

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE POLITICS OF LABOR UNIONS LAWS POLICY  
MAKING IN ARGENTINA

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The question addressed in the Thesis seek to elucidate how and why did organized labor recover its strength *vis-à-vis* the state and create for itself a significant political place in the process of labor unions laws policy making in the eighties in Argentina? Drawing inspiration upon the historical institutionalist literature on policy outcomes and Bourdieu's concepts of field and practice sense, we proposed to answer the question by placing our attention on the conditional and contingent political factors as well as the historical and institutional patterns of overlapped and interwoven relationships that shaped labor politics: the trilogy state,

labor, and peronist party. Specifically, we focused on organized labor relationally constituted capacities, coherence as a collective actor and capacity to fit its demands toward the state, the two critical dimensions of labor as a political actor to making sense of labor action *vis-à-vis* the state in the politics of labor unions laws reform.

THE POLITICS OF LABOR UNION LAWS

POLICY MAKING IN ARGENTINA

by

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## Aknowledgments

The Journey -Mary Oliver-

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting their bad advice-  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.

"Mend my life!"  
each voice cried.

But you did not stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.

It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.

But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,

that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do-  
determined to save the only life you could save.

I would like to thank to the members of my committee, Meyer Kestnbaum, Patricio Korzeniewicz, and Reeve Vanneman, for their generosity and for understanding that the path of our calling has many ups and downs. I have a debt of gratitude, especially, with two people, who gave me their support, effort, and patience under difficult and sad times. You have enriched the meaning of the word kindness.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter 1: Historical puzzle	1
Building a bridge between historical institutionalism and Pierre Bourdieu	5
What sort of historical and institutional patterns of relationships shaped labor politics in the eighties?	15
Chapter 2: Labor action <i>vis-à-vis</i> the state in the politics of labor unions laws policy making	28
Corporatist stage	33
Social stage	46
Political party stage	56
Chapter 3: Conclusions	68
Appendix A	72
References	74

## Chapter 1

### Historical puzzle

The last coup d'etat that Argentina witnessed on March 24, 1976 plunged the country into the ineffable experience of abyss and terror. The transition to democracy path, according to the literature, was military defeat and regime collapse (O'Donnell, Whitehead and Schmitter 1986, Stepan and Linz 1996). It is also pointed out that Argentina had "the only unpacted and the most classically free transition of the South American cases. This in part explains why the incoming democratic government imprisoned numerous military officers for human rights violations" (Stepan and Linz 1996: pp. 193). Whereas the fact that the democratic forces did not pact with the military regime the institutional conditions, rules, and content of the democratic transition<sup>1</sup> was a motive to rejoice, in turn contained the promise of a new historical birth. Nonetheless, this hopeful and uncertain new beginning did not foster a sort of pact among the political parties either, which would have established the terms of the democratic transition and certain conditions for further institutional and economic design<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Chile, under the aegis of Pinochet, was the conditioned, or "from above", democratic transition case par excellence.

<sup>2</sup>The most classic example of pacted transitions was Spain, and its foundation stone was the Pact of the Moncloa.

One of the most insightful places in which the full implications of the unpacted democratic transition could be assessed was the reform of labor unions institutional configuration that took place during the first democratic government that held in the power to former President Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989)<sup>3</sup>. Under this period, a new chapter in the country labor history was written since the labor unions laws had been suppressed under the military dictatorship. The discussion between state and organized labor (*Confederación General del Trabajo*, CGT) around the reform of labor unions laws became a central component of the political scene until 1988, five years later, when the new body of labor unions laws was finally enacted.

I aim to tell in this study the fascinating story about the uniqueness of the politics of labor unions laws policy making and the peculiar historical outcome that emerged in which labor succeeded *vis-à-vis* the state in light of the claims pursued and the policy outcomes. The question addressed in the study was: How and why did organized labor recover its strength *vis-à-vis* the state as well as create for itself a significant political place in the process of labor unions laws reform in the eighties in Argentina, in a seemingly adverse historical context characterized by labor

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<sup>3</sup>Between December 1983 and June 1989.

institutional weakness and a non-pro labor party in the government?

In order to answer the question, we proposed to examine the conditional and contingent political factors as well as the historical and institutional patterns of overlapped and interwoven relationships that shaped labor politics in the eighties: the trilogy state, peronist party, and labor. We focused on labor calling of 13 general strikes with the aim of examining to what extent organized labor through its mobilization filled the emptiness place of 'the peronist party opposition *qua* political party', and shaped some of the main political arrangements with the state that have had a significant impact on the process of policy making and policy outcomes. More precisely, the attention was placed on organized labor relationally constituted capacities, labor coherence as a collective actor and labor capacity to fit its demands toward the state, the two critical dimensions of labor as a political actor to making sense of labor action *vis-à-vis* the state in the politics of labor unions laws reform.

The first chapter has two sections. The first one illustrates the theoretical roots upon which this study drew inspiration: historical institutionalism on policy outcomes and Bourdieu's concepts of field and practice sense. The second section presents the historical and institutional

patterns of relationships that shaped labor politics since forties in order to illustrate how and why complex and overlapped relationships among state, peronist party, and trade unions have shaped labor politics in the eighties. The second chapter, which analyzes organized labor (CGT) action *vis-à-vis* state action and its impact on the politics of labor unions laws policy making, is composed of three stages: corporatist, social, and political party stage. The stages do not constitute historically differentiated and irreducible stages of the process of labor unions laws reform but rather the analytical differentiation in stages had the purpose of highlighting in each stage the most relevant features of a growing complex, contingent, and overlapped political process.

Let me add a few comments about my theme of study. As the grand thinker of the social and political life, Max Weber, has taught us long time ago, the selection of our theme of study is always a product of its cultural significance and personal intellectual values. In my case, I would say that recognized and unrecognized intellectual heritages, political passions, and my own biography traced the footsteps that led me toward the path of this study. The eighties, for my generation of sociologists in Argentina, was the decade in which our place as intellectuals was revealed; we embraced freedom for the first time, we became involved in politics for the first time,

we were exposed to an immense circulation of ideas and ideals, for the first time as well. Maybe this essay represents for me a sort of bridge between my present and my past, built with certain melancholy because we, those of that moment, are not the same, but with the joy to recognize that the time may pass, the landscape may change, and we still remain faithful to our ideals and dreams.

### **Building a bridge between historical institutionalism and Pierre Bourdieu**

This study drew insights upon some remarkable pieces that inscribe in the field of historical institutionalist literature on policy outcomes (Hall 1986, Skopcol 1985, Skopcol 1992). Peter Hall's work (1986) provided the first path to make sense of our historical puzzle. Based on the reciprocal influence of institutions, interest, and ideas, Hall sustains that historically specific patterns of organization (institutions<sup>4</sup>) have effects on the national

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<sup>4</sup>By institutions Peter Hall (1986) means "formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals and in various units of the polity and economy. As such, they have more formal status than cultural norms but one does not necessarily derive from legal, as opposed to conventional, standing. Throughout, the emphasis is on the relational character of institutions; that is to say, on the way in which they structure the interactions of individuals. In this sense it is the organizational qualities of institutions that are being emphasized; and the term

policy patterns: "Institutional factors play two fundamental roles: on the one hand, the organization of policy making affects the degree of power that any set of actors have over the policy outcomes. On the other hand, organizational position also influences actor's definition of his own interests, by establishing his institutional responsibilities and relationship to other actors. In this way, organizational factors affect both the degree of pressure an actor can bring to bear on policy and the likely direction of that pressure (...) with an institutional model we can see policy as more than the sum of countervailing pressure from social groups. That pressure is mediated by an organizational dynamic that imprints its own image on the outcome. Because policy making in the modern state is always a collective process, the configuration of the institutions that aggregate the opinion of individual contributors into a set of policies can have its own effect on policy outputs". (pp. 19) As a complement to Peter Hall's work, and given the centrality of the state in the historical scene, Theda Skocpol (1985) provided an enlightening path to bring the state back in the analysis of policy making, specifically the insightful inquiry about the degree of autonomy and the capacities of states as actors trying to realize policy goals, "realizing them more or less

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"organization" will be used here as a virtual synonym for "institution"

effectively given the available state resources in relation to social settings" (pp. 28). In addition, I borrowed insights upon her structured polity approach to analyze the origin and transformations of national systems of social provision (1992), which highlights the reciprocal influence of political institutions, social and political factors, political opportunities, and policy historical legacy on the politics of policy making.

Following the historical institutional tradition, we built a polity-centered analysis of the process of labor unions laws policy making in the eighties in Argentina. The way in which the politics of labor unions laws policy making worked depends upon how trade unions, state, and peronist party have been differentially constituted as political actors and how relations among them have been variously institutionalized. Unlike some corporatist approaches, which presumes or asserts not only a particular and exclusive pattern of relations between state and labor but also reasonable stability in those relations<sup>5</sup>, our approach

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(pp. 19).

<sup>5</sup>For example, some corporatist approaches fail to capture not that the state truly resides at the center (as corporatism in large measure agree) but that the precise manner in which the state resides at the center, and the way in which politics works, all depend upon how the state and labor have been historically constituted as political actors. Philippe Schmitter (1979) defines corporatism as the system of representation of interests in which the constitutive units are organized in a limited and not competitive number of singular categories. These categories are hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated. They are recognized or authorized (but also

specifies the historical and institutional configuration of those relations, focuses on multiplicity, overlapping, and interwoven relations as well as contingency and change. Thus, the politics of labor unions laws policy making was shaped by conditional and contingent political factors as well as historical and institutional patterns of interwoven and overlapped relationships among labor, state, and peronist party. In addition, our penchant for building a polity-centered approach of the process of labor unions laws policy making aimed to enhancing the effects of societal institutions over policy making and policy outcomes by taking distance from some of the materialist and social determinist assumptions that often characterize the pluralist<sup>6</sup> and neo-marxist<sup>7</sup>

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created) by the state. Each component of this system of representation of interest observes certain controls in the selection of its leaders, conserves the monopoly of the representation within its respective category, and conserves as well the monopoly of the articulation of demands and supports. The author differentiates two sub-types: societal corporatism, related to the democratic, post-liberal, capitalist welfare state; and state corporatism, which is presented as a structural necessity of the anti-liberal, neo-mercantilist authoritarian state of the under-developed capitalism.

<sup>6</sup>In the traditional pluralism, the meaning of individual or collective action lies in the social norms. The existence of shared norms is a condition and guaranty for the constitution of a group to defend it. Indeed, the absence of conflict, the stability of political regimes, is explained by the integration or internalization of shared norms. Pluralist theory of the group of interest also presents democracy as the most legitimate and efficient system: democracy is in conditions of processing efficiently diverse interests due to the no prevalence of one group upon the other; thus, the multiple and no polarized character of the process of policy making is guaranteed.

<sup>7</sup>Neo-marxism breaks with the pluralist approach. It takes distance from the assumption that agents have equal opportunities to organize and to influence the process of either political decisions or policy making. Conflict and relations of domination are prioritized by this approach. In

paradigms (Skopcol 1985, Hall 1986). Likewise, our aim was to differentiate our approach from the institutional determinism that characterizes the neo-classical pluralist paradigm, whose tendency toward linear and static accounts focuses primarily on constraints and presents explanations on continuity rather than change<sup>8</sup>. The important fact in this context was to

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the structuralist tradition, the problem of collective action is not relevant neither in organizational terms nor in the behaviour of the actors. This approach sustains Marxism is not interested in individual or collective action but in the structural forces that ultimately orient these actions. For example, the cyclical crisis theories link increasing levels of class confrontation to the end of a long term of cycle accumulation, having these cyclical crises a fixed and predetermined length. (Kondratieff cycle, a regular economic cycle of fifty years of duration, the so-called long wave). However, there is a tradition within neo-marxism that emphasizes on the logic of collective action of actors. This tradition focuses not only on the inequality in class capacities but also argues that capital is in better conditions to shape its own interests. Claus Offe (1987) points out that capital and labor follow different practices of association, and also pursue different types of collective action in order to favor common interests. Whereas the economic conflict of class implies that both organizations pursue one logic of collective action; the political conflict of class, on the contrary, implies that each organization pursues different logics of collective action. On the one hand, capital political logic of collective action will be based on an individualist rationality, closer than labor to the pure type of collective action the author calls the monological form of collective action. On the other hand, labor political type of collective action will express always mixed forms of organizations, reproducing an eternal contradiction between democracy and bureaucracy, aggregation of individual interests and formation of a collective identity. The differentiation in two logics of collective action for capital and labor constitutes not only a critique to the conceptualization in terms of group of interest because of the concealed inequalities inherent to these groups, but also highlights that the price paid by labor in organizing and defending its interests is much greater than what capitalists pay.

<sup>8</sup>The neoclassical pluralism emphasizes the micro-processes as a crucial point from which political process or policy making is explained, and in order to construct a general theory about individual and collective human behavior. The neoclassical pluralism considers that the individuals act collectively well informed, and under the consideration of only one logic of collective action -- the economic one --. The logic of collective action of the actors, then, is centered in rational and individual actors whose decisions of collective action are taken in strategic terms respect to other parts of the political exchange but not in relational terms. Therefore, this approach provides account of single actors rather than the

differentiate this study from those approaches that disregard variation by taking the historical episode to be analyzed as constant. Thus, do not distinguish between the genesis and the evolution of a phenomenon, or do not specify which processes or events were critical in producing different combinations of sequences as well as change (Thelen 1999)<sup>9</sup>.

As a complement to the historical institutionalist literature on policy outcomes, in order to making sense of organized labor action *vis-à-vis* the state, this study was greatly influenced also by Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1994). In

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relations among them. It can explain continuities but not changes and variations because the preferences of the actors are stables. Finally it takes for granted, and does not even problematize, the symmetric capacity of action, power, and influence of the actors over the process of policy making. The neo-classical pluralist reaction against the traditional pluralism points out that the existence of common interests does not guarantee the emergence of collective action; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. One of the main disagreements with the traditional pluralism arises in the relationship between individual interests and collective action. The distinguishing point is that it can not be expected that collective actors will necessarily defend common interests. For example, Mancur Olson (1982) understands collective action as the sub-product of strategic actions oriented to the maximization in the individual level. In his opinion, the nucleon of the explanation of collective action lies in the existence of selective incentives. Thus, rational action and selective incentives are the independent variables, and collective action the dependent one. The author associates the possibility of collective action to the distribution of selective incentives. With the exception of small groups, the rational individual will not be interested in cooperating to obtain a collective good without coercion or the provision of a selective incentive. His thesis, therefore, is that those groups that have access to selective incentives will probably act in a collective way to obtain collective goods with more frequency than the groups that do not have access to these incentives.

<sup>9</sup>Kathleen Thelen's work (1999) deserves a special mention because reminds us the importance of drawing together insights from the critical junctures literature (on institutional formation) and the literature on path dependency and policy feedbacks (on institutional reproduction). By focusing on the possibilities of institutional openness and change, Thelen highlights four sources of institutional dynamism (broad changes in the

first place, we drew on Bourdieu's insights with the aim of vanishing from this essay the ghosts and shadows of social reification or substantialist modes of thinking. Labor and state are not real entities but categories of analysis unintelligible in detachment from the historical and symbolical relationships within which they act. Echoing Pierre Bourdieu: "The substantialist mode of thinking is perhaps most unrestrained when it comes to the search for 'explanatory factors'. Slipping from the substantive to the substance (to paraphrase Wittgenstein), from the constancy of the substantive to the constancy of the substance, it treats the properties attached to the agents -- occupations, sex, age, qualifications -- as forces independent of the relationship within which they act". (Bourdieu 1984: pp. 22) Bourdieu also enabled us to bring to the table a way of interpreting organized labor action through the lens of relationally constituted capacities, or languages of action, which was, in certain way, obscured in the historical institutionalist tradition. According to Bourdieu, agents' languages of action express under certain conditions contained in the concepts of field and practice sense. Bourdieu defines field as a space of forces that imposes over the agents, and as a field of struggles within which the agents, with differentiated means and goals according to their position

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socioeconomic or political context; changes in the political balance of

in the structure of the field of forces, strive to redraw the relationships among themselves and, in some cases, their conditions of production and reproduction. Yet Bourdieu sustains that the agents and their languages of action are not subject to mechanically imposed forces or causes. The agents are not rational actors acting with full knowledge of their actions and consequences. On the contrary, a practice sense, or an acquired system of preferences, views of classification and division of the social world, durable cognitive structures, orient their perception of the situation and their answer. This sort of practice sense, what makes the agents to do what they consider has to be done in a certain situation, when is expressed through the languages of action becomes agents' capacities of establishing symbolic and, eventually, hegemonic differences among agents within the boundaries of a specific social field (Bourdieu 1984, 1994).

Hence, in this study, in order to making sense of organized labor action in the politics of labor unions laws policy making, we focused not only on the historical and institutional configuration of the relationships that shaped labor politics in the eighties but also we examined how and what labor capacities shaped labor political interactions, political actions, goals, and influenced policy outcomes. In

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power; exogenous changes; institutional breakdowns).

doing so, we focused on two organized labor relationally constituted capacities: coherence as a collective actor and capacity to fit its demands toward the state. By coherence of labor as a collective actor, I understand the capacity of labor to maintain as a unified collective actor, overcoming any eventuality of labor fragmentation although its own internal heterogeneity. Labor's capacity to fit its demands upon state is defined as the capacity of labor as a collective actor to wisely engage in dual relationships toward state, which not necessarily expressed different strategies, cooperation or confrontation, but, on the contrary, further enhanced the capacity of labor to alternately combine, with considerable freedom of action, how and when to cooperate or confront to state. The two critical dimensions of labor as a political actor were not inherent labor capacities or resources, or fixed and given labor attributes. They did not represent the mere epiphenomenon of the materialist substratum, which expressed labor economic interests. They did not express labor ideological positions either, understood as an idea-system deployed by self-conscious political actors or, since a structuralist perspective, constituted by state ideological apparatus. But mainly both labor capacities were the expression of organized labor practice sense, a sort of *ethos*, or way of being, acting, and belonging within a

particular social field, whose meaning is unintelligible in detachment from the historical and symbolical patterns of relationships within which labor act.

So that the politics of labor unions laws policy making in the eighties in Argentina was shaped by historical and institutional patterns of overlapped and interwoven relationships among the trilogy state, peronist party, and trade unions. Yet it was uncertain and open, and subject to conditional and contingent political factors, labor action *vis-à-vis* the state. Because, like Brubaker sustains in his fine analysis of Yugoslavia or Post-Soviet Union<sup>10</sup>, the dynamic, path that the politics of labor unions laws reform would generate was not institutionally determined but relationally constituted in the interplay of differentiating languages of action or capacities of the agents. By virtue of particular and distinctive capacities, coherence as a collective actor and capacity to fit its demands toward the state, organized labor

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<sup>10</sup>In *Nationalism Reframed* (1996), Rogers Brubaker points out: "The relational field in which the national question arises is a highly structured one. In the post-Soviet case, it was predictable that nationalizing stances of some kind would prevail among successor state elites; that successor state Russians would tend to represent themselves as a national minority; and that Russian Federation elites would engage in "homeland" politics, asserting Russia's right, and obligation, to protect the interest of diaspora Russians. In the Yugoslav case, again for historical and institutional as well conjunctural reasons, the emergence of nationalizing, minority, and homeland stances was similarly predictable. But what could not be predicted, and cannot be explained as structurally determined, was just what kind of minority self-understanding, what kind of homeland politics would prevail in the struggles among competing stances within these three relational fields,

strove to impose differentiating and hegemonic principles upon the others players in the field, with the purpose to redefine alliances, what kind of unions institutional configuration should prevail, and labor social and political representation in the politics of labor unions laws policy making.

**What sort of historical and institutional patterns of relationships shaped labor politics in the eighties?**

There were historical and institutional reasons to establish the peronist government in the forties as the point of departure to characterize labor politics in the eighties. Although some authors have pointed out that, in Argentina, labor participation in politics, or the fact that labor constitutes the state as the main subject of claims, was not inaugurated under peronism -- and I agree with this --, what is important in this study is to trace the history of the process of structuration of labor politics as a result of the historical and institutional patterns of overlapped and interwoven relationships among peronist party, state, and labor. This particular configuration, precisely, was inaugurated in the forties. In addition, the labor unions laws

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and just how the interplay between the three fields would develop". (pp.

that were at the center of the dispute between organized labor and state in the eighties have shaped labor institutional configuration since peronist government in the forties, and were subject to reform in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. The laws were subject to reform again in the eighties -- the theme of study of this research --, and in the nineties, until nowadays.

Galiani and Gerchunoff (2001) have pointed out that since the peronist government that came into power in the forties, a pro labor government that clearly counted with the support of trade unions, the most favorable legislation for labor unions has passed in the forties, fifties, sixties, and during the early seventies. Hence, labor institutional configuration has constituted a clear source of unions strength and growth. The authors mention three institutional sources of unions strength and growth. In first place, "the labor unions laws that regulated the constitution, organization, and working conditions of the trade unions. Although freedom of association for workers was guaranteed, the system was based on one union by industry: the syndicate that held trade union representation got as well civil representation. There was a monopoly of the labor representation by unity of categorization -- as being part of the same branch of activity, what is, only one trade

union was recognized by the state-- . These laws also established that unions could constitute federations and confederations, second and third order associations (Decree 2669, 1943), giving birth to a pyramidal and centralized labor organization, with three levels of representation from down to top: local level, federation of trade unions by branch of activity (public or private), and the CGT, the confederation that centralizes all the rest. During the seventies, the law was reformed, and the federations and confederation increased its capacity to intervene those trade unions that are below in the structure of the organization". (pp. 23)

Another institutional source of unions growth and strength is "the professional association's law, which entitles one union to represent a group of workers by industry in a determined geographical area in the bargaining process. This is the union that obtained legal recognition, which it was originally given to the most representative union (law 14455, 1953). In 1973, the Professional Associations law 20615 replaced the 14455, although the union model adopted was the same. It gave more power and homogeneity to the labor movement. Given the union structure prevalent in Argentina, most collective agreements are national agreements that take place at the industry level. A collective agreement has to be endorsed by the ministry of labor and social security has to be

extended to all workers and employers of a determinate activity in a specific geographical space (collective bargaining law 14250)". (pp. 22) Although, according to the authors, "a fairly centralized system of collective bargaining like the Argentinean promoted labor unions growth by reducing employer opposition and by giving unions influence over national economic trends" (pp. 10), nonetheless, "a singular characteristic of the collective bargaining system in Argentina is that it was recurrently eliminated and reinstated by military and civil governments respectively. In spite of its constitutional guarantee since 1953, there were only a few opportunities in which collective bargaining was unfettered. Indeed, collective bargaining was banned among 1956 to 1958, 1967 to 1971, 1973 to 1975, and 1976 to 1988". (pp. 21)

The third institutional source of unions growth and strength mentioned by the authors "is the right granted to unions to administrate the national health insurance of the workers and families originally developed by collective bargaining at the end of fifties. Employers agreed to contribute to the funding of the system and the unions imposed statutory contributions to their members. During the early sixties, the government created by law health insurance systems for some industries and some state government employees. Finally in 1970, the law 18160 established the creation of a

mandatory system for all workers. This system was financed by the contribution of both employers and employees irrespective whether or not they are union members, and was administrated by the union signatory in the collective bargaining of the industry. The administration of the system in addition to provide unions with substantive financial resources, have provided a source to maintain union density at high levels, specially in industries where direct control of affiliation by the syndicate was too costly, like it is in the case of industries with small average of firms (i.e. trade sector)". (pp. 10)

Without any doubt, labor institutional configuration described above has constituted a source of unions growth and strength since the peronist government that came into power in the forties. However, an exclusive focus on labor institutional configuration per se as a way of explaining labor politics does not seem enough to elucidate what kind of structuring structures have shaped labor politics since the peronist government in the forties. One corp of the literature that analyzes the process of structuration of labor politics since forties until seventies point out that labor politics was shaped by historical and institutional patterns of overlapped relationships between trade unions and peronist party, which

gave to labor unions an exceptional gravitation in the Argentinean political, economic, and social life.

Lipset and Rokkan (1976) have pointed out that cleavages in the social structure translate into party systems. The Argentinean political system is not an exception to this dynamic. The peronist party in particular has been historically both an agent of conflict and integration; a space in which labor conflicts acquired political expression. This historical and institutional pattern of relationships between peronist party and organized labor was still present in the eighties, even under conditions characterized as emptiness of the peronist party opposition *qua* political party (Mc Guire 1989). Many scholars have sustained that the peronist party during large part of its history has had the ability to foster a sort of political system within the party, with ruling coalitions as well as forces that played the role of opposition (Torre 1993). This has been the dynamic of the relationship between trade unions and party elites, sometimes one emerged *vis-à-vis* the other diminished. It should be highlighted that in several opportunities the trade union leaders played a major part in party elite's, which bestowed upon them the possibility to act simultaneously in two spheres of influence within the party. This tendency was much more evident after the coup d'etat of 1955, period in which trade unions political centrality

dramatically increased. The relationship between trade unions and peronist party was informally institutionalized in 1957, when the peronist trade unions clandestinely got together to give birth to the labor side within the peronist party, the 62 *organizaciones peronistas* (their main demand was the devolution of the CGT building, and the reinstatement of the professional associations law enacted under Perón government). (Abós 1983)

There were historical conditions that contributed to peronism capacity to alternatively reinforce either the trade unions side or the party side of the peronist party. Between 1955 and 1983 -- with the exception of the period between 1973-1976 -- the peronist party was not able to participate in elections. The regimes alternated between military dictatorships or illegitimate democratic governments because of the peronist party was proscribed and hence unable to participate in the electoral process. Under clandestine conditions, Perón in exile (1955-1973), the peronist party proscribed, the trade unions constituted the place in which the identification and mutual recognition among peronists was maintained alive, in turn the peronist party was able to continue acting as a political force (James 1990).

On the other hand, a second body of the literature<sup>11</sup> that analyzes the process of structuration of labor politics since

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forties highlights that it was, precisely, labor conflict politicization what gave to the trade unions an exceptional gravitation not only upon the political system, or in particular the peronist party, but also upon the state<sup>12</sup>. Jean Bunel (1992) identifies Argentinean labor politics with "political corporatism because trade unions are integrated into the state not subject to the state. Therefore, political corporatism does not abolish labor independence but directs its action toward the political field and the state" (pp. 136-137). Torre and Sigal (1980) have showed that Argentinean labor politics do not fit within the classic attribution of economic functions to the trade unions, specially because of its main interlocutor is the state, and the sphere of resolution of its demands is the political field. The authors point out that since the peronist government in 1945 "labor pressures on the

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<sup>11</sup>I have translated from Spanish the quotations presented in this section.

<sup>12</sup>By emphasizing the cleavage between labor and capital as the main conflict, even in the political arena, appears as a limitation to understand the dynamic between labor and capital in developing countries due to the particularity adopted by the process of politicization of the working class. It could be argued that in some cases this process did not imply the mere translation of the conflict between capital and labor to the political arena but it implied the introduction of a third actor, the State, whose incorporation redefined both labor and capital capacity of collective action, influence, and power (Pizzorno 1973). In any case, the politicization of the working class can lead to more stables or short term compromises between capital, labor, and state but certainly it can not be taken for granted that ultimately it always expresses the conflict between capital and labor (Heller 1999). In doing so, the analysis is under danger of losing of sight the contradictions within capital, the differences in capacity of collective action and organization of the working class, the challenges that through its mobilization is in conditions of installing, and finally the fact that the state itself often appears to be pursuing a

state more than on capital to acquire its demands (...) with the exception of some particular trade unions that are strategic due to their productive insertion, industrial labor had a bargaining power too weak to exclusively orient its action at the level of enterprise and in the economic sphere. In part as a consequence of this, in part due to the broad role of the state, such items as work schedules, holidays, professional mobility, as well as the rate of minimum wages have been matter of legislative regulation and less an issue to negotiate between labor and capital" (pp. 141-142). Juan Carlos Portantiero (1987) also highlights the fact that labor politics directed its action toward the state, and also points out the need to go beyond the analytical distinction between trade unions and political party functions in order to characterize Argentinean labor politics since forties. According to the author, "labor defined its action on behalf of workers, had the state as main interlocutor and not capital, and seek to situate itself in the political field as a political actor. Its function was to coordinate workers interest superseding their internal heterogeneity, and its main goal was wage and employment (...) Labor has been political by the means of strike employed, by the institutions toward whom directed its action, and by its ends: centralization and homogeneity of

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strategic logic that is not always consistent with the aim of the capitalist

wages, and state recognition of organized labor political and economic power". (pp. 167)

The particular characterization of the structuring structures that shaped labor politics since forties, as described by the two bodies of the literature, was still pregnant in our historical puzzle. We will discuss more in detail how and why in the next chapter, but broadly speaking, in the eighties<sup>13</sup>, labor politics was shaped by overlapped and interwoven patterns of relationships among trade unions, peronist party, and state, which was enhanced by two historical events that surrounded the Argentinean democratic

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class (Franzosi 1995).

<sup>13</sup>The literature that analyzes labor politics in the eighties although is not extensive emphasizes also on some issues that are somewhat related to the destiny of the labor unions laws in the period. One of the pieces that focus on the relationship between labor and government was written by Ricardo Gaudio and Andres Thompson (1990). They analyze the period that goes from the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR) arrival to the government in December 1983 to the presidential elections in May 1989: "We propose to analyze two dimensions of the relationship between government and labor: the conjunctures in which social concertation took place, and the political logics behind their actions" (pp. 10). With particular attention to detail, they analyze the most relevant labor issues in the period: the law of labor normalization, the electoral process in trade unions, the project of labor relationships modernization, and the incorporation of a labor sector to the government. Another work, written by Héctor Palomino (1987), unlike Gaudio and Thompson, whose work proposes a historical description of labor relationships, Palomino focuses on the strategies that both state and labor employed. Some of the main issues that he considers are the projects of labor normalization, the Plan Austral, the conflicts by labor sectors, the structure of labor market, and the different sectors of labor organization. In contrast to these works, Juan Carlos Portantiero (1987) differentiates from Palomino and Gaudio and Thompson since the author focuses exclusively on the first year and half of government. He aims to reconstruct the diverse state proposals of social concertation, and the reasons by which the arrival of an agreement was impossible. On the other hand, this work differentiates from the prior two because the author conceptually inscribes his historical question under the frame of the models of social concertation and political pacts implicit both in state corporatism, and the liberal and societal neocorporatism.

transition: the collapse of the military dictatorship and the fact that the elections of October 30, 1983 were the first opened and free elections in which the peronist party (PJ) suffered an electoral defeat since the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR) party obtained 50 % of the votes and the PJ 39% of the votes. On the one hand, the literature points out that Argentina was the democratic transition case "from below" par excellence (O'Donnell, Whitehead and Schmitter 1986, Stepan and Linz 1996). The military regime collapsed, among other factors, due to its own erosion, which enabled the elites of the democratic forces to initiate the unpacted process of democratic transition. But this unconditionated democratic transition had consequences on the design of public policies, in particular labor policies, because the democratic forces did not pact among them certain conditions for further institutional and economic design either. Furthermore, the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR) party, which won the elections, did not count with a bureaucratic body of politicians and administrators that would design and give certain continuity over time to a particular labor policy direction. Hence, state capacity and autonomy to realize policy goals (Skopcol 1985, 1992) was gradually undermined *vis-à-vis* labor capacity to fit its demands toward the state and its coherence as a collective actor. On the other hand, the electoral defeat of 1983 plunged

the peronist party (PJ) into a deep institutional reorganization. It should be remembered that one of the factors that carried on to former President Raúl Alfonsín to his triumph was the complaint of a pact between the militaries and the trade union leaders. This complaint was directly associated and impacted deeply on the peronist party because the trade union leaders were the party most visible faces at that moment. As a consequence of the electoral defeat, the peronist party became empty of power, run for elections in 1985 fractionated, and it was just at the end of 1985, afterwards the mid-term elections, when a new sector emerged within the party -- called Peronist Renovation --. This sector began gradually to win spaces of power, in turn displaced the trade union leaders from positions of authority within the party, until the peronist party primaries in 1988 to select the presidential formula for the elections of 1989. (Gutiérrez 2001, Lewitsky 1999). Since the PJ was immersed in a deep process of democratization and institutional reorganization almost since the beginning of the democratic government, the peronist party *qua* political party enabled the UCR to dialogue less with the party of opposition but its ephemeral fragments. In this stage, the UCR was surrounded by a historical and (lethal) paradox: the emptiness place of the peronist party opposition *qua* political party and the trade union leaders as

the only trustworthy peronist party visible face. Before this dilemma, the UCR did of need virtue, and the trade unions were considered the peronist political interlocutor for the government. The political actor with whom to cooperate, to confront, and eventually to incorporate as part of the ruling coalition (in 1987, Alderete, a trade unions leader, was appointed Minister of Labor).

## Chapter 2

### Labor action *vis-à-vis* the state in the politics of labor unions laws policy making

During the military dictatorship (1976-1983), the labor unions laws that shaped labor unions institutional configuration since forties were suppressed, and as a result, labor unions sources of strength and growth. As Galiani and Gerchunoff (2001) pointed out, during the military regime, "the government faculties to intervene trade unions expanded, being banned the trade unions' activities, elections and assemblies. The Labor General Confederation (CGT), the regional labor representations (3<sup>rd</sup> order associations) and the second order trade unions were intervened. It was established, as well, that the CGT would not intervene in the conduction and in the administration of the labor system of health insurance. Indeed, enterprise's contributions through collective agreements were suspended. Additionally, it was derogated the decree 1045 (1974), which allowed unions to charge fees to all workers in the industry irrespective of whether or not they were union members. As a result, the main fountain of resources of the trade unions became circumscribed to member's dues and contributions. The law 21261 suspended the right to strike and also suspended collective bargaining.

The government established wages since then, until the reinstatement bargaining in 1988". (pp. 24) The labor unions laws that were at the heart of the dispute between state and organized labor during the first democratic government (1983-1989) were the law that organizes the trade unions professional associations, the law that grants to trade unions the right to administrate the Health Insurance National System for workers and families, and the law that regulates the system of wage bargaining including minimum wage.

The question addressed in the Thesis aimed to elucidate how and why did organized labor create for itself a significant political place in the politics of labor unions laws policy making in the eighties, in a seemingly adverse historical context characterized by labor institutional weakness and a non-pro labor political party in the government? In order to answer the question, we placed our attention on the the conditional and contingent political factors as well as the historical and institutional patterns of overlapped relationships that shaped labor politics in the eighties: the trilogy labor, peronist party, and state. We focused on labor calling of 13 general strikes<sup>14</sup> with the aim

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<sup>14</sup>We draw inspiration upon Tilly and Shorter pioneer work about the strikes in France (1974). This work understands labor collective action through the hypothesis of political action, as part of a struggle that takes place in the political field. In this sense, the state appears as the main object of claim. The strikes, for the authors, are less a demonstration of

of examining to what extent labor through its mobilization filled the emptiness place of 'the peronist party opposition qua political party', and shaped some of the main political arrangements with the state that have had a significant impact on the process of policy making and policy outcomes.

More important here than the processes of instrumental action in which organized labor was engaged in its quest for the accomplishment of its agenda, more important than the instrumental rationality behind the *misse in scene* of these general strikes, was what field of struggles and what symbolically mediated relationships within which labor act

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economic force than a manifestation of labor symbolic power and political decision, oriented toward the political authorities. One note in regard to Tilly's work. Although I am considering a piece written in the seventies, and since then, he has introduced new concepts to analyze mobilization, I believe that, for the ends of my research, the piece about the strikes in France brings to the table an appropriate answer to my interest, and on the other hand, it is also present, and has even become an assumption, on Tilly's oeuvre. I am referring, in particular, to the way in which contentious politics is understood, with the presence of the state or authorities as at least one of the parts of the struggle.

A new concept introduced later by Tilly in his works was the concept of repertoires of collective action, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), *Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758-1834* (1995). In the latter, Tilly makes a comparison of British struggles between 1758 and 1833, and shows how the predominantly forms of popular collective action changed during 75 years. The author discusses with the historical literature by the fact that this literature presents documentation that analyzes particular forms of contentious but there is not a systematic discussion of their covariation and change. In this text, Tilly pointed out that the definition of repertoires of collective action presented differs from his prior definition in *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978) because that definition was prisoner of a teleological tone, and its categories, competitive, reactive, and proactive categories, sound like modernization theory. In his new definition he tries to expound the residues of modernization theory from the concept. His first definition of repertoires also assumed that a single actor (individual or collective) owned a repertoire of means and deployed it strategically. For Tilly, that was also a mistake because repertoires of collective action designate not

shaped these strikes *misse in sense*. Thus, labor action through the calling of thirteen general strikes was taken as a place in which the alliances among agents (organized labor and state, but also industrial organizations, political parties, labor sectors) and organized labor relationally constituted capacities (labor coherence as a collective actor and labor capacity to fit its demands toward the state) could be reconstructed. Labor coherence as a collective actor touts its capacity to overcome any eventuality of labor fragmentation despite of its own internal heterogeneity. Labor's capacity as a collective actor to fit its demands upon state enhances its capacity to engage in dual relationships toward the state by combining, in an alternate way and with considerable freedom of action, how and when to cooperate or confront to state. Both crucial dimensions of labor as a political actor, or labor capacities, were, precisely, what made Argentinean labor politics unique in the eighties. Cooperation and confrontation toward state were both present under the same historical period and with a strong and unified organized labor<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, cooperation (and confrontation) was

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individual performances but means of interaction among pairs of larger sets of actors.

<sup>15</sup>Labor politics in Argentina has been also characterized in terms of cooperation or confrontation before the eighties. For example, Samuel Valenzuela (1985) points out that Argentinean labor politics, in different historical periods, have fluctuated from a "state labor" to an "antagonist labor". Torcuato Di Tella (1969) sustains that labor situated in a continuum that went from a "proto-state labor" to "autonomous mass labor",

present as mechanisms linking labor and state in a historical context in which the political party in the government was not the peronist party, the historically oriented pro-labor party, but the UCR (*Unión Cívica Radical*).

During the first democratic government, inasmuch labor capacity to fit its demands toward the state and labor capacity to maintain its coherence as a collective actor varied and changed over time, state, peronist party, and trade unions alliances did not remain unchangeable either, which gave birth to three differentiated and distinctive stages in the process of labor unions laws policy making. The stages do not constitute historically differentiated and irreducible stages but rather the analytical differentiation in stages had the purpose of highlighting in each stage the most relevant features of a growing complex, contingent, and overlapped political process.

- (1) Corporatist stage: since the beginning of the first democratic government (December 1983) until the (economic) *Plan Austral* (1985).

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at half a way between pragmatic reformism and ideological reformism, considering as well different historical periods. However, the main difference we found in labor politics in the eighties was the fact that cooperation and confrontation was both present as mechanisms linking labor and state under the same historical period and with a strong and unified labor organization in spite of its internal heterogeneity.

- (2) Social stage: since the *Plan Austral* until Alderete, a trade union leader, was appointed Minister of Labor (April 1987).
- (3) Political party stage: since the mid-term elections in which the peronist party acquired an overwhelming victory over the UCR (September 1987) until the end of 1988 (after the peronist party primaries in which the formula Menem/Duhalde was elected to run for the next presidential elections in 1989).

### **Corporatist stage**

Since the beginning of the democratic government (December 10, 1983) until the economic *Plan Austral* (in 1985), organized labor (CGT) called on two general strikes: on September 3, 1984 and on May 23, 1985. The first stage was characterized corporatist because during this period: (1) The political party in the government, UCR, politically confronted to the social corporations (organized labor, industrial organizations, and also militaries); (2) The CGT and the industrial organizations became closer and even arrived in many opportunities to agreements as an answer to state labor policies; as further support, some industrial organizations expressed their explicit support to the CGT in both general

strikes; (3) State proposals of labor policies failed; (4) Labor sectors joined together under one organized labor (CGT).

I will briefly characterize the labor sectors that have had a relevant political presence within organized labor (CGT) in the eighties: "62", "25", "ubaldinismo", and "15". Since 1983, different labor sectors began to take form within the CGT, showing these labor sectors discontinuity and not always agreement on what kind of relationships the CGT should establish *vis-à-vis* the state. Organized labor had internal contradictions and limitations regarding to whether or not to confront or cooperate with the state, and with regards to what kind of labor alliances to maintain. This internal heterogeneity was expressed many times in the general strikes, and in the way in which these sectors related toward the state. However, these differences never became such irreconcilables to fragment labor organization.

"62": This sector was created in 1956, when 62 peronist trade unions clandestinely got together, after the peronist government overthrow by the coup d'etat of 1955. The "62" transformed in the peronist sector within the trade unions, and maintained its hegemony within organized labor over time with the exception of those historical periods in which an alternative labor organization was created. Being trade unions political arm, this group expressed the traditional peronist

features within the trade unions: organized labor was centralized and verticalist, and established a direct relationship with the state to whom recognized as its main interlocutor. Participated in this sector, among other trade unions: UOM (metal workers), UOCRA (construction), *Carne* (meat industry), and *Comercio* (trade sector).

"25": Labor peronist renovation, or "25", was created under the military dictatorship (1976-1983), when a group of trade unions called on the first general strike (April 1979). They expressed a more antagonist relationship toward the state than the "62", promoting the calling of strikes and labor mobilizations. The discussion with the state was not only centered on wage issues but also social policies (health, education, housing, etc). One feature that defined this group was its closeness with the Peronist Renovation, a sector within the peronist party that in the eighties initiated the process of peronist institutional reorganization and democratization, after the electoral defeat of 1983. Thus, the "25" intended to introduce democratizing practices within organized labor. In this group converged trade unions leaders from the "62", as well as some trade unions that in the late sixties had created an alternative labor organization to the official CGT, the CGT of the Argentineans. Among others trade unions, the most important were: *Taxistas* (taxi drivers),

*Tabaco* (tobacco), *Camioneros* (truck drivers), and SMATA (metal workers supervisors).

"*Ubaldinismo*": This group represented a younger generation of trade union leaders than Lorenzo Miguel and the "62". Ubaldini's leadership was consolidated under the first democratic government. Expressed certain tone of social protest that in such a way contributed to organized labor coherence. Labor sector differences metamorphosed under the protection of this group, which summoned the support from the "62" and the "25". The main trade unions, in its majority from the public sector, were: UPCN (state employees), public services state trade unions, such as *Luz y Fuerza* (electricity) and *Obras Sanitarias* (water).

"15": Although this labor sector was created in 1987, different trade unions gradually converged in the same labor space, which represented the trade unions that had always established differentiating relationships with the state (generally reserved) in comparison with the strategy followed by the CGT. These trade unions expressed different labor traditions: from "*Gestión y Trabajo*", a labor sector that followed collaborator practices during the military dictatorship (*Comercio* (trade sector) and *Plásticos* (plastic industry)), from the "62" and from the "25" (FOETRA (telephone) and SMATA (metal workers supervisors)).

The first project to reform the labor unions law that shaped organized labor institutional configuration was the Labor Reorganization Law proposal, presented before the Congress by the Executive Power eight days later of having arrived the former president Alfonsín to the presidency. The project of labor unions institutional configuration reform was known as the Mucci Law, because, precisely, Mucci was the Minister of Labor. Although it was approved in the Chamber of Representatives in the Congress, the law was not enacted because the UCR lost the final voting in the Senate (for only one vote of difference). The immediate effect that this state labor proposal provoked among labor sectors was organized labor (CGT) unification, which was divided in two organizations since the military regime: CGT Brazil and CGT Azopardo. The failed state proposal of labor unions institutional configuration reform not only provoked, as an immediate answer, organized labor unification, but also created the conditions for trade unions and industrial organizations closeness. For example, in the CGT Press Release, dated on March 20, 1984, the CGT expressed the calling to the industrial organizations with the aim to carry out multisectorial meetings to analyze the socio-economic crisis. The history could have been very different, or perhaps not, if the Mucci Law instead of loosing in the Senate for

only one vote would have been enacted. The fact is that three months later of having arrived the UCR to the government, the conflict between organized labor and state around the destiny of the labor unions laws showed its first face, and both actors did not hesitate to choose the path that leads them toward confrontation.

One of the consequences of this project of labor unions institutional configuration reform failure for the UCR was the change of the Minister of Labor. Casella replaced to Mucci, and under his administration it was inaugurated a new style of communication between the state and the CGT. Indeed, Casella represented the sector within the state that favored agreements with the CGT, contrary to other members who had much more intransigent positions, like the General Secretary of the Presidency, G. López, or the president of the Commission of Labor in the Congress, O. Sanmartino. The new Minister of Labor, Casella, had as main goals to reach a consensus with the CGT on the terms of organized labor electoral process, the law of unions professional associations, and the law that regulates the trade unions administration of the labor health insurance system. During Casella administration in the Ministry of Labor, the CGT obtained two of its main goals. In first place, the articles that prohibited to the trade unions the management of the

labor health insurance system, since the military regime, were suspended for a period of six months by the Senate. In second place, the Senate converted in law the trade unions electoral code approved by the CGT and the Minister of Labor. This last point was very important for the CGT because the trade unions had to call for elections since, at the end of the military regime, representatives from the Ministry of Labor had been appointed in those trade unions intervened after the coup d'etat of 1976. Although some trade unions had already called for elections, it was done under the law 22105 promulgated in 1979 by the General Videla.

The CGT introduced also a new item in the negotiations with the state, which was organized labor participation in the design of wage policies. The former president Alfonsín declared in March that the CGT, industrial organizations, and state would participate in ad hoc organisms, with the purpose of discussing the design of the wage and price policies, until the creation of the Minimum Wage National Council. The first formal meeting for the socio-economic concertation proposed by the state, and that organized labor attended, was held in August 1984. The other two meetings did not have the same lot because the CGT and the national assembly of regional trade unions resolved to call on the first general strike for September 3, 1984. Apparently the general strike was called

because of the state rejection of incorporating in the August wage increase of some wage additional, such as productivity awards, antiquity, etc. However, there were other underlying motivations that made the CGT to generate a political action such a general strike: the closeness of the electoral process in the trade unions, and the pressure on the CGT from those trade unions established in the interior of the country.

At the end of August, there was a new replacement in the Ministry of Labor. Although the first general strike cannot be considered the main cause for the departure of Casella from the Ministry of Labor, the truth is that the internal tensions and differences within the state with regards to what kind of labor policy direction to follow came to the forefront again, and the sectors that had lost spaces of influence after the defeat of the Labor Reorganization proposal (or Mucci project) confronted not only to the CGT but mainly to the Minister of Labor, Casella, and his conciliatory labor policies. The former president Raúl Alfonsín appointed as Ministry of Labor to Barrionuevo. The new minister was a man of the trade unions (from the labor sector called "20", former CGT Azopardo, and a sector that after having opposed to the CGT unification in 1984 participated out of the structure of the CGT). The effects of his appointment in the CGT were divided: the sector called "25" and the "62" expressed their conformity; but the

sector "*Gestión y Trabajo*" expressed its disapproval. The new administration intended to continue with the state proposal of a formal socio-economic concertation among trade unions, state, and industrial organizations. The new ministry inaugurated his functions with a new decree that established the wage increase for October, November, and December. At first sight, this was one of the major obstacles that Barrionuevo had to face; however, curiously, this decree did not have major resonance within the CGT since organized labor was absorbed in the trade unions electoral process.

The informal contacts between the CGT and the Minister of Labor Barrionuevo were interrupted in December when the CGT claimed for a new wage adjustment before the end of the year, in turn expressed its concern for the project of Health National System that was circulating in different spheres of the state. The Minister of Social Action intended to create a Health National System, and his intention was to send the project to the Congress in February. Deepening the gap that separated the CGT from the state, it was announced the proposal to create an unemployment system. As answer to both projects, the CGT distributed a new document with eight points in which conditioned its return to the socio-economic concertation with the state and the industrial organizations. In this document, the CGT avoided to criticize to the former

president Alfonsín, and directed its tough critics against the Minister of Economy, the Minister of Labor, and the Minister of Social Action. The document criticized directly the state wage policies because did not seem to have any difference with the military regime wage policies, and conditioned labor return to the socio-economic concertation upon the establishment of wage policies not based on the IMF directives, but upon the reinstatement of collective bargaining. Thus, at the end of 1984, the CGT made his first public announcement in defence of the reinstatement of the law of collective bargaining.

The meetings for the socio-economic concertation between trade unions and state were reinitiated after that the former president Alfonsín announced that collective bargaining would be reinstated not so far than July 1985. Even more, the CGT demonstrated its willingness to cooperate with the state and did not immediately pronounce with regards to the *Plan Quinquenal* proposed by the Secretary of Planification, and avoided any references to the "Plan for Social Concertation" presented in the presidential residence in Olivos. The state proposal was the following: the concertation would have two parts: first, the *Plan Quinquenal* proposed by Sorrouille, and in a second step, the Social and Economic Pact to be signed by the state, the CGT, and industrial organizations. The proposal

included the commitment to reduce fiscal deficit to 6 % of GNP; to increase tax collections; payment on time of public job. In addition, it was offered to the CGT and the industrial organizations the establishment of mechanisms of inflation self-control, the transformation of the system of control of prices in control of costs, the inclusion of productivity agreements in collective bargaining, the adjustment of the real wage to the levels acquired in 1984, and the adjustment of wage increase to the GNP.

Under these circumstances, it was agreed a truce of thirty days, in which the industrial organizations committed to avoid job suspensions and dismissals, and the CGT committed not to call on general strikes. Parallel to this truce, the CGT and ten industrial organizations joined together in the group called "11", which elaborated a Proposal of Concertation as counter-point to the state proposal. One more time, as we sustained in the outset of this section, the answer to state labor policies proposals had as consequence the closeness and agreement between industrial organizations and trade unions. Two documents were elaborated: "Proposal of Social Pact" and "Proposal of Growth with Freedom and Social Justice". More than the proposal of a social pact, the documents presented a collection of demands by sector, and many of them were anything but contradictory between each other. For example,

"to increase the rate of exchange for exports, and to reduce fiscal deficit" would affect real wage increase, as well as "to diminish taxes for industry, and to grant loans for industry" implied to control state capacity to redistribute resources, in turn to diminish workers and farming-exporting sector participation in national income distribution. One of the most important points of the document was related to the management of the labor health insurance system. The document proposed that the trade unions should be in charge of the management of the health insurance system for workers and their families, what was an explicit answer to the state proposal to create a National System of Health Insurance.

At the end of February, a new event would radically modify the relationships between the state and organized labor, which would establish the foundations for the next stage. The Minister of Economy, B. Grinspun, resigned and Alfonsín appointed in his place to J. Sorrouille, who was at that moment in the Secretary of Planification, and had elaborated the last state proposal of social concertation. The seriousness of the economic situation was expressed by the president when in a public act on April 27, 1985 announced the implementation of an "economy of war". During these months the confrontation between the CGT and the state intensified. The CGT elaborated a plan of strikes and called on to a new

general strike with mobilization for May 23, 1985. The main demands were the defence of job stability, wage increase, defence of national industry, and the devolution of the labor health insurance system administration to the trade unions. In the middle of a terrible inflationary situation (in one year the rate was around 1580 %) it was announced the implementation of a new economic plan, the *Plan Austral*, which radically changed state economic policies as it had been applied until that moment as well as recognized the inevitable exhaustion of this phase.

During the first year, it was clear the state difficulties to realize labor policy goals. On the one hand, it was clear the state lack of capacity to arrive into an agreement for socio-economic concertation (for example, in wage policies or in the establishment of collective bargaining) (Portantiero 1987). On the other hand, it was evident the lack of capacity from the state standpoint to maintain certain continuity in labor policies direction due to, as we have showed, state internal contradictions on which labor institutional configuration should prevail and on which labor allies to find (for example, in the case of the first state proposal to modify the law that regulates the institutional configuration of organized labor (Mucci Law), or the modifications proposed to the labor health insurance

system through the creation of a Health National System). As a consequence, from the CGT standpoint, not only resisted these state proposals by confronting to the state but also the agreements on these issues with industrial organizations were intensified. And mainly, organized labor, CGT, was unified, initiating a long phase that will last until the end of this presidential period, in which organized labor (CGT) will privilege its coherence as collective actor although its visible heterogeneity.

### **Social stage**

Since the economic *Plan Austral* (1985) until Alderete, a trade union leader, was appointed in the Ministry of Labor (April 1987) organized labor called on six general strikes: August 29, 1985; January 24, 1986; March 25, 1986; June 13, 1986; October 9, 1986; and January 26, 1987. The second stage was characterized social by taking into account: (1) General strikes main goals; (2) The relationship between the general strikes and the evolution of the number of strikes by economic sector; (3) Organized labor dual relationship toward the state, cooperation and confrontation, exacerbated, since organized labor confronted the state through the calling of six general strikes, while labor cooperation toward the state

was crystallized in labor forming part of the ruling coalition; (4) The internal differences within organized labor (CGT) became more visible, and the general strikes were visualized by the labor unions sectors as a place of construction of power.

Political goals criticizing the socio-economic policies were still part of the CGT claims in these general strikes. However, social claims acquired a particular significance in this stage, mainly those social claims connected to labor institutional configuration as well as wage policies and the defence of job positions. The general strikes claims in this phase picked up the claims in the strikes by sector of economy. Taking into account the work of Héctor Palomino in the Journal *El Bimestre* (1984-1988), since the end of May through August 1985, the number of strikes by sectors of economy decreased. In these months, the evolution of labor conflicts followed the descendent tendency of industrial activity. Palomino points out that the number of conflicts decreased because the economic recession threatened job stability. Since in the previous months and after the economic *Plan Austral* the economic recession became deepest, the main claims addressed in the strikes were related to dismissals and job suspensions. After August 1985, the tendency in the nature of the claims raised in the strikes by sector of economy was

reversed. The improvement in the labor market situation -- maybe because there was an improvement in the industrial activity, maybe because the increase of unemployment temporary stopped - enabled the claims on wage increase to replace the claims on dismissals and job suspensions of the prior semester of the year.

During 1986, the number of labor strikes by sector of economy showed a growing expansion until June, when they stabilized in a pretty high level, to descend again in November. Until June, at the same time that the signs of economic reactivation were more evident, the strikes were disseminated all over the sectors of economic activity -- public and private --. The strikes in both sectors, public and private, had a common denominator: wage claims. The strikes not only claimed for wage increase but also the recognition as part of the real wage of some of the wage additional, such as productivity awards, bonus, etc. In the public sector, the number of conflicts reproduced not only because of low wages but also due to the wage increase in the private sector. After July, the evolution of the number of strikes by sector of economy was modified because the state promoted wage bargaining between organized labor and industrial organizations, and also wage bargaining was promoted within the state. In July 1985, the big industrial trade unions,

beginning by the UOM (metal workers), agreed on with the industrial organizations a serie of wage increase, which constituted a sort of essay of collective bargaining under state supervision. Thus, in the second semester of the year, the greatest number of strikes were called by state labor unions since in the private sector there was a predisposition to negotiate wages under the rules established by the state (the system established a minimum and maximum percent of wage increase in order to prevent the policy of prices stability from being affected). In 1987, since the descendent tendency in the number of strikes continued, the lowest number of strikes was registered.

The brief summary of the evolution in the number of strikes during this stage intended to show the correspondence between the evolution of the number of conflicts and the economic situation. The economic *Plan Austral* provoked the stability of unemployment rate, and sub-employment rate did not show the stability of the former but remained constant. Under conditions in which the economic situation improved, the number of strikes increased, and also the nature of the claims changed (from job stability to wage increase). This relationship between economic situation and general strikes did not exist. The number of general strikes was the same in uneven economic conditions. However, there was a certain

correspondence between the claims raised in the strikes by economic sector and the claims raised in the general strikes. As it happened with the nature of the claims raised by economic sector, in the general strikes called on before the *Plan Austral*, the main claim of the CGT was the defence of job stability and the opposition to job suspensions and dismissals, whereas after the *Plan Austral*, the claims turned to wage claims.

The nature of the general strikes wage claims deserves an special explanation. Because under this period, if we compare the evolution of the real wage with the evolution of the wage according to cost of living adjustment, we find a recuperation of the real wage compared to the levels acquired before the *Plan Austral*. It does not near the rates of 1984, although the rates are higher than the rates that the real wage will have later, overall in the last part of the government. The wage according to cost of living adjustment improved also because the inflation was controlled under the *Plan Austral*, reducing the gap between both wages. What I am trying to highlight is that, in the general strikes, at the heart of the divergence between the CGT and the state with regards to wage claims, there was a wage dimension that the state was not in conditions to negotiate with the CGT: the actualization of the basic wages in the collective bargaining. Except the period

that goes from January to June 1986, in which increased, broadly speaking, the tendency for these wages was descendent. This explicit claim will appear in the general strike called on January 26, 1987. In the prior one, October 9, 1986, one of the main claims of the CGT was to equalize the wage system the state had established for the private sector with the wage system for the public sector (this wage system was connected to the first essay of collective bargaining that the trade unions and the industrial organizations realized in October 1986).

Another point to highlight, and connected with the prior one, is the situation of precarious job positions. This issue was one of the main points of disagreement between the state and the trade unions because the CGT pressured on the legalization of these job positions to be incorporated in the collective bargaining, while the state showed one of its most intransigent faces in this issue. During the eighties, the number of precarious job positions in the labor market composition increased. The increase of employment in urban areas between 1974 to 1988 was related to precarious job positions (Beccaria and Orsatti, 1991). According to Cariola (1992), the absence of certain features, typical of legal jobs, characterizes precarious jobs: stability guaranteed by collective bargaining and social benefits. Galin (1991)

includes within the group of precarious jobs to the illegal jobs, clandestine jobs, part-time jobs, and temporary jobs. Beccaria and Orsatti (1991) consider precarious jobs to the clandestine job or job not declared, taking into account the information obtained from the Household Permanent Survey. For the authors, this kind of jobs is associated to low payment, low job antiquity, unskilled positions, and lower number of work hours.

Why was for the CGT important the legalization of these precarious job positions, and why was this claim at the heart of the wage conflict between trade unions and state? Because the rate of unionization was being affected. Argentinean rate of unionization, although is likely overestimated, is impressive for its magnitude (Torre 1972, Feldman 1987). It is measured with regards to the number of affiliates of the trade unions and the quantity of workers in conditions to join a union. It is directly related to the quantity of workers that the collective agreement covers. Galiani and Gerchunoff (2001) have showed that "union density rate in Britain and USA was thirty-nine and twenty-nine percent respectively in 1945; it was forty-four and twenty-five percent in 1955. USA union density peaked in 1945 while Britain's density peaked in 1980 with a rate of fifty-three percent. Argentina's rate seems to have been stabilized around forty-five percent until early

nineties when it decreased to around forty percent. Britain's rates also decreased since the early eighties and it was approximately forty percent by the early nineties. Britain and Argentina show similar union density rates since forties". (pp. 11)

The CGT was concerned about the changes in the labor market composition - the increase of precarious jobs- and the consequences on the rate of unionization because it affected directly organized labor internal composition. The changes in the labor market composition provoked a decrease in the number of affiliates of the most representative trade unions (mainly industrial trade unions). As a result, the weight of industrial trade unions decreased while public trade unions (state trade unions and state public services trade unions) increased within organized labor. In sum, an uneven, fragmented labor market, with a high weight of informal sectors and an increase of precarious job positions considerable affected the rate of unionization. As a result, trade unions representativity and distribution of power within organized labor changed.

What is the conclusion of this story? Although the economic *Plan Austral* provoked an improvement in wages according to cost of living adjustment, by having established as one of the main points of the economic plan the freezing of

prices and wages, the CGT was not able to put in full practice one of its sources of growth and strength: collective bargaining. Furthermore, the CGT was not able to equalize the wages system for private and public sector, and was not able to legalize precarious job positions. These wage dimensions were closer to labor institutional configuration than to wage conditions of workers. Thus, the same basic problematic underlined the two main social claims of the period, wages and labor unions laws: the possibility to reorganize organized labor institutional configuration.

The second stage was called social also because the pressure on the CGT executive committee from the regional trade unions, and the growing evolution of the number of strikes by economic sector polarized the tendencies within the CGT. During this stage, organized labor capacity to engage in dual relationships toward the state was enhanced (I want to remind the fact that in the prior stage, which was called corporatist, and in which organized labor unification took place, the different labor sectors shared to follow the path of confrontation toward the state). On the one hand, organized labor followed the path of confrontation toward the state through the calling of 6 general strikes. The main advocates of this path within organized labor were the regional trade unions, the state trade unions, the "25", and the

*"ubaldinismo"*. On the other hand, other labor sectors privileged the enhancement of the path of cooperation with the state because some of them, especially the industrial trade unions, had begun to participate in a sort of collective bargaining with the agreement and under supervision of the state. Also because Alderete, a trade unions leader, had been appointed Ministry of Labor, what provoked controversial answers within the CGT, mainly from the "25" and the *"ubaldinismo"* since Alderete was part of the labor sector called "15"<sup>16</sup>. However, in spite of the differences among the labor sectors that composed the CGT, organized labor coherence as a collective actor was prioritized since the polarized positions among labor sectors did not provoke organized labor (CGT) fragmentation.

The labor unions laws that were at the heart of the dispute between organized labor and state during the eighties were the law that organizes the trade unions professional associations, the law that grants to trade unions the right to administrate the Health Insurance National System for workers and families, and the law that regulates the system of wage bargaining including minimum wage. The claim for the reinstatement of these labor unions laws was systematically

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<sup>16</sup>Although Alderete was appointed Ministry of Labor, the UCR offered this position, in first place, to Rodriguez and Triaca (one of the members of

raised throughout the six general strikes (and also during the prior stage). At the end of this stage, under the administration of the Ministry of Labor Alderete, a trade unions leader, began the full reinstatement of the labor unions laws, which began to function simultaneously at the beginning of 1988, under the administration of a new Minister of Labor, Tonelli (in the next stage). Only in the general strike that took place on April 14, 1988 (in the next stage) the CGT explicitly mentioned the labor unions laws because the industrial organizations had suggested to the president to veto the law of professional associations enacted by the Congress. Then, one of the main claims of the CGT in this strike was the opposition to any eventual presidential veto to the law of professional associations.

### **Political party stage**

Since the mid-term elections in which the peronist party acquired an overwhelming victory over the UCR (September 1987) until the end of 1988 (after the peronist party primaries in which the formula Menem/Duhalde was elected to run for the next presidential elections in 1989), five general strikes

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the CGT executive committee since organized labor unification), but both declined.

were called on: November 4, 1987; December 8, 1987; April 14, 1988; September 9, 1988; and September 12, 1988.

In this stage, the state continued being the main subject of claims for the CGT, and likewise in the prior period (social stage) confrontation was placed also among labor sectors within the CGT. But this stage distinguished from the prior two by one particular reason: the inclusion of the peronist party. After the peronist party overwhelming victory in the mid-term elections of September 1987 the emptiness place of the party of opposition was filled by the peronist party, displacing the CGT and the trade unions leaders, which had filled this place since the beginning of the first democratic government. Indeed, it was particularly relevant the presence of the peronist party in the five general strikes and also in labor mobilizations. For example, in the general strike called on November 4, 1987, Carlos Menem (presidential pre-candidate) participated along with Ubaldini (CGT presider), who was the only speaker (although it was evident his absence in the two general strikes called on -- September 9 and September 12, 1988 -- after his formula won the party primaries for presidential election). In turn Cafiero (presidential pre-candidate) supported all the general strikes in this stage as well as the Peronist Party National Conduction. Thus, the general strikes appeared as a space of

confrontation between the political party in the government (UCR) and the party of opposition (peronist party), as well as since the standpoint of organized labor, the general strikes were a space in which the main differences among labor sectors emerged with regards to how the CGT would participate in the new peronist party configuration (after the victory in the mid-term elections of September 1987, and the future party primaries to elect the presidential formula for the elections in 1989).

Under these conditions, the third stage was called the political party stage because of: (1) the decrease of the weight of the labor side of the peronist party *vis-à-vis* the party side within the peronist party; (2) the constitution of the general strikes as a space of confrontation between labor and state, but also among labor sectors who strove to define CGT participation within the peronist party new institutional configuration; (3) the presence of the peronist party *qua* political party in the general strikes; and (4) Organized labor claims around the reform of labor institutional configuration lost centrality because of the full reinstatement of the labor unions laws, which began under the administration of the trade unions leader, Alderete, as Ministry of Labor (in the prior stage), to finally begin to function simultaneously in this stage, at the beginning of

1988, under the administration of a new Minister of Labor, Tonelli.

The first main agreement between the UCR and the peronist party was possible to sign after the victory of the peronist party in the mid-term elections of 1987, when the PJ won the positions to governor all over the country, with the exception of two provinces in which the UCR won, Córdoba and Río Negro, and Neuquén, San Juan, and Corrientes, in which regional political parties won. In addition, the peronist party obtained the majority in the Chamber of Representatives, and maintained its supremacy in the Senate (until this election, the UCR maintained the majority in the Chamber of Representatives, and the peronist party in the Senate). The agreement between both parties was the *Coparticipación Federal* Law, which was enacted in February 1988, but it had been blocked in the Congress since 1985. The agreement between the peronist party and the UCR showed that the elections of 1987 had provoked a turning point for the state (and the CGT) because the peronist party recovered its place as the party of opposition, and as a result, the labor side of the peronist party lost its place of state peronist privileged interlocutor.

As it was mentioned, one of the main historical events that affected the path of the first democratic government was

the defeat of the peronist party in the elections of 1983, in which the UCR obtained 7,725,823 votes (50 %) and the peronist party 5,994,405 (39 %). The unexpected victory of the UCR plunged the PJ into a virtual "political mourning". The peronist party went through a deep process of institutional reorganization and democratization. A new sector -- peronist renovation -- began to take form after the peronist party national meeting in Río Hondo (February 1985). This sector emerged in open confrontation against the orthodox side of the peronist party that had appointed in a vertical way the new authorities of the party in the Odeon Meeting, in December 1984. After intense discussions between both sectors, it was called a third national party meeting with the presence of both sectors in La Pampa, in which the orthodox sector (Herminio Iglesias) in alliance with the labor sector "62" organizations imposed over the "peronist renovation". It was not until the end of 1985 that the peronist renovation began to win spaces within the peronist party, overall, because in the mid-term elections of 1985, the peronist party presented fractionated, and the candidates from the *Frente Renovador* accomplished better electoral results than the candidates from the orthodox sector, FREJULI (for example, in the province of Buenos Aires, the former obtained more than one million votes, and the latter no more than half a million of votes). Finally,

the elections of 1987 consolidated the "Peronist Renovation" hegemony within the peronist party, until the party primaries in 1988, when the peronist renovation presidential formula, Cafiero and De La Sota, lost before the candidates Menem and Duhalde (Gutiérrez 2001, Lewitsky 1999).

The peronist party new institutional configuration in this stage increased the divergences among labor sectors. The general strikes were exceptional witnesses of a situation in which the state continued being the subject of claims of the CGT but rather the peronist party was the CGT main interlocutor since some labor sectors in the CGT promoted to cooperate or confront toward the state considering how the peronist party, and the CGT inclusion in the party, could be affected. For example, although the first general strike (November 4, 1987) was supported by all the sectors of the CGT, during the first week of October organized labor was faced with an unusual situation. In the moment in which the economic situation and the inflation was at one of its most hard stages, 8 members of the CGT executive committee resigned due to the agreement between the "25" and the "*ubaldinismo*" to distribute labor positions in the future peronist party national meeting. With this action, the "15" and the "62" intended to pressure on the labor sectors but rather on Cafiero, the peronist renovation presidential candidate. Since

Argentinean organized labor does not sustain eternal ruptures, in the next meeting of the CGT, the members who had previously presented its resignation, returned to their positions (with the opposition of Lorenzo Miguel). As a result, the pressure from the "62" and the "15" on the alliance between the "25" and the "*ubaldinismo*" was not able to obstaculize the appointment of the trade union leaders Lingeri (*ubalidinista*) and García (25) in the peronist party national meeting. In the first meeting of the CGT after the "defeat" of the "62" before the alliance between the "25" and the *ubaldinismo*, the "62", trying to recuperate capacity of action before the other labor sectors, proposed to call on a new general strike. The "25" and *ubaldinistas* proposed different meetings all over the country, instead of calling a general strike, in order to prevent the peronist party from being adversely affected. Ubaldini, acting as a mediator between the faced labor sectors, "25" and "62", was able to neutralize the "62" intentions by proposing to begin the general strike at 2 p.m., and under a holidays day (December 8, 1987). Finally, the third general strike called on April 14, 1988 unified again the CGT against the state socio-economic policies. This general strike showed also the main particularity of this stage, and it was the closeness between labor action with the peronist party. After the CGT decided to call on a new general

strike, the executive committee maintained a meeting with Cafiero in which they agreed on to join forces to guarantee the success of the strike. Thus, Cafiero, who was the president of the peronist party national council, governor of the province of Buenos Aires, and presidential candidate (peronist renovation list) invited the population to participate in the general strike through the media, and pointed out that although it was not a wish to call on a general strike it was the only tool to express the economic policy has to be changed.

A new event would radically modify the relationships between the CGT and the peronist party. The peronist renovation to whom the CGT, especially the "25" and the "*ubaldinismo*", had been associated, lost the peronist party primary elections in July 1988, in which the formula Menem/Duhalde won before the peronist renovation formula, Cafiero/De la Sota. The labor sectors that composed the CGT changed their relationship toward the peronist party, in turn this change affected the calling of the next two general strikes. One of the most eloquent features of the last two general strikes was the absence of the trade unions enrolled in the "62" and the "15". The absence revealed the debate among labor sectors around the new distribution of power within the new peronist party institutional configuration as

well as what form labor protest would adopt in the months previous to the presidential elections of May 1989. The general strike of September 9 was called as a result of the CGT decision of taking distance from the new economic plan called Primavera (Spring), and the CGT rejection to participate in the Wage National Council created by the state. However, many of the trade union leaders opposed to the calling of a new general strike, and preferred to replace it by another form of protest, like mobilizations all over the country. For example, although the "62" recognized the social necessity of a general strike, they did not want to obstaculize the peronist party path to the presidential elections of 1989. For them, the priority was to extend the success that Menem (to whom they were associated) had obtained in the party primaries over the peronist renovation into the CGT in order to subordinate to Ubaldini to the 62 organizations. A new general strike, according to their political analysis, would favour the alliance between Ubaldini and the "25" within the CGT. The "62" did not declare in public this position, much less in a moment in which the prices and wages had the UCR in one of its worst moments of popularity. But they used a less visible tactic, which was to try to negotiate directly with the state. The "62" proposed to be offered to the CGT the two claims that had been previously

denied: a double increase in the minimum wage and in family assignments. The negotiations did not prosper and the general strike was called on. It was evident the absence of the "15" in the mobilization, and with the exception of Lorenzo Miguel and Genta, the "62" did not participate in the CGT stage, while was extended the presence of the "25" and the "*ubaldinismo*".

As a result of the police repression over the participants in the general strike (September 9), the CGT immediately called on another general strike on September 12, to reject the police repression and in defence of civil rights. The main opposition to the new general strike came from the "15", who did not participate of the deliberations in the CGT and criticized to the "25" and the "*ubaldinismo*" due to the nature of the strike, which not only affected the peronist candidate to the presidency (Menem) but also affected the trade unions since they would not be able to use the strike against the maximum of 10 % of increase in the basic wages of collective bargaining established by the state. The UOM (metal workers trade unions) and the "62" published a press release in the newspapers in which rejected the police repression against the *pueblo*, and expressed their support to the new general strike. The CGT criticized in public to those labor sectors that did not support the general strike and

pointed out that these trade union leaders will have to give explanations before the workers and the organic bodies of the CGT.

During the first two stages, organized labor through its mobilization constituted the state as its main subject of claims at the same time that shaped many of the main political arrangements with the state in the process of labor unions laws reform. But the historical conditions that brought the CGT until this point had changed in the last stage. On the one hand, the discussion between organized labor and state around labor institutional configuration began to lose centrality because the labor unions laws laws had been already enacted at the beginning of this stage. Although in the general strike that took place on April 14, 1988 the CGT made an explicit declaration with regards to the labor unions laws because the industrial organizations had suggested to the President Alfonsín to veto the law of professional associations enacted by the Congress. Thus, one of the main claims of the CGT in this strike was the opposition to any eventual presidential veto to the law of professional associations.

On the other hand, the labor side of the peronist party was being gradually overshadowed *vis-à-vis* the party side. Even more, the peronist party new institutional configuration and political position exacerbated the differences among the

labor sectors within the CGT, and since these differences in certain moments became irresolvable, the way of finding an exit to the internal dispute within the CGT, as we have showed, was through the calling of a new general strike. Likewise it happened in the prior two stages, labor differences did not bring to CGT fragmentation, on the contrary, organized labor privileged its coherence as a collective actor. At the same time, labor continued engaging in dual relationships toward the state by cooperating or confronting, but in this stage labor field of action was conditioned by the appearance of a new actor: the peronist party. Thus, cooperation or confrontation toward the state was not merely related to the re-instatement of the labor unions laws but was connected to the insertion of organized labor in the new peronist party institutional configuration.

### Chapter 3

#### Conclusions

In the outset of the essay, the enigma, or historical puzzle, of the study was presented: How and why did organized labor (CGT) action hold a remarkable impact and create a significant political place for labor in the process of labor unions laws policy making that took place during the first democratic government that held in the power to former president Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989), in a historical context characterized by labor institutional weakness and a non-pro labor party in the government?

In order to answer the question, we placed our attention on the historical and institutional patterns of overlapped and interwoven relationships that shaped labor politics in the eighties. We focused on labor calling of 13 general strikes with the aim of examining to what extent labor through its mobilization filled the emptiness place of 'the peronist party opposition *qua* political party', and shaped some of the main political arrangements with the state that have had a significant impact on the process of policy making and policy outcomes. More specifically, we focused on organized labor relationally constituted capacities, labor coherence as a collective actor and labor capacity to fit its demands toward

the state, the two critical dimensions of labor as a political actor to making sense of labor action *vis-à-vis* the state in the politics of labor unions laws reform.

Beginning with the Thesis theoretical contribution within the field of policy making, this study built a bridge between the historical institutionalist literature on policy outcomes and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field and practice sense. Following Hall's and Skocpol's work, the process of labor unions laws policy making was analyzed through the lens of a polity-centered approach. Thus, the politics of labor unions laws reform in the eighties was shaped by conditional and contingent political factors as well as historical and institutional patterns of overlapped and interwoven relationships among state, peronist party, and labor.

Bourdieu's work enabled us to bring to the table a way of interpreting organized labor action *vis-à-vis* state in the process of labor unions laws reform through the lens of organized labor relationally constituted capacities, or practice sense, which was, in certain way, obscured in the historical institutionalist tradition. Maintaining labor coherence as a collective actor and labor capacity to fit its demands toward the state, fostering with considerable freedom of action labor practices of cooperation and confrontation, or labor practices of inclusion and exclusion, within the field

of the politics of labor unions laws policy making, as it was described, were not given labor resources, or fixed and given labor attributes. On the contrary, both organized labor's capacities were relationally constituted in the frame of multiple social relationships within which organized labor simultaneously act: with the state, the peronist party, the Congress, the industrial organizations, or among the labor sectors; and, of course, these were unstable, at times futile, relationships that varied and changed over time.

The richness and uniqueness of the historical puzzle and Argentina as case of study within the field of policy making lies in the two critical dimensions of labor as a political actor, or organized labor relationally constituted capacities, to making sense of labor action *vis-à-vis* the state in the process of labor unions laws policy making in the eighties: coherence as a collective actor and capacity to fit its demands toward the state. Because, precisely, through practices of inclusion or exclusion, or practices of cooperation or confrontation, organized labor succeeded in the field of the politics of labor unions laws policy making in light of the claims pursued and the policy outcomes. By privileging its coherence as a collective actor, organized labor maintained unified in a strong labor organization during the whole period, in spite of its internal heterogeneity. On

the other hand, labor capacity to fit its demands toward the state in the field of the politics of labor unions laws policy making and on policy outcomes was enhanced through the development of a dual relationship toward the state. Furthermore, the path of confrontation and the path of cooperation toward the state did not express the coordinated or uncoordinated action of different labor organizations at the same time that did not express organized labor action *vis-à-vis* the state under different political regimes but were both present under the same historical period and with a strong and unified labor organization.

## Appendix A

In this study, we used the following sources of data collection:

- Argentinean scholar literature on labor politics.
- Labor unions laws reform proposals (three), from 1984 to 1989.
- CGT Press release, from 1984 to 1989.
- Journal *El Bimestre*, CISEA, from 1984 to 1988.
- Newspapers:
  - a) Clarín and La Nación (main national newspapers), from December 1983 to June 1989;
  - b) Labor *Editorial*, Clarín, every Monday from 1984 to 1989.

Additionally, we took into consideration some variables to analyze labor market evolution in the eighties:

1. Rate of Unemployment.
2. Rate of Unionization, by sector of economy.
3. Evolution of Real Wage.
4. Evolution of Wage, according to cost of living adjustment.

The analysis of the newspapers, or labor press release, among other sources, was not oriented to textual analysis. We consider these written pieces as a place in which the historical and symbolical relationships among actors can be

revealed. For doing so, it was taken a photography of the thirteen general strikes considering the following dimensions, and the significance of each dimension for each general strike:

- (1) Sphere of calling of the strike: *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT) executive committee, or a national assembly with regional trade unions by sector of economy: industry, bank, services, education, and public administration.
- (2) Number of strikers: the information will be collected by regions (considering the regions in which the country is divided), and by sectors of economy: industry, public administration, banks, services, and education.
- (3) Type of general strike: with mobilization or not, at the national and regional level.
- (4) Support from different social and political actors: industrial organizations, political parties, labor sectors.
- (5) General strikes main goals: political, economic, and social.
- (6) Relationship between general strikes and the evolution of strikes by economic sector (number of strikers, number of strikes, main goals).

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