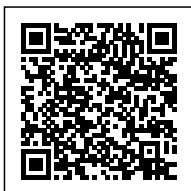


# A HISTORY OF ARGENTINE POLITICAL THOUGHT

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## John Hoover

Professor Romero's 1946 story of the political thought of his country still merits great respect. In its third Spanish edition, it has now been translated into lucid English and will increase understanding of Argentina among readers of that language.

Romero's work is much more than intellectual history; the spirit and feelings of the times may be sensed clearly through his acute analysis of the course of political and social thought during more than three centuries. This was the author's purpose. He sought "to reach from the plane of sharply focused ideas into the dark depths of elemental motives."

The division of the text into colonial, creole and "alluvial" periods rests easily on history. But the treatment of these eras is unique. It is marked, like much of today's historical writing, by strong overtones of the political, social, and behavioral sciences. For example, "colonialism" is perceptively described to explain what the colonial experience meant to the several social classes, what they thought, felt, and how they reacted to it. The very term "alluvial," characterizing the last six decades, sums up the unending superimposition of layer upon layer of foreign influences —people, customs, ideas, and things— which Argentina goes on branding as her own.

The interpretation of the colonial period is in the author's view of overriding importance; then Hapsburg and Bourbon bequeathed authoritarianism and liberalism, twin hammers to forge later national history. Not only was the "social reality of the future Argentina formed, but our spiritual attitude toward the most serious problems of our common experience was shaped."

The second, or creole, period has been given sympathetic analysis. Romero feels the idealism that moved Independence leaders in their unsteady efforts to find a basis for national organization, experimenting with doctrines and methods of the day, before being brought to see in the rock of the Rosas dictatorship the true political and social reality. The efforts of the Generation of 1837 —of Echeverría, Alberdi, Sarmiento and their allies— to find and form, through rigorous analysis of the political, economic, and social facts of Platine society, a new and energy-releasing basis of government, are recounted with pride. To Romero, theirs was the glory of creating the modern nation that, changing its traditional social order, surged into the twentieth century.

But Professor Romero's portrayal of the alluvial period may be the most significant contribution of his book. Aware that he cannot judge definitively, since the period is still in full course, he piercingly

identifies "the hostile elements that struggle

in its depths." Important, the old system, "adapted to the regulation of the conventional interplay between parties of the same social class," broke under compelling pressures for social reform. After that, socialism, syndicalism, communism and other burly competitors for status and acceptance opened the way for fascism and Perón. At the time of writing, Professor Romero was optimistic for the future. With wholesome national pride he had faith that the powerful forces shaping history would, as in the past, mold old and new ideas into a better reality, both unique and Argentine.

