

## Social Genocide

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By [RONNIE SCHEIB](#)

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Over the past several years, a number of grass-roots documentaries like "Matanza" and "Voices From the Edge" have depicted the rise of social activism in Argentina's slums, showing the unspeakable conditions in which millions of people live and lamenting the national debt which is growing like a cancer. But, in these smaller, regional films, the root cause of Argentina's economic woes remains vague.

Solanas goes back to the election of Menem, a seeming neo-Peronist who, shortly after winning, threw off his populist trappings along with his populist platform. Under Menem's watch, the Argentinean government — conniving with international organizations — sold off lucrative state-owned companies and utilities for a fraction of their worth. The multinational corporations that bought them first stripped them of their assets and then provided citizens with severely reduced services for astronomical rates. At the same time, Menem's infamous finance minister, Domingo Cavallo, legitimized and exponentially increased the national debt.

Moujan's imaginative camera glides through the antechambers, committee rooms, and red-carpeted corridors of power, focusing on particular statues, stacks of dossiers or piles of money along the way. Outside, low-angles on magnificent state and corporate buildings are contrasted with children picking through garbage, the perpetually flooded streets of Matanza's slumlands, or the deserted factories of once-thriving industries.

But Solanas' focus remains chiefly fixed on the causes rather than the results. Intermittently sampled throughout, the media's coverage of events is relentlessly upbeat, teasing the president about his sex appeal or cheerfully explaining why debt is good for Argentina.

Tech credits are first-rate.

Social Genocide

Argentina

PRODUCTION: A Cinesur SA/Thelma Films AG/ADR production. Produced by Fernando Solanas. Executive producers, Pierre Alain Meier, Alain Rozanes, Solanas. Directed by Fernando Solanas.

CREW: Camera (color, DV-to-35mm), Alejandro Fernandez Moujan, Solanas; editor, Juan C. Macias; music, Gerardo Gandini; sound (Dolby), Jorge A. Kuschmir. Reviewed at Tribeca Cinemas, New York, April 19, 2004. (In Tribeca -- competing, and Berlin film festivals.) Running time: 118 MIN. (Spanish dialogue)