

## **The First Lady**

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**Stephen Rodemeyer**

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## **Preview**

This paper discusses the life, accomplishments and perceptions of a twentieth century first lady. To set the stage, we will discuss some well-known First Ladies and the perception of their influence on their husbands. We will then turn to Women's Suffrage. Historically, First Ladies have played some role, positive or negative, on Women' Suffrage in their countries. I will, at some point, reveal the identity of this evening's First Lady, if you have not already determined it.

We tend to think of media scrutiny as a recent phenomenon, but some First Ladies have been subject to both positive and negative press and I am interested in your evaluation of the legacy of our First Lady. I will certainly discuss both sides of her image.

After examining the perceptions of our First Lady, as reported by the press of the era and current literature, I will present my conclusion.

## **First Ladies**

The role of the First Lady has evolved from that of hostess, presiding over social events, to one of more stature, in our country as well as internationally. Certainly, while the image of First Ladies is intertwined with that of their husbands, many have set their own role and made contributions of their own. Some have added to their husband's role, some have out-shown him.

Let me remind you of a few well known First Ladies and ask you of your rating of them as if you were present at the end of their influence. These are not in order of importance.

Nancy Reagan. Knowing what we know now of President Reagan's Alzheimer's Disease, can we assume that she was really running the country (possibly with the help of her psychic)? Her "Just Say No" campaign is part of our language.

Lady Bird Johnson. She was at the forefront of the beautification and environmental movements.

Imelda Marcos. Did she have any effect other than buying shoes and absconding with funds?

Hillary Clinton. Headed Task Force on National Health Care Reform.

Benazir Bhutto's husband. Is he a First Lady? He is now President in his own right.

Eva Peron. Similar to Marcos. Any contributions except as eye candy?

Carla Bruni-Sarkozy. Too early to tell.

Rosalynn Carter. Sat in on Cabinet meetings.

Princess Diana. Not a true First Lady, but certainly was more well known than her husband.

Jackie Kennedy. Huge contribution to the image of the United States, both here and abroad.

## **Women's Suffrage**

First Ladies can catalyze or hinder the movement for women's suffrage. In many countries, movement for women's suffrage did not move smoothly, whether by negligence or antagonism within the government. Lip service, but no action, slowed the process. It is interesting to see, in Appendix A, that countries normally assumed to be pioneers in this effort were, in fact, slow in approving the women's vote.

The country we will discuss for the rest of this paper is Argentina, which formalized the women's vote in 1947 after resolutions and bills had been languishing on the back burner for years.

The prime force for breaking through the blocks is our First Lady of this paper, Eva Duarte Peron.

## Background

In Argentina in the early 1900's, there were sharp differences between the coastal and interior inhabitants. The upper classes felt that they were the bastions of European culture as opposed to the inner country barbarians. The country was settled from west to east, starting with trade from Peru. The economies were different in the ports and the interior. Large landed interests (the oligarchs) controlled the government and identified with the cultured coastal interests. These interests, along with most of the middle class, were identified with the anti-Peronists.

In the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was massive migrations from Europe – Italian, British and the third largest Jewish settlement after New York and Tel Aviv. This immigration was followed by migration from the interior to the coast. These workers were identified with the Peronists.

Before Peron, twenty percent of the workers were unionized. After Peron, Argentina had the largest unionized work force in South America.

Politically, the oligarchs controlled the government until the 1940's. Their last selection, Patron-Costas in 1943, was unacceptable to the education and military establishments. Banks and business closed in protest. General Arturo Rawson was President for a day, followed by General Ramirez. Juan Peron was Secretary of Labor under Ramirez and engineered his replacement by General Farrell. Peron then took Farrell's post as War Minister. Fraser, p. 39

When Peron was elected President in 1946, Argentina "was not only the richest country in South America, it was also one of the richest countries in the world. The war had left it a creditor nation; It was owed almost two billion dollars by Britain alone." Fraser, p. 77 It was an exporter to Europe, allowing its new industries to prosper. It is said that the British lost their unofficial colony with the election of Juan Peron.

## Chronology

In spite of being traumatized by dates in my history classes, the best way to describe the impact of Eva Duarte Peron is in a chronological way. An abbreviated chronology (Taylor, p. 35-71) is in Appendix B.

This section will describe both the Lady of Hope and the Black Myth. I will use the name "Eva" in this paper unless a direct quote uses "Evita." Our First Lady used Eva as the wife of the President, but preferred Evita for her people.

In an American setting, the Lady of Hope describes a pure country girl who comes to the big city, meets the future President, helps him run the country and helps the poor and workers. The Black Myth describes a loose woman who uses her body and mind to seduce the future President, then continues to gain power, ruthlessly destroying any opposition. "The first depicted Eva as a virgin in the flesh...the very meaning of sacrifice. The second reflected a prostitute, a social climber thirsting for power." Ortiz, p. 296-7

In May 1919, Eva was born of an unwed mother. The father, Duarte, denied the use of his name. Later confrontation with legitimate family at Duarte's funeral. Family moves to Junin, a big town of 20,000.

In 1934, Eva Duarte moved to Buenos Aires to pursue an acting career, by 1939 she had some radio parts. In 1943 she began a radio series "Famous Women" in which she played the lead parts. Her Director/Producer was Francisco Munoz Azpiri, who mentored her and later became the Director of Propaganda in the Subsecretariat of Information. It is noted that her background in Junin of being ostracized and her observations of the living conditions in Buenos Aires sharpened her social conscience.

After an earthquake in San Juan (in the Andes, Jan. 15, 1944), Juan Peron organized a national relief effort. He invited stars for a benefit performance (Jan. 22, 1944). That was their first meeting.

Prior to his liaison with Eva, Juan Peron had a "normal" mistress. Apparently, one day his mistress was gone and Eva had installed herself in his apartment. She was different than the usual mistress in that she hung around his meetings, soaking up Peron's philosophy, then gradually began representing him, only speaking with his voice (as an extension of him), then on her own. "Wherever I am, Peron is present." Taylor, p. 137

Peron's base was as Secretary of Labor and Welfare. He appointed Eva as Head of the Radio Union and she has a job in the Ministry. As she began her liaison with Juan Peron, she started a series "Towards a Better Future." Eva received offers for movies also, perhaps due to her somehow cornering the market on celluloid film, which was in short supply and had to be imported from Mexico through Peron.

In October 1945, opponents forced Juan Peron to renounce his positions in Labor and Welfare, Minister of War and Vice President, Eva was fired and Juan exiled. Several unions planned a general strike and protest for Oct. 18. The unions, especially sugar and meat plant workers, were afraid their gains would be eliminated by a new Secretary of Labor Fraser, p. 62. The day before the scheduled protest, a huge number of workers (the "shirtless ones") staged a large rally (instigated by Eva?) and demanded the reinstatement of Juan Peron. He returned from exile.

In 1946, Juan Peron was elected President and Eva Duarte Peron created her role as First Lady. Her speeches were written by Francisco Munoz Azpiri. By the end of 1946, Eva is the "Queen of Labor" and the "Patroness of the Argentine Worker." She received delegations on her own – labor representatives, diplomats and poor people. As First Lady, she could be President of the "Sociedad de Beneficiencia," the charity run by the elite women of Buenos Aires. Apparently, due to her reputation, she was not invited to be part of the Sociedad.

Shortly afterward, the government took over the Sociedad, which ceased to exist, and Eva started the "Fundacion Eva Peron." Fraser, p. 114 Later, it seems that any time any of these aristocratic women were found in violation of the law, they would wind up in jail, usually in a cell with prostitutes. Funerals of aristocrats were refused permission to occur due to some misunderstanding. The misunderstanding was usually cleared up if the women involved invited Eva into their homes for an afternoon of tea. As part of her Foundation, Eva bought houses in some aristocratic neighborhoods to provide homes for wayward girls.

In November 1946, Juan Peron issues his 5 year plan for a "new Argentina," which nationalized British rail and utilities, and promoted more unionization and pension and welfare reform. Fraser, p. 77-79

At this point, Eva also started the Women's Suffrage Association. She also bought the newspaper "Democracia." All references indicate that she had a huge influence in all aspects of government.

In January 1947, Raul Apold took over as Director of Broadcasting with 1100 employees, mostly to provide pro-Eva propaganda. Ortiz, p. 217

In June 1947, Eva accepted an invitation (apparently initially offered to Juan) from Franco to visit Spain. Her visit is to be unofficial, but with power to sign agreements. She was in daily telephone contact with Juan and Congress during the trip. She had to fly to Spain, since the Navy refused to make a vessel available to her. She was bid farewell by 500,000 Argentines and welcomed by 300,000 Spaniards. The New York Times called her Europe visit "The most original diplomatic mission in recent times." Fraser, p. 93

Both Peron and Franco gained from the visit, Franco who was isolated and Eva Peron who became a world figure. In Spain, she was the favorite of the aristocrats as well as the crowds. This visit compares with modern day visits by Jackie Kennedy or Princess Diana. Opposing newspapers started a "dress watch," noting the contradiction between her criticism of the upper class with her adoption of their identifying mark – the elegant dress. Her paper, "Democracia" compared the crowds during her tour to those in pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Eva also visited Italy, where she had an audience with Pope Pius XII. She did not receive a special papal blessing as hoped, but met with ex-king Umberto to add royalty to her list. Her visit to Italy was marred by protests by communists.

Her intended visit to Great Britain was cancelled. The Royal Family would not be in London during that time (perhaps not willing to host a representative of a Fascist country).

However, she received warm welcomes in Portugal and France (France needed Argentinean wheat), not so warm in Switzerland. On her return, she sailed to Brazil for an official visit.

This trip had three consequences: Eva became an international figure, enhancing her status at home, she changed from the young ingénue to a sophisticated diplomat, and her exhaustion was evident.

After her European tour, Eva consolidated power in many areas. She involved herself in the political arena, solving union problems, always being referred to in the news as "solving labor problems."

The Peronist Women's Party was formed with Eva as its leader. Neighborhood Meeting Centers were founded for both social and political action and it was said that Eva had her own army of 5 million workers, members of the General Federation of Labor (GCT) and the social clubs. Barnes, p. 111

She was constantly in the media. No event was too small for an appearance, with pictures, no returning sports figure or dignitary too minor for a media event with Eva. Fraser, p. 109 She received an average of 12,000 letters per day. Ortiz, p. 228

Her charity work expanded, which also kept her in the public eye. Her Fundacion dominated public health and education, almost replacing government agencies in these areas. Her press was always good, since she owned the "Democracia" and other papers usually wrote favorable reports. Her monopoly of printing ink may have persuaded the other newspapers to be positive in their editorials. There were also convenient paper shortages. She also acquired a chain of newspapers and radio stations, not always friendly take-overs. Juan Peron: "There is no more adversary journalism, only pure journalism." Fraser, p. 105

In 1950-51, "Eva exercised responsibility for contracts, pensions, collective bargaining." Taylor, p. 52 Her role was emphasized over Juan's in solving strikes. Her relatives were appointed to government positions (including her brother, Juan Duarte, as appointments Secretary to Juan Peron, Fraser, p 75) and she controlled the Cabinet. She took a role in foreign policy. Eva's autobiography, "La Razon de mi Vida," was used as a reader in first grade and as a civics textbook in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Barnes, p. 157

She continued in poor health, having a hysterectomy, followed by radiation treatments.

In August 1951, at a huge rally (an open town meeting), the crowd demanded that Eva run as Vice President when Juan Peron ran for his second term. Eva was vague, but renounced the position two weeks later. The "Renunciacion" is always capitalized. By assuming the Vice-Presidency, she would have been forced into a conventional position, losing her spontaneity. With the Renunciation, she renounced any ambitions.

Within 3 weeks she was confined to her room, had two operations (with both Argentinean and USA surgeons) and made some short speeches. She attended Juan Peron's Inauguration in June 1952 and died later that month.

Her body laid in state for weeks, at one point, there were 35 blocks of mourners. Pope Pius was telegraphed and asked to bestow sainthood, but to no avail.

After the end of the Peronist government in 1955, many of her statues, clothes and jewelry were destroyed. Some were exhibited to show her extravagance, similar to the display of Imelda Marcos' shoes.

After 1955, there was a tremendous preoccupation with her body. Her supporters wanted to display the body as a remembrance of her, hoping to return to Peronism. The military "buried her standing, a traditional tribute rendered (to) unvanquished warriors." Taylor, p. 85 At one point, 5 coffins were sent to 5 different locations to avoid someone taking the body to prevent her rising again. Once her body was discovered in a box labeled "radio parts." It is know that the body was in Italy, then Spain before returning to Argentina on orders from Isabel Peron in 1974. Juan and Isabel Peron returned to Buenos Aires in 1972 to head a new Peronist regime and Isabel took over as President after Juan's death.

Although the body supposedly rests in La Recoleta cemetery, I do not think it can be determined without some DNA testing. The body was assaulted during the intervening time: decapitated, legs broken and breasts torn open.

## Legacy

What did Eva Duarte Peron leave as her legacy? Using the accomplishments that most of my references agreed upon, in addition to the information from the Eva Peron Historical Research Foundation ([evitaperon.org](http://evitaperon.org)), it is obvious that her legacy includes many concrete achievements.

In partnership with Juan Peron and Congress, she concentrated on helping children, workers, seniors and the poor. Most of these groups had a "Decalogue of Rights" passed by Congress.

Through her Fundacion Eva Peron, she established:

- 12 hospitals
- a traveling train for free inoculations, X-rays and medications
- a school of nursing (all duties of nurses, including how to drive trucks to get to patients)
- housing for seniors, children and the poor
- some transitional housing
- villages with workshops to teach new occupations
- 1000 schools
- mechanical equipment for farmers
- homes for single women and workers
- water and sanitary facilities.

"The country which forgets its children renounces its future." [Evitaperon.org](http://Evitaperon.org)

- a Children's City for orphans and others
- a children's Tourism Plan to help children visit parts of Argentina
- children's sports competitions, which included medical check ups.

The Fundacion also helped other countries to recover from natural disasters: Ecuador, Italy, Israel, France, Japan, Peru, Washington, DC, Bolivia.

People in Argentina remember her generosity in the form of small things: jobs, household items, bedding, toys and school food programs. Taylor spent time in Argentina living with working class families. He states (p. 4) that almost everyone had knowledge of someone receiving something personal from Eva - a sewing machine, a bed, needed medicine. She had made great personal sacrifices, but she was not considered a "saint." However, she was portrayed by Peronists in vaguely religious terms, such as "Madonna of the Poor."

Everything the Fundacion did was first class, cost money, but worked. All buildings, equipment and donated items were marked with Juan Peron's sayings and/or Eva's name or initials, including even medicine vials. Fraser, p. 131

She re-established the Pena (literary salon) Eva Peron.

She was instrumental in getting the vote for women. "Evita has been widely credited for having brought the vote to Argentine women, and it is this that is the basis of the claim that she was "an early feminist." Fraser, p. 105

It is claimed that Eva Peron did not take a peso for herself from the Fundacion. However, there was a Swiss bank account set up, apparently during her European tour. An estimation of the value of this account is up to \$700 million. The accountant said "we are doing fine."

Some funds came from the Ministry of Social Welfare. When a union won a new contract (sometimes negotiated by Eva Peron), the first two weeks of the extra wages were designated for the Fundacion. Two working days of salary from each union worker as well as parts of labor contracts, lotteries, casinos and a movie ticket tax supported the Fundacion. As is common in the current political situation, people who wanted access to Juan or Eva Peron made a generous donation to the Fundacion. Extortion or generosity?

## Conclusion

Eva Duarte needed Juan Peron. Juan Peron did not need Eva specifically, he would have invented someone else. Or some strategy to appeal to the masses. Peron was a military strategist and politician, still not able to identify with the masses, even though he was of humble birth and illegitimate. He was still bound by military modes of action. Eva could get outside tradition. This caused a great deal of resentment in the military. Juan Peron stated: "Eva Peron is an instrument of my creation." Taylor, p. 55

"The sun of a radiant Eva began to eclipse Juan's fading moon. Eva was converting the nation into a matriarchy." Taylor, p. 79

"She disregarded rules, disobeyed protocol, broke traditions with an impunity no one else was permitted. She began projects, fanned emotions, defended ideas with an originality of which no one else was capable." Taylor, p. 128

"Evita confronts us with the enigma of power attributed to a woman in a traditionally and formally patriarchal society, a society that devalues women as against men." Taylor, p. 10

"At the time of her death, Eva Peron was arguably the most powerful woman in the world." Taylor, p. 11

The question is whether Eva Duarte Peron was a comet, appearing brilliantly in the sky briefly, to fade and return as her supporters hoped and her enemies feared, at a later date. That is at the heart of the preoccupation with her body. Or whether she was a falling star, brilliant, now gone.

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"What Is the Role of the First Lady?" *The Fresno Bee*, Jan. 4, 2009, p. J4

## **Appendix A. Dates of Women's Suffrage**

History of Women's Suffrage

www.scholastic.com

<b>New Zealand</b>		<b>1893</b>
<b>Finland</b>		<b>1906</b>
<b>USSR</b>		<b>1917</b>
<b>Great Britain</b>		<b>1918</b>
<b>USA</b>		<b>1920</b>
<b>Spain</b>		<b>1931</b>
<b>Brazil</b>		<b>1932</b>
<b>France</b>		<b>1944</b>
<b>Argentina</b>		<b>1947</b>
<b>China</b>		<b>1947</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>		<b>1971</b>
<b>Canada</b>		<b>1916-1970</b>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>		

**Appendix B. Short Chronology of Eva Duarte Peron**

Taylor, p. 35-71

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
<b>1919</b>	<b>Birth</b>
<b>1934</b>	<b>Moves to Buenos Aires</b>
<b>1939-43</b>	<b>Radio parts</b>
<b>1944</b>	<b>Earthquake in San Juan Liaison with Juan Peron</b>
<b>Oct. 17, 1945</b>	<b>Protest against Peron exile</b>
<b>Oct. 22, 1945</b>	<b>Marriage to Peron</b>
<b>1946</b>	<b>Peron elected President Eva Peron takes several govt. jobs</b>
<b>1947</b>	<b>Fundacion Eva Peron</b>
	<b>Europe Tour</b>
<b>1949</b>	<b>Peronist Women's Party</b>
<b>1950</b>	<b>Poor health</b>
<b>August 22, 1951</b>	<b>Renunciacion</b>
<b>July 26, 1952</b>	<b>Death</b>
<b>1972</b>	<b>Juan Peron returns from exile</b>
<b>1974</b>	<b>Isabel Peron brings Eva Peron's body back to Argentina</b>

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The prime force for breaking through the blocks is our First Lady of this paper, Eva Duarte Peron.

## **Background**

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Eva also visited Italy, where she had an audience with Pope Pius XII. She did not receive a special papal blessing as hoped, but met with ex-king Umberto to add royalty to her list. Her visit to Italy was marred by protests by communists.

Her intended visit to Great Britain was cancelled. The Royal Family would not be in London during that time (perhaps not willing to host a representative of a Fascist country).

However, she received warm welcomes in Portugal and France (France needed Argentinean wheat), not so warm in Switzerland. On her return, she sailed to Brazil for an official visit.

This trip had three consequences: Eva became an international figure, enhancing her status at home, she changed from the young ingénue to a sophisticated diplomat, and her exhaustion was evident.

After her European tour, Eva consolidated power in many areas. She involved herself in the political arena, solving union problems, always being referred to in the news as “solving labor problems.”

The Peronist Women’s Party was formed with Eva as its leader. Neighborhood Meeting Centers were founded for both social and political action and it was said that Eva had her own army of 5 million workers, members of the General Federation of Labor (GCT) and the social clubs.

She was constantly in the media. No event was too small for an appearance, with pictures, no returning sports figure or dignitary too minor for a media event with Eva. She received an average of 12,000 letters per day.

Her charity work expanded, which also kept her in the public eye. Her Fundacion dominated public health and education, almost replacing government agencies in these areas. Her press was always good, since she owned the "Democracia" and other papers usually wrote favorable reports. Her monopoly of printing ink may have persuaded the other newspapers to be positive in their editorials. There were also convenient paper shortages. She also acquired a chain of newspapers and radio stations, not always friendly take-overs. Juan Peron: "There is no more adversary journalism, only pure journalism."

In 1950-51, "Eva exercised responsibility for contracts, pensions, collective bargaining." Her role was emphasized over Juan's in solving strikes. Her relatives were appointed to government positions (including her brother, Juan, as appointments Secretary to Juan Peron) and she controlled the Cabinet. She took a role in foreign policy. Eva's autobiography, "La Razon de mi Vida," was used as a reader in first grade and as a civics textbook in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.

She continued in poor health, having a hysterectomy, followed by radiation treatments.

In August 1951, at a huge rally (an open town meeting), the crowd demanded that Eva run as Vice President when Juan Peron ran for his second term. Eva was vague, but renounced the position two weeks later. The "Renunciacion" is always capitalized. By assuming the Vice-Presidency, she would have been forced into a conventional position, losing her spontaneity. With the Renunciation, she renounced any ambitions. Within 3 weeks she was confined to her room, had two operations (with both Argentinean and USA surgeons) and made some short speeches. She attended Juan Peron's Inauguration in June 1952 and died later that month.

Her body laid in state for weeks, at one point, there were 35 blocks of mourners. Pope Pius was telegraphed and asked to bestow sainthood. To no avail.

After the end of the Peronist government in 1955, many of her statues, clothes and jewelry were destroyed. Some was exhibited to show her extravagance, similar to the display of Imelda Marcos' shoes.

After 1955, there was a tremendous preoccupation with her body. Her supporters wanted to display the body as a remembrance of her, hoping to return to Peronism. The military "buried her standing, a traditional tribute rendered (to) unvanquished warriors." At one point, 5 coffins were sent to 5 different locations to avoid someone taking the body to prevent her rising again. Once her body was discovered in a box labeled "radio parts." It is know that the body was in Italy, then Spain before returning to Argentina on orders from Isabel Peron in 1974. Juan and Isabel Peron returned to Buenos Aires in 1972 to head a new Peronist regime and Isabel took over as President after Juan's death.

Although the body supposedly rests in La Recoleta cemetery, I do not think it can be determined without some DNA testing. The body was assaulted during the intervening time: decapitated, legs broken and breasts torn open.

## Legacy

What did Eva Duarte Peron leave as her legacy? Using the accomplishments that most of my references agreed upon, in addition to the information from the Eva Peron Historical Research Foundation. It is obvious that her legacy includes many concrete achievements.

In partnership with Juan Peron and Congress, she concentrated on helping children, workers, seniors and the poor. Most of these groups had a "Decalogue of Rights" passed by Congress.

Through her Fundacion Eva Peron, she established:

12 hospitals, a traveling train for free inoculations, X-rays and medications, a school of nursing (all duties of nurses, including how to drive trucks to get to patients), housing for seniors, children and the poor, some transitional housing, villages with workshops to teach new occupations, 1000 schools, mechanical equipment for farmers. Homes for single women and workers. Water and sanitary facilities.

Eva Peron: "The country which forgets its children renounces its future."

A Children's City for orphans and others. A children's Tourism Plan to help children visit parts of Argentina. Children's sports competitions, which included medical check ups.

The Fundacion also helped other countries to recover from natural disasters: Ecuador, Italy, Israel, France, Japan, Peru, Washington, DC, Bolivia.

People in Argentina remember her generosity in the form of small things: jobs, household items, bedding, toys and school food programs. Taylor spent time in Argentina living with working class families. He states that almost everyone had knowledge of someone receiving something personal from Eva - a sewing machine, a bed, needed medicine. She had made great personal sacrifices, but she was not considered a "saint." However, she was portrayed by Peronists in vaguely religious terms, such as "Madonna of the Poor."

Everything the Fundacion did was first class, cost money, but worked. All buildings, equipment and donated items were marked with Juan Peron's sayings and/or Eva's name or initials, including even medicine vials.

She re-established the Pena (literary salon) Eva Peron.

She was instrumental in getting the vote for women. "Evita has been widely credited for having brought the vote to Argentine women, and it is this that is the basis of the claim that she was "an early feminist."

It is claimed that Eva Peron did not take a peso for herself from the Fundacion. However, there was a Swiss bank account set up, apparently during her European tour. An estimation of the value of this account is up to \$700 million. The accountant said "we are doing fine."

Some funds came from the Ministry of Social Welfare. When a union won a new contract (sometimes negotiated by Eva Peron), the first two weeks of the extra wages were designated for the Fundacion. Two working days of salary from each union worker as well as parts of labor contracts, lotteries, casinos and a movie ticket tax supported the Fundacion. As is common in the current political situation, people who wanted access to Juan or Eva Peron made a generous donation to the Fundacion. Extortion or generosity?

## Conclusion

Eva Duarte needed Juan Peron. Juan Peron did not need Eva specifically, he would have invented someone else. Or some strategy to appeal to the masses. Peron was a military strategist and politician, still not able to identify with the masses, even though he was of humble birth and illegitimate. He was still bound by military modes of action. Eva could get outside tradition. This caused a great deal of resentment in the military. Juan Peron stated: "Eva Peron is an instrument of my creation."

"The sun of a radiant Eva began to eclipse Juan's fading moon. Eva was converting the nation into a matriarchy."

"She disregarded rules, disobeyed protocol, broke traditions with an impunity no one else was permitted. She began projects, fanned emotions, defended ideas with an originality of which no one else was capable."

"Evita confronts us with the enigma of power attributed to a woman in a traditionally and formally patriarchal society, a society that devalues women as against men."

"At the time of her death, Eva Peron was arguably the most powerful woman in the world."

The question is whether Eva Duarte Peron was a comet, appearing brilliantly in the sky briefly, to fade and return as her supporters hoped and her enemies feared, at a later date. That is at the heart of the preoccupation with her body. Or whether she was a falling star, brilliant, now gone.