

## Biography

### Eva Peron - Evita



Born María Eva Duarte on May 7, 1919, in Los Toldos, Argentina, Eva Perón was a leading political figure in her native country as first lady and wife to President Juan Perón. She grew up poor, dreaming of becoming actress. Perón and her sister, Erminda, often made up little performances together in their youth.

Around the age of 15, Eva Perón moved to Buenos Aires to become an actress. There, she found work with a number of theater companies. In 1937, Perón landed her first film role in *Segundos Afuera* and got a contract to perform on the radio. She continued to work in stage productions as well over the next few years.

Perón was about 20 years old when she started her own entertainment business, the Company of the Theater of the Air, which produced radio programs. In 1943, Perón enjoyed one of her greatest successes: She signed on to portray a number of famous women in history on a special radio series, giving her the chance to play the likes of Queen Elizabeth I and Catherine the Great.

Perón's life changed dramatically when she married Juan Perón, a colonel and government official, in 1945. He became president of Argentina the following year, and his wife proved to be a powerful political influence. Eva Perón used her position as first lady to fight for causes she believed in, including women's suffrage and improving the lives of the poor. She also unofficially ran the ministries of health and labor in her husband's government.

Perón became a legendary figure in Argentine politics. A skilled speaker, she was adored by the poor citizens she worked hard to help, but she was not without critics and detractors. Asked to run as vice president with her husband in 1951, she faced opposition by the army. Perón ultimately turned down the post—possibly due to the health issues she was battling around this same time, stemming from cervical cancer.

Perón made her last public appearance in June 1952, at her husband's second inauguration. The following month, she succumbed to her illness: Perón died of cervical cancer.

in Buenos Aires on July 26, 1952. She was given a funeral fit for a head of state, showing how much public support she had from the Argentine people at the time.

### Che Guevara- Che



Che Guevara was a prominent communist figure in the Cuban Revolution (1956–59) who went on to become a guerrilla leader in South America. Executed by the Bolivian army in 1967, he has since been regarded as a martyred hero by generations of leftists worldwide. Guevara's image remains a prevalent icon of leftist radicalism and anti-imperialism.

Born Ernesto Guevara de la Serna on June 14, 1928, in Rosario, Argentina. After completing his medical studies at the University of Buenos Aires, Guevara became political active first in his native Argentina and then in neighboring Bolivia and Guatemala. In 1954, he met Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro and his brother Raul while in Mexico.

Eva Peron and Che Guevara never met, although Guevara did apparently once write her a sarcastic letter, asking her to buy him a motorcycle. In reality, Guevara was in his teens when the Perons came to power, and 24 when Eva died.

Playwright Tim Rice created the character, Che, to serve as a narrator and Greek chorus. Although he had recently discovered Che Guevara was Argentine, he did not necessarily intend that the character be based upon him, despite inserting specific biographical details into the lyrics that clearly apply to Guevara. When Harold Prince later became involved with the project, he insisted that the actors portraying Che should use Guevara as a role model. In the 1996 film adaptation, the character returned to his more anonymous roots. This was also the case for the 2006 London revival. The role of Che functions as a Greek chorus, commenting on Eva's life.

## Juan Peron



Juan Perón was born in Lobos, Argentina, on October 8, 1895. Perón returned to Argentina in 1941, used his knowledge to achieve the rank of colonel, and joined the United Officers Group (Grupo de Oficiales Unidos; GOU), a secret military lodge that engineered the 1943 coup that overthrew the ineffective civilian government of Argentina. The military regimes of the following three years came increasingly under the influence of Perón, who had shrewdly requested for himself only the minor post of secretary of labour and social welfare. In 1944, Perón became minister of war and then vice president. Clearly he was bidding for undisputed power, based on the support of the underprivileged labourers (the descamisados, or “shirtless ones”) and on his popularity and authority in the army.

On Oct. 17, 1945, from the balcony of the presidential palace, he addressed 300,000 people, and his address was broadcast to the country on radio. He promised to lead the people to victory in the pending presidential election and to build with them a strong and just nation. A few days later he married actress Eva Duarte, or Evita, as she became popularly called, who would help him rule Argentina in the years ahead. Eva was a political partner as well as a spouse. She made frequent public appearances in support of her husband's administration and the policies of his government. She died of cancer in Buenos Aires in 1952.

In September 1955, Juan Perón was driven from office and into exile by a confederation of military leaders. He fled to Paraguay before settling in Madrid. He continued to exert enough political influence from abroad to help shape the Peronist movement that reclaimed the presidency in 1973. Perón returned to Argentina just after the March elections. In October, he won a special presidential election and installed his new wife as vice president.

Regaining power through alliances with labor groups, Perón tacked to the right once in office. He died on July 1, 1974, in Buenos Aires. His wife, Isabel, held onto the presidency until a military coup removed her from power on March 24, 1976.

## Agustín Magaldi



Agustín Magaldi (December 1, 1898 – September 8, 1938) was a tango and milonga singer. His nickname was "the sentimental voice of Buenos Aires." Magaldi took part in the opening broadcasts of Argentina's LOY Radio Nacional in July 1924. Magaldi suffered from liver disease and was admitted to Sanatorium Otamendi early in September 1938. An operation by Dr. Pedro Valdez was successful, but Magaldi died 48 hours later. He was buried in the Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

In *Evita*, Agustín Magaldi is depicted as bringing Eva to Buenos Aires and so is therefore referred to as "the first man to be of use to Eva Duarte". There is some disagreement, however, about the role Magaldi played in Eva's real life. For example, in the biography *Evita: The Real Life of Eva Perón* biographers Marysa Navarro and Nicholas Fraser write that there are no records of Magaldi performing in Eva's hometown of Junín in the year that Eva is said to have met Magaldi:

"Most accounts of Evita's life say that she fell in love with the spotlight image of Magaldi or that she decided to seduce him and use him; but that, in either event, she was introduced to him, asked him to take her to Buenos Aires, and when he wavered, forced her way into his train compartment and rode with him to the city, thus leaving her family and becoming a married man's mistress. Yet there is no record of the tango singer's having come to Junín that year. Magaldi, a mild man who was devoted to his mother, used to bring his wife on tour. If he did help her leave Junín, it is likely that his assistance was of the most innocuous kind. Evita's sister insists that doña Juana, prodded by don Pepe, accompanied Evita to the city. According to her account, mother and daughter kept visiting the radio stations until they found a programme for which a young girl was needed."

A major point that detracts from the credibility of the version of the story presented in *Evita* is that in the stage (and film) versions, Magaldi is depicted as performing at a charity concert given in aid of the victims of an earthquake in San Juan, Argentina. The earthquake occurred on 15 January 1944, and the concert occurred on 22 January, when Eva almost certainly met Peron. However, Magaldi could not have performed there since he had died of peritonitis in Buenos Aires more than five years earlier.

Juan Perón and his wife Eva in Buenos Aires on inauguration day (June 9, 1952) of his second term as president of Argentina.



While in Argentina in 1950 Freund was asked to photograph first lady Eva Perón. With her trademark intimate style, Freund captured Perón with her dogs, getting her nails done, doing her hair, with her large hat collection, and giving handouts to the poor. The photographs, when published in Life, were seen by Eva and Juan Perón as ostentatious and embarrassing, and, as a result, the magazine was banned in Argentina and Freund became persona non grata.

Eva and Juan Peron on their wedding day





Eva Perón addresses the Peronists on 17 October 1951. By this point she was too weak to stand without Juan Perón's aid.

Eva Peron on November 17, 1951 continuing her work from her hospital bed.



Eva Peron speaking on behalf of the female vote.

## Descamisado (Shirtless one)



In Argentine history, during the regime of Juan Perón (ruled 1946–55, 1973–74), any of the impoverished and underprivileged Argentine workers who were Perón's chief supporters.

The term was originally used by the narrator in Victor Hugo's seminal 1862 novel *Les Misérables* to refer to the revolutionary Spanish masses. Following the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo, the French (Bourbon) monarchy was restored to power. The Bourbons acted to prop up the Spanish monarchy against the popular forces of the Spanish social revolution in the Spanish War of 1823. Hugo's character is commenting on the use of the term by the supporters of the French Bourbons. The word was used pejoratively and in direct comparison to the derogative term applied to the French popular masses, the *sans-culottes* of the French bourgeoisie revolution of 1789.

In the 20th century, it was also used as an insult by the elite of Argentina to describe the followers of Juan Perón, who served as president of Argentina from 1946 until 1955, and then again briefly from 1973 to 1974. The term was later reclaimed as a term of pride, with Juan Perón and his wife Eva Perón affectionately referring to their followers as "descamisados". And during his 1945 campaign for president, Juan Perón toured the country on a train that he named *El Descamisado*.

By most accounts, the term has its modern origins on October 17, 1945, when thousands of supporters of Juan Perón gathered in front of the Casa Rosada making a demonstration to demand Perón's release from prison. While waiting for Perón on this hot day, many men in the crowd removed their shirts—hence the term "shirtless". However, there is much debate among scholars in regards to the origins of the label. Some claim that the word was coined to describe the working poor, the social class from which Perón drew the greatest amount of his political backing, who were so downtrodden that they could not have afforded to buy shirts. Perón's use of the labor unions as a means of consolidating his power lends credibility to the claim.

Perón's wife, Eva Peron became the idol of the descamisados because of her own poor origins and her reputation for using her great influence to benefit the poor. After Evita's death (July 1952), Perón lost support among the workers.



## Eva Peron and Feminism in Argentina



Eva's legacy on Argentine women was, for the most part, positive. Before Evita, Argentine women were purely chattel— they spent their lives subservient to men, were taught to tolerate machismo and their husband's affairs, could not vote and had no rights whatsoever.

It must be emphasized, though, that the struggle for women's equality in Argentina did not begin with Evita. Many feminists before Evita were struggling for women's rights, such as Alicia Moreau de Justo, a physicist and pacifist, who for many years struggled for women's right to vote and Victoria Ocampo, a feminist writer who often noted that when Argentine women married, they exchanged one prison for another and there was no friendship between women in that country— merely opposition. Eva may have won the vote for women, but she is in part indebted to her predecessors.

Eva wrote in 'La Razon de Mi Vida' that she was not a feminist by any means. She quoted Peron to say that 'feminists want to be men. It is as if to save the workers I make oligarchs out of them.' While this attitude was not uncommon in the 40s and 50s, it is insulting to modern ears.

It cannot be denied, though, that many women who were not interested in politics entered this arena because of Eva's active role as a politician which was never heard of before. Delia de Parodi, a close friend of Eva's, was one of the first Argentine congresswomen. Many believe Eva paved the way for Argentina's two female presidents, Isabel Peron, her successor, and the current president, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner.

### Partido Peronista Femenino:

The Female Peronist Party, also known as the Feminist Peronist Party and the Peronist Feminist Party, was the women's wing of the Peronist Justicialist Party of Argentina. It was founded by Eva Perón in the late 1940s. After the Peronist Feminist Party was founded, twice the number of women were allowed to attend university.[13] With the set up of the Peronist Feminist Party, women's centres were set up in poor Argentinian neighbourhoods. These centres provided a wide range of services including medical, legal and social services.[13] At the time of the party's founding, women were largely absent from the political process in Argentina and were not allowed to vote.

In the first elections (in 1951) in which women could run for office, 24 were elected to the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, all Peronists.[13] Also, seven female senators were elected, making Argentina the country with the most women representing the government.[13] Following



the death of Eva Perón, Delia Parodi, one of those deputies, led the party until the military coup of 1955.

## Peronism



Peronism (Spanish: peronismo) or Justicialism (justicialismo) is an Argentine political movement based on the political ideology and legacy of former President Juan Domingo Perón and his second wife Eva Perón. The Peronist's Justicialist Party derives its name from the concept of social justice.

The pillars of the Peronist ideal, known as the "three flags", are social justice, economic independence and political sovereignty. Peronism can be described as a third position ideology as it rejects both capitalism and communism. Peronism espouses corporatism and thus aims to mediate tensions between the classes of society, with the state responsible for negotiating compromise in conflicts between managers and workers

From the perspective of opponents, Peronism is an authoritarian ideology. Perón was often compared to fascist dictators, accused of demagoguery and his policies derided as populist. Proclaiming himself the embodiment of nationality, Perón's government often silenced dissent by accusing opponents of being unpatriotic. The corporatist character of Peronism drew attacks from socialists who accused his administration of preserving capitalist exploitation and class division. Conservatives rejected its modernist ideology and felt their status threatened by the ascent of the Peronist apparatus. Liberals condemned the Perón regime's arbitrariness and dictatorial tendencies.

Defenders of Peronism also describe the doctrine as populist, albeit in the sense that they believe it embodies the interests of the masses and in particular the most vulnerable social strata. Admirers hold Perón in esteem for his administration's anti-imperialism and non-alignment as well as its socially progressive initiatives. Amongst other measures introduced by Perón's governments, social security was made universal while education was made free to all who qualified and working students were given one paid week before every major examination. Vast low-income housing projects were created and paid vacations became standard. All workers (including white-collar employees) were guaranteed free medical care and half of their vacation-trip expenses and mothers-to-be received three paid months off prior to and after giving birth. Workers' recreation centers were also constructed throughout the country.