

The Many Argentine Revivals

(A portion of this article was written by Peter Wagner and edited by Chris Simpson, and David Little. Robert Miller added many updates and details to this article as well.)

We can learn lessons in Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare from Argentina. This country has been one of the most successful models of urban evangelism.

Argentina has known many moves of God. It began with the [Tommy Hicks crusade](#) and its aftermath in the 1950s. It continued with many waves of glory and manifested Presence of God in the late 1960s. The Charismatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the 1970s swept the churches of the entire country. Later, the evangelistic crusades that swept from city to city around the nation with thousands of people converted, delivered, healed and creative miracles under the ministry of Evangelist Carlos Anacondia in the early 1980s. (He is still going strong at the time that this portion of the article was being written in July of 2010.) A profound move of the Spirit named “the fire move” took place in the late 1980s at Peniel Bible Institute in Mar del Plata, and spread throughout the country. A powerful move followed in the 1990s called “the river move” Claudio Freidzen and many other men and women of God were used of the Lord during these many years.

Argentina has also experienced hardships and trials:

There was a change in the spiritual climate after the Falkland Islands war in 1982 when Argentina tried unsuccessfully to occupy the Malvinas Islands, as they call them. The British victory caused a radical change in Argentine social psychology. National pride, for which Argentines were internationally notorious, was severely damaged. The church had failed them, the military had failed them, Peronism had failed them - they were ready to try something new. The fact of the matter is that well before 1982 the basis for Argentine pride had severely eroded. Once the world's tenth strongest economic power and boasting a standard of life higher than that of southern Europe. Argentina was the jewel of South America, peaking during the reign of Juan Domingo Peron and his followers through the 1950s and 1960s. As his influence waned in the early 1970s, Peron linked up with a powerful occult practitioner, Jose Lopez Rega, known popularly as "el brujo" (the warlock). Lopez Rega served under Peron as social welfare minister, and after Peron's death in 1974 became the chief advisor to his wife, Isabel Peron, during her two years as president. He erected a public monument to witchcraft (since dismantled), and is said by many to have publicly cursed the nation when he lost power with the military coup of 1976. Spiritism, principally from Brazil, began to flood the nation. Under the military rulers 8,000 political suspects "disappeared" forever, the bodies of many recently being uncovered in mass graves. Once the tenth strongest economic power, Argentina now finds itself tenth from the bottom by some measurements. Little wonder the nation is ripe for the gospel message. True, in such a spiritual vacuum, any change is seen by

many as a change for the better. The power of witchcraft continues to escalate. False cults such as Mormonism are experiencing rapid growth. A huge ornate Mormon temple dominates the highway leading from the Ezeiza airport to Buenos Aires.

But with all this, the power of God is being manifested in extraordinary ways. Hector Gimenez The largest church in downtown Buenos Aires is pastored by Hector Gimenez, an ex-drug addict and gunfighter. He started the church in 1983 and now leads a congregation of some 70,000. The official name of the church is The Miracles of Jesus Renewed Christian Church, but it more popularly carries the name of Gimenez's radio broadcast, "Waves of Love and Peace." Their church home is a 2,500 seat theater in which they hold eight services daily, seven days of the week. Gimenez himself preaches five services per day, a total of 35 different sermons per week. A study by a Polish sociologist estimates the attendance at 14,000 daily.

Peter Wagner had the privilege of preaching to a packed house at the 8:00 p.m. service on a Tuesday night in April 1990, and saw more than a dozen profess salvation and fifty profess miraculous healing, numbers totally disproportionate to the usual results of my speaking. When we left just before 10:30 p.m., a new crowd had totally jammed the space between the theater door and the street, waiting to get in for the next service! Gimenez told me that a couple of weeks previously on Easter Sunday, they had rented the largest enclosed auditorium in the city, Luna Park, which seats 15,000. They needed three services to accommodate the 35,000 worshipers, and they baptized 3,200 by immersion in portable pools.

Larry Lea says, "The devil's work is to blind the minds of men and women. It is our work to pray that the powers of darkness be pushed back from shrouding people's minds." Powerful intercessory prayer is the chief weapon of spiritual warfare on all levels. For instance, backstage in Hector Gimenez's service I saw three women interceding on their knees on the hardwood floor throughout the entire two-hour service. I was told there are usually more. I doubt that Gimenez would see the spiritual power he enjoys without these intercessors. Larry Lea adds, "Until we do the prayer work necessary to defeat the forces of the enemy holding people in darkness, Satan's blinders will remain."

One of today's most knowledgeable Argentine leaders is Edgardo Silvosio of Harvest Evangelism based in San Jose, California. Silvosio said, "If there is one dominant element that has emerged in the theology and methodology of evangelism in Argentina, I would say it is spiritual warfare. It is an awareness that the struggle is not against a political or a social system. Nor is it on behalf of those who are captives, but it is rather against the jail keepers, against the rulers, those in authority in the spiritual realm." Silvosio contends that understanding this allows Argentine evangelists to get to the root of the problem instead of dealing merely with symptoms. He suggests that the results seem to validate this approach.

Carlos Annacondia may well be the most effective citywide interdenominational crusade evangelist of all time. If this turns out to be only approximately true, his approach to winning the masses of the cities to Christ deserves close scrutiny. Annacondia was the committed Christian owner of a prosperous nuts and bolts factory in Quilmes on the outskirts of Buenos Aires when he was called into evangelistic ministry. It was probably no mere coincidence that the day he launched his first public crusade was the day the British sunk the Argentine battleship General Belgrano in the 1982 Falkland Islands war. He was 37 years old at the time.

Christian leaders in a matter-of-fact way refer to recent trends in their cities as "before Annacondia" and "after Annacondia". There are new sanctuaries constructed to contain the growth after Annacondia's crusade in their city. A basketball stadium had been leased for six years to hold services after one of Carlos anacondia's crusades. Another church now holds 17 services a week in five rented theaters. Another pastor reports "a notable change of attitude among the people of his city as a result of Annacondia's ministry."

Annacondia has a great deal in common with traditional crusade evangelists. He preaches a simple gospel message, gives an invitation for people to come forward and receive Christ as their Lord and Savior, uses trained counselors to lead them to Christ and give them literature, takes their name and address and invites them to attend a local church. Like Billy Graham and Luis Palau, Annacondia secures a broad base of interdenominational support from pastors and other Christian leaders in the target area. Like Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday he has had no formal academic theological training. Like Reinhard Bonnke and T. L. Osborne he features miracles, healings and deliverance from evil spirits in his meetings. He is not the only one who preaches in the open air, conducts three-hour services, or has many on-the-spot intercessors praying for the ministry. The major difference is Carlos Annacondia's intentional, premeditated, high-energy approach to spiritual warfare. A permanent fixture of Annacondia's crusades is what has to be one of the most sophisticated and massive deliverance ministries anywhere. Literally hundreds of individuals are delivered from demons each of the 30 to 50 consecutive nights of a crusade.

The 150-foot deliverance tent, erected behind the speaker's platform, is in operation from 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. each night. Scores of teams that ministers Botari and Barboza have trained, do the actual hands-on ministry. Never has another evangelist been observed in crusades who is as publicly aggressive in confronting evil spirits as Carlos Annacondia. With a high- volume, high-energy, prolonged challenge he actually taunts the spirits until they manifest in one way or another. To the uninitiated the scenario might appear to be total confusion. But to the skilled, experienced members of Annacondia's 31 crusade ministry teams, it is just another evening of power encounters in which the power of Jesus Christ over demonic forces is being displayed for all to see. Many miraculous

healings occur, souls are saved, and so great is the spiritual power, that unsuspecting pedestrians passing by the crusade meeting have been known to fall down under the power of the Holy Spirit.

The 5,000 to 20,000 who crowd into Annacondia's crusades night after night are lower class people. The gospel is preached to the poor as in Jesus' day.

Omar Cabrera, pastor of the Vision of the Future Church of 90,000 which is Argentina's largest, uses aggressive spiritual warfare in his own style and is filling his meeting places in 40-50 locations with those of the lower class