

## Your View

Saturday, September 12, 2015

## HELL ON EARTH

A portal to a hitherto unknown Tenth Circle of Hell has opened up in the section of Viamonte Street between Reconquista and Avenida Leandro N. Alem in Buenos Aires City.

Called "El Alboroto," it's deeper and more horrible than even Malebolge and Cocytus and it's where sinners are punished with constant, discordant noise and clamour.

I live on Viamonte near the intersection with Av. Alem and there must be an excess of inveterate sinners living and working around here as we're tortured 24/7 by moronic fiends masquerading as motorists and bus-drivers who wait at the traffic lights at Viamonte's intersection with Av. Alem in the apparently unshakable belief that if you blast your horn as loudly and as long as possible, the traffic lights will more quickly change to green.

This never-ending, mindless, futile and disruptive use of car horns is in contravention of traffic and environment by-laws but the infractions are ignored by the city government (and for that matter everywhere in Buenos Aires).

You'd think this odious automotive cacophony was punishment enough for the sinners in this barrio but yet another blight recently descended and again, courtesy of City Hall.

Four weeks ago in the dead of night at the intersection of Viamonte and Reconquista workmen loudly excavated a hole in the street with pneumatic drills, covered it with a two-metre square steel plate and then vanished in a vile puff of exhaust smoke.

Within a week, as it worked loose from its fixings, the steel plate began to rattle and emit, at around 120 decibels, cracks like gunshots each time the thousands of cars and colectivos who use Viamonte every day and night drove over it.

The large hotel and the restaurants in the area both lost a lot of business as their guests couldn't bear the constant din and decamped to more pacific parts.

The business owners and scores of desperate residents telephoned the city government many times over the succeeding weeks pleading for relief but after a week the City officials became so sick of the calls of complaint that, as soon as they heard the word "Viamonte," they hung up.

I took direct action with some of the hotel's employees and we wedged cardboard and carpet offcuts under the steel plate to soften its rattle but to no avail as the plate was so unstable it soon spat out the cushioning and the noisome rattling resumed.

Only after the residents had been reduced to blabbering wrecks did a cherubic-looking young workman come, two days ago (September 7), to remove the steel plate although it quickly became clear that appearances can indeed be deceptive as this putative angel of mercy had a heart of stone.

When asked why amelioration had been so long in coming, he replied: "You're lucky this plate has been here for only a month — sometimes we leave them for a year or so — and the noise is normal as the fixings always loosen. We've got lots of them all over the city and they all rattle so we get hundreds of denuncias a week about the noise" he added and laughed heartily.

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When I suggested that rubber mountings would prevent the rattling, the workman said: "It would cost too much — people will just have to put up with the noise and if they don't like it, well who cares? Certainly not my bosses."

City government officials are obviously and reprehensibly under the spell of a wicked indifference to the quality of life of those who pay their salaries and whom they supposedly serve.

It's said that fire should be fought with fire and to this end it can only be a matter of time before, as I do believe people care, there's an inevitable and massively loud escrache at the town hall or at the homes of officials demanding that environmental noise by-laws be respected.

Let's see if what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, which I doubt, as it is one thing to be indifferent to the suffering of other people but should horrible noise come home to roost, action would surely be taken.

Thomas Manning, City



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**NOTE:**

The writer Thomas Manning is a New Zealand businessman active in Argentina for over 25 years, a founding member, former Vice President and long-standing director of the Latin America New Zealand Business Council and a regular Buenos Aires Herald correspondent on South Pacific trade and aviation matters.

[Thomas Manning 'Your View' Article, 12 September 2015 @ Buenos Aires Herald on-line](#)

