

1968: A Global Perspective

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Argentina 1968: Political Halcyon, Anticommunist Legislation and Frustrated, "Immoral" University Students

1968 marked the year of ostensible social stability during "La Revolución Argentina," the fifth military dictatorship of the twentieth century (1966-1973). Furthermore, General Juan Carlos Onganía new measures for economic stabilization directed the nation's attention away from the implementation of anti-communist and censorship legislation; the government's most effective way to prevent the spread of communism and moralize the supposed decadent youth. The following year in May 1969, radical university students responded to the government's cultural reforms. Emulating the fury of student demonstrations occurring around the globe, they turned their criticisms to violence with riots in several cities, plunging the country into social and political chaos and reversing any economic growth.

What occurred in 1968 that caused middle class university students to turn from political discussions within the haven of the national universities to battle a well trained military during the riots of 1969? Gen. Onganía's cultural reforms had agitated Argentina's youth who looked to radical cultural experimentation and leftist ideology to define their modernity. The government had attempted to address youth immorality and combat the spread of leftist ideology through a morality crusade and intervention in the national autonomous universities. However, using military pamphlets and speeches, the writings of university student organizations, literature, legislation, and Argentine and U.S. newspapers, my work demonstrates that 1968 marked the year Argentine students' political discussions fissured to open violence in May 1969 as a result of the government's continued attempts to combat communism and immorality.