

LABOR

Ambassadors of the Working Class: Argentina's International Labor Activists and Cold War Democracy in the Americas. By Ernesto Semán. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. Pp. xiii, 314. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$94.95 cloth; \$26.95 paper. doi:10.1017/tam.2018.74

Artfully written and accessible, Ernesto Semán's examination of Argentine worker attachés during the opening and closing of a democratic spring in the early Cold War Americas is an important addition to the study of Peronism and the history of inter-American relations. This sophisticated and multilayered transnational study examines the unusual role of working-class men and women in Argentina's diplomatic corps, perhaps its toniest government institution between 1946 and 1955. Perón's call to action motivated these attachés to attempt to create a regional labor movement based on Peronist ideals of social democracy and inclusion. This vision ran headlong into the competing vision of economic and political liberalism advanced by the United States.

Semán's extensive research illustrates both the promise and limits of Peronism as a vehicle for inclusive democracy and a movement for regional leadership. The book is based on interviews, attachés' personal papers, original material long buried in Argentine embassies in Bolivia, Cuba, and Peru, and collected materials housed in archives and repositories in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The founding of the worker attaché program, which Semán situates in the broader context of democratizing Argentina, subtly reveals the emerging shape Peronism took, defying any sort of linear progression or singular font of inspiration. Perón himself participated in classes for the attachés-in-training. The curriculum demonstrated the importance of creating a shared language among Peronists as much as highlighting the project's achievements or training future diplomats.

As the first generation of attachés took their posts in the United States and the Soviet Union, these workers marveled at the Soviet laborers' immiseration, while in the United States they witnessed the sustained assault on workers' rights and welfare. In each instance, worker attachés better appreciated and articulated labor's accomplishments under Peronism and the importance of a "third way." The attachés' most important activities, however, took place in Latin American posts. Working with urban groups and fanning far out into the countryside, these missionaries of social revolution, often well-funded by the Eva Perón Foundation, distributed Peronist propaganda and sought to build alliances with local progressive associations and labor groups. Worker attachés sponsored the work of labor leaders and activists, including a young Fidel Castro's trip throughout Latin America in 1948. These activities prompted reactions throughout the hemisphere. Yet, the Ninth Pan-American Conference hosted in Bogotá in 1948 and the subsequent establishment of the Organization of American States turned the tide against the attachés' mission, institutionalizing the move to

social containment and conservative backlash. Perón's interest in transnational labor organization waned as his sympathies to US foreign policy and the urgencies of the Cold War dovetailed, showing his movement's "plasticity" in adapting itself from a postwar spring to a Cold War winter" (168).

In the early 1950s, the attachés' diplomatic activities also encountered an increasingly aggressive US foreign policy that looked to eradicate any movement, especially from within organized labor, that might cause social unrest. Thus, it was ironic that the worker attachés created the labor-based Latin American regional union ATLAS in 1952, during the attenuation of social reforms and the escalation of aggressive and increasingly violent responses to labor activism in Argentina. Despite the authoritarian trend in Peronism and elsewhere, worker attachés continued to champion progressive politics within the Peronist framework, advancing workers' rights and challenging social conventions and hierarchies. ATLAS nevertheless arrived too late and was doomed to failure, as most battles for greater inclusion and social rights were fought at the domestic level and through nationalistic lenses. As Semán notes, the closure of peaceful paths of social inclusion and the redressing of long-standing inequality through democratic institutions provided the impetus for more radical and violent methods for revolutionary change.

Although the attachés never challenged the primacy of Perón as leader of the movement, they often acted independently, as typified by the heroic actions of Alberto Viale during the 1954 Guatemala coup, Pedro Conde Magdaleno's attempt to smuggle Spanish communists out of the Soviet Union, and Modesto Álvarez's smuggling of Hernán Siles Suazo, a future president of Bolivia, into Argentina via car trunk. Products of their upbringing, the attachés were also often insensitive to racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. Although the majority of the attachés were male and their efforts focused on male workers, the study would have benefitted from a deeper discussion of the experiences of the few female worker attachés sent abroad and their activities. This minor quibble aside, Ernesto Semán's perceptive and fine study should be taught and debated in graduate seminars and undergraduate courses well into the future.

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Redeeming the Revolution: The State and Organized Labor in Post-Tlatelolco Mexico. By Joseph U. Lenti. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017. Pp. 355. Illustrations. \$70.00 cloth; \$35.00 paper.
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As president of Mexico, Luis Echeverría (1970–76) faced the unfortunate task of attempting to restore the popular legitimacy of the PRI's supposedly 'revolutionary'