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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**European Immigration in Argentina from 1880 to 1914**

written by

**Sabrina Benitez**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for completion of the  
Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

thesis director

second reader

third reader

honors program director

21 April 2004

# **European Immigration in Argentina from 1880 to 1914**

Sabrina Benitez  
Ouachita Baptist University  
Senior Honors Thesis

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Situated in the southernmost region of South America, encompassing a variety of climates from the frigid Antarctic to the warmest tropical jungles, lies a country that was once a land of hope for many Europeans: Argentina. Currently Argentina is a country of one million square miles-four times larger than Texas, five times larger than France, with more than thirty seven million inhabitants. One third of the people in Argentina live in Greater Buenos Aires, the economic, political, and cultural center. Traditionally having an economy based on the exportation of beef, hides, wool, and corn, Argentina transformed this pattern during the country's boom years –the last decades of nineteenth century– toward industrialization and openness to a European model of progress and prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

In the process of consolidation and formation of its own identity as a nation, Argentine liberals in the nineteenth century promoted and fostered European immigration as a way to achieve progress and civilization. However, the influence of these newcomers hindered a true and real sense of Argentine nationalism among its people. What is this land? Who are the Argentine people? Why is Buenos Aires called the Paris of South America?

### **Nineteenth Century Nation-Building in Argentina**

In his definition of a nation, Carl Friedrich mentions five different components that must be present. First, a nation has to be independent, meaning that it cannot be governed by another country's authority; second, there must be cohesion among the group of people who form the nation; third, it has to be politically organized, that is, having a formal government that exercises real power over its people; fourth, it must be autonomous, in that its

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Scobie, *Argentina A City and A Nation* (New York: Oxford Press, 1964), 3.

people give its government support and approval so that it can rule effectively among them; and finally, a nation must be internally legitimate, the people that belong to that nation must support the social, economic and political institutions of their own nation.<sup>2</sup> After a long period of political instability and civil wars, Argentine national institutions began to consolidate as a “nation” in the 1880’s. The economy began to flourish, technology helped to improve cattle and sheep raising, and with the rising prices of cash crops, Argentina became a world leader in the production and importation of cereals. The Argentine pampas along with the Canadian prairies were two of the world’s richest agricultural regions.<sup>3</sup>

Argentina was going through great economic, social, political, and demographical expansion. As Carl Solberg notes, “...the key to Argentina’s success in attracting a massive immigration was the government’s policy, in effect until 1930, that admitted all able-bodied Europeans regardless of ethnic background.”<sup>4</sup> The new role of Argentina’s economy in the world also led to trade relations with Europe through exporting grains and beef and importing manufactured products. Relations between Buenos Aires and Europe increased radically in the years 1860-1880. France and Great Britain were the main trade partners. French imports were significant in luxury goods, wines, and sugar, while British textiles, hardware, coal, and machinery lead the international market for Argentina.<sup>5</sup> Immigration as well as import-export relationships also

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<sup>2</sup> Karl W Deutsch and William J. Foltz Ed., *Nation-Building* (New York, Atherton Press, 1963), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Solberg, “Peopling the Prairies and the Pampas: The Impact of Immigration on Argentine and Canadian Agrarian Development” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 24 (May 1982): 135.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>5</sup> James R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City And A Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 190.

brought important European investment, especially from England. British money was used to build railroads, factories, and other public utilities.

This growth, however, was not equal throughout the country. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few, the landowners, living in Buenos Aires, while the majority got only a small piece of the big pie. By the end of the nineteenth century, Argentina had already declared its independence from Spain, created a national constitution, chosen a president, and established a national capital in the city of Buenos Aires. However, establishing a sense of unity and commonality among the people was not yet a reality among Argentines.

The spirit of nationalism ---a state of mind or feeling of belonging to a group of people who identify themselves as a political community based upon common territory, culture, history and cultural bonds--- came along late within the country. The people of Buenos Aires and the oligarchy (rich hacienda owners) were more loyal to Europe, who they looked up to, than to Argentina itself. As James Scobie notes, "As the nation became more European in blood and culture and Buenos Aires became more Parisian, Argentine diplomats disdained the heritage and problems of their neighbors. Nonalignment with territorial systems or alliances hardened into an Argentine belief that the country's principal bonds were with Europe, not with Latin America."<sup>6</sup> Nationalism in Argentina came about in the twentieth century and grew mostly within the middle and lower classes. These people were the ones who viewed in the figures of the *gaucho* (Argentine cowboy, usually of mixed ancestry) and *criollo* (people of European ancestry born in America) as true representations of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 215-16.

Argentine nationalism, while protesting against foreign money and foreign influence. Nevertheless, this was not a constructive nationalism; it was forming in opposition to foreigners and foreign influence.<sup>7</sup>

### **Brief Historical Background**

When Spain began its conquest of the Americas, the European mother country thought of its colonies as a branch of its Empire, but it never intended to develop the regions into autonomous nations. The Spanish crown had viceroys in its colonies who governed in the name of the king. After independence in 1816, it took seven decades for Argentina to begin its way to consolidation as a nation. However, as Nicolas Shumway states, "...the Spanish American colonies came to the independence movement of 1810 ideologically ill-prepared for the task of nation-building."<sup>8</sup> Independence was possible thanks to the events occurring in Europe when the Spanish King Fernando VII fell under Napoleon's power in 1808. Before these events the creoles, (*criollos*) who always had an attitude of *Obedezco pero no cumplo* (I obey but I do not comply) saw an opportunity to act independently from Spain. Even after independence in 1816, the Argentine people were clearly divided between the coast and the interior provinces, the city and the countryside. The difference was seen not only in their opposite economic interests but also in their distinctive traditions and ways of life.<sup>9</sup>

Taken into the political arena, this division was evident between those who favored a strong central government (*unitarios*) controlled by *porteños*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (California: University of California Press, 1993), 6.

<sup>9</sup> James R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City And A Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 88.

(those who lived close to the port of Buenos Aires), and those who advocated provincial autonomy (*federales*). The latter tended to be more populist. In Argentina, the term populist was first associated with radical democracy in which all elements of society, regardless of race, class, and provenance, participate equally; second, the federalists/populists perceived the provinces as mainly independent entities in a relationship of mutual consent among each other; and finally, populism implied a nativist impulse that would define Argentina by its popular culture focused on the figures of the *gaucho* and the lower classes. As Scobie notes, "Argentine nativism grew as a counterbalance to the Europeanized ways of the Morenistas and Unitarians."<sup>10</sup> In his work, Juan B. Alberdi talks about the two countries (rural and urban) maintaining,

"...for Buenos Aires, the May revolution meant independence from Spain and control of the provinces... For the provinces, the May revolution meant separation from Spain and submission to Buenos Aires, a new configuration of colonialism rather than its abolition. This perversion of the revolution, brought on by the unthinking ambition of Buenos Aires, has created two countries, different and separate, behind the appearance of one: the metropolis state, Buenos Aires, and her servant state, the Republic. One governs, the other obeys; one enjoys the national income, the other produces it; one is fortunate, the other miserable."<sup>11</sup>

This irreconcilable division within the country led to opposing interests between Buenos Aires and the interior. While the *porteños* encouraged and favored all kind of European influence (immigration, arts, architecture, letters), the people of the interior favored local culture. Liberals and *porteño* elite ideas at the end of the nineteenth century associated provincial areas with barbarism. This was exemplified clearly by Guido Spano (1879) when he says,

"Barbarism is with us; it is necessary to excise Barbarism, and this cannot be done without regenerating our race. FOR ARE WE NOT

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,48.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 221.



MORE CONNECTED TO EUROPE THAN TO AMERICA? Are we not Europeans? What do we have to do with the savage Pampa and its rustic inhabitants, enemies of all progress, and undutious in the passive obedience and submission that they owe us?"<sup>12</sup>

This was an incompatible dichotomy that engendered limitations on the formation of national identity.

## **Nineteenth Century Argentine Ideologies: Positivism and Liberalism**

Along with the ideas of the nineteenth century liberals in Argentina, intellectuals also found a justification for immigration that would bring progress and modernization to the country. As Shumway notes, "The European, they predicted, would shake both nations –Chile and Argentina– out of the traditional colonial mold and make them powerful, dynamic, and civilized. The foreign-born population would promote not only economic development but also political stability and cultural progress."<sup>13</sup>

Advocates of liberal/positivist social philosophy laid the ideologies that would give scientific justification to the immigration phenomenon in Latin America. Positivism supposed that society could be scientifically observed and studied, and as in the natural sciences, this observation would bring general social laws that would be universally applied. In theory any country could apply these laws in order to achieve social and economic progress. Positivism also agreed with economic liberalism in that both prosperity and progress could be reached by international labor mobility.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>13</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 17.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 18.

Race concerns were aroused in Argentina as a result of positivist ideas and influence. In Argentina, the upper-classes were mainly creoles, people of Spanish descent, while the lower classes were composed by *mestizos*, a mixture of Spanish and Indian ancestry. Many Argentine thinkers followed the arguments of European biological determinists such as Count Gobineau, Guatave Le Bon, and Herbert Spencer. "These pseudoscientific racial theories, which considered non-whites inherently inferior and condemned racial mixture, found a sympathetic audience in Latin America, partly because they reinforced a long-standing creole disdain for the Indian."<sup>15</sup> In the same way, both the upper-class as well as the intellectuals in Argentina perceived the dark-skinned people as culturally inferior to the white Europeans.<sup>16</sup> The idea among intellectuals was that the native people, the mestizo population, would never bring order and progress to the nation. Therefore, to solve this racial problem the government should promote immigration and mix the mestizo with the European in order to "whiten" the natives. In fact, Argentine writers and intellectuals preferred northern Europeans, who, they alleged, were racially superior and would further aid the "whitening" of the mestizo more than people from the south or east of Europe.<sup>17</sup> However, northern Europeans ultimately chose other regions of America where they found more cultural commonalities, such as in the United States.

Intermarriage with Europeans to "whiten" the population was just one of the reasons for immigration. Intellectuals also claimed that immigration was the

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<sup>15</sup> Morner Magnus, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires), 108.

<sup>16</sup> Guillermo Subercaseaux, *Historia de las doctrinas económicas en América* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires, 1980), 40-45.

<sup>17</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 19.

best way to achieve population growth needed to achieve cultural and economic progress, and even protect national sovereignty.<sup>18</sup> The irony here was that foreigners were always outsiders; they would never have thought of themselves as Argentines, even when they stayed there for good and brought up their entire families on Argentine soil. Immigrants never saw themselves as Argentines, because first, the laws on immigration did not obligate foreigners to renounce their original European citizenship, but instead allowed them to keep that citizenship and stay in the country for an indefinite time. Secondly, the biggest motivation for most foreigners to leave Europe and go to the New World was economics, that is, to enrich themselves in the short-term and take their money back to Europe.

Intellectuals and even the media influenced public opinion and encouraged the government to pass policies to populate Southern Argentina – especially Patagonia– and the north and west regions of the country with European immigrants. However, the government was more interested in settling Buenos Aires and the coast provinces than populating the interior provinces.<sup>19</sup>

The most convincing justification of European immigration advocates was that for great economic development, large numbers of foreign workers were necessary. After the positive impact that immigration brought to the country in terms of population growth and economic wealth, Argentine intellectuals such as Manuel Gálvez praised the immigrant. He stated, "...the immigrants were helping native-born Argentines form a new nation, the nation of tomorrow," Furthermore, he said,

"Here we are all brothers

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 24.

and we give to those who come from abroad  
the friendship of our hearts and a place  
in this land of promise and of love."<sup>20</sup>

These words reflect the thinking of most intellectuals of the nineteenth century who welcomed and praised the European immigrants because they were the ones who would make of Argentina a great and rich nation.

In *The Argentine in the Twentieth Century*, President Carlos Pellegrini had the same ideas about immigration when he said, "immigration and foreign capital were making Argentina one of the greatest nations of the earth."<sup>21</sup> National intellectuals in their zeal to Europeanize Argentina welcomed the foreigner, not only because he was presumably a general civilizing element but also because he would disseminate the innovative European arts and letters to the New World.<sup>22</sup>

### **Alberdi and Sarmiento**

A member of the Generation of the '37, the nineteenth century liberal Juan Bautista Alberdi greatly influenced the destiny of Argentina. He wrote a constitutional proposal, *Bases and Suggestions for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic*, to the federal constitution of 1853 that would set the basis for modern Argentina.

Alberdi's most important ideas were his concern for population and race. As Moya states, "The necessity to populate the country through immigration became a top item on the liberal agenda of the new republic leaders, a

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<sup>20</sup> Manuel Gálvez, *Los himnos de la Nueva Energía* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nosotros, 1913), 70-71.

<sup>21</sup> Carlos Pellegrini, *The Argentine in the Twentieth Century* (Buenos Aires: Univeristy of Buenos Aires, 1954), 32.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Jose Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires 1850-1930* (California: University of California Press, 1998), 49.

necessity best expressed in the famous dictum of Juan Bautista Alberdi, “*Gobernar es poblar*” (To govern is to populate).<sup>23</sup> It is important to consider that like Harold explains, “When he asserts that ‘to govern is to populate,’ he is giving a broad meaning to the word ‘populate’—one which embraces immigration, education, economic development, and cultural and moral improvement.”<sup>24</sup>

During the middle 1800’s Argentina practiced liberal ideas promoting unrestricted immigration that would provide cheap rural labor for the nation’s growth and prosperity. At the same time, the creole agricultural worker was denigrated and portrayed as lazy, incompetent and unambitious.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Alberdi never favored the native Argentine to populate his or her own nation, but rather he wanted to increase population density “with people of better quality,” with “the civilized races of Europe.” He further argues, “Who would not a thousand times rather have his sister or daughter marry an English cobbler than an Araucanian chieftain? In America all that is not European is barbaric.”<sup>26</sup> Finally he added, “Only the influx of masses with deep-rooted habits of order and industry, not books of philosophy, could bring the life-giving spirit of European civilization, a spirit that would get rid of the primitive element of our popular masses.”<sup>27</sup> In his chapter that discusses immigration as a way to progress and culture for the Americas. He says,

“¿Queremos plantar y aclimatar en América libertad inglesa, la cultura francesa, la laboriosidad del hombre de Europa y de los Estados Unidos? Traigamos pedazos vivos de ellas ne las costumbres de sus

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<sup>24</sup> Eugene Harold Davis, *Latin America Thought* (Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press), 125.

<sup>25</sup> Carlos Urien and Ezio Colombo, *La República Argentina en 1910* (Buenos Aires: 1930), 147.

<sup>26</sup> Juan Bautista Alberdi, *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1966), 422.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 427-28.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

habitantes y radiquémolas aquí."<sup>28</sup> [*Do we want to plant in America the English liberty, the French culture, the industriusness of the European and North American citizen? Let's bring living pieces of them in the costumes of their peoples and establish them here*].

Here Alberdi proposes to bring people who already have habits of order, discipline and industry in order to gain those values in Argentina. To make this immigration possible he says that Argentina must develop good communication systems and offer foreigners the same rights and privileges that native citizens enjoy. Alberdi goes further in his pro-Europe arguments by saying, "Todo en la civilización de nuestro suelo es europeo; la América misma es un descubrimiento europeo."<sup>29</sup> [*Everything in the civilization of our land is European; even the Americas are a European discovery*]. In the same paragraph he mentions that the important cities, the Spanish language, the Christian religion, the foundation of Argentine laws, and the way people dress all come from Europe. In the same discussion, he concludes,

"Los americanos hoy somos europeos que hemos cambiado de maestros: a la iniciativa española ha sucedido la inglesa y francesa. Pero siempre es Europa la obrera de nuestra civilización. Ella [América] no está bien, está desierta, solitaria, pobre. Pide población, prosperidad. ¿De dónde le vendrá esto en lo futuro? Del mismo origen que vino antes de ahora: de España." [*The Americans today are Europeans who just changed masters: from the Spanish to the English and French. But it is always Europe the one who gives civilization. Where is the future going to come from? It will come from the same origin as before, that is, from Europe*]."<sup>30</sup>

In these words, Alberdi expresses the general thinking of the Argentine liberals of the nineteenth century. The native Argentine people, for these thinkers, did not rule over America any more, because Europeans are the real owners and lords of the Americas.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Another important liberal of the nineteenth century, although an enemy of Alberdi, who also favored European immigration, arts, education, architecture and culture, was the great educator, diplomat and president of Argentina, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. With his slogan "to govern is to educate" he tried to achieve economic, social and political freedom as well as social progress and prosperity for the American people. In his book *Civilization and Barbarism, The life of Juan Facundo Quiroga*, also called *Facundo*, Sarmiento criticizes the *caudillismo* (a system lead by local authoritarian and charismatic figures --- *caudillos*), specifically the caudillo of La Rioja province Facundo Quiroga. Sarmiento believed Quiroga's spirit was still alive in the person of the tyrant Juan Manuel de Rosas, governor of Buenos Aires during 1830s. He associates civilization with Europe and barbarism with the Argentine Pampa and America, in general. Sarmiento starts by describing the Argentine geography and its people, repudiating the way of life of the interior as well as the general situation of the country. He views the Argentine Pampa (an extensive grassy plain in central Argentina) as lacking all kind of communication and sociability among its people, where *la fuerza bruta*, the strongest, has unlimited and irresponsible authority over its subordinates. Sarmiento also portrays the native Argentine, the *gaucho*, as a savage who hinders any kind of progress and order. He says,

"His moral character is of the quality to be expected from his habit of triumphing over the obstacles and the forces of nature; it is strong, haughty, and energetic... Thus if the disorganization of society among the gauchos deeply implants barbarism in their natures, through the impossibility and uselessness of moral and intellectual education, it has, too, its attractive side to him. The gaucho does not labor; he finds food and raiment ready to his hand."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Life In The Argentine Republic In The Days Of The Tyrants; or, Civilization and Barbarism* (New York: Hafner Press, 1868), 23.

Sarmiento portrays Buenos Aires as civilized and destined to be one the greatest cities of America. He says,

"She is the only city in the vast Argentine territory which is in communication with European nations; she only can avail herself of the advantages of foreign commerce; she alone has power and revenue. Vainly have the provinces asked to receive through her, civilization, industry, and European population...but the provinces had their revenge when they sent to her in Rosas the climax of their own barbarism."<sup>32</sup>

He also fervently supports European immigration,

"Hemos de cerrar voluntariamente la puerta de la inmigración europea, que llama con golpes repetidos para poblar nuestros desiertos, y hacernos, a la sombra de nuestro pabellón, pueblo innumerable como las arenas del mar? Hay en la América muchos pueblos que estén, como el argentino, llamados por lo pronto a recibir la población europea que desborda como el líquido en un vaso? No queréis, en fin, que vayamos a invocar la ciencia y la industria en nuestro auxilio, a llamarlas con todas nuestra fuerzas, para que vengan a sentarse en medio de nosotros,...? Oh! Este gobernar no se renuncia así nomás!"<sup>33</sup>  
*[Are we going to close voluntarily the doors to the European immigration that is calling us to populate our deserts and make of us an innumerable people like the sand of the sea? Is there any other nation in the Americas that are like the Argentine people called to receive the European population that overflows like liquid in a cup? Does not our nation desire to invoke the science and the industry in our help? We can not renounce to this future!]*

The great influence of Liberal ideas on Argentina made it the South American country that received the most European immigration. Sarmiento's words reflect this encouragement:

"Its own extent is the evil from which the Argentine Republic suffers; the desert encompasses it on every side and penetrates its very heart; wastes containing no human dwelling, are, generally speaking the unmistakable boundaries between its several provinces." ... "All civilizations whether native, Spanish, or European, centers in the cities, where are to be found the manufactories, the shops, the schools and colleges, and other characteristics of civilized nations."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>33</sup> Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires, 1961), 16.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 13.



It is clear that Europe was the model for these thinkers on how to imitate and on which to build upon the new Argentine nation that was being consolidated. They identified themselves as Europeans rather than Argentines because the Old World was synonymous of progress and civilization.

## **Key Immigration Legislation In The Nineteenth And Twentieth Centuries**

### **National Constitution of 1853**

After decades of civil strife and national disagreement, especially between the interior provinces and Buenos Aires, on May 1<sup>st</sup> of 1853, Argentina declared its National Constitution. This Constitution clearly reflected the liberal thinking of the nineteenth century Argentina. It explicitly promoted European immigration in its 25<sup>th</sup> Article which states, "The Federal government will foster European immigration; and it will not restrict, limit, or impose any kind of taxes on immigrants whose purpose of coming is to work the fields, improve the industries, and introduce and teach science and art."<sup>35</sup>

Article 20 also talks about the rights of foreigners and their legal status.

"Foreigners enjoy on the territory of the Argentine nation all the civil rights of the citizens; they can set up industries, commerce, work on their professions; they can own properties and buy them; they can freely sail the rivers and coasts, they can freely profess their religion; they can testify and contract matrimony according to the laws. They are not obliged to acquire the Argentine nationality, nor pay extraordinary contributions. They obtain Argentine nationalization by residing two years in a row in this Nation; however, authorities can shorten this term in favor of the applicant by proving services to the Republic."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *La Constitución Nacioanl*, Article 25 (Buenos Aires: CLASA Press, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> *La Constitución Nacional*, Article 20 (Buenos Aires: CLASA Press, 1988).

## Special Immigration Law of 1876

Argentine President Nicolás Avellaneda proposed an immigration law to the Congress based on Article 25 of the National Constitution that was approved on October 6<sup>th</sup> of 1876 under the name Avellaneda Law 817. He expresses the immigration situation in these terms, "...y en su internación y acomodo se invierten sumas sin exámen, sin claificación..."<sup>37</sup> The law translates as: "...and in order to settle and accommodate the immigrants we have spent a great amount of money without even examining them, without finding out their qualifications..." Nevertheless, the project's goals were to protect and promote European immigration as well as to subsidize it by spending six millions pesos for tickets and other expenses of the immigrants. This law, at the same time, tried to promote immigration not only in the cities but also in the interior provinces in order to more equally distribute the population among the whole nation. Law 817 made possible the entrance into the country of almost four million foreigners. This law, according to David Ochs, "provided for the establishment of a department of immigration, the appointment of immigration agents in Europe, and the continuance of the employment office and the immigrant hotel."<sup>38</sup>

This law established norms and regulations for immigration by restricting the entry of people with mental and terminal diseases, criminals, women with children younger than fifteen years old, people older than sixty years, people with passport and documentation problems, and those with work-related disabilities according to the Article 32.<sup>39</sup> This law reflected the promotion of the

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<sup>37</sup> Bidabehere, Fernando A., *El Problema Migratorio* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo Press, 1940), 22.

<sup>38</sup> Ochs, David Robert, *A History of Argentine Immigration, 1853-1924* (Illionois: Wesleyan University, 1936), 7.

European immigrant, a person that would bring progress and civilization to a country with very low rates of population.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Immigration: Push and Pull Factors**

The government policies paid dividends, resulting in a major increase of immigrants. For example, substantial money was spent on advertising campaigns to attract immigrants. "Prospective immigrants read it was easy for newcomers without capital to acquire their own land and that virgin land was 'subdivided and sold by the owner on every easy terms.'"<sup>41</sup> The new economic model based on exportation of cereals looked for partners in the Old World, following the example of the United States.

The magnitude of migration from the Old World to the New World during the nineteenth century reached the highest percentages, especially from 1880 to 1914. This massive crossing was possible thanks to the development of steamship and railway networks. Europeans reaching the Americas by crossing the Atlantic Ocean were motivated by various factors, such as economic wealth, religious freedom, psychological needs, and the possibilities of improvement in social status.<sup>42</sup>

The newcomers shared a common aspiration to find in New World farming the material prosperity and personal freedom that were so elusive in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>40</sup> "Política Inmigratoria," <<http://www.oni.escuelas.edu.ar/olimpi98/BajarondelosBarcos/EI%20Hoy/polAtica.htm>> 1.

<sup>41</sup> Carl Solberg, "Peopling The Prairies And The Pampas; The Impact of Immigration on Argentine and Canadian Agrarian development," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 24 (May 1982): 135.

<sup>42</sup> Nugent, Walter, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1974* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 12.

Europe.<sup>43</sup> Immigrants searched for better opportunities. Once in the Americas, Europeans tried to bring family members and friends in order to take advantage of the same opportunities they found in the New Continent. This was often called chain or "serial" migration and was a very common pattern. There were various opportunities for the immigrants. Some laid in farmland, while others worked in factories, mining, and construction; for a minority, skill was required for work. As Walter Nugent states, the general rule in migration was that if farmland was the goal, then immigrants were more likely to stay in the New World. However, if the target was to work to make some money, then immigrants were more likely to return home, or in some cases, to travel to another country because the main objective for the immigrant was not to settle in the New World, but rather improve their lives at home.<sup>44</sup>

In regard to the role of women in the migration process, the general assumption was that they normally migrated as wives or daughters. European women simply had to wait for their husbands or fiancées to come home with some money to improve their finances. Nevertheless, in reality, women also migrated by themselves seeking labor or land. Others, contrary to the general assumption, did become the first of a two-step process, while some women chose not to go back home because they were able to keep their earnings in the new country.<sup>45</sup> Repatriation, which is, returning home after a certain period, was the general and traditional rule for most Europeans. For Argentina, the

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<sup>43</sup> Solberg, Carl, "Peopling The Prairies And The Pampas; The Impact of Immigration on Argentine and Canadian Agrarian development," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 24 (May 1982): 132.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

official numbers during the years 1857-1914 show that out of one-hundred Europeans coming into the country, 43.3 people returned home.<sup>46</sup>

Argentina, during the late nineteenth century, was a land of hope and opportunity ---*Tierra de Esperanzas y Oportunidades*--- and was among the countries within the American continent that received the most immigrants. The other big major immigration destinations were the United States, Brazil, and Canada. Among the biggest European donors were Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Ireland, Portugal, and to a lesser extent, France. All of these countries were in different degrees "first worlds," and they all (except Russia) also kept extensive population numbers. Argentina, United States, Brazil and Canada, the four largest countries in the New World, had extended areas of land as well as significant population.<sup>47</sup>

In the case of Argentina, population growth was the highest between 1869 and 1895: 135 percent; it multiplied five times its number from 1869 and 1914.<sup>48</sup> According to Scobie, from a population of 50,000 inhabitants around 1816, the number rose to 1,800,000 by the year 1869, 4,000,000 in 1895, and 8,000,000 in 1914. However, the Indian, Negro, and mestizo population did not follow this pattern of increase. As Scobie notes, "European immigration caused sharp population rise of the late nineteenth century and the 'whitening' of Argentina's coastal zone. By 1914 foreigners outnumbered native Argentines

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>47</sup> Nugent, Walter, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1974* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 15.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>49</sup> James R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City and A Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 147.

two to one in most of Santa Fe, Córdoba, and Buenos Aires, and constituted three-fourths of the adult population in the city of Buenos Aires."<sup>49</sup>

In 1895, 72 out of 100 inhabitants of Argentina were foreigners with diverse origins, from which 43 percent were Italians and 33 percent Spanish. This mass of foreigners was to originally settle the desert. However, they eventually settled and populated the city area, soon filling all employment positions. Even the policemen were Europeans.<sup>50</sup>

Reflecting this notorious expansion in Argentina's population, Nugent mentions the fact that during the years 1860s to 1914: "Population rose from 1.7 million in the first national census in 1869 to 7.9 million in the third, in 1914. Migrants from Europe formed a greater part of the population in Argentina than in any other country (three and a half times the proportion of Brazil), and by 1914 the foreign-born and their children accounted for 58 percent of the 7.9 million."<sup>51</sup> Immigrants and their Argentine-born sons and daughters formed an overwhelming European population, especially Italians, in the capital of the country and in the richest provinces. A question that arises here is why these people chose to migrate to Argentina? The answer is that both local and European situations were propitious for migration.

During the last part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Europe was undergoing a series of changes and was also experiencing overpopulation. Moreover, national governments encouraged migration in their policies, while a boom of the steamship, as mentioned before, made the trip to America much cheaper and faster than before. It even came to

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<sup>50</sup> Hugo Ratier, "Tierra de Esperanza," *La Nación*, 14 June 1907.

the point that it was cheaper to make a trip to America than from the towns to the ports! There were also campaigns promoting immigration to the attractive lands of the New World. Finally, there was *Inmigración Golondrina* (swallow immigration) –seasonal workers– male and female with higher salaries paid in Argentina compared to the salaries paid to an European farmer, and in addition again, to the cheap tickets to America.

Climate was also influential, as Moya describes when he explains how Argentina became a country of immigrants. He includes the River Plate region among those within temperate zones. This region is also known for its productive lands, its cattle and sheep, and its immense production of cereals. Moya even goes further to say that "Compared to the substantiality of biology, climate, geography and demography, politics may seem truly superstructural, almost immaterial, in explaining why Argentina became a country of immigrants."<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, he recognizes the important influence of politics when he says, "Yet politics, and thus human agency, played a role."<sup>53</sup>

In Argentina, Buenos Aires opened its gates of entrance for these immigrants. Around four million Europeans landed on its coast, during a process that acquired maximum intensity between 1881 and 1930. In the Litoral Provinces (Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, and Corrientes), various colonies from diverse ethnic origins had been established since the middle 1800s. Jews, French, Germans, Slavs, Italians, and Spaniards were populating the Argentine Litoral and came to be called *pampa gringa o pampa sin gaucho*.<sup>54</sup> The local farmers

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<sup>51</sup> Walter Nugent, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1974* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 112.

<sup>52</sup> Jose Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires 1850-1930* (California: University of California Press, 1998), 48.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Hugo Ratier, "Tierra de Esperanza," *La Nación*, 14 June 1907.

benefited from these immigrants because they made possible the dynamism and productivity of the region, which had been often threatened by native Indians.

Since the 1880s, the Argentine government also favored a program to modernize the country by encouraging European immigration and its insertion in the international market while undermining its native people, and thus virtually eradicating all Indian populations. Under the rule of President Julio Roca (1880-1886, 1898-1904) the central government completely eliminated native tribes from the province of Santa Fe and Patagonia. As Nugent notes, "General Julio Roca destroyed the Araucanians [native Argentine tribe] and thus completed the 'conquest of the desert.'"<sup>55</sup>

Ethnic considerations are also important when measuring Argentina's success in attracting a large number of immigrants. First, no other neighboring country such as Brazil or Chile could compete with Argentina in the same way that United States did with Canada. Second, with the prevailing belief that Europeans were "superior races," Northern Europeans enjoyed high prestige as desirable immigrants into the country. However, migration from this area of Europe was not very plentiful. As a result, Argentine liberals of the nineteenth century along with the government did welcome Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the same way as the Northern ones. People from the South adapted much better to a the standard of living that Argentina could offer, and they were also willing to start by working as sharecroppers and renters to make some money.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Walter Nugent, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1974* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 116.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.



Now, why did Europeans and not native Argentines become the main labor force in the Pampas' economy? According to Solberg, in the interior provinces people practiced cattle raising or plantation agriculture worked by mestizo tenants. The existing population in the Pampas area was the typical *gauchos*, (South American cowboys) who considered agriculture as an inferior activity left to women or Italians. "The Argentine government made no real effort to settle internal migrants as farmers, so the Pampas filled up with Europeans."<sup>57</sup> In this same line of thinking, Moya concurs that when Argentina expanded its market for food into the Old World, this context created a market for labor because the Pampas, being one of the best farms belts in the world, lacked farmers.<sup>58</sup>

By 1920, Argentina was the world's largest corn and beef exporter and ranked second or third in the exportation of wheat. In order to encourage this great economic growth, the government fostered foreign investment as well as immigration from Europe.<sup>59</sup> Argentina's particular case is evident in the massive number of immigrants who went to and stayed in the country between 1870 and 1930.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Immigrant: Origins and Group Attributes**

The origins of most European immigrants in Argentina were Italy and Spain. In 1880, 60 percent of the immigrants were Italians, while 18 percent

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<sup>57</sup> Carl Solberg, "Peopling The Prairies And The Pampas; The Impact of Immigration on Argentine and Canadian Agrarian development," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 24 (May 1982): 144.

<sup>58</sup> Jose Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires 1850-1930* (California: University of California Press, 1998), 55.

<sup>59</sup> Carl Solberg, *Peopling The Prairies And The Pampas; The Impact of Immigration on Argentine and Canadian Agrarian development*, *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 24 (May 1982): 132.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

Spanish. Northern Italians were the majority at the beginning, but since 1895 southern Italian immigrants outnumbered their patriots from the north. "Many southern Italians came to settle permanently, but thousands of others took advantage of low steerage-class steamship fares to migrate back and forth between Italy and Argentina, working in the harvests of each country," —*golondrinas*-.<sup>61</sup> Even though most of Italians came to work in agriculture as farmers and peasants, those who settled in the city of Buenos Aires worked in factories, industries, and railroads. Spanish immigrants formed the largest nationality group after the Italians that arrived in Argentina. They often came from a region in the North of Spain called Galicia, and that is why Argentines called all Spaniards *gallegos*.<sup>62</sup> Despite their numbers, 1.5 million, Spanish immigrants did not receive much attention from Argentines because they were culturally similar to Argentines.

There were other ethnic groups in Argentina. Russians composed the third major ethnic group that migrated to Argentina and were mainly Jews escaping from religious persecution (the *pogroms*) in the Russian Empire. Another significant group of immigrants were the Volga Germans, Protestant people who were expelled from Russia and formed small agricultural colonies in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, and La Pampa. The Syrian and Lebanese people also came to Argentina as a result of oppression in the Ottoman Empire. These last groups of immigrants did not, however, work in agriculture but in business. Finally, a small but economically successful group were the Serbo-Croatians. People from Asian continent also made their way to

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>62</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 39.

South America. A small number of Chinese and Japanese came to Argentina in the year 1914 and began to engage in commerce.

The English were a special group of immigrants because, in spite of their small number, (1 percent out of the 6 million immigrants), they had a major influence in the nation by working in companies controlled by British capital. Approximately 80 percent of the foreign capital was British at the beginning of the century. Solberg explains why British immigration to Argentina was small when he says, "The threat of the frontier Indian raids until the 1880's along with the unfamiliar language, the high cost of land, Argentina's low standard of living, all combined to discourage British immigration."<sup>63</sup> The English did little to adapt to the Argentine culture. Moreover, they formed close groups by attending English temples and schools. Such was the superior perception of the British in Argentina that even though these Europeans looked upon the natives as inferior people, the Argentine upper-class admired them and tried to imitate their fashions, architecture, and sports. As a result, rugby, tennis, hockey, polo, yachting, rowing, and soccer came from England to Argentina.<sup>64</sup>

Most of the immigrants that stayed in the country settled in the big cities such as Buenos Aires and Rosario. This population increase in the urban areas altered the way of living. Overpopulation led to the crowding of immigrants into old houses where aristocratic families used to live, but left because of the yellow fever epidemic. These immigrants lived in the so called *conventillos*, where they

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<sup>63</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 146.

<sup>64</sup> Hugo Ratier, "Tierra de Esperanza," *La Nación*, 14 June 1907.

rented small rooms and living conditions were inhumane: one room per family, unhealthy environments and lack of privacy were the norm.<sup>65</sup>

As stated before, the main reason European immigrants came to Argentina was to better themselves economically and then return to their lands. As a result, they were not interested in becoming Argentine citizens. In legal terms, the immigrant was a foreigner, in Spanish *extranjero*. The political system in Argentina was a closed one, controlled by the small upper-class who did not want to open the system to the new immigrants because they feared they could lose their political power and material wealth. In terms of voting, fraud and elitism controlled national politics until the Sáenz Peña Law in 1912, which mandated that the vote be universal, mandatory, and secret. Since then, more immigrants became naturalized. However, most of them still remained foreigners.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, "if the immigrant decided to stay permanently, retaining his European citizenship was still to his advantage, particularly if he happened to be a property owner or businessman."<sup>67</sup>

Many immigrants struggled with a conflict of loyalties between the new --- America--- and the old ---Europe. In this respect, European immigrants always tried to preserve elements of their own culture, which has had a great effect on modern Argentina. They soon formed associations and institutions where they practiced their religion, language, ate traditional food, wore typical clothes, and even danced traditional dances from their countries.<sup>68</sup> In relation to the Italian immigrants Solberg notes, "Aside from their contribution to economic

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<sup>65</sup> Hugo Ratier, "Tierra de Esperanza," *La Nación*, 14 June 1907.

<sup>66</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 42.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>68</sup> Hugo Ratier, "Tierra de Esperanza," *La Nación*, 14 June 1907.

development, the Italians made a strong impact upon Argentine culture.<sup>69</sup> In music, language and especially food, Italians strongly influenced Argentina. Today pizzas, pasta, and bread, are common dishes in Argentina; in music, for example, the Italian accordion took the place of the famous Spanish guitar; in language, the Italian influence became very evident. Italians altered Spanish pronunciation and added new words, particularly slang words such as *morfar* (to eat), *chau* from *ciao* (bye) and *pibe* (kid) among others.<sup>70</sup> Such was the number of Italian immigrants in Argentina that they began to form the stereotype of the immigrant; but not any Italian, only those from Napoles, often called *tano*.<sup>71</sup>

### Immigration as a Threat to Argentine Nationalism

After 1900, anti-immigration forces began to arise. Even prior this date, however, some nationalists were against immigration. For example, during the middle 1800, people were already expressing their support of native Argentine people, as well as their traditions and customs.

In the literature of the middle 1800s José Hernandez, an important writer in Argentine literature, made his words heard in defense of the undervalued Argentine gaucho. As the author of the famous *Martín Fierro*, Hernandez tried to expose the social situation of the gaucho and his daily fight to survive in an unjust and oppresive society. As his verses state,

“El anda siempre juyendo,  
siempre pobre y perseguido;  
no tiene cueva ni nido,  
como si juera maldito;

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 37

<sup>70</sup> James R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City And A Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 193.

<sup>71</sup> Hugo Ratier, “Tierra de Esperanza,” *La Nación*, 14 June 1907.

porque el ser gaucho... barajo!  
*El ser gaucho es un delito.*<sup>72</sup>  
[He is always escaping,  
he is always poor and persecuted  
he does not have a cave nor a nest,  
as if he were an evil person,  
just because he is a gaucho  
because being a gaucho is a crime.]

Like Hernandez puts it, "being a gaucho is a crime," was the general image that the Argentine society in the nineteenth century had of its own people. The gaucho being pure Argentine, does not have a voice because he is ignorant, evil, lazy and poor, a person that would never bring progress or civilization to the country. The liberals of the 1800s hated the gaucho because he was totally against Europe and all that was not native.

"Y deajo rodar la bola,  
que algún día se ha de parar.  
Tiene el gaucho que aguantar  
hasta que lo trague el hoyo  
o hasta que venga algún criollo  
en esta tierra a mandar."<sup>73</sup>  
[And I let the stone roll,  
that one day is going to stop.  
The gaucho has to bear  
until he is dead  
or until some criollo come  
to govern this land.]

Here Hernandez shows the fictional gaucho's thoughts regarding the necessity of the criollo to govern the Argentine land.

Immigration policies fluctuated during the nineteenth century. The governmental immigration policy in Argentina experienced a radical change after the Constitution of 1853. During the colonial era, the Viceroyalty of River Plate was under the authority of the Spanish crown, which, as a form of

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<sup>72</sup> José Hernandez, *Martin Fierro* (Buenos Aires: Santillana, 1997), 59.

<sup>73</sup> José Hernandez, *Martin Fierro* (Buenos Aires: Santillana, 1997), 82.

<sup>74</sup> David Ochs, *A History of Argentine Immigration, 1853-1924* (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1937), 4.

protectionism, refused any kind of migration from other European countries to its colonies.

Since 1812, as a member of the Executive Branch, Bernardino Rivadavia, issued the first decree on population, granting land, free transportations from Europe, civil liberties and citizenship to those foreigners who wanted to settle the provinces of La Plata. However, these policies were put to a stop by the governor of Buenos Aires, Juan Manuel de Rosas, who completely opposed the coming of foreigners into the Argentine territory.<sup>74</sup>

By 1902, laws favoring immigration made a radical and notorious change with the Resistance of Strangers Law. In November of 1902, a general strike led by immigrant anarchists took place in Buenos Aires, and President Julio Roca called the Congress into special session. The Legislature declared a state of siege and later promulgated the "Resistance Law." This law, unlike the others, discouraged immigration and was in opposition to the Argentine liberal thinking of past years. As Carl Solberg says, "The Resistance Law of 1902 was Argentina's first legislation designed specifically to discriminate against the foreign born."<sup>75</sup> It reflected a new and different image of the immigrant: a suspicious, dangerous and undesirable person. According to this norm, the government was able to expel any foreigner who would threaten the national security or the public order. The Resistance Law came as a response of the elites to the urban and social movements led by foreigners that were threatening the stability of the country.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Solberg, Carl, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970) 110.

<sup>76</sup> "Política Inmigratoria," <<http://www.oni.escuelas.edu.ar/olimpi98/BajarondelosBarcos/EI%20Hoy/polAtica.htm>> 1.

Those favoring immigration in Argentina saw only the short-term benefits of this process, because the newcomers did provide the muscular force necessary to the grain export economy the country was experiencing. They also were an important factor in port labor, factories and mines. However, along with the foreign laborers also came a group of ambitious businessmen who were determined to enrich themselves in the New World.<sup>77</sup> These immigrants devoted their entire time and energy to their work and were very good at saving. Their hard work did pay off. As one Italian wrote, "...in Argentina the only real nobility consists of those who labor. Everyone has a right to advance ... to earn a fortune."<sup>78</sup>

On the other hand, the elite class in Argentina was not happy with this type of entrepreneur immigrant who began to threaten their prestige in society. Statistics reveal that In the Argentine society social status was determined by the amount of land a person or family owned. The aristocracy was able to enjoy life thanks to the money they obtained from their land ownership.

"The idea of the dignity of labor, which the European cultural heritage of manyimmigrants emphasized, was weak. Argentine and Chilean culture conferred slight social prestige on commercial or industrial entrepreneurship. These were not considered activities suitable for gentlemen. Nor did the creole (native Argentines) culture emphasize saving."<sup>79</sup>

Argentine society was somewhat based on a feudalistic-type of system where the lords were represented by the elite landed class, and the serfs, by the lower class. This was a static system where social mobility was almost impossible and saving was entirely foreign to the culture. Having no interest in

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<sup>77</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 33.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 49



business matters, the creoles left this economic activity in the hands of the ambitious foreigners, who soon began to form banks, insurance companies, and export-import businesses. Europeans were very experienced, and they brought to America new and modern techniques of industry and commerce. "They were innovators and modernizers who dared to promote economic enterprises into which few upper-class gentlemen would have ventured."<sup>80</sup> For many Argentines this foreign prosperity began to foster anti-immigration sentiments, especially by the elites and lower classes, whose lives were being threatened by these Europeans. Statistics reveal that "In Argentina, European-born businessmen seized practically complete control of commerce by 1914. These numbers show that many native-born Argentines were excluded from commerce and Europeans got control of this area."<sup>81</sup> As Solberg writes, "...not only did relatively few Argentines own commercial firms, but also the largest and wealthiest businesses were likely to be controlled by immigrants."<sup>82</sup>

Industrial development was also being dominated by European immigrants in branches such as construction, furniture, and metal products, all of which required skilled and specialized workers lacking in Argentina. By 1914 Europeans owned around 65 percent of Argentine industry, which shows that the European, and not the native-born Argentine, built the foundations for the future industrial development of the nation.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>80</sup> Seymour M. Lipset, *Elites in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 26.

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<sup>81</sup> Solberg, Carl, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970) 51.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 52.

The social consequences of the enterprising immigrants in Argentina were notorious. These rich businessmen soon began forming a new social class in the Argentine society: the middle class. And it was this class, the European immigrant, not the national citizen, "who took advantage of the new commercial and clerical opportunities that were opening up."<sup>84</sup>

The new middle class of Argentine immigrants was beginning to ascend into the social status, although the elites usually excluded foreigners from their closed circles. In this context of a rapid rise and economic success of the middle class, and the zeal for wealth of most European immigrants, led to a gradual change in images and ideas about immigration in the minds of many Argentine creoles. As Solberg noted, "Indeed, shortly after 1900 a hostile reaction set in against the foreigners who competed socially and economically with nationals."<sup>85</sup> The traditional image of the immigrant as an educated and civilized person began to change to a new, negative stereotype.

The world economic crisis of 1930's hit Argentina's export economy as well, and this event affected immigration accordingly. Sons and daughters of the European middle class now favored government actions to restrict immigration because middle-class foreigners represented their rivals and sometimes their enemies.

However, this new opposition to immigrants started not within the middle class but within the elites. The oligarchy saw themselves threatened by the new middle class composed mainly by immigrants, who represented a major political

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<sup>84</sup> John J. Johnson, *Political Change in Latin America: The Emergence of the Middle Sectors* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires, 1982), 30-31.

<sup>85</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 65.

force capable of displacing and undermining the power of the upper-class.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, traditional elites excluded and discriminated against foreigners. The landowners' view of immigrants was totally opposed to the ideas of previous Argentine liberals. The elite class began to see the immigrants as socially inferior to the native Argentines and stated that their only reason for coming to America was to fill their pockets with money and then leave.

Intellectuals also opposed these immigrant businessmen by claiming that their ideas and influence would weaken and disrupt the country rather than develop it. They were concerned that immigrants would exclude all native Argentines from being entrepreneurs at all.<sup>87</sup> Argentine literature also reflects this change in the image of immigration. As Galves said, "While in the past the collective soul of Argentina was 'noble and lived in the pursuit of great ideals,' massive immigration brought a 'repugnant materialism' and a 'veneration of money.'"<sup>88</sup> The Argentine novelist Pedro G. Morante points also to the immigrant obsession for money in his novel *Grandezas* when he says, "...there were no other just causes...than money," money ruins her Argentine husband but uses her beauty, charm, and feminine wiles to achieve wealth for herself and her children."<sup>89</sup>

Accordingly, educational policies to bring in foreign teachers in 1910 were strongly opposed by Argentine teachers and the media. National educators encouraged policies that favored the Argentine teacher to promote and protect national values and patriotism, the use of national symbols, and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>88</sup> Manuel Gálvez, *El Solar de la Raza* (Buenos Aires: 1952), 10.

<sup>89</sup> Pedro Morante, *Grandezas* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires, 1986), 77-85.

their own language and the knowledge of their own history and geography in order to build among the future generation a sense of Argentine character. Military conscription was another way to incorporate those cultural values. The military service would do this by teaching the soldiers patriotism and love for their national institutions and traditions. In the same way, cultural nationalists were also beginning to restore the image of the native-born Argentine, who was viewed now as the real source of progress and civilization. As Massé said "The government has erred gravely by paying attention only to the foreign element,' and by 'leaving aside the creole, who was much more effective and valuable.'"<sup>90</sup> The *gaucho argentino* was now the symbol of national culture and heritage to defend the country against the evil that threatened the country: immigration.

Manuel Gálvez, in his book *Don Quijano de la Pampa*, affirmed the detrimental effect that immigration was having in the country by saying it was "destroying the Argentine character and, with it, the people's traditional patriotism." Because of "the cosmopolitan and the denationalization of the present era," he wrote, "few Argentines can understand the idea of the Fatherland and sense that we carry something of it within ourselves." Moreover, Ricardo Rojas and Leopoldo Lugones among others also expressed the same ideas. "The values, traditions, and institutions that had developed in the interior towns over the centuries constituted for these men the true Argentine cultural heritage, a tradition that they feared immigration was disrupting."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Juan Bialet Massé, *Informe sobre el Estado de las Clases Obreras en el Interior de la República* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires, 1904), 52.

<sup>91</sup> Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890-1914* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 142.

## Conclusions

European immigration has had a great impact on Argentine political, social, economic, and demographic systems in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Liberal leaders who developed the basis on which the nation would develop, viewed Europe as a model to imitate and to follow. As Shumway argued, Argentina needed these guiding fictions as a way to “give individuals sense of nation, peoplehood, collective identity, and national purpose.”<sup>92</sup>

Europeans brought music, architecture, food, dancing, laws, languages, letters, technology, and labor force. Immigration did contribute to the country’s growth and progress. However, its influence hindered a strong sense of national identity in Argentina. By 1910 Argentine social thinkers began to see the reality that immigration was more of a threat to the national cultural heritage. Even Sarmiento who had fervently promoted European immigration, later in his book *Conflictos y Armonías de las Razas en América*, expressed his doubts and concerns about the real effect of immigration on his country,

“¿Que es la América?”

Es acaso la vez primera que vamos a preguntarnos quiénes éramos cuando nos llamaron americanos y quiénes somos cuando nos llamamos americanos y quiénes somos cuando argentinos nos llamamos.

¿Somos europeos?- Tantas caras cobrizas nos desmienten.

¿Somos indígenas?- Sonrisas de desdén de nuestras blondas damas nos dan acaso la única respuesta.

¿Mixtos?- Nadie quiere serlo, y hay millares que ni americanos ni argentinos querrían ser llamados.

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<sup>92</sup> Nicolás Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), xi.

¿Somos nación? ¿Nación sin amalgama de materiales acumulados, sin ajuste ni cimiento? ¿Argentinos? Hasta dónde y desde cuándo, bueno es darse cuenta de ello."<sup>93</sup>

*[What are the Americas?*

*Is this the first time we are going to ask ourselves who*

*We were when we were called Americans and who we are when we call us*

*Americans, and who we are when we call ourselves Argentines.*

*Are we Europeans? Can we tell that by looking at our faces?*

*Are we indigenous people? The smiles of disdain of our ladies are*  
*Going to give the only answer.*

*Are we of mixed race? Nobody wants to be that, and there are a million*  
*people that do not want to be called either Americans or Argentines.*

*Are we a nation? Nation without the amalgam of necessary elements,*  
*without any adjustment or foundation? Argentines? Until where and since*  
*when? It is good to realize this.]*

These questions about which ethnic group Argentines belong to, and the institutional nature of the country, show the lack of an Argentine sense of nationalism among the people as well as the political institutions. Along with progress and innovation, European immigration brought questions that still remain in the minds of Argentine people, Are we Europeans? Indigenous? Mestizos? Argentines?

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<sup>93</sup> Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Conflictos y Armonías de las Razas en América* (Buenos Aires: University of Buenos Aires, 1958), 27.

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