



“The Dirty War”: Military Dictatorship of Argentina 1974-1983



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Things to Know:

In the early spring of 1976 the government of Argentina, headed by President María Estela Martínez “Isabel” de Perón was ousted from power by a three-person military junta in a coup that would lead to years of bloody secrecy and state-led violence. This committee will focus on the resistance to the “Dirty War,” as it is referred to now.

How it Happened:

Prior to that day in March of 1976 Argentina had survived 33 years since its last military coup. In fact, it had only just emerged from its most recent dictatorship in 1973 from under Alejandro Agustín Lanusse as part of what is now known as the “Argentine Revolution”.

For much of the 1900s the country of Argentina existed in political turmoil, with 14 different dictatorships ruling intermittently over a period of 53 years. However, the coup of 1976 is understood to be one of the most deadly and destructive, with state terrorism exercising control over the people through the forced disappearances of thousands, as well as torture and other human rights violations that were generally accepted by the international community.

The junta was directly supported by the United States government through activities by the School of the Americas, where operatives designated to fight the “war on communism” were provided with the skills to effectively address the concerns of the US government surrounding countries that were leaning too far toward Socialism.

In the case of the 1976 coup, following the election of Peronist candidate Héctor J. Cámpora in 1973, free elections were allowed. Cámpora stepped down leading Juan Perón to leave exile to win the popular vote and reassume presidency in 1973. Perón’s policies were a form of corporate socialism in which industries were nationalized, labor unions were formed and poverty was attacked. The United States was fearful that communism would spread through Latin America, and eventually to their borders, and assisted in installing the junta regime.

In the seven years that the junta was in power (under various dictators), resistance was relatively underground, with some of those most at risk for state-sponsored violence leading the way.

This committee will take place three years into the violence, in 1979, under the rule of Jorge Rafael Videla.

A Note From Your Crisis Director:

While I genuinely hope that you enjoy taking part in this committee, some of the events and themes that we will approach over the course of the conference are extremely sensitive to this day. Therefore, I want you to be aware that I will not be tolerating any language or actions that attempt to belittle the horrors of life under the junta. I believe that there are ways to address this in a way that is both respectful and fun. Please join me this weekend as we explore it.

Characters:

Camila Josefa Martínez de Armas: One of Las Madres del Plaza de Mayo, Martina has been searching for her son, who disappeared 8 months ago. She has the sway of her group and the sympathy of the people on her side.

Rafael Cortez: Rafael is a former philosophy professor turned head of an underground resistance network of mostly students and liberals. His family is being watched by the military government, though no one knows of his exact whereabouts.

Ana Bodoa Capelo: Ana is one of many students who took to the shadows with Rafael Cortez. She however, lead a double life, continuing to present herself as the wealthy student everyone sees her to be.

Mateo Pozo: As a de facto leader in one of Buenos Aires’ poorest neighborhoods, Mateo is one of those most at risk to be the target of state terror. Though not a political activist, he has managed to bolster his community in a time of fear and instability.

Paula Ramirez: Paula is particularly hateful toward the dictator. Her brother was disappeared at the start of the new government, and though she suspected it was due to his penchant for inciting

resistance, she was never certain. Though not at all wealthy, she has a handful of his former acquaintances who could help her.

Carlos Vega: Carlos is a journalist, a profession in dire straits at this time. His newspaper is controlled by the dictator, but he is determined to uncover and spread the truth about what is happening.

Santiago Perez: As a member of the Catholic Church, Santiago is supposed to be in support of the regime. However, as a man from humble beginnings, he identifies with the “enemies of the state” and has begun to aid resistance.

Julián Bedoya: Julián is a soldier through and through, but fighting under the dictatorship isn't what he had in mind. His doubts about the justification for the state's actions have led him to take some of his own.

Mark Roberts: Mark is an American businessman, having economic dealings with the Argentinian banks for many years. However, with the 1976 coup his profits have dropped and he is looking to change things for his personal gain.

Isabel Perón: As the detained former president, Isabel Perón is in a unique position. She remains under house arrest, but may still be in contact with her former connections, all afforded to her as the president.