

THE PRESIDENT'S YOUNG GUARD

KIRCHNERIST YOUTH ORGANISATION LA CÁMPORA QUIETLY AND SECRETLY TURNS ARGENTINA UPSIDE DOWN

Kristin Wesemann

León Cristalli sounded as if he were possessed by the spirit of Ernesto "Che" Guevara: "We came to support the revolutionary process of el Comandante",¹ shouted the militant supporter of Argentina's President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, as he stood before the Venezuelan embassy in Buenos Aires, together with like-minded comrades. This day in January was merely a sick call without a patient, as Hugo Chávez underwent treatment in Havana. Nevertheless, the demonstration illustrated the high esteem in which the deceased autocrat from Caracas was held by Kirchner's most loyal followers, La Cámpora.

Today, Argentina and Venezuela have close ties – economically, ideologically and personally. In 2003, the oil-rich republic in the north purchased government bonds from the economically reeling giant in the south, in a sense reinvigorating it financially. Since then, both nations have pursued a "new political model" that shifts the focus back onto a strong state, instead of being geared towards the West. At one time, Chávez is thought to have sent Kirchner coffee-loads of illegal cash to support her election campaign;² in 2012, she paved the way for his admission into the southern common market, Mercosur. However, Paraguay never ratified Chávez's admission, which was agreed on in 2006 – the old familiar play to subsequently delay multinational resolutions – and was suspended as a consequence.



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1 | "Marcha de organizaciones kirchneristas en Buenos Aires", *La Nación*, 9 Jan 2013, <http://lanacion.com.ar/1544077> (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

2 | Claudia Zilla, "Eine 'Chavezierung' Argentinien's?", *SWP-Aktuell*, No. 31, Jun 2009, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), 3, http://swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/aktuell/2009Akt31_zll_ks.pdf (accessed 15 Jan 2013).

Officially, Argentina cited the so-called "democracy clause" and warned that popular sovereignty must first be re-established in Paraguay after the dismissal of President Fernando Lugo.³ In Caracas, Chávez had Argentinean journalists arrested and interrogated without just cause.⁴ Kirchner sent him her most important supporters for the election campaign: the young members of La Cámpora.

In Argentina, any politician who harbours national ambitions needs their own, predominantly young, militant supporters. Yet in this respect, militancy need not be synonymous with violence. Rather, it stands for the absolute loyalty the members vow to their political leaders. Hardly any movement in South America leverages its power and

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dominance in such a way from this model as Peronism. Its home – so to speak the summonable address – is the Justicialist Party,⁵ yet its various groupings are at times highly divergent in terms of ideology. Were one to unite all parties represented in the German Bundestag, it would yield a constellation that would approximately attain the diversity of Peronism. An answer to the question of how a disparate entity can still cohere is found in "La Marcha Peronista", the anthem of this movement, which is sung with great fervour and teary eyes. The anthem goes: "This great leader knew how to win the masses and conquer the capital. We proclaim from our hearts ¡Viva Perón!"⁶ What use are programmes against such devotion?

Since Juan Domingo Perón (1895-1874) and the spiritual leader of the nation, Evita (1919-1952), a proven level of political militancy is the admission ticket to those places where power, state offices and positions are assigned. Militancy represents devotion to the movement, submission under one leader, as well as combativeness, which has many facets in Argentina: roadblocks, factory occupations,

3 | "Mercosur Suspends Paraguay over Lugo Impeachment", *BBC News*, 29 Jun 2012, <http://bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-18636201> (accessed 19 Apr 2013).

4 | Kristin Wesemann, "Das nächste Feindbild", *KAS Länderbericht*, Dec 2012, 7, http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_33158-1522-1-30.pdf (accessed 5 Jan 2013).

5 | Partido Justicialista (PJ).

6 | "La marcha peronista", *El Sitio Peronista*, <http://www.elsitio-peronista.com.ar/marcha.htm> (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

attacks. Boxers who go down and stay down after just a few punches are referred to as having a glass jaw. Top-tier political militants need to have both a steel jaw and a heart of steel. Insults have to be shrugged off, as do real punches, now and then.

YOUTH AS A LEGACY OF THE NATIONAL MODEL

In South America, the time after stepping down from office is planned early, often directly after entering office. Thoughts in the present focus on the future – one's own, that is – because one remembers all too well the fate of others. Often enough, former presidents have been seen fleeing the country because their successor had promised in their election campaign to “clean up house”. Others ended up in prison. Argentina was usually more civilised in this respect. Cristina Kirchner, who polarises the nation, turns it upside down, breaks with traditions and by now also has many enemies amongst the Peronists, should nevertheless know that she needs to be cautious. One day, she too will have to move out of the Casa Rosada, the pink-toned government palace. Should she fail to step down at the zenith of her power and instead be voted out of office, her successor will have no choice but to distance himself from her. Unless he is unable to do so and is bound to fealty. And that's the whole point when Cristina Kirchner says: “Young people are the most important pillar of the government – the guarantee that this project advances and becomes ever stronger.”⁷ The Argentinean Ministry of the Interior and the Instituto Nacional de Capacitación Política have even developed a “Manual of political empowerment” to fulfil this plan: “We want the national and popular model – to which we have contributed so much – to survive”, says the manual. “Our calling as militants guides us.”⁸

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7 | “Fuerte impulso de la Presidenta a la militancia juvenil”, *La Nación*, 23 Feb 2011, <http://lanacion.com.ar/1352203> (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

8 | Ministerio del Interior, Presidencia de la Nación und Formación Política Instituto Nacional de Capacitación Política, “Manual de Formación Política”, Buenos Aires, 2012, 9, http://mininterior.gov.ar/asuntos_politicos_y_allectorales/incap/publicaciones/Manual_FP.pdf (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

Argentina is a very young nation. The average age is just 30.5 years. (In Germany, the average age is 43.) When Cristina Kirchner was confirmed as president in October 2011, every second voter was younger than 35. And this figure is expected to rise in future. To this end, the Peronist party to which the president belongs, Frente para la Victoria (Front for Victory), dropped the statutory voting age from 18 to 16 years literally overnight in autumn last year. From 2013, the 25.2 million Argentines aged between 18 and 70 who are required to vote will be joined by 1.4 million young people able to vote in national elections. This is not yet mandatory.

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The opposition has criticised the president's intentions across the board. Peronists in the capital stuck up masses of placards:

"Beasts!! Now they're even snatching the sixteen-year-olds! They know no mercy." The accusation: Cristina Kirchner wants to ensure her people achieve a two-thirds majority in the 2013 parliamentary elections. Only in this way can she amend the constitution and stand for a third term in 2015. The debate focusing on the so-called Re-Re-Elección may appear somewhat bizarre in these weeks amid crumbling approval ratings for the president, but by no means marks her defeat.

The "Re-Re" and the voting right for young people are ideas that stem primarily from La C mpora. When parliamentarians debated the new voting right at the end of October 2012, hundreds of militants were in attendance. And when the resolution was passed, they unrolled an enormous flag bearing Cristina's portrait over the heads of the representatives to celebrate their triumph.

When in Argentina mention is made of La C mpora, it is always a bit eerie. The image is akin to watching a good horror movie: it is not the blood and gore that spreads fear and sets nerves on edge. It is the unknown, the mysterious figure stalking through the mist towards a house, whose occupants are sound asleep, blissfully unaware of the approaching peril. It therefore remains a puzzle how the best-known of the president's militant groups of supporters is structured and functions.



Book cover of the publication "La C mpora. The secret history of the legacies of N stor and Cristina Kirchner". | Source:   KAS Argentina.

THE HOLIEST OF ALL MILITANTS: PER N

Last year, journalist Laura Di Marco attempted to shed light on the murky situation. Her expos  *La C mpora. The secret history of the legacies of N stor and Cristina Kirchner*⁹ sold like hot cakes. However, this work often relies on conjecture and hearsay, as a careful reading makes readily apparent. The history of the organisation that is told is nevertheless fascinating, in part due to the tragedies that some Camporists who are feared today have to offer.

Take for example "Wado", whose real name is Eduardo de Pedro and is a child of the *desaparecidos*, the "Vanished" of the military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983, many of whom were never seen again. They were tortured, drugged, thrown from aeroplanes or otherwise murdered. Human rights campaigners estimate the number of victims to be 30,000. Official agencies speak of more than 11,000. When they were students, "Wado's" parents joined the Montoneros, a kind of Peronist urban guerrilla group

9 | Laura Di Marco, *La C mpora, Historia secreta de los herederos de N stor y Cristina Kirchner*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 2012.

founded in 1970. Its members – both left-wing and nationalist – shrouded the country in their battle against all other political groupings with spectacular ambushes, kidnappings, blackmail and murder. They hoped for the return of Perón from his exile in Madrid and, together with him, wanted to establish a socialist Argentina. When the general returned home after 18 years of exile on 20 June 1973, he saw how divided his supporters were – supporters who should actually have been fighting for a better nation in his name, and in the name of Peronism.

A simple number suffices to describe the charisma Perón still possessed upon his return: three million compatriots awaited him. They travelled from all 23 provinces and the capital Buenos Aires, some under way for weeks on foot or by horse. Yet this mass was no longer united. Left and right-wing militant Peronists faced off irreconcilably at the welcoming celebration. And even before Perón landed, his adherents were killing one another. 13 people died and more than 100 were wounded. The “Ezeiza massacre” finally sealed the division of the Peronists.

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Perón opposed the Montoneros and expelled them from the party. He called them “fools” who should “get off his back”.¹⁰ In Argentina, presidents are allowed to say such things. Indeed, it is expected of them. The Montoneros were now “infiltrators, betraying us from the inside”, “more dangerous than our external enemies”.¹¹ The military dictatorship that came to power in March 1976 after the death of Perón and the unhappy presidency of his widow, Isabel Martínez, destroyed the Montoneros. Eduardo de Pedro’s parents were captured in 1977; his mother was nine months pregnant. “Wado”, one year old, was kidnapped, abandoned and found by relatives. In the 1990s, he began to search for his parents and sibling.

From the very beginning, President Néstor Kirchner campaigned for a second purge of the military dictatorship. Under the first president after the nation’s return to democracy, radical Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989), Argentina began to

10 | Ingo Malcher, *Tango Argentino. Porträt eines Landes*, Becksche Reihe, Munich, 2008, 53.

11 | Ibid.

investigate the crimes of the junta's officers and generals. Peronist president Carlos Menem (1989-1999) ended this phase by enacting amnesty laws. This was an attempt to appease both the politicians and the population and to prevent further military rebellions, which had repeatedly destabilised the nation under Alfonsín's presidency. These amnesty laws were not repealed until 2003 under Kirchner. This cleared the way for new trials and sentencing – until today. At the end of 2010, those responsible for the murder of "Wado's" parents and his sibling – members of notorious military intelligence service "Batallón de Inteligencia 601" – received prison sentences from 25 years to life. Despite all the failings the Kirchners can be accused of in other areas, such as economic orientation, one thing is certain: they are deserving of accolade by virtue of their contributions to purging the military dictatorship. In this respect, Argentina is more progressive than its neighbours, who have also experienced brutal dictators.

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Cristina Kirchner played a very active role in the "601" proceedings, and via these came to know "Wado". According to Cámpora researcher Di Marco, he in turn "began to believe that Néstor and Cristina would continue the project for which his parents had fought".¹² And so it was that he ended up in the Kirchnerist youth organisation. This is headed by the president's son, Máximo Kirchner. In addition to Eduardo de Pedro, the group has five more noteworthy members: Andrés "El Cuervo" (the raven) Larroque, Juan Cabandié, whose parents were likewise "Vanished", Mariano Recalde, José María Ottavis Arias and Mayra Mendoza, the only woman. The group is named after Héctor José Cámpora, who was president for 49 days in early summer 1973 before Perón forced him to step down. Today, Cámpora has a reputation for being particularly loyal to Perón. Chronicler Martínez even describes him as subservient, awkward and totally lacking self-esteem. A reply he reportedly gave to Perón when the latter once asked him at the time has even outlasted his death: "It is always the time that you wish it to be, Mr. President."¹³

12 | Di Marco, n. 9, 206.

13 | "Nicht einen Tag", *Der Spiegel*, 19 Mar 1973, 110, <http://spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-42645370.html> (accessed 25 Apr 2013).

Di Marco is searching for parallels between La Cámpora and the Montoneros and finds them in the self-conception of both groups as "subjects of change". Indeed, most first-generation Camporists are children of the Argentinean state crisis of 2001/2002. Back then, the economy and currency had collapsed. Many Argentines lost not only the majority of their savings, but above all any faith whatsoever in the nation's politics. Street battles raged across the nation, together with bloody protests and looting. And everywhere, the youth also took part. Today, the leadership of La Cámpora has three pillars: the sons and daughters of the "Vanished" of the military dictatorship, former students who gravitated towards the left-wing political spectrum of the universities after the nation went bankrupt, and activists from social movements. Larroque "The Raven", for instance, discovered La Cámpora via youth work.

How did this loose bundle of politically inquisitive individuals transform into the shadowy force that gained the trust of the president and now controls large parts of the country?

Nearly all the young Peronists had initially grouped behind Néstor Kirchner up to 2005. However, La Cámpora projected a particularly "young" image. It organises itself via the Internet and its logos are praised as works of art. The question is, how did this loose bundle of politically inquisitive individuals transform into the shadowy force that gained the trust of the president and now controls large parts of the country? It is established fact that Cristina Kirchner celebrated her overwhelming re-election result on 23 October 2011 with a very small gathering comprising only her son Máximo and his friends in the presidential residence in Olivos. For herself, widow of the great unifier Néstor, virtually no friends remained. She had always embodied the politics of her husband. And not even he trusted everybody, preferring to rely instead on his long-standing stalwarts, the "Penguins" from his home province of Santa Cruz. However, the Camporists have long displaced the predominantly older "Penguins". "Secrecy and distrust", writes journalist Di Marco, are the "hallmark" of La Cámpora.¹⁴ And in actual fact, only the leadership around Máximo is actually known by name. The son plays a dual role in this context: he has replaced the father as the political spin doctor, and as the man at the president's side. Cristina Kirchner, who is visibly disinclined to expose herself to the masses, allows herself to be protected by

14 | Di Marco, n. 9, 206.

him. He and his confidants intercept the fervent avowals of loyalty of the supporters. And everyone around the president knows that the 36-year-old Máximo has a certain claim to the political legacy of the Kirchners. Aníbal Fernández, Interior Minister under Néstor, Minister of Justice for Cristina and today a senator with a definite penchant for her duties, already attested to Máximo's qualities as heir to the throne at an early stage: "He has the ability to come to power, far more so than others who have already been involved in politics for years."¹⁵ Only the fatherly friend from Caracas was even more direct in this assessment. Hugo Chávez assigned the young man a tremendous task at the funeral service for Néstor Kirchner: "You must continue along the path your father took."¹⁶

EMPLOYMENT AGENCY WITH PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL

Consequently, the president's path leads via Máximo, and his selection committee is La Cámpora. Just like the president, this movement stands for a national and economic understanding that is referred to as "The Model". Nobody has a definition on hand. However, two baselines can be identified to which virtually the entire national policy of Argentina is currently attributable. First: the economy is controlled by politics. Second: the economy is an instrument with which to improve the situation of the lower income classes. This is the justification behind the famous "para todos" ("for all") programmes. "Carne para todos" and "Fútbol para todos" are intended to ensure that inexpensive meat and publicly broadcast league matches are accessible to everyone. The slogan has long been the subject of mockery. For instance, when fans of hard, fast and loud guitar music meet at a festival, they speak of "Metal para todos".

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The social programmes are often designed in such a way that the middle class is excluded from these benefits, although it is precisely this income bracket that pays for

15 | Juana Libedinsky, "Heredarás mi Reino", *Vanity Fair*, Dec 2012, <http://www.revistavanityfair.es/articulos/heredaras-mi-reino/10916/page/4> (accessed 8 Jan 2013).

16 | Juan Cruz Sanz, "Dar el salto, un desafío para Máximo K", *Clarín*, 30 Oct 2010. http://clarin.com/gobierno/_0_363563646.html (accessed 10 Jan 2013).

it all via taxes. Incomes have dropped in value on account of galloping inflation in excess of 20 per cent. However, child allowances – roughly 50 euros – are only available to families that have less than the minimum wage per month (2,670 pesos, just under 400 euros). Above all, the model should never be one thing: “neoliberal”. The 1990s under President Menem, the institutions of Bretton Woods, the European Union and the United States – all castigated Cristina Kirchner as a victim of her own deficient system. Her Argentina would fight its way out from under the yoke of capitalist imperialism. And it is precisely this point that bears the signature of La C mpora. The group first rose to power under Cristina Kirchner at the moment her husband N stor passed away in 2010, and its leaders made sure that the country’s streets and squares filled with people.



C mpora office in the capital Buenos Aires. | Source:   KAS Argentina.

After all, an unwritten law in Argentina states that power and personality can be found where the masses are: poor mobilisation inevitably means poor governance. Until recently, the president was a master at mobilisation. However, organising mass rallies is somewhat more difficult. In common parlance, La C mpora is now popularly referred to as “Agencia de Colocaci n”, or “the employment agency”. The positions they occupy today in government, governmental organisations and nationalised private enterprises have made the young militants wealthy, as well as less popular. “Blind obedience and a lack of work experience characterise the militant Kirchnerist elite that the nation

has reaped”, wrote traditional centrist newspaper *La Nación*, subsequently naming a long list of “occupied” state institutions.¹⁷ These lucrative positions are allocated behind the scenes, without any controls or public consultation. This means that frequently, names only become known once a decision has long been set in stone. Only then can researchers go to work and expose the connections to La Cámpora.

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Yet it still comes to light at some point. After all, wherever there are winners, there are usually also losers. And the executive chair in which a Camporist sits is usually still warm from its predecessor. This was recently the case with Jorge Argüello, Ambassador of Argentina to the United States: dismissed after just one year and dispatched to Portugal. For some time already, La Cámpora had earmarked his successor, Cecilia Nahón in her late 30s, for a career in the foreign office, which is steeped in tradition. Just a few months after the re-election, Paula Ferraris – the young head of the strategically important secretariat for international coordination and cooperation, announced the end of her career to a good dozen veteran ambassadors on the fifth floor of the Palacio San Martín: “Diplomats who are over 50 years old are no longer tenable. We must fill these positions with those militant comrades-in-arms who allow us to pursue a foreign policy that reflects the process of change of this new phase.”¹⁸ In other words, forced retirement was practised on a grand scale, once again freeing up positions for loyal supporters of the president.

The new ambassador in the USA also had good contacts all the way to the top: Cecilia Nahón is an important confidant of Vice-Minister for Economic Affairs Axel Kicillof, who in turn is one of the key confidants of the president. German left and Marxist daily newspaper *Junge Welt* praises him as the “new strong arm of Argentine policy” and “passionate

17 | “El avance de la Cámpora”, *La Nación*, 4 Mar 2012, <http://lanacion.com.ar/1453557> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

18 | Rodrigo Lloret, “Purga en Cancillería para haber lugar a los militantes”, *Perfil*, 23 Mar 2012, http://perfil.com/ediciones/2012/3/edicion_661/contenidos/noticia_0031.html (accessed 22 Jan 2013).

defender of the managed economy".¹⁹ Towards the people, however, he has to be increasingly careful. Only recently in early February, he had to seek refuge in the captain's cabin on the ferry from Montevideo to Buenos Aires. Fellow passengers had berated him harshly for his policies and threatened him with their fists.

He has Máximo Kirchner to thank for his evidently very special connection to Argentina's ruler. The two got to know each other at the University of Buenos Aires, where Kicillof belonged to TNT and the 501 movement. TNT can be translated to mean the eponymous explosive, or the motto "Tontos Pero No Tanto" (dumb, but not so dumb). 501 stands for the surfeit of the political class at the turn

of the millennium. In Argentina, only those who are more than 500 kilometres from their home town – and thus from the ballot box – are exempt from voting. And in this way, the members of 501 circumvented the blanket electoral duty. They met up and together

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travelled the requisite 501 kilometres. The movement is regarded as a kind of fun guerrilla movement in Argentina and attracted young people of various political persuasions. Only Menemists were unwelcome. Yet Carlos Menem, president in the 1990s with his neoliberal-branded policies, was and still is considered responsible for the economic collapse of 2001/2002. One guiding principle from the statute of 501 is: "policy does not stem from the politicians, because they have kidnapped and gagged."²⁰ The aim was always to remain outside of the so-called system. The names of most members remain unknown to this day.

Kicillof led TNT together with General Secretary Nahón. As Vice-Minister for Economic Affairs, the theoretician of Marxist economics has become a practitioner, as well as a head-hunter. Nahón's earlier position in the Foreign Office was given to Augusto Costa, Kicillof's confidant in the Ministry for Economic Affairs. In his place came Mariana Laura González, his colleague from Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Argentino (Cenda), the think tank that

19 | Fernando Krakowiak, "Marxist mit Einfluss", *junge Welt*, 19 Nov 2012, 9, <http://jungewelt.de/2012/11-19/021.php> (accessed 22 Jan 2013).

20 | Quoted after: "Kicillof: Los primeros años", *7 Miradas*, 12 Dec 2012, <http://7miradas.com/?p=10260> [21.01.2013].

hallmarks the economic policy of the nation. President Kirchner rules on such staffing decisions by presidential decree.²¹ These often involve strategically important positions with substantial budgets, like that of general director for the government's media and public relations, which was filled a few months ago by Hernán Reibel Maier, a childhood friend of Máximo. This young adherent was also appointed by presidential decree, much to the chagrin of the critical press. *Clarín*, the country's largest daily newspaper, wrote: "Hernán Reibel Maier now has control of the enormous budget of the official propaganda machine with which the government sponsors loyal media and censors independent and critical journalism, with the ultimate goal of stifling it."²² Like Kicillof and numerous other Camporists, the most famous being leader and founding member Mariano Recalde, Reibel Maier also began his career at Aerolíneas Argentinas, which was nationalised in 2008. A never-ending series of scandals has followed. And of course, the old adage that Woodward and Bernstein, the *Washington Post* reporters who exposed the Watergate Affair, once heard from their source "Deep Throat", also holds true in this case: "Follow the Money!"

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The state-owned enterprise is generating millions in losses and its situation is dire. However, in some way it has always served as a training centre for government supporters with ambitions for a good position. Critical observers describe the strategy thus: La Cámpora relies on loyal followers in strategically important positions. This is explained by the subsequent step-by-step recruitment of further acolytes. In the case of General Director Reibel Maier, 40 additional active members were contracted in the space of just a short time.

THE POLITICAL DIVIDE BETWEEN THE RIVALS

All the same, the group is also politically involved. When it comes to the parliamentary elections in October (congress renews a third of the delegates and senators every two

21 | "Un hombre de Kicillof ocupará el puesto de Cecilia Nahón en Cancillería", *Infobae*, 28 Jan 2013, <http://infobae.com/notas/693556-.html> (accessed 2 Feb 2013).

22 | Leonardo Mindez, "Ahora La Cámpora tomó el control de la millonaria publicidad oficial", *Clarín*, 21 Feb 2012, http://clarin.com/politica/_0_650334992.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

years), it is not a question of “whether” the president and her supporters wish to determine the party’s candidates list themselves – the only uncertain factor is how successful they will be in doing so, as the governors are becoming restless. Control of Casa Rosada is even a cause of headache for Daniel Scioli, powerful governor of the key province of Buenos Aires. After his re-election last year, Cristina Kirchner encouraged him to appoint Cámpora ally Gabriel Mariotto as Vice-Governor. Mariotto had already made himself a career, first as a journalist and film-maker, then as a university lecturer, and subsequently as head of the Argentine Media Authority. And he had remained a loyal Kirchnerist throughout. Mariotto has long attained nationwide fame with attacks against his boss, Scioli, and thus repaid the trust of the nation’s leader. On the one hand, he and his confidants – including Cámpora co-founder José Ottavis – block legislative initiatives in the provincial parliament. On the other hand, they publicly needle Scioli and his team to such an extent that it often verges on insult. When Peronists from the provincial senate met together with the organisation La Juan Perón to find an answer to La Cámpora, Mariotto proclaimed that they were merely “dinosaurs” who had failed to understand that “history had changed” in 2003 with the inauguration of Néstor Kirchner.²³ Ottavis bowed a little lower. “If Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández have achieved anything”, said the leading Camporist, “then it is to return ideology to politics.”²⁴

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Scioli, a candidate for the 2015 presidential election on whom the divided Peronists were able to agree, ignores such attacks. He is supported by an echelon of younger politicians, including the minister of his provincial cabinet. However, the DOS group – derived from the initials of Daniel Osvaldo Sciolis – has so far been a rarity in the public eye, likely at the behest of their beacon of hope. The governor takes a lot of hits without fighting back. This is partly attributable to the fact that his province needs the financial assistance of the national government in order to survive.

23 | “Mariotto y La Cámpora embisten contra ‘La Juan Domingo’ de Scioli”, *Perfil*, 7 May 2012, http://perfil.com/contenidos/2012/05/07/noticia_0013.html (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

24 | *Ibid.*

Other governors, such as Daniel Peralta (Santa Cruz province) and Juan Manuel De La Sota (Córdoba province), have broken ties with Cristina Kirchner, and they make no secret of it. Scioli understands that, ultimately, should he win the election, he can only unite the Peronist groups behind him as a champion of conciliation. He will also need the support of the long-standing Kirchner voters – and they will certainly not support any rebel who has made life difficult for their Cristina. Or, as Kirchnerist congressman Edgardo Depetri put it: “Anyone who opposes Cristina will lose.” Either she will be president for another term in 2015, or it will be “whoever she decides on”.²⁵

One way of attaining even greater power is via Argentina’s social insurance system. The Administración Nacional de la Seguridad Social, or Anses, has again been completely under government control since 2008. It pays pensions, as well as unemployment and child allowances, and allocates mortgage loans, laptops and educational grants. For Cristina Kirchner and La Cámpora, however, it serves one primary function: that of “the most important political instrument of the current government”.²⁶ Diego Bossio, head of Anses and a close friend of La Cámpora, is a virtuoso at this game. He has employed hundreds of Camporists and had hundreds of Anses offices opened in the provinces. He has tasked his personnel with “spreading the social fairytale”, and this means from “door to door”.²⁷ The numerous new offices throughout the nation also hold seminars for young people. There, for instance, they should learn how to fill in forms correctly. Indeed a challenge in excessively bureaucratic Argentina, where the government wants to know more and more. Usually, however, other details – so-called “educational details” – are taught. The young students hear such phrases from their teachers as “You can be extremely useful to the nation by spreading its social policy.”²⁸

Argentina’s social insurance system pays pensions, unemployment and child allowances, and allocates mortgage loans, laptops and educational grants. For Kirchner and La Cámpora it is “the most important political instrument of the current government”.

25 | Jesús A. Cornjeo, “Mariotto dijo que el reclamo de Scioli es ‘electoralista’”, *La Nación*, 30 Jan 2013, 7.

26 | María Jastreblansky, “La Cámpora hace una ‘revolución’ en la Anses”, *La Nación*, 5 Oct 2012, <http://lanacion.com.ar/1411557> (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

27 | *Ibid.*

28 | *Ibid.*

And what's more, this isn't even practised in secret! Appearances by Anses leader Bossio are always meticulously orchestrated. He hands out good deeds or declares new policies surrounded by Camporists and other foot soldiers of the president, often accompanied by well-known ministers and even Cristina Kirchner herself. To put this into context, imagine the head of a European social services authority, accompanied by the prime minister or the minister for social affairs, handing out housing benefits to individual citizens at an election campaign booth, while being celebrated by the party's youth organisation. With the public television network broadcasting the event live for at least one hour on all of its channels! Yet in Argentina, virtually nobody is irritated by this any more. This is because La Cámpora has long provided for "political education" in elementary and high schools. The Directorate to Strengthen Democracy, to which the head of cabinet is subordinate and which is led by Camporist Franco Vitali, thought up the game "Hero of the Community". Camporists visit the schools with their flags and party symbols. The "Eternaut" makes his appearance – a militant Camporist with the face of Néstor Kirchner. A fifth-grader recalls: "The result of the game was that everything will be fine as long as we all follow the same path – and that means the path chosen by the government."²⁹

LA CÁMPORA SETS A PRECEDENT

In this respect, political commitment is thoroughly encouraged and socially recognised. Argentina's political youth is active, with well over 700 registered political parties. Universities in particular are highly politicised. The elections of student representatives attract almost as much media attention as the national parliaments. The militancy is synonymous with what is commonly referred to as a "hard slog": a difficult upwards struggle as a combination of responsibility for the party and self-interest, a life of membership between posting placards, manning election campaign booths in the pouring rain, meetings after work and political commitment on the district council. Peronism is more strongly oriented to individuals than any west-

29 | Laura Serra, "La Cámpora realiza talleres políticos en escuelas públicas", *La Nación*, 12 Aug 2012, <http://lanacion.com.ar/1498643> (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

European political party. Even Governor Juan Manuel De La Sota added fuel to the fire and had the young guard La Militante founded in Córdoba by a very close confidant ... his wife, Adriana Nazario. La Militante manages the youth agency in Córdoba, has the nation's spiritual leader Evita Perón in its logo and is committed to "Unity, Solidarity and Federalism". However, anti-Kirchnerism is more decisive than the triad of catchwords. Anyone unable to guarantee this has no place in La Militante and will, in the worst case, be shut out, like young provincial representative Marisa Gamaggio in early 2012. She attracted the negative attention of members with good contacts in the national government.

Other groups continue to openly affirm their commitment to Cristina Kirchner. Movimiento Evita, led by former unemployed leader Emilio Pérsico, is "ultra-Kirchnerist" and consequently often tangles with La Cámpora. They fight for the favour of the president. The Movimiento is primarily active in townships and has great influence on the allocation of social projects. Yet above all, Pérsico and his adherents can mobilise some 70,000 people.³⁰ A fact which is not-insignificant for the president. Added to this is a number of additional organisations characterised by absolute fealty to Cristina Kirchner: Kolina, founded in 2010, is under the command of Minister Débora Giorgi (Industry) and Alicia Kirchner (Social Affairs). The president's sister-in-law has control of the five-billion-peso programme Argentina trabaja (Argentina Works), which assigns publicly financed jobs – 80 per cent of which are in the Buenos Aires province. Kolina, now officially approved as a Kirchnerist party, aims to contest the party lists of the critical Peronists in the most densely populated region of the country (almost 14 million inhabitants), the prospects of which are absolutely possible in light of its many good deeds. An old proverb says: whoever wins the votes of the province will win the elections. Critics state

An old proverb says: whoever wins the votes of the province will win the elections. Critics state that the minister and her new party should step aside to clear the path for the Cámpora activists.

30 | Gabriel Sued, "El Movimiento Evita, otro polo de poder en el kirchnerismo", *La Nación*, 17 Jan 2012, <http://lanacion.com.ar/1441126> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

that the minister and her new party should step aside to clear the path for the Cámpora activists.³¹

According to the motto “The More the Better”, we also have Nuevo Encuentro, the Kirchnerist party of Martín Sabbatella. He heads the controversial media supervisory authority and only recently attracted attention. Negative attention that is, from most Argentines, but positive attention from the president. Once again, this involved the Media Act, which proponents consider to be a contribution to media diversity, and opponents regard as an attack on the Clarín media corporation and critical journalism. The responsible court had just decided to further postpone implementation of the act. Sabbatella took the mic, called the ruling “a disgrace” and said that the Argentinean judiciary has been “colonised by the corporations”.³² Sabatella is a major political entity in the province of Buenos Aires; for many years, he was a local politician and also held a representative’s seat in congress. For the president, he is an important antagonist in the unofficial battle against Scioli and could also be described as a test pilot for unconventional manoeuvres. After Sabatella attacked the judges, Cristina Kirchner declared her intent to also “democratise” the judiciary.

The list of mainly youth-oriented support organisations could almost go on forever. Yet a large and diversified ensemble of organisations makes sense when flattering the government’s vanity should sound harmonious. However, the young Kirchnerists would prefer to take the stage in a united fashion in the struggle for their own identity, which is why they established Unidos y Organizados (United and Organised) in autumn 2012. This is a kind of umbrella organisation with the goal of explaining the president’s policies and organising the election campaign. After all is said and done, no matter the extent of the fear of La Cámpora and no matter how much

After all is said and done, no matter the extent of the fear of La Cámpora and no matter how much influence its opponents ascribe it, alone it is unable to mobilise the requisite masses.

31 | Ezequiel Spillman and Mariano Confalonieri, “Apuestan a Alicia para disputar contra el sciolismo”, *Perfil*, 20 May 2012, http://perfil.com/ediciones/2012/5/edicion_678/contenidos/noticia_0077.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

32 | Sebastian Abrevaya, “El fallo de la Cámara es una vergüenza”, *Página12*, 7 Dec 2012, <http://pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-209410-2012-12-07> (accessed 20 Jan 2013).

influence its opponents ascribe it, alone it is unable to mobilise the requisite masses. And so it endeavours to at least determine the direction. As Unidos y Organizados first gathered in congress in the new “Néstor Kirchner Hall of Youth”, the Cámpora spearhead dictated the tone. Vice-president Amado Boudou, plagued by corruption, was in attendance, as was Julián Domínguez, President of the House of Representatives, Agustín Rossi, head of Block K in the same governmental body, head of cabinet Juan Manuel Abal Medina, home secretary Florencio Randazzo and Cámpora co-founders Andrés Larroque and Eduardo de Pedro. Nowadays, none of these men are particularly “young” (at best lacking career experience like their SED comrades in the blue shirts of the Free German Youth), but incredibly powerful all the same. And if it were up to them, that would stay so for quite some time. “Just so that nobody’s surprised”, said Larroque in this clique: “Cristina is the leader, and should there be a subcommand, then that is militancy.”³³ And militancy has only one definition for a Camporist: La Cámpora.

33 | Mariano Confalonieri and Emilia Defino, “Lanzaron orgánicamente el cristinismo puro, fuera del PJ”, *Perfil*, 16 Sep 2012, http://perfil.com/ediciones/2012/9/edicion_711/contenidos/noticia_0048.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).