³⁹ Argentina’s Supreme Court concurred in 2005.¹⁴⁰ In 2006, Argentine judge Norberto Oyarbide overturned the decree of amnesty for General Videla and Admiral Massera, and in 2007 an Argentine federal court re-sentenced the former *Junta* members to life in prison, removing them from their previous detainment under house arrest.¹⁴¹

Looking Back at 1978: Cycles of Memory and Time

In her landmark work on reconciliation and memory cycles, Ludmila da Silva Catela divides Argentina’s efforts at establishing a conciliatory dialogue into four categories which encompass the twenty-two years between the return of democracy in 1983 and the conclusion of her survey in 2005. According to Catela, Argentina has passed through three of these cycles, and is in the midst of a fourth period - a period which this thesis will assert has been crucial to the

¹³⁷ Garro and Dahl, 359-363; Kathryn Lee Crawford, “Due Obedience and the Rights of Victims: Argentina’s Transition to Democracy,” in Neil J. Kritz, ed., 363-365.

¹³⁸ Jelin, 125.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 132; Robben, 150-151. In 2003, the Argentine Congress confirmed Judge Gabriel Cavallo’s ruling.

¹⁴⁰ “Argentine Court Overturns “Dirty War” Pardon,” Reuters, 25 April 2007, <http://iimp.chadwyck.com/quick/displayMultiItem.do?Multi=yes&ResultsID=11EE6E323F1&&QueryName=articles&ItemNumber=9&ItemID=iimp00479001&FormatType=raw&journalID=JID00426180&logType=fulltext>: (Accessed March 24, 2009).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*; “Argentine junta pardons revoked,” BBC News, 6 September, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5314700.stm>: (Accessed March 24, 2009).

fostering of the 1978 national team's narratives. In the first period, between 1983 and 1989, Argentine passed through "a cycle of establishing truth," which also saw "the birth of memory about the disappeared." During this period, Alfonsín inaugurated the trials of military leaders, and the CONADEP report made available for public consumption information about the detention process, detention centers, and detainees themselves. Beginning with Menem's amnesty policy in 1990, the nation shifted course, progressing into "a cycle of impunity by the state," driven by "the pardon laws and the strategic silence of victims and families." During this period, Catela argues, those most closely affected by the military dictatorship became disenchanted with government-led reconciliation efforts, and began to replace public testimonies given to state-run reconciliation outlets, such as CONADEP, with the publication of photos and short notes in newspapers giving the names and dates of disappearances for still-missing friends and family members.¹⁴²

In 1995, a third phase of memory and reconciliation began in Argentina. It was catalyzed by the publication of *El Vuelo*, or the flight, a book constituting the first public admission of guilt by a torturer during the dictatorship, as well as by the emergence of a new generation of Argentine citizens eager to establish a public dialogue about the dictatorship years. Described by Catela as "the cycle of state reparations and the growth of public memories promulgated by victims," this phase saw the development of "*el escrache*." This retributive technique, used by victims, friends, and family members, involved the defacement of the property of those involved in the military dictatorship, in an effort to produce the justice the Argentine state was unwilling to provide. During this time period, the government also began to prosecute military officials

¹⁴² Catela, 61-64, 68-70.

involved in the kidnapping of children of *desaparecidos* - crimes that were excluded from Menem's general pardon but whose prosecution condemned both General Videla and Admiral Massera to house arrest - and to provide reparations to the victims of military rule.¹⁴³

Catela's fourth cycle of memory is crucial to this thesis. This period includes the creation of a state-led, public process of memory, a development that has spurred both the re-opening of discussions and the creation of new dialogues centered on the dictatorship. For the members of the 1978 World Cup team, this opening has provided opportunities and engendered the cultural surroundings in which to speak not only about the events on the field during the tournament, but also to address more difficult questions of government manipulation and collaboration. Catela traces the origins of "the cycle of state incorporation of memory" to the start of this century, but proposes that Néstor Kirchner's presidency, from 2003 to 2007, catalyzed its growth.

On March 24th, 2004, Kirchner converted the ESMA into a "space of memory," labeling it *el Espacio para la memoria y la promoción de los derechos humanos*, or a place for memory and the promotion of human rights. Néstor Kirchner also ordered that Argentine schools instruct students in the history of the dictatorship, and, throughout his term in office, maintained close relations with leaders of Argentina's most influential human rights organizations. These acts all brought memories of the dictatorship into direct contact with both the Argentine government and the Argentine people, and helped establish - through their coverage in the press - a foundation for public dialogues that the 30th year anniversary ceremony would capitalize on four years later.¹⁴⁴

Changes in politics and policies, such as those between Menem's regime and Kirchner's government, often result in a victory for one group and a defeat for the other. The *Juntas'* use of

¹⁴³ Ibid., 64-69.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 68-74.

March 24th for their own political advancement during the dictatorship evaporated when democracy returned, and the date slowly shifted into a state controlled homage to the victims of that regime.¹⁴⁵ While this new shift in the reconciliation process has prompted a flurry of memories related to the 1978 World Cup, it has inevitably favored some voices over others. In her analysis of the four cycles of memory, Catela acknowledges that the recent alliance between the Argentine government and human rights organizations is one that has the potential to drown out some of the “less visible” memories of the dictatorship.¹⁴⁶

The testimonies of the 1978 World Cup’s central figures support Catela’s assertion that Argentina is once again in a period of increased dialogue and openness towards its past. This openness is predicated on an interaction between cultural realities and memory processes. When an individual remembers, he or she is in the process of retrieving an experience that is equal parts individual and social.¹⁴⁷ As seen in the previous chapter, individuals often repress memories that are traumatic, opting for silence instead of an open, public dialogue. This process of self-silencing is replicated when social norms do not allow discussion of particular memories - that is, when the memories and recollections of an individual do not match the “official story,” or will not be well received by the population as a whole.¹⁴⁸

Examining Catela’s discussion of Argentina’s cycles of memory, it is clear that this process of self-silencing fits into the second cycle, when victims of state repression opted for silence as successive Argentine regimes moved towards a state directed process of reconciliation through general amnesty. During this period, the 1978 national team remained relatively silent

¹⁴⁵ Jelin, 37.

¹⁴⁶ Catela, 74.

¹⁴⁷ Jelin, 24.

¹⁴⁸ Cubitt, 237.

about their experiences of the World Cup, precisely because Argentine society was not in a position to receive and process these dialogues. Conversely, the majority of the national team accounts examined in this thesis stem from Catela's fourth cycle of memory, a period that encouraged - and continues to encourage - the discussion of the dictatorship and the opening of debate. In an environment in which disparate accounts of the dictatorship are prevalent, and in which human rights groups have worked closely with the government to seek further accountability and transparency, discussions of guilt and accountability - even in situations where such links between the military regime and the national team are denied - are welcome. As never before, players are able to discuss their role in the World Cup, and their unique status as the "middle men" of memory. Having discussed how cultural transformations within Argentina have enabled the proliferation of an open dialogue about the 1978 World Cup, this chapter now examines the role of place-sensitive ceremonies and commemorative events in encouraging discussion and reflection.

Looking Back at 1978: Cycles of Memory, Place, and Ceremony

The seesaw struggle for control of Argentina's reconciliation narrative has passed into a cycle that has encouraged the reemergence and creation of various narratives regarding the dictatorship. As recollections of the 1978 World Cup proliferate, they are fundamentally linked to commemorative times and places. For this thesis, the central location is *El Monumental* stadium in Buenos Aires, and the two World Cup anniversary ceremonies it has hosted.

The relationship between memory, place, and ceremony is not unique to Argentina, but rather a well-researched link that spans the globe.¹⁴⁹ Anniversaries of important events connect different sets of dialogues and narratives regarding these specific occurrences.¹⁵⁰ As such, these events and ceremonies are the product of struggles among various interest groups, and accordingly reflect the designs of those in power.¹⁵¹ In Argentina, the power play for control of commemoration ceremonies and places has influenced the public consumption of March 24th, the anniversary date of the 1976 coup. Originally a propaganda opportunity for the military government, control of the date eventually passed into the hands of human rights groups, and, since 1995, the Argentine government, which has since made it a national holiday. The trend towards a government alliance with human rights organizations seen in Catela's discourse on time and memory is thus also applicable in discussions of memory and place.¹⁵²

Just as March 24th remains a seminal day in recollections of the dictatorship as a whole, June 25th, the date of Argentina's three to one victory over the Netherlands, is a focal point of public recollections of the 1978 World Cup. In 2003, members of the national team orchestrated a ceremony commemorating the 25th year anniversary of the World Cup final. Five years later, the national team worked with human rights groups to stage another commemorative event. Such occasions prompted the emergence of further dialogues about the place of the 1978 final in Argentina's history. These discussions focused in part on the World Cup's central actors, prompting the retrieval of the memories of the national team players and coach Menotti analyzed in Chapter Two.

¹⁴⁹ Jelin, 39.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-40.

¹⁵¹ Cubitt, 226-227.

¹⁵² Jelin, 36-38.

While anniversary ceremonies marking the 1978 World Cup triumph are not the exclusive owners of player memories related to that tournament, interviews conducted with players outside of these events also exemplify the date-place nexus discussed above. Mario Kempes' primary account of the 1978 tournament forms part of a broader anthology of Argentina's historical participation in the World Cup, an anthology published in 2002, a World Cup year. Several of the interviews with - and accounts of - national team players and head coach Menotti used in this thesis also come from books published in World Cup years. 1986, the publication year for *Yo fui testigo: Los militares y el mundial*, is especially significant. In that summer, *La Albiceleste* won their second World Cup title, thereby presenting a logical opportunity for reflection on the nation's initial triumph in 1978. Similarly, the 1998 publication of *El terror y la gloria: La vida, el fútbol y la política en la Argentina del Mundial '78* coincides with the twentieth year anniversary of the 1978 World Cup win. In each of these situations, both the members of the national team being interviewed and the general public reading these interviews would naturally turn to discussions of the 1978 tournament. The commencement and development of Catela's 4th cycle has pushed such dialogues out into the open. These public conversations have, in turn, set the stage for both the two recent World Cup anniversary ceremonies in 2003 and 2008, and the outpouring of powerful narratives from the survivors of military repression that accompanied them.

The memories of the 1978 national team reflect important theories about the progression of state directed reconciliation in Argentina, and illustrate the crucial role of ceremony and location in the construction of memory narratives. The following section focuses on the impact of these narratives, and examines how the 1978 World Cup's central figures are not merely

participating in broad reconciliation efforts, but are in fact driving the establishment of open dialogues regarding the coup.

Healing Through Ceremony

In Chapter Two, this thesis focused on the importance of the 1978 national team's memories of the coup, and asserted that they occupied a place in Argentine society between those guilty of outright collaboration with the military regime and those persecuted by the various *Juntas* that ruled the nation between 1976 and 1983. This section draws on this point to demonstrate that, in addition to occupying a key space in Argentina's new open dialogue, and thereby confirming the importance of location to memory, the anniversaries of the World Cup final are in fact facilitating new ways to examine one of the nation's darkest eras.

Commemorations of the 1978 win form a neutral space between divisive sectors of Argentine society. The anniversary ceremonies do not divide these sectors into competing ideological blocks, but rather serve as a conduit for various interpretations and narratives of the dictatorship. This integration is a necessary condition for the productive dialogue needed to establish a cohesive and peaceful nation-wide process of reconciliation.

The very existence and role of commemorative events in Argentina is as controversial as the issue of whose voices they amplify. The trend towards an open dialogue seems to represent progress towards communal closure concerning the coup and the dictatorship, but not all scholars agree on the positive effects of such a shift. While historian Geoffrey Cubitt identifies commemorative events as "force[s] for political and social cohesion," anthropologist Antonius

C.G.M. Robben cites the trend towards public memorials and anniversary ceremonies as a manifestation of divisive politics that will only prolong divisions within Argentina.¹⁵³

The 25th anniversary ceremony of the 1978 final underscores Robben's analysis of the dangers of tailoring commemorative ceremonies to the uses of specific social groups. This thesis supports Robben's assessment that sites that "belong" only to certain sectors of the population, such as the national team stadium during the 25th anniversary celebration, have the capacity to exploit and deepen divisions in society.¹⁵⁴ On July 9th, 2003, players from Argentina's 1978 and 1986 World Cup championship squads gathered with then-current members of the national team to pay homage to Argentina's first World Cup win. The majority of the 1978 squad participated in the ceremony, although only four members - Jorge Olguín, Ubaldo Fillol, Alberto Tarantini, and José Daniel Valencia - actually played in the exhibition match. While the ceremony was held on national independence day - a logical day to commemorate a national win in the country's most popular sport - fewer than 7,000 fans filed into *El Monumental*. Rather than festive, the mood at the event was divisive and somber.

Human rights organizations protested outside the stadium, and members of the group *HIJOS, Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*, or Children for the Reclamation of Identity and Justice against Social Silence and Forgetting, held a banner that read "Champions of what?" directly referring to the controversial and painful nature of the World Cup win. *Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* asked players to carry a banner into the stadium that read "justice and punishment for the *Junta*," as well as to wear shirts asking for "the recovery of the

¹⁵³ Cubitt, 222; Robben, 127, 151-154.

¹⁵⁴ Robben, 150-154.

identity of our [disappeared] brothers,” but the plan failed when it did not receive support from the entire group of players on hand.¹⁵⁵

After the ceremony, members of the 1978 national team again attempted to separate their actions on the field during June 1978 from what took place off of it. Ricardo Villa asserted that he supported the idea of the players holding up the “Justice and Punishment” sign, because it “was an opportunity...to show [we were] on one side, and [establish] who was on the other.” Villa clearly identified himself as belonging to the human rights side, and therefore not on the “other” side, the side of the dictatorship. Teammate and former defender Jorge Olguín similarly defended the national team’s independence from the dictatorship: “one always has to be aware of what happened so that it does not happen again...but in this situation there is no relation [between the World Cup and the dictatorship]...nonetheless, people still want to disgrace a title that was fairly won.”¹⁵⁶ Olguín added, “I’m upset that not as many people showed up [for the ceremony] as we would have hoped...but we are thankful to those who showed up.”¹⁵⁷

Villa and Olguín’s comments highlight the controversial nature of the 2003 ceremony. An attempt to commemorate Argentina’s first World Cup championship ended as a celebration only of the players who won the title on the field, and not of their victimized countrymen who had celebrated in the stands, on the streets, or, in some cases, in detention centers across the country. While Villa and Olguín attempted to distance themselves from the dictatorship and ally

¹⁵⁵ Claudio Macri, “El tiempo vuela,” *La Nación*, July 10, 2003, http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=510279; (Accessed April 10, 2009); Martín Castilla, Cristian Grosso, Andrés Presiileo y Javier Reyes, “Con emoción y nostalgia,” *La Nación*, July 10, 2003, http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=510262; (Accessed April 10 2009); Horacio Pagani, “Cuando la memoria le hizo un guiño al tiempo,” *La Nación*, July 10, 2003, <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2003/07/10/d-00401.htm>; (Accessed April 10, 2009); Julio Chiappetta, “Fútbol y derechos humanos,” *La Nación*, July 10, 2003, <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2003/07/10/d-00501.htm>; (Accessed April 10 2009).

¹⁵⁶ “Fútbol y derechos humanos.”

¹⁵⁷ “Con emoción y nostalgia.”

themselves with the cause of human rights, both the lack of fans in *El Monumental* and the protests outside the stadium ensured the futility of these efforts.

Five years after the 25th anniversary ceremony, an event that scholar Eduardo Archetti labeled “a sad day for the heroes of 1978,” *El Monumental* again hosted a World Cup commemoration. *La Otra Final*, however, was a very different event from its predecessor. The 30th year anniversary’s establishment of a public homage to the dictatorship’s victims within a soccer specific stadium and featuring the heroes of Argentina’s first World Cup triumph, their legacy, *and* prominent human rights organizations dramatically changed the playing field.

At first glance, the ceremony was not that different from the one five years earlier. Despite reports that a large contingent of the 1978 team would attend, only three players - Ricardo Julio Villa, Leopoldo Luque and René Houseman - showed up, and neither head coach César Luis Menotti nor any of the coaching staff was present.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, while the crowd of 20,000 was three times larger than the audience in 2003, it was itself dwarfed in size by the 71,483 odd people who filled *El Monumental* for the *real* 1978 final between Argentina and the Netherlands.¹⁵⁹

Nonetheless, the event was landmark for reconciliation efforts in Argentina, as it demonstrated the ability of memories of the 1978 World Cup triumph to unite human rights organizations and, more importantly, to encourage open dialogues about the nation’s past and provide a location for these dialogues to flourish. In the five years between 2003 and 2008, Argentina’s shift towards a more open recognition of its past and focus on commemorating important locations from the military era prompted the changes that engendered *La Otra Final*’s

¹⁵⁸ “Un repetuoso homenaje, con muy poca esencia deportiva.”

¹⁵⁹ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos.*

success. Renewed efforts to unite the players, human rights groups, and the general public were on display from the ceremony's start, a public march from the infamous *Escuela Mecánica de la Armada*, or *ESMA* to *El Monumental*, site of the World Cup final. The anniversary ceremony's official program boldly acknowledged the new alliance between memories of the World Cup win and memories of the dictatorship, distinct recollection groups that had clashed during the commemorative event just five years prior.

According to the 2008 program, the anniversary ceremony represented “the game for life and for human rights,” or an alliance between the national team's athletic achievement and the ongoing struggle to digest the human rights abuses of the military regime. Unlike in 2003, *HIJOS* actively participated in the event preparations. Ana María Careaga, the executive director of the *Institute Espacio para la Memoria*, the ceremony's organizing body, asserted the key role of the ceremony in “helping society...defend its right to...memory, truth, justice, and human rights for everyone.” In short, “a game that must be won [and played] by everyone.” In a final tribute to the ceremony's importance in uniting soccer and human rights, Mabel Gutiérrez, a member of the human rights group *Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas*, or Family Members of those Disappeared and Detained for Political Reasons, admitted “every World Cup has been torture for me...since my son Alejandro was kidnapped in his house in La Plata in 1978,” but asserted “I hope that *La Otra Final* can replace these traumatic memories.”¹⁶⁰ It is exactly this capacity to soothe even the deepest wounds inflicted by the dictatorship that makes the 1978 national team, their memories, and the embodiment of these

¹⁶⁰ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos.*

recollections in commemorative events such as *La Otra Final* so crucial in bringing Argentina together.

The 30th year anniversary's success in linking a commemoration of the 1978 triumph to Argentina's most prominent human rights groups is not its only triumph. Rather, *La Otra Final's* true importance to national reconciliation efforts lies in its ability to bring out and bring together differing memories of the dictatorship and the 1978 World Cup. Renowned Latin American author Eduardo Galeano, himself a victim of government persecution in both his native Uruguay and across the River Plate in Argentina, called on *La Otra Final* to "unite everyone in memory...[in order to] win, together, the fight against forgetting."¹⁶¹ The key to Galeano's statement is the word "everyone." According to the author, the 30th year anniversary represented more than a mere union between the 1978 national team and human rights groups, but rather an opportunity to bring the entire country - and beyond - together to work towards remembering and honoring the past. In his analysis of the event, Nobel Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, himself a victim of government repression in Argentina, highlights the importance of the commemorative final in "creating memories." According to Esquivel, the 30th anniversary ceremony was not merely an event restricted to certain actors, but rather an occurrence open to Argentine society as a whole - an opportunity to celebrate "life [and] democracy."¹⁶²

In the spirit of this new opening, *La Otra Final's* program featured interviews with human rights workers and members of the 1978 national team regarding their respective memories of the World Cup, as well as six editorial columns on the relationship between the

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² "El partido de la memoria."

Junta and the 1978 tournament. Rather than following a singular narrative, these interviews and editorials often expressed conflicting viewpoints. The significance of these opinions lies not in their contrasting views of the dictatorship and the World Cup, but rather in their juxtaposition in a single document *actively* promoting *La Otra Final*.

Once the anniversary ceremony started, 20,000 spectators echoed Galeano and Esquivel's sentiments about the importance of bringing various memories together by simultaneously raising banners that condemned the dictatorship and highlighted current human rights struggles both in Argentina and across Latin America. Images of Che Guevara and signs calling for "an end to terrorism in Colombia" greeted a procession of hundreds of human rights leaders who wound around the track on the inside of *El Monumental*, carrying with them a banner depicting the faces of Argentina's 30,000 odd *desaparecidos*.

The 30th anniversary of Argentina's first World Cup triumph thus succeeded where the 25th year anniversary failed, as it successfully brought together the players and the legacy of the 1978 World Cup with human rights groups, and, more importantly, established their union as a conduit for the development of dialogues about the dictatorship and the 1978 World Cup. In the light of this success, it is possible - and necessary - to address the absence of the majority of the 1978 national team from the ceremony. While it initially seems impossible that an event such as *La Otra Final* can encourage the harmonious establishment of various dialogues of the dictatorship and the 1978 World Cup without the tournament's central actors, it is crucial to remember that soccer, in Argentina as in few countries across the globe, is a national sport and obsession.¹⁶³ As such, the physical presence of the national team and coach Menotti was not

¹⁶³ Kuper, 205-206.

needed in June 2008 in order to prompt discussions of the military era. The memories of the players operate in a unique space in society, linking both perpetrators and victims, and soccer's popularity has ensured that this unique position remains relevant. In 2008, *La Otra Final* not only reached out to the human rights organizations excluded in 2003, but also to those who, drawn by a desire to commemorate a soccer victory, were also willing and indeed eager to offer separate analyses of the *Juntas*' time in power. At the event, the national team's position in Argentine society ensured that, even without their physical presence, the commemoration would nonetheless unite memories and interpretations of the past under the larger umbrella of a celebration of soccer.

In their comments in *La Otra Final*'s program and newspapers the day after the event, the national team remained adamant about their innocence in helping the dictatorship remain in control. This thesis has already established that such claims of innocence are most likely exaggerated, but their validity did not matter in the context of *La Otra Final*. The event's spectators saluted Villa, Luque, and Housemann with a thunderous ovation before the start of an exhibition game that closed out the ceremony, and similarly booed as the procession with the banner of *desaparecidos* passed by the presidential box that had once seated Videla, Agosti, and Massera. The benediction of the players relative to the treatment of the *Junta* continued in earnest the following day, when *El Clarín* referred to the national team as "heroes."¹⁶⁴

Neither the cheers of 20,000 individuals at an exhibition match, nor the photos of players embracing human rights workers and mothers who lost their husbands, sons, and daughters during the dictatorship will be enough to overcome thirty-three years of conflicting memories

¹⁶⁴ "El partido de la memoria."

and narratives.¹⁶⁵ Divisions within the human rights community - one of the two branches of *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, *Asociación de las Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, was conspicuously absent in 2008 - have limited the scope of reconciliation. Further, the absence of many members of the 1978 team in 2008 shows that these individuals, while willing to discuss their participation in the World Cup, are not ready to directly relive their experiences in a setting not entirely devoted - and it was in 2003 - to soccer.

In a 2003 interview, goalkeeper Ubaldo Fillol asserted that he was proud of his team's accomplishments because, in winning the World Cup, *La Albiceleste* "defended the flag [of Argentina]."¹⁶⁶ It is likely that those living under this flag will never completely resolve all of their conflicting historical narratives. The emergence of a steady and lengthy dialogue about the 1978 World Cup, however, occupying the fourth phase of memory as defined by Catela and operating within the established framework of commemorative locations as keys to memory, represents an important step towards broad societal reconciliation. Largely ignored by the public in 2003, the 1978 national team's importance has ironically increased despite its diminished physical presence at the 2008 anniversary ceremony. As the dialogue about the 1978 World Cup continues, recognition of the national team's role as central actors on both the field of history and the field of memory will increase. So too will an understanding of the efforts of these men to defend not only their flag, but also their honor.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela.*

Conclusion

In the summer of 1986, eight years after the controversy of 1978 and three years after the nation returned to democratic rule, Argentina won its second World Cup by defeating West Germany three to two in a thrilling final in Mexico City's *Estadio Azteca*.¹⁶⁷ The 1986 tournament was also controversial - Diego Maradona scored the first of his two goals against England in the quarterfinals with his hand, later calling it the "hand of God" - but the suspicions and questions surrounding this tournament pale in comparison to those that characterized, and still shape, public opinions of the 1978 World Cup.

Scholarly and media treatment of the 1978 World Cup largely centers on Argentina's military government's efforts to manipulate the staging and outcome of the tournament for political benefit. For the military *Junta*, which was composed of leading members of the nation's Army, Navy and Armed Forces and led by President Jorge Rafael Videla, the World Cup emerged as a means of promoting Argentina as a world-class soccer power and a modern nation.¹⁶⁸ In the two years between the coup that brought the military regime to power in 1976 and the World Cup's opening ceremonies on June 1st, 1978, no expense was spared in modernizing Argentina and preparing it to host the biggest event for the world's most popular sport. The government spent close to \$700 million USD to build new stadiums, renovate old ones, construct a new press center, and generally make the nation tourist friendly.¹⁶⁹

Yet away from the cameras, a darker set of preparations was also underway. For the *Junta*, creating a new and modern society meant cleansing Argentina of its leftist influences,

¹⁶⁷ Arcucci and Sasturain, 145.

¹⁶⁸ Arbena, 120-122.

¹⁶⁹ Alabarces, 125-126; *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

including the guerilla groups who had violently lashed out at previous regimes during the early 1970's. Efforts to simply defeat guerilla insurrections, however, quickly expanded in both scope and intensity. By end of the military regime in 1983, close to 30,000 individuals had been kidnapped by the military government and "disappeared," never to be heard from again.¹⁷⁰ To avoid criticism of their methods, the *Junta* exerted close to complete control over Argentina's press. As the World Cup neared, this web of censorship expanded again. When European human rights groups and organizations such as France's *Comité de Boycott du Mondial de Football en Argentine*, or Comity for the Boycott of the 1978 World Cup, began to call for national sides to boycott the tournament in protest over the *Junta*'s methods, the *Junta* responded by accusing these sources of foreign subversion.¹⁷¹ In a particularly twisted method of ascertaining information, military officials running many of the nation's 340 detention centers ordered detainees to continually sift through foreign newspapers, searching for articles and images condemning the military regime and its World Cup.¹⁷²

On June 1st, 1978, General Jorge Videla officially opened the 1978 World Cup with a speech proclaiming the tournament to be "the World Cup of Peace."¹⁷³ Just over three weeks later, Videla handed over the 1978 World Cup trophy to Argentine captain Daniel Passarella, giving the nation its first World Cup victory and cementing the tournament's place as one of the most controversial sporting events in history.¹⁷⁴ Tainted by allegations of bribery and doping,

¹⁷⁰ Hodges, 176-179; Lewis, 151-153.

¹⁷¹ *La otra final: El partido por la vida y los derechos humanos*; Mason, 72; Smith, 69-73.

¹⁷² *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*; Mason, 72.

¹⁷⁴ *Mundial '78: La historia paralela*.

and carried out amidst egregious human rights abuses across the country, the tournament was, and remains, a far cry from “the national party” that official propaganda promised it would be.¹⁷⁵

In examining the 1978 World Cup thirty years later, it is important to see the tournament not merely as a sporting event carried out against a backdrop of dictatorship and political turmoil, but also as a critical force in a nation’s continuing struggle to establish its relationship with the past. Many of those who were directly affected by the *Junta*’s maniacal repression nonetheless celebrated *La Albiceleste*’s on-field triumphs, while numerous individuals who were, or at least claim to have been, ignorant of the nation’s domestic situation today view the title as tainted.

At the heart of this “double standard” of memory sits the World Cup’s central actors, the Argentine national team. The memories of these twenty-three men - twenty-two players and head coach César Luis Menotti - constitute the core of this thesis. In examining their testimonies and memories of June 1978, it is clear that these individuals occupy a crucial space in Argentine society. The players’ selective memories and need to exonerate themselves from collaboration with the military *Junta* resonates with broader patterns of traumatic memory in Argentina, and the national team’s lingering confusion regarding the World Cup’s contemporary importance further echoes the feelings of their civilian counterparts. Moreover, the team’s status as soccer players and Argentina’s first World Cup champions elevates them - and their memories - to an almost mythical level in society. This mystique, combined with the team’s status as both perpetrators and victims of the military *Junta*, places their memories in a unique space in Argentina.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Having established that the memories of the players and coach Menotti deserve special recognition, this thesis examined Argentina's efforts at democratization and reconciliation following the Junta's fall in 1983. According to scholar Ludmila da Silva Catela, Argentina is currently in a 4th phase of dealing with the trauma of the most recent military coup - a period in which the current government has taken unprecedented efforts to re-open a national dialogue regarding the dictatorship years.¹⁷⁶ The recognition of the importance of place and ceremony in memory is crucial to understanding these efforts. A comparison between the 25th and 30th year anniversaries of the World Cup Final victory over The Netherlands demonstrates the key role that the 1978 national team is playing in reconciling the nation.

As Argentina has moved into a new era of open discussion of its past, the role of locations and commemorative ceremonies in analyzing this history has increased. Academics agree that the connection between places, anniversaries, and memory is fundamental to understanding how societies interact with their traumatic past.¹⁷⁷ This thesis applied the ideas of Antonius C.G.M. Robben - the scholar argues that commemorations of the dictatorship have only widened gaps between historical memories - to its discussion of the 25th year anniversary of the 1978 World Cup Final. This thesis contends that, while celebrations for the 25th year anniversary served only those sectors of the population willing to accept Argentina's victory without remembering the domestic turmoil in the midst of which it was won, the 30th year anniversary ceremony has unified disparate elements of society and their memories.

¹⁷⁶ Catela, 71-74.

¹⁷⁷ Jelin, 38-40; Cubitt, 226-227.

It is premature to proclaim that soccer is well on its way to saving Argentina from its past, or that the testimonies of the World Cup's central actors alone will have the potential to create a new, singular and socially acceptable narrative about the World Cup. Nonetheless, in their position as collaborators, middlemen, and victims, the memories of the players and coach Menotti are uniquely available to all Argentines, regardless of those individuals' personal experiences with the 1978 World Cup. Additionally, in a nation that reveres its soccer heroes, the legendary status of the 1978 team has enabled the players to guide conversations about the role of the 1978 World Cup in Argentina's past - never more so than during the recent commemoration of the 30th anniversary of Argentina's triumph.

On June 30th, 2008, 20,00 individuals marched from the *ESMA* to *El Monumental* to witness *La Otra Final*, a recreation of the World Cup final dedicated both to those who celebrated and those unable, unwilling, or ashamed to participate in the festivities following Argentina's first World Cup triumph. The members of the 1978 World Cup team present on the field that day had aged since their run to World Cup glory - of the three, only Leopoldo Luque suited up and played in the exhibition game. Nonetheless, the importance of the commemorative match lies not in its quality, but rather in its existence. As the ball bounced from one individual to the next, dialogues and competing narratives on the World Cup mingled and mixed, tangled up one instant and free the next. Above the field, generations of Argentines watched and cheered, united in their support for the men on the field, the flag on their shirts, and the dialogue of reconciliation growing with their every dribble.

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