

CORRIENTES AND PUEYRREDON
7:02 AM



IF I HAVE TO START IT IN SOME WAY, I WOULD SAY, IT STARTS ON ANY GIVEN MORNING WITH AN INSIGNIFICANT ACT: A WOMAN RUNNING FAST, A CHILD COMING ACROSS AN INJURED BIRD ON THE SIDEWALK, TWO PASSERS-BY BUMPING ONE ANOTHER WHILE CROSSING CALLE SARMIENTO...





MY NAME IS ROLI GERCHUNOFF. AGE: FORTY-TWO. PROFESSION: PHOTO-JOURNALIST. SALARY: ENOUGH NOT TO HAVE TO BORROW MORE THAN ONCE A MONTH. FOR EIGHT YEARS I'VE WORKED AT PLAYBOY. SINCE THE MAGAZINE REDUCED ITS STAFF, I FREE-LANCE.



IDEOLOGY: PROGRESSIVE, ALTHOUGH NOT QUITE A RADICAL. I'M THE FIRST TO CONFESS THAT MY YOUTHFUL REBELLIOUSNESS HAS BEEN TURNED INTO COMPLACENCY. RELIGION: SKEPTIC. SOMETIMES I SEE MYSELF IN THE MIRROR AND CAN'T RECOGNIZE THE PERSON WHO LOOKS AT ME. NOR CAN I RECOGNIZE EL ONCE.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IN BUENOS AIRES IS MORE THAN A SPOT ON THE MAP: A STATE OF MIND.



IT TAKES ITS NAME FROM SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1852, WHICH IS WHEN BUENOS AIRES BECAME INDEPENDENT. YES, EVERY NATION HAS ITS OWN 9/11. THE CRUCIAL MOMENTO—THE WOUND—WHEN IT RECOGNIZES ITS VULNERABILITY BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE.

ALL SORTS OF IDENTITIES CONVERGE IN EL ONCE: KOREANS, POLES, PERUVIANS, ARMENIANS, RUSSIANS, CHINESE AND JEWS... SO WHERE DOES ONE FIND ARGENTINIANNES? IN THE JUNCTURE WHERE EVERYONE'S HOPES COME TOGETHER. PEOPLE COME HERE TO DREAM.





MY GRANDPA PRODUCED LEATHER IN MATADEROS AND SOLD IT IN EL ONCE. HE WAS FROM A TOWN CALLED PROSKURIV, IN THE UKRAINE, AND HE ARRIVED BEFORE WORLD WAR II.



ONE OF THOUSANDS OF IMMIGRANTS. I OFFER THESE DETAILS NOT BECAUSE THIS STORY IS ABOUT ME—OR IS IT?—BUT BECAUSE IN IT OUR ROOTS ARE UNEARTHED AND MADE TO BURN UNDER THE SUN.



NEXT TO SO MUCH RELIGIOUS EXALTATION IS THE TEMPTING HUMAN FLESH. AH, HEAVEN AND EARTH JOINED TOGETHER AT THE CORE!



EL ONCE, THEN, IS A MONUMENT TO MEMORY. AT FIRST ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION THAT NOTHING WE DO LEAVES A MARK. ARGENTINA IS A COUNTRY WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF MEMORY THAT PEOPLE PREFER TO IGNORE.

DID I SAY THIS IS AN AVERAGE MORNING?



