This is the suffering people that represent the pain of the motherland

Juan Domingo Peron

Juan Domingo Peron began to gain prominence in Argentina's political scene after the military coup of 4 June 1943, which overthrew the conservative president Ramon Castillo, who had come to power through fraud. In 1945, General Edelmiro Farrell was ruling the country and Colonel Peron was Secretary of Labour, Vice President and Minister of War. Due to the pressure coming from both civilian and military opponents, on 9 October 1945, he was forced to resign from all his posts and on the 12 October he was imprisoned. On 17 October, after a huge mass mobilisation calling for his release, and which according to Alain Rouquie gave the military the understanding that it was best to stand by Peron than to be on the sidelines of his indisputable leadership, he was released. In order to placate the crowd that had gathered in the Plaza de Mayo, at 23:00 Farrell himself presented Peron on the balcony of the Government House (Casa Rosada) to speak publicly. Peron fulfilled this purpose especially because he avoided giving the crowd information about what had happened during his imprisonment, and by asking them to quietly return to their homes and to go on strike on 18 October, as decreed by the General Confederation of Workers, as a public holiday (not as a protest).

But the speech of 17 October, which lasted about half an hour and was broadcast throughout the country by the Official Broadcasting Service, is famous for other reasons. In it, Peron constructed his audience with the identity of the Argentine people. In successive rhetorical moves, Peron brought the workers into existence through expressions such as "the authentic Argentine people" and performs it by saying "This is the people". In various expressions Peron implied that one social sector claimed to be the people but was actually an inauthentic Argentine people, a false people. According to Peron's speech, the true and authentic people were the Peronist workers, so left-wing workers were excluded from it, as well as those of the Communist Party – not co-opted by Peronism – the middle class who were against his policies, and the upper class.

In his 17 October speech there is a "conversion" of the identity of Peron that allows for a "transubstantiation with the people" and the rhetorical construction of its political leadership. Peron explicitly expresses that he is putting the uniform aside and putting on the civilian's coat to blend in with the sweaty masses. But while he mingles with the masses, by means of other rhetorical moves, he climbs up to a higher place in hierarchical terms (he formulates requests, advice and recommendations, positioning himself as an "older brother") until he ends his speech above the crowd, observing it from the balcony of the Government House. The tension between the fusion/division of the constitutive dialectic is manifested in the relationship itself between Peron and the crowd: he merged with it, but at the same time he ends his speech positioned outside of it, physically and symbolically above it as their leader.

In his 17 October speech, Peron used the slang word "vieja" (old lady) to refer to his mother, saying "you have had the same pains and the same thoughts as my poor old lady", thus distancing himself from the conservative and dry language of his political opponents. It also builds the spoken scene rhetorically between Peron and the crowd in a familiar setting and re-semanticises political relations as family relations. Therefore Peron portrays himself as an older brother who gives advice to the mass. This older brother, who is wiser and more powerful, presents himself as a leader who communicates with the people without mediation. Thus, Peron represents his meeting with the workers by means of the expression "this true celebration of democracy", a phrase that separates the notion of celebration of democracy into a true celebration and a false one, which implicitly refers to the

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celebration of liberal representative democracy, where raw mediated relations between the representatives and the represented come first.

The 17 October speech is constitutive of an enunciation device that establishes a verbal link between the leader and his audience without mediation, and which situates this crowd in an ambiguous place with regard to their own right to speak. The people ask Peron several times to tell them where he had been, but he says: "With all this new insistence, I request that you do not ask me". In an act of authority, Peron defines himself as sole administrator of his rights and duties as political speaker, and in the same act he defines the rights and duties of his audience, the acts of legitimate and illegitimate enunciation.

My thanks go to Maria Sofia Vasallo, of the National University Institute of Arts, for facilitating the transcription she produced of the original audio of the speech of 17 October, preserved in the General Archive of the Nation, for her (unpublished) thesis for her Masters in Speech Analysis at the University of Buenos Aires. Unlike the written version that mainly circulates and which is archived on the educ.ar website, this audio includes the voice of the speaker who presented Peron and the part of his speech where he refers to his upcoming trip to Chubut. On the other hand, it allows us to notice the interaction between Peron and his audience and how at the end of his speech the people broke into a chant that would be repeated by Peronists at political rallies or demonstrations for the remaining decades of the twentieth century and even until today.

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Workers, almost two years ago, from this same balcony...
Audience: Silence!
Peron: I said I had three honours in my life: that of being a soldier, being a patriot and being the first Argentine worker.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers (four minutes).*
Peron: Today... Today, this afternoon, the Executive Power signed my request for retirement from active duty in the military.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: With this I have voluntarily given up the most distinguished honour a soldier can aspire to – to bear the laurels and palms of General of the nation.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: This... I have… I have done this because I want to continue to be Colonel Peron.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: And, with this name, to be at the full service of the authentic Argentine people.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* President! President! President! Farrell! Farrell! *(Isolated cries).*
Peron: I hang the honourable and sacred uniform handed to me by my fatherland, to now wear the civilian coat and join the suffering and sweating masses that produces the work and the greatness of our nation.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* We want Peron! We want Peron!
Peron: With this... With this I give a final embrace to that institution that is the mainstay of our fatherland: the military.

Audience: *Applause.*
Peron: And I... And I also give…
Audience: The police! *(An isolated cry).*
Peron: my first embrace to this great crowd that represents the synthesis of a feeling that had died in the Republic: the true civility of the Argentine people.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* This is the people! This is the people!
Peron: This is the people. This is the suffering people that represent the pain of our motherland, which we have to defend. And we...
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Peron! Peron! This is the people of... This is the people of Peron! This is the people of Peron! *(In unison with increasing strength).*
Peron: This... This is the people of the fatherland.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: The same people who in this historic square, before the Congress, demanded that their will and rights be respected.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Peron! Peron!
Peron: It is… It is the same people that must be immortal, because no human treachery or evil will be able to subdue this great people in feeling or in numbers.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: This... This genuine celebration of democracy, represented by a people marching for hours, to go and demand that their officials fulfil their duty and defend the rights of the authentic people.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Peron! Peron! Peron! *(30 seconds)*
Peron: Many times... Many times I have attended meetings of workers. I have always felt a great satisfaction, but from today I will feel a real pride of being Argentine, because I interpret this collective movement as the rebirth of a consciousness of the working class.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: Of a consciousness of the working class that is the only thing that can make our fatherland great and immortal.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Peron! Peron!
Peron: Two years ago I asked for trust. I was told many times that this people, for which I sacrificed many hours, day and night, would betray me.
Audience: Never! Never!
Peron: They must know... Today, those unworthy frauds must know...
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: that this people, today those unworthy frauds must know, that the people does not betray those who do not betray it *(ecstatic).*
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Peron! Peron!
Peron: So... So, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity, as a simple citizen, part of this sweaty mass, to embrace you deeply and close to my heart, as I would do with my mother.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.At that moment, someone close to the balcony shouts:* a hug for the old lady!*(According to another version of the speech)*
Peron: From this time... From this time, which will be historic for the Republic, may Colonel Peron be a link, a link of union that makes the bond between the people, the military and the police indestructible.

Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers. Chant (unintelligible).*
Peron: May... May that union be eternal and infinite so that this people may grow in the spiritual unity of the true and authentic forces of nationality and order; may that unity be indestructible and infinite so that our people may possess not only happiness but that they may also know how to defend it with dignity.
Audience: Like José de San Martin! (*Or similar*, Like at Plaza San Martin!)
Peron: We... We, the true patriots, feel that unity, because when we love our country we will not love its fields or its houses, we will love our brothers and sisters of the nation. That unity, the basis of all future happiness, must be founded on a formidable stratum of this people, who – by showing up here today at this square in numbers that exceed half a million – is showing the world its spiritual and material greatness.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Where were you? Where were you? Where were you? *(With increasing force, in unison)*
Peron: You ask... You ask me where I was.
Audience: Yes! (*In unison*).
Peron: I was making a sacrifice that I would make a thousand times over for you.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Don't go! Don't go! Don't go!
Peron: I do not want to end without affectionately and fraternally remembering our inland brothers and sisters, who move and beat in unison with our hearts, from all areas of the fatherland.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: To them... To them, who represent the pain of this land, we send our love, our memories and our promise that in the future we will work from dawn till dusk for them to be less hopeless and be able to enjoy life more.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Where were you? Where were you? Where were you? *(Inunison). Murmurs close to the microphone.* Where were you? Where were you? *(Isolated cries)* Where were you? Where were you? Where were you? *(In unison) (40 seconds).*
Peron: And now... And now comes, as always, for your Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare, who has fought and will continue to fight beside you in order to see the culmination of this work that is the ambition of my life, the expression of my desire, for all the working class to be a little happier.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: This time is a time for advice.
Audience: Where were you? Where were you? *(Different individual voices).*
Peron: Which I give with my heart as open as it can be before something one loves so much: the people.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Where were you? *(Isolated cries).*
Peron: Ladies and gentlemen, with all this new insistence I request, I request *(raising his voice)* that you do not ask me and you do not remind me of matters I have already forgotten.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers. A few cheers close to the microphone.*
Peron: Because... Because those who are not able to forget, do not deserve to be loved and respected by their neighbours (*ecstatic*).
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: And I aspire... And I aspire to be loved by you...

Audience: The people with Peron!
Peron: And I do not want to tarnish this act with any bad memory.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: I said, I said it was time for advice. Remember, workers: unite! Be more united in brotherhood today than ever! In this beautiful country the unity of all Argentines will be built on the unity of those who work.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: We will... Every day we will incorporate each of the unruly or unhappy ones into this beautiful mass in movement, so that, among us, they may become like this beautiful and patriotic mass that you are.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Marry Evita! Marry Evita! Marry Evita!
Peron: *(Lowering his voice and smiling)* It is a lot already.
Audience: Marry Evita! Marry Evita! Marry Evita!
Peron: I also ask that all of you workers, my friends, receive with affection my immense gratitude for the concerns you have had for this humble man who speaks before you here today.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* We want Peron! We want Peron! We want Peron! *(Strongly increasing) (21 seconds).*
Peron: That is why... That is why I said earlier that I would embrace you as I would embrace my mother, because you have probably had the same thoughts and the same pains as my poor old lady has suffered these days.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* Peron! Peron! We want Peron!
Peron: *(cut in the recording)* Let us trust that the coming days will be of peace and of building for the nation. Let us wait, with the ease with which you have always waited for future improvements that would never come. Let us have faith in the future and let us hope that the new authorities steer the ship of the State towards the destinies to which we – simple citizens at your service – all aspire.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers (unintelligible).*
Peron: I know... I know that labour movements have been announced. Now, at this time, there is no reason for it.
Audience: *Individual cry (Unintelligible).*
Peron: This is why... This is why I ask you, as an older brother, to return peacefully to work. And think...
Audience: *outburst of cries.(30 seconds)*
Peron: And today...
Audience: Peron celebration! Peron celebration! Peron celebration! *(With increasing force, the clamour becomes deafening). (35 seconds)*
Peron: I ask you to return peacefully to your homes. And... And, just this one time, because I could never say it as Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare, I ask that you go on that strike in celebration...
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Peron: I ask... I ask that you hold this day of strike by celebrating the glory of this gathering of good working men, who are the purest and dearest hope of the country.
Audience: *Cries and cheers. Applause.*
Peron: And I have left... And I have left...
Audience: *Cries (unintelligible).*

Peron: And I have deliberately left for last, to advise you that as you leave this great assembly, you do so very carefully. Remember that among you there are many women workers, female workers that must be protected here and in life by the male workers themselves.
Audience: *Cries (unintelligible).*
Peron: And... And finally, I ask you to bear in mind that I need some rest, which I will take in Chubut, in order to regain strength and return to fight alongside you, till exhaustion, if necessary.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.* This is the people of Peron! This is the people of Peron! This is the people of Peron!
Announcer: And so Colonel Juan Peron has spoken to this magnificent gathering at the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires and through State Radio and the Argentine Broadcasting Network, to workers nationwide.
Peron: Attention! Attention! I ask that we all stay at least another fifteen minutes here together, because I want to stand here and watch this spectacle that pulls me out of the sadness in which I have lived these last days.
Audience: *outburst of cries and cheers.*
Announcer: From the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, a rare spectacle has also played out in front of the whole audience of the capital. State Radio has broadcast together with all the members of Argentine Broadcasting Network. At Colonel Peron's request for the people to remain another fifteen minutes here in the square we are seeing scenes of inexpressible joy. From each throat, a cry of joy ascends to heaven, celebrating the return of Colonel Peron. The Square is dotted with torches made of the evening newspapers. Choruses that are already popular throughout the city of Buenos Aires sing Colonel Peron's name.
Audience: I will give you/ I will give you one thing/ I'll give you, beautiful fatherland/ something that starts with P/ Peron! *(in unison).*

Translated from Spanish (Argentina) by Clara Tilve.