A HISTORY OF ARGENTINE POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Artificial though it may be, the language barrier all too often limits the awareness in this country of major works by contemporary Latin American social scientists. The 1946 publication of José Luis Romero's *Las ideas políticas en Argentina* gained far too little circulation, although received with praise by the *HAHR* and a few other professional journals. It is happy indeed that Professor Thomas F. McGann has translated the work, for it constitutes a substantial analytical treatment of Argentine socio-economic forces as reflected in that nation's political development.

Strictly speaking, this is not a study of formal political thought, as McGann observes in his Introduction. To a degree the English title is misleading, although it is probably the best rendering of the Spanish. In any event Romero examines the course of Argentine affairs from the time of Mendoza in the 1530's down to the present, employing a chronological approach under the three rubrics of The Colonial Era, The Creole Era, and The Alluvial Era. In essence he pursues the coexistent but competitive streams of authoritarianism, liberalism, and democracy. These themes are interlaced through a study of the long struggle between *porteño* and *provinciano,* the Rosas era, the Constitution of 1853, the events of 1890, and the Radical surge to power under Yrigoyen in 1916.

The background discussion of The Colonial Era is perhaps the least significant portion, although Romero's handling of the contrast between the Hapsburg and Bourbon influence on the Plate River provinces is certainly competent. The Creole Era is distinguished in particular by discussion of the Generation of 1837. The author presents not only Alberdi's role in the drafting of the famous Constitution, but gives due attention to the writings and influence of such figures as Echeverría, Cané, and others. The agreements and divergences between Alberdi and Sarmiento are also presented with what must be regarded as uncommon clarity.

In Part Three Romero shows the extraordinary impact of the flood of immigrants on all levels of Argentine life. He rightly describes the Revolution of 1890 as a struggle between the landed oligarchy and what is today becoming known as the urban middle sector. Here the insight is keen and the perception penetrating as he studies the interaction of the broad forces exerting themselves upon the nation. Students of the Radical Party will find the treatment of the party origins and evolution highly interesting; they will regard somewhat less satisfactory his explanation of the ultimate failure of the Radicals as bearers of the banner of representative democracy.

Of particular interest is the inclusion of an Epilogue added by Romero to the 1959 Spanish edition, for it speaks of the post-1930 events. Dr. Romero, himself among those intellectuals removed from

university life by Perón, argues strongly that the fascist pattern was, given the circumstances, an understandable offshoot of the "anti popular" revolution of 1930. His condemnation of the 1930-1943 regime is strong, although he does relatively little to explain fully the effective shattering of the democratic movement during these years. His final comments are somewhat inconclusive, and –at least to this reviewer— he offers few thoughts suggestive of the possible future course of Argentine political trends.

Further mention must be given to McGann's role. He has added a brief but choice bibliography of relevant English-language works to Romero's selection of Argentine volumes. The translator has also provided a ten-page introduction setting forth some of the more striking parallels and similarities between Argentina and the United States. He cannot within this limited scope give forth the full range of possibilities, of course, but the framework is provocatively and soundly shaped. The translation itself is careful and thorough, conveying Romero's thoughts in English that is both precise in meaning and felicitous in phrasing. Many have said that the task of translation is as thankless as it is tedious —in this case, we are all greatly indebted to the dedicated scholarship of Professor McGann.