
REVIEW ESSAYS

DEADLY TANGO : Populism and Military Authoritarianism in Argentina

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ARGENTINA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. Edited by DAVID ROCK. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975. Pp. 230. \$14.50.)

JUAN PERON AND THE RESHAPING OF ARGENTINA. Edited by FREDERICK C. TURNER and JOSE ENRIQUE MIGUENS. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983. Pp. 268. \$24.95.)

THE POPULIST CHALLENGE: ARGENTINE ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR IN THE POSTWAR ERA. By LARS SCHOULTZ. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983. Pp. 241. \$9.95.)

PERON: A BIOGRAPHY. By JOSEPH PAGE. (New York: Random House, 1983. Pp. 594. \$25.00.)

ARGENTINA UNDER PERON, 1973-76: THE NATION'S EXPERIENCE WITH A LABOR-BASED GOVERNMENT. By GUIDO DI TELLA. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. Pp. 246. \$25.00.)

RETORNO Y DERRUMBE: EL ULTIMO GOBIERNO PERONISTA. By LILIANA DE RIZ. (Mexico: Folios Ediciones, 1981. Pp. 151.)

ARGENTINA, HOY. Edited by ALAIN ROUQUIE. (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1982. Pp. 279.)

EL ULTIMO AÑO DE PERON. By JULIO GODIO. (Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1981. Pp. 272.)

Probably all scholars believe that “their” chosen country is the most complex, paradoxical, and insidiously difficult to understand. The Argentine family of social scientists are no exception, arguing that they have one of the hardest cases to analyze. This claim is probably not only valid but useful in maintaining the collective challenge to unravel the Gordian knot.

Arguments based on single-minded determinants or ecologically unidimensional causation rarely provide satisfying answers to questions of political instability or lack of economic development. One therefore welcomes the increasing variety of interest in Argentina in the last decade. When it became clear that Peronism was no longer solely a historical phenomenon, a scholarly resurgence paralleled the Peronist resurgence, bringing to an end the relative scholarly neglect, particularly outside Argentina, of the 1950s and 1960s. Under review here are some recent examples of Argentina’s newfound gravitational pull, and they probably comprise only a third of what has been written on the topic in the last several years. These eight books represent a spectrum of interests and tendencies. A total of thirty authors are included: ten sociologists, seven political scientists, six economists, three historians, two writers, and two law professors. Of the thirty contributions, thirteen were written by Argentines, seven by North Americans, six by British, and one each by Brazilian, Uruguayan, West German, and French authors.

All of the books focus on Peronism’s continuing appeal to the Argentine political community and its most recent incarnation. The broadest historical scope is found in the Rock study, which goes back to the inception of modern Argentina in the 1880s and works its way up to the Peronist-populist revival in 1973–75. Page’s biography begins with the 1930s, tracing the young Perón through the “take-off” years (1943–45), the two administrations of his mature years (1946–55), and his “last hurrah.” Schoultz covers the thirty years since Perón’s first impressive political triumph in a study of electoral patterns. The Turner-Miguens volume chronologically parallels the Schoultz monograph but adopts a broader approach. The works by Di Tella, De Riz, and Godio all concentrate on Perón’s return and last administration, although they provide varying degrees of historical background on Perón’s “second coming.” Lastly, Rouquié’s edited work discusses the contemporary residue following the disfiguring of the Argentine “civitas.”

David Rock’s *Argentina in the Twentieth Century* demonstrates the importance of strong editorial direction, a cohesive research focus, and a rigorous scholarly approach. The result is an innovative dissection of key Argentine economic and political determinants in the modern era. In many ways, it is a revisionist collection based on precise historical

research that manages to overturn particular shibboleths regarding Argentine development since 1900. The most analytical of the chapters is Jorge Fodor's fine piece. He demonstrates Perón's lack of credible alternatives to using Argentine foreign exchange reserves for outlays other than nationalizing British railways, repaying the foreign debt, and encouraging industry to the relative neglect of agriculture. Why was this the case? The inconvertibility of sterling in 1947, which was designed to protect a run on the British currency, left Argentina with surplus sterling that could not be turned into needed dollar imports from the United States. North American hostility minimized capital imports, while the recovery of European agriculture substantially curtailed the European market, and to increase exports would have meant more inconvertible sterling balances and inflation. Thus railway purchases and debt clearances by the Instituto Argentino para la Promoción de Intercambio (IAPI) became part of a nationalist, but pragmatic, Peronist strategy. The situation changed in the 1950s, but Fodor makes an excellent case for Perón's having combined economic necessity with good politics. Fodor also substantially revises the historical view of Perón's economic policies during his first government.

A. G. Ford's chapter speaks of the early framework for dependency in the Argentine notion of "comparative advantage," a concept that fostered heavy Argentine emphasis on its export-import sector with Great Britain and set the stage for similar continuing relations with the United States. Colin Lewis's chapter in the Rock reader establishes that Argentine foreign imports decreased as a percentage of total domestic industrial production. Moreover, the importing of consumer goods decreased, allowing for a dramatic increase in the domestic production of consumer goods between 1940 and 1955. Complementing this trend was an increase in capital goods importation, as well as an increase of raw and semifinished imports, which helped to fuel domestic industry. It was also under Perón that a shift was effected that made the United States Argentina's leading trading partner. This move was particularly decisive in Argentine imports from the United States.

Walter Little convincingly muddies the water regarding the origins of working-class support for early Peronism, a topic much discussed by Argentine scholars (see Germani 1963 and Kenworthy 1975). For example, most rural migrants from Argentina's provinces came from urban settings and were therefore not strictly rural in origin. Little states that they arrived from towns and even cities, although his data are not totally conclusive because they are based on ecological analysis of the more urbanized provinces. Unlikely as it seems, the migrants might have come from rural sections of the more urbanized provinces. One could also argue from a nondoctrinaire perspective of class that

rural origin does not necessarily mitigate a strong notion of class sensitivity and affiliation, particularly on the part of those motivated to migrate in the first place.

Another thesis that Little takes to task is the supposition that skilled craft unions opposed Perón and the new industrial sectors supported him between 1943 and the 1946 election. Although some unions were initially anti-Peronist and some pro-Peronist, the majority of the unions were originally ambivalent. Little categorizes Peronist support not by the trade or industry but by leadership receptivity to Perón's appeals.

Joseph Page's *Perón: A Biography* is a work full of contradictions. It contains an unusual combination of acute insights and superficial judgments, being both comprehensive and exhaustive in its coverage yet simplistic in the depth to which it probes any one concept or issue. Controversial points are raised, briefly held up to view, then unceremoniously dropped. The reader gleans many hitherto uncollected facts surrounding Perón but cannot utilize them to construct a developed intellectual portrait. For example, the biography offers little analysis of such key issues as Perón's dealings with the metropolitan powers or his views on Argentina's economic dependency. Nevertheless, *Perón* reflects prodigious reading and careful listening. Page obviously understands Argentina far better than most social scientists who claim to know Argentina but whose writings betray obliviousness to nuances. The biography is the account of a good journalist rather than a law professor, a beneficial perspective. But despite its length, the book still is too episodic and cursory and depends excessively on the analyses of others. Yet at times, Page's *Perón* is also extremely moving and entertaining. Consistently readable, it often presents tantalizingly different, yet seemingly valid, hypotheses for Perón's actions.¹

Page's best writing appears in his interpretations of the several crisis periods of Perón's life. For example, Page writes of Perón's military detention in October 1945 prior to becoming the junta's strong man:

He was prepared to retire from the arena, should circumstances suggest that his political career had aborted, but he also left open the possibility of a return to the fray in the event his fortunes revived. He hid in the protective mist of ambiguity (which some have mistaken for indecision) and preserved his options. At a time when the rest of Argentina was passionately dividing into pro- and anti-Perón factions, the subject of the controversy remained singularly uncommitted.

Page writes of Perón in exile:

The pursuit of power seemed to spur him to greater heights than its exercise. The challenge of putting together a political movement in the years from 1943 to 1946 had brought out the most creative aspects of his genius. Now a much more

arduous task loomed ahead. If boredom had overtaken him during his second presidency, the difficulties of conducting long-range political warfare on the men who had ousted him aroused him from his lethargy. It is crucial to keep in mind that what consumed him was the process of strategic and tactical maneuver, not any principled commitment to substantive goals.

The best of Page provides an excellent personal portrait of Juan Perón, yet Page seems unwilling to project hypotheses and analyses. In sum, *Perón* is a magnificent, yet pedestrian, work—magnificent in its picturesque descriptions and steady command of countervailing information, pedestrian in its failure to assess directly the larger philosophical and moral questions surrounding Argentine society and the role of Perón within it.

Lars Schoultz's *The Populist Challenge: Argentine Electoral Behavior in the Postwar Era* is densely constructed and reads almost like two monographs. Chapters 1 and 2 plus the conclusion comprise a competent summary of Argentine political history. Chapters 3 and 4 constitute a tightly knit statistical survey of voting patterns in the Peronist-dominated elections since 1946. The earlier chapters and the conclusion analyze Perón's historical multiclass coalitions and the deep reforms instituted in governmental responsibilities, social goals, and the political process itself. In the last area, however, Schoultz neglects some of the best literature on early Peronism and Peronism in exile, such as Murmis and Portantiero (1971) and Hodges (1976), although they are listed in his bibliography. Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to a multivariate analysis that, to this reader at least, is reminiscent of earlier studies of Peronist election returns done some years ago and evidences no new hypotheses despite the additional elections covered (compare Canton 1968 and Mora y Araujo 1975). *The Populist Challenge* is a modestly conceived, circumspect study that avoids the pitfalls of "ecological fallacy" that abound in compiling survey data on industrial development, poverty indices, migration, and population growth.

Schoultz's review of the literature on populism ably treats the well-known interpretations of Di Tella (1965) and Germani (1963) but surprisingly ignores some of the most stimulating work on the subject by Gramsci (1971) and Laclau (1977), and inferentially by Miliband (1977). The latter writers discuss the question of populism not only as a phenomenon of class and mass but from an ideological perspective as well.

The Populist Challenge categorizes the heterogeneous nature of the Peronist coalition, which includes factions of the military, white-collar employees, the national bourgeoisie, and the working class. It also makes clear that few groups remain permanently outside of Peronism's broadly cast net. Schoultz points out that only diehard liberals and revolutionaries were exempt from the appeals of Peronism. His findings,

which were apparently compiled with the help of a variety of governmental ministries and census personnel, corroborate scholars' increasingly layered understanding of Peronism. Peronist electoral support is associated with areas of industrial growth, rather than absolute levels of modernization.

Schoultz's conclusion about Perón's historical role parallels Rock's regarding the post-Perón restorationist policies of General Aramburu beginning in 1955. That is to say, both conclude that had the "Liberating Revolution" been content with ousting Perón without undermining so entirely the working-class gains of a decade, the subsequent history of Argentina might have been different. Schoultz's larger conclusion is somewhat problematic. He posits a "built-in instability" existing in Argentina that rages between liberal and populist models of development. But the factors that caused the Argentine malaise have been the rapacious intrusion of the military greeted by passive acceptance and even reliance on the military by vast sectors of Argentine society. This situation typifies the plight of weaker capitalist countries where those in the military are neither certain of the civil norms regarding their status nor assured of the institutionalized benefits available to their counterparts in the wealthier capitalist countries. Here the military's neurosis about the economic future makes them readily available to liberal calls to defend free enterprise and Western values.

The collection edited by Frederick Turner and Enrique Miguens, *Juan Perón and the Reshaping of Argentina*, parallels the latter sections of the Rock reader but is neither as scholarly nor as focused. It is instead a hodgepodge of disparate chapters, some good, some mediocre. Turner's perfunctory introduction is followed by various studies of Peronism, Evita, labor, religion, elections, terrorism, and entrepreneurs. I will discuss only those selections that have a bearing on populism and military authoritarianism. Marysa Navarro develops the feminist issue in her study of Evita's impact on Argentine politics and Peronism, a theme that needs reiterating. Evita's contributions must have accustomed Argentines to seeing women in political, administrative, social, and labor roles, and her public career probably inspired several generations of young women to pursue higher education or become involved politically.²

Gary Wynia's chapter focuses on several post-1955 governments to determine whether their respective strategies toward organized labor were "bargaining," "autocratic," or "cooptation." Bargaining was employed by the administrations of Frondizi and Illia, autocracy was Onganía's style, and cooptation was adopted during Perón's third administration. Wynia concludes that each strategy initially produced successes but eventually succumbed to political pressures. He attempts to distinguish between economic policy-making, which he considers nonpoliti-

cal, and societal or military pressures, which he terms political. This arbitrary distinction allows him to make the statement that "Onganía's achievement is very impressive. Labor protests were reduced to the lowest levels of the post-war period, wage increases were minimal, and inflation was reduced to its lowest in two decades." Apparently, nasty politics had not yet undermined antiseptic economic decisions. Wynia too often perceives politics as a necessary evil that interrupts the continuity of economic policy. He views politics in terms of personal aggrandizement and economics as a mode of national resource management. Consequently, he fails to comprehend the class nature of both popular demands and economic policy-making.

The chapter by Juan Carlos D'Abate takes a more structural-societal approach than those chosen by Navarro and Wynia. D'Abate describes the Peronist advances in labor legislation as inexorably reflecting the growth of labor as an economic and political force in an industrializing society. He then maps identifiable continuities in the early and late Perón administrations, continuities that reaffirm a commitment of thirty years. Wayne Smith's chapter on Perón's last years in Argentina is comparable to the De Riz book and the latter chapters of the Page biography. One could quibble with Smith's interpretations regarding the Cámpora government of early 1973, but by and large, he has written a well-researched piece of political journalism.

José Enrique Miguens's chapter entitled "The Presidential Election of 1973 and the End of an Ideology" is the most self-consciously theoretical essay in the book. It covers ground well trodden by Eldon Kenworthy (1975), Daniel James (1976), and Peter Smith (1972). Miguens critiques the early writings on Peronism and fascism, raising issues that have already been laid to rest. His grasp of Marxism also seems weak, as does his notion of the concept of political charisma as used, for example, by Max Weber (1947) and Erik Erikson (1969). Quoting Weber out of context on a leader's "extraordinary," "magical," and "supernatural" powers, Miguens continues: "To qualify Perón as a charismatic leader in this sense automatically disqualifies his followers as rational decision makers. . . . There were no 'supernatural' beliefs in this process." Agreed, but Miguens is flaying a dead horse. Later he states that if workers voted for Perón, it did not make them irrational or antilabor. It has been a long time since anyone has expressed such views. Miguens would like to tear Peronism bodily from the leftist tradition rather than accept its role as a populist alliance that includes labor support and leftist propositions on a number of social, economic, and foreign policy issues, positions that often coincide with those of traditional Marxist-Leninist political parties. The difference is that with Peronism the workers must share influence with other socioeconomic groups, but this distinction does not exclude Peronism from the tradi-

tion of mass movements of the progressive left. I would be the last to deny the gulf between Peronism and Argentine Marxism-Leninism, but to deny Peronism as a genuinely socialist form of populism is to ignore the great Argentine debate on the left among all those sectors from Perón's exile up to the present.

Manuel Mora y Araujo and Peter Smith focus on the Argentine 1973 election, as does Lars Schoultz, and the studies tend to corroborate each other in finding that Peronism is popular in industrially developing areas and is basically a working-class movement in the growing industrial cities. In addition, Mora y Araujo and Smith view Perón's appeal as a multiclass phenomenon in the poorest areas of the country. Their indicators of development include urbanization, quality of housing, infant mortality, the number of doctors per capita, and the ability to produce electricity. Their findings would have been more credible had they been able to lay their hands on cleaner and more conclusive data, such as indices of industrial growth, percentage of workers unionized, income data, tax data, unemployment ratios, and other indicators of poverty such as literacy rates and telephones and televisions per capita. Mora y Araujo and Smith nevertheless reach some cautious conclusions via the impact of two key variables, namely, that housing quality correlated negatively with a Peronist vote. They determined levels of industrialization circuitously by interpreting electrical consumption as indicative of greater industrialization, which leads to increased economic development, then to a higher standard of housing, resulting in lower totals of Peronist votes. At the close of this meticulous chapter, Mora de Araujo and Smith also demonstrate that Peronism receives "substantial support in industrial working class zones, for the most part, where *syndical organizations* enjoy a powerful influence over the masses. . . ." Their conclusion, which goes far beyond their data analysis, makes these assertions:

The Peronist vote in the less developed areas would be both a popular response to the conditions of life and a measure of elite capacity to control the mass vote through populist means that uphold the traditions—and the institutions—of conservative caudillismo. In the working-class areas, on the contrary, the Peronist vote can be attributed not so much to the prevailing conditions of social deprivation as to the legacy of the first Perón regime (1946–1955), an era marked by the strengthening of union organizations and by a notable tendency to redistribute economic resources in favor of industrial workers. The syndicates no doubt perpetuate the memories of this experience, and for them Peronism represents their major opportunity for increasing their power within society, rather than a solution to problems of social deprivation.

This analysis posits a new kind of "dualism" that I believe to be suspect because it could repeat the mistake of the Germani perspective on the nature of the support base of "early Peronism." It creates a dichotomy between support for a populist leader with a proven prolabor

track record and the need of the disadvantaged for improvement in their socioeconomic conditions. It seems to me artificial to disaggregate these motivations and thereby remove class considerations from the less developed regions of Argentina.

Roberto Pereira Guimarães has contributed a short, but significant, piece entitled "Understanding Support for Terrorism through Survey Data: The Case of Argentina, 1973." It seems to me that in this essay, he largely supports the testimony of Hodges (1976) and Gillespie (1982) in their studies of leftist-Peronist guerrillas and severely undermines the "powerlessness syndrome" thesis of Ernst Halperin (1976). Pereira Guimarães's evidence debunks the "deviant individuals" explanation as well as Ted Gurr's (1970) concept of "relative deprivation." In the Argentine case, Pereira Guimarães points out, the guerrilla struggle was strengthened most by the marginalization of Peronism and by the students' sympathy for the workers' plight as well as their determination to restore Peronism to power. These Argentines consciously chose to engage in the guerrilla struggle.

Frederick Turner's piece, "Entrepreneurs and *Estancieros*," probably should not have been included. His thesis is far afield from any understanding of Perón and Peronism. The piece reads like an afterthought, and its Pollyannish view often lacks a "feel" for Argentina. He surveys the levels of inter-elite agreement among members of the business and landowner communities and among other groups such as urban and rural workers, the middle class, and military officers. Turner finds that landowners and business executives agree more often than they disagree and that they resemble one another more than they resemble the other groups surveyed. Both survey questions and the interpretations of the answers were strained: "Many industrialists gave their occupation as *empleado gerente* (employee director), revealing their own perceptions of the classic difference between early and late capitalism, that is, between the earlier era when business executives (like contemporary *estancieros*) could own their companies, and later times in which they have become mostly chief administrators." This view perpetuates a myth that has been questioned by scores of researchers, including Kolko (1962) and Zeitlin (1970). Industrialists are often not only chief administrators but major stockholders or partners or both. Elsewhere Turner speaks of the landholders' "surprisingly high level of admiration of the *peones*." Slave owners and feudal lords undoubtedly also admired their slaves and serfs.

The Di Tella, De Riz, and Godio books all focus on the last Perón administration of 1973–75 and its denouement under Isabel Perón. All are serious contributions by insiders or close observers of the "last days of Perón," and they round out the story presented in Page's personality-oriented biography by providing complexity and wider perspectives.

Guido Di Tella's study deals most incisively with the Isabelita period after Perón's death on 1 July 1974 until the coup of March 1976. The De Riz and Godio books, which are much more sympathetic to the C mpera left-populist experiences, trace the aftermath dating from C mpera's accession in May 1973 to the Per n-Montonero falling-out just twelve months later in May and June of 1974.

In *Argentina under Per n, 1973–76: The Nation's Experience with a Labor-Based Government*, Di Tella focuses on the late-1974 culmination of right-wing Peronist domination under Jos  L pez Rega, who was Minister of Social Welfare and advisor to Isabel. The administration made a determined effort to isolate the movement of the Peronist youth and the Montonero guerrillas and thus end their access to the government entirely. Deciding on a political purge, a "dirty war" against the guerrillas, the administration unleashed the military. By mid-1975 a bureaucratic-authoritarian state resembling the Uruguayan model of post-1969 was already in place in Argentina. Its economic policies ended the brief C mpera flirtation with nationalistic, reformist, and antibusiness policies. Di Tella recounts a shift toward policies favoring foreign capital, a market economy, and a reliance on private capital to fuel investment and growth. This shift involved freeing prices, devaluating exchange rates, increasing prices of public services, keeping wages down, and curbing the power of the unions.

Di Tella accepts the notion that excessive union reaction to these policies and their "unchecked power" and "exaggerated demands and irresponsible behavior made a significant contribution to the pre-coup climate." In depicting the last year and a half of the third Peronist government, Di Tella acutely observes that these eighteen months in some ways paralleled the last thirty-six months (1952–55) of Per n's earlier administration, both periods comprising nearly 40 percent of each government's stay. Thus the latter part of each government's experience should not be viewed, as it has been so often, as unrepresentative of Peronism as such. Di Tella has no patience with "populist," "monopoly capitalist," or "bureaucratic-authoritarian" definitions because they imply clear-cut homogeneous periods that do not exist in actuality. For example, he finds that Argentine capital investments have increased independently of the types of government in Argentina between 1950 and 1978. This trend apparently reflects the growing technological complexity of Argentina and its capital needs. Di Tella's tables show a few deviations from the norm, but they are neither radical nor long lasting (pp. 146–47).

Di Tella also ascertains a commonality among different administrations in their economic policies vis- -vis inflation. The three Per n governments, the Frondizi government of 1958–62, and the Krieger Vasena policies under Ongan a all followed three stages in this cyclical

pattern: first, inflation was restrained until it resulted in serious imbalances; second, the inflationary process was rekindled; and third, pressures were created to “do something,” which opened the way for a new stage of “repression.” The Radical government of Illia (1963–66) constituted one of the prominent exceptions to this pattern. Interspersed with his economic analysis, Di Tella makes various penetrating observations concerning Argentina’s overall political life. He speaks of the political instability of late industrialization that has given rise to something like a three-party system, each one assuming power in different ways. Peronist-labor coalitions won relatively free elections in 1946, 1952, and 1973 (March and September); middle-class parties won the restricted elections of 1958 and 1963, when the Peronists were banned; and conservative groups took power in 1955, 1966, and 1976 through military coups.

Regarding the last Peronist experience, Di Tella criticizes the lack of consistency of its leadership. The initial leftward thrust was too shocking for the establishment, but the swing to normalcy under Perón had its costs, including an incoherent policy. The eventual move to the right under López Rega and Isabel Perón further split the coalition into its labor and bureaucratic political factions. Given these internal contradictions, Di Tella concludes, it was unrealistic to expect the Peronist administration to be more than a distributionist government with a reformist bent, one far from dedicated to radical structural changes. As he observes, “With limited objectives, the going was rough enough.” Because Di Tella was a collaborator in that governmental process, his opinions take on added cogency despite the resignation of his tone. Thus Di Tella provides a rather humanistic economic analysis of the last Peronist governments that displays an Argentine flair for economic analysis interlaced with sharp political judgments.³

Liliana De Riz, in *Retorno y derrumbe: el último gobierno peronista*, discusses the forces that led to engineering Perón’s return, his deteriorating coalition, the unleashing of right-wing Peronism, and eventually a full-scale military resurgence. She depicts this period as only the latest of the political crises that have comprised the continuing theme of Argentine society since 1940. Like Di Tella, De Riz also believes that the lack of a legitimate conservative tendency among civilians has unbalanced the political process and made the military its surrogate and major alternative to Radical-Peronista political domination. Thus by way of Gramsci, she posits the reasonable notion that a dominant-class hegemonic crisis exists that has not been superseded by a new class-based replacement in the political order. This approach is interesting but is unfortunately not elucidated in the book, which is a more straightforward compilation on the last years of Perón and Peronism prior to 1976.

Julio Godio’s *El último año de Perón* is the work of an avowed democratic socialist. When it avoids theoretical entanglements, the

work is informative and fair to all Argentine currents. More than any of the other books under review, *El último año de Perón* combines history, social analysis, ideology, and economics. Despite its modest title, the book depicts the larger clash of values occurring in contemporary Argentina.

By the late 1960s, the major Argentine initiative had shifted to the center of the Peronist movement, which had attracted a majority of Argentines from all generations and classes. It was basically an anti-military coalition spearheaded by the residue of the 1969 “Cordobazo,” which meant the Peronist militants inclusive of the Montoneros and the combative sectors of the Confederación General de Trabajo (CGT). The coalition then turned in upon itself when the struggle shifted to defining what that victory meant.

Godio’s book depicts the fratricidal warfare that by this point characterized the Peronist movement. The struggle was raging between the Peronist left and guerrilla factions versus the governmental and labor bureaucrats. Although Godio is sympathetic to the goals of the guerrillas, the Peronist youth and the “Peronismo de base,” he disagrees with their precipitous attempt to establish socialism in Argentina before solidifying a populist base led by Perón. By forcing Perón to act against them, they opened the door to a right-wing counterrevolution following the demise of the mediating figure of Perón. Godio makes the case that the labor unions were just as important as the radical left to the restoration of democracy and that the movement toward deepening democratic socialism had to pause to consolidate the victory fully before moving slowly ahead with total mass sympathy and involvement. He blames the Montoneros for the first breach in the popular coalition.⁴

Godio argues that a basic *modus vivendi* could have been achieved around an independent foreign-policy coalition that would have been antioligarchic, anti-U.S. capital, and anti-imperialist. But to have expected anything structurally deeper in 1973 would have been to misconstrue the thinking and capacities of Juan Perón. Perón came back with his rank restored, and he appeared in his military epaulettes from the balcony of the Casa Rosada, not as a “descamisado” as in 1945–46. He returned to persuade and accommodate, not to confront and isolate. This reality the Montoneros found hard to swallow, given his years of socialist rhetoric in exile.⁵

Alain Rouquié’s collection entitled *Argentina, hoy* encompasses the Argentina of Perón’s second presidency and the military experience afterward. A French sociologist, Rouquié has written the opening chapter entitled “Hegemonía militar, estado y dominación social,” which attempts to establish a relationship between economic stagnation and political crises. Like Di Tella and many others, Rouquié finds that the

Argentine military is a permanent power broker against whom and without whom nothing can be accomplished. Simply measuring economic downturn or stagnation as the prelude to military intervention is an insufficient approach because coups have also occurred after periods of economic upswings. Nor are interventions purely a function of the so-called oligarchy's dissatisfaction with the political process. Besides, the traditional oligarchy (the landowners) and the industrial interests are becoming increasingly interlinked as large agrarian capitalists undertake commercial and financial ventures. Basically, the agro-industrialists or "green industries" (those dealing with meat, cellulose, soybean, pulp, and food processing) hold sway until populist national pressures for political participation and income distribution build up to the point of being uncontainable. When the tilt becomes too unfavorable to key agro-industrial interests, the military's cyclical interventions restore their "domination without hegemony."

Ricardo Sidicaro, an Argentine sociologist, finds in another chapter that even when conditions for the agrarian bourgeoisie are optimal under military regimes favorable to the free market, their productivity and entrepreneurial adaptive skills leave something to be desired. Despite favorable prices of grain and other agricultural commodities in world markets, cattle production continues to be the predominant use of Argentine land. Moreover, the efficiency of the cattle industry has not improved despite sympathetic military governments.⁶ Yet despite these structural rigidities, it is clear that radical shifts in leadership and policies are more critical for Argentina than for most Third World countries that are much poorer in natural, technological, and population resources. The impression lingers that a determined and consistent political leadership could easily turn around a floundering nation. This "preindustrial" strategy of Argentina's, as Aldo Ferrer depicts it in a later chapter of the Rouquié book, has stultified a nation with enormous potential.

It was the working class that paid the greatest price during the military regime that came to power in 1976. In a subsequent chapter of the Rouquié collection, Argentine sociologist Francisco Delich explains that under the military, the working class's socioeconomic and political leverage fell to its lowest ebb since Perón's first government. Massive layoffs, astronomical losses of real wages, and frightening levels of political repression ensued. Rent stabilization was ended. The cost of all levels of education fell heavily on the working class, multiplying the number of student dropouts, and teachers deserted the classroom because of low pay scales. The litany of popular setbacks goes on and on. The growing debates between 1973 and 1975 among the working class about their ideological role, the place of the labor bureaucrat, and the

struggle for influence in the Peronist party apparatus were all temporarily put on hold. But they are unquestionably underway again under the administration of Raúl Alfonsín.

Other contributions to the Rouquié reader, including ideological, sociological, and cultural perspectives by Argentine sociologists Silvia Sigal and Eliseo Verón, West German sociologist Peter Waldmann, and Uruguayan writer Angel Rama employ divergent methodologies yet contribute to a possibly unintended consensus regarding Perón's return to power. According to this consensus, a new ecumenical Perón returned in 1973, ensconced in solid Argentine values and virtues, to assemble a majoritarian support unheard of in Argentina. Much of his "third position" outlook of the 1940s and the "socialismo nacional" posturing of the 1960s had been reduced by then to a moderate stance advocating a "social pact" among the competing social classes. The violence that Perón helped inspire he later categorically denounced. In 1973 he wrapped himself in the Argentine flag, thus encompassing almost all social groupings. This ability to embody the country's desire "to get on with it" delayed the Montoneros and other factions of the Peronist youth in their final suspension of belief and their acceptance of the total confrontation of the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) with the Peronist regime.

In conclusion, the enduring impact of Juan Perón may still have to be assessed. His contradictory writings, speeches, and actions foretell continual trauma and conflict within Peronism as it develops under the administration of Alfonsín's Radical party. Clearly, Perón adeptly managed an evolving majoritarian coalition that implicitly excluded nazism, Communism, the Argentine oligarchy, and imperialist dependency relationships. Many of his policy initiatives fostered a national-populist equilibrium equidistant from all radical positions. Certainly, Perón in exile was another person entirely, and in retrospect, one not to be taken seriously. Whatever the reasons (perhaps advancing age's obeisance to conciliation and the incapacity to sustain the energy required for structural revolution), Perón's restoration to power marked the return of a moderate, less combative Perón than the middle-aged Perón of the late 1940s and early 1950s. He seems to have immunized Argentines against fascism, and by the pervasive rhetorical power of "justicialismo," given the Argentine working class an ideological screen that filters out Marxism-Leninism. In his second coming, Perón almost ruled above party and faction, nearly dwarfing even Charles de Gaulle's stature in postwar France when he returned from self-imposed exile. Like de Gaulle, Perón developed personal movements, using the original Labor party and the Peronista party to achieve and consolidate power, yet remaining above its internal machinations and turmoil. In order to "save the republic," Perón used many vehicles to bring himself

back to power: first the CGT, then the Montoneros, then the military. Perón came home to save the left from the right and the right from the left. It is really vintage de Gaulle.

The Argentina that Perón shaped is still considered to be developing rather than developed, although it is certainly one of the most prosperous developing countries. What makes it less developed is more its political institutions than the nature of its society at large. What are the political shortcomings that prevent development? The problem apparently goes back to instability fostered by regime changes that have overhauled Argentine society in order to change the direction of previous regimes. Its political starts, shifts, and restarts have made it difficult for Argentine society to establish continuities of any kind in ideology, leadership, or policy.

NOTES

1. Page's biography demonstrates his familiarity with all kinds of literature—scholarly and popular, Argentine and foreign. But it will probably fail to satisfy historians and many social scientists because of its Guntheresque approach. Page relies heavily on Argentine biographical works, particularly Torcuato Luca de Tena's *Yo, Juan Domingo Perón*, as well as on his own fortuitous access to the Argentine army's bureau of historical studies. He also makes frequent use of the works of Robert Potash, Enrique Díaz Araujo, and Spruille Braden, as well as Perón's writings in exile.
2. Evita's influence as a role model for young women is evidenced not only by her creation of the "rama femenina" in the Peronist party but by the popular slogan of the 1970s, "Si Evita viviera, sería Montonera."
3. Di Tella's book is an informative economic analysis from the point of view of an intellectual who participated in the early months of the last Peronist government. *Argentina under Perón* also leads to certain normative perspectives about the larger Argentine society. Di Tella seems to speak for a segment of the Argentine intelligentsia when he refers to the "unhappy populist experience" of 1973–76. In doing so, he appears to condone the military intervention as being inevitable. This acceptance of military intervention as an unalterable fact of political life is what distinguishes Argentine society from Western industrial capitalist countries. Continually avoided are the issues of the military's internal decision-making apparatus, their "irresponsibility" when compared to other agencies of government, their mysterious procedures for selection and promotion, and their undue budgetary advantage. Di Tella's view of the military's role may be symptomatic in that it appears to legitimize such behavior as a matter of course. This view has considerable consequences in that it can lead to the intelligentsia's implied collaboration with a continuing ritual that is so dangerous to a nation's democratic institutions. The military in power, as distinct from other groupings and coalitions, plays less by the rules than any other faction. Constitutions, elections, the legislature, interest-group pluralism, human rights, and civil rights are all ignored when it suits the needs of the military government. Such behavior contrasts sharply with that of the Argentine populist and liberal civilian governments, which display far more sense of democracy and rule by a variable-sum approach to the solving of problems of development. In fact, since 1930 in Argentina, all major institutional, constitutional, and electoral decisions have been made by colonels and generals. The bottom line seems to have been the desire to protect their institutional prerogatives and their budgetary and pension privileges while staving off the unknown threat to their political status by left-populist movements regardless of who was in power. That pattern explains why cyclical compression and decompression have inflicted such hardships on the Argentine people.

Threats (mild or otherwise) to the military as a predominant interest have always been met forcefully, from the veto of Eva Perón's candidacy for the vice-presidency in 1951 to the ouster of a Peronist administration in disarray in 1976. These constraints remain even after Alfonsín's popular victory and political mandate.

4. To most of the workers, the "patria socialista" was the "patria peronista." Thus the Argentine youth needlessly isolated themselves by their implied, and later explicit, criticism of Perón. While the labor rank and file were seeking to decentralize the labor unions, democratize union elections, rotate assembly delegates more regularly, and establish better working conditions, the Peronist youth (led by the Montoneros and their strategic allies, the Marxist ERP guerrillas) were seeking to confront the right-wing Peronist elements that were slowly surrounding Perón and cutting off access to him. Godio criticizes their shotgun approach to confronting official Peronists of the right, the bourgeoisie, the police, and finally the military forces themselves. Instead of achieving Peronist consolidation, the large conglomeration disintegrated from within, a story that Godio dramatically tells with all its terrible agony and sacrifice.
5. Godio would argue that Perón's hand was forced when he was no longer willing to wield power. Others took his place, but the hand would describe a murderous arc. Laws were promulgated by "vertical" Peronism to reinstitute repressive antisubversive legislation, restore top-down hierarchy to the CGT affiliates, and finally unleash the military and the police as well as the secret AAA (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina), a paramilitary organization responsible for thousands of dead and "disappeared." The intra-Peronist struggle had the venal impact of putting the government on the offensive against its own militants, while the mass of workers remained passive and unorganized observers of the massacre. Thus the common consensus of the post-Cordobazo Peronist coalition was forgotten in the mayhem and anarchy that ensued, inviting the military's culminating purge of its own society.
6. In the five wealthy pampa provinces, for example, 52 percent of the land is controlled by thirteen thousand landowners. Seven thousand ranches (2 percent of the total) are dedicated entirely to cattle raising on 40 percent of the total land. Sidicaro also found that the largest landowners were the least likely to shift their land and resources to the production of grain, which is 300 percent more lucrative per hectare. On the contrary, their cattle production had declined by 5 to 10 percent—after five years of favorable military overseers.

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