

Revolución y contrarrevolución en la Argentina. Volume I: 3rd ed. *Historia de la Argentina en el siglo XIX.* Volume II: 1st ed. *Historia de la Argentina en el siglo XX.* By JORGE ABELARDO RAMOS. Buenos Aires, 1965. Editorial Plus Ultra. Notes. Pp. 431, 703. Paper.

In the words of its author, this work presents Argentine "national history from the Marxist point of view" (I, 8). To its publishers it represents the materialist conception of history. To the reviewer it seems more ultranationalistic than either Marxist or materialist. In reinterpreting the most controversial aspects of its history, Jorge Abelardo Ramos argues that Argentina has never approached fulfillment of its grand destiny—a destiny to be achieved only by the new revolution he advocates. The Revolution of May failed to attain the ultimate objective of Moreno, San Martín, and other prime movers. Instead of the continental nation which they envisioned, the Latin Americans got only Balkanization and insularity. Counterrevolution forestalled Argentina's manifest destiny. ("*Somos un país porque no pudimos integrar una nación y fuimos argentinos porque fracasamos en ser americanos*" [I, 9].) Within the limits of this major theme, the author seems to see in successive national crises a frustrating cycle of smaller revolutions and counterrevolutions.

Ramos professes utter disdain for what he terms the hypocritical history of the university lecturer and the professional historian. Because their conventional interpretations play directly into the hands of the "dominant class" (II, 697), the Marxist historian must seek a new approach. Twentieth-century Argentina still faces problems ignored during the previous century, he suggests, but under new conditions created by neo-imperialism: the rise and decline of two great national movements, radicalism and peronism; the transition from an agrarian state to a new stage of industrial development; the army's participation in public affairs; the decline of old political parties; and the appearance of new forces. But all these changes have encountered a single unvarying obstacle—the power of the stock-raising and commercial oligarchy. Assisted by such influential cultural agencies as the great daily newspapers and the universities, the oligarchy has perpetually intimidated the new forces and precluded every possibility of economic progress. Diverse social classes and interest groups led by Yrigoyen, Perón, Frondizi, and others have governed the country without solving its basic problems and without destroying the power of the oligarchy. Only the proletariat has not had its chance to govern, and since it is "*el ejército más fiel a los*

intereses nacionales” (II, 703), it is the only class that can cleanse Argentina of its oligarchical parasitism.

Within this frame of reference Ramos makes effective use of world events and their influence on Argentina’s evolution. As a social historian he seeks to combine economic processes, political conflicts, literary trends, and changing mores into a harmonious synthesis. In marshalling data from these diverse fields he reveals an astonishing command of both personalities and ideas.

One of Ramos’ favorite techniques is labelling Argentine leaders. His gallery of heroes contains strange combinations and epithets. San Martín was “an intrepid revolutionary” (I, 26) and Moreno “the greatest revolutionary of his age” (I, 21). Artigas, Alberdi, Quiroga, Roca, and José Hernández and “Martín Fierro” receive special pedestals. In working to efface antinational loyalties the Generation of ’80 was perhaps the only truly Argentine one. His selection of whipping-boys is equally disparate. Rivadavia was “a reformer who never existed” (I, 79). Rosas was politically “a reactionary from head to foot, insensitive to progress” (I, 137). Mitre’s presidency was “a disaster” (I, 254), his government “sinister” (I, 154). Sarmiento was *loco* (I, 241), his *Facundo* an “hermosa mentira” (I, 242). Quintana was “a dandy who dressed himself in Paris and inspired himself in London” (II, 49). Alvear was “a madcap and a loafer” (II, 249). The founders and editors of *La Nación* and *La Prensa* were “*bandidos de la prensa venal*” (I, 261).

Throughout the book, Great Power imperialism in general and British influence in particular receive caustic treatment. From its alleged intrigues in the May Revolution to its later domination of Argentine railways, Britain provided “a classic model of imperialist duplicity” (I, 144). The United States and its leaders receive equally rancorous indictments. President Franklin Roosevelt is condemned for “his evangelizing and loathsome oratory” (II, 500). Secretary Hull is characterized as “a hard-crusted puritan” (II, 527), Ambassador Braden as “an obese and brutal man” (II, 581), and Mayor La Guardia as a “mixture of Sicilian gangster and political ‘boss’ ” (II, 572).

Ramos expresses satisfaction that the two earlier editions of his work (1957, 1961) have aroused general hostility among his natural adversaries. If antagonizing readers is an effective way to sell books, then this greatly amplified edition should promptly join the earlier ones as sellouts, for in his continuing iconoclasm he has spared few sacred Argentine historical images, even those created by Ricardo Levene and his “acolytes” (I, 23). Because his “heterodox book”

(I, 7) is used in some universities, the author says, he has placed all footnotes at the foot of the page. In whatever ways the work may be used in Argentine universities, it will serve American students most effectively if regarded as an exhortatory tract, not as a scholarly historical survey.

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Carlos Pellegrini. El estadista sin miedo. By JORGE NEWTON. Buenos Aires, 1965. Editorial Claridad. Illustrations. Bibliography. Pp. 282.

Carlos Pellegrini was one of the outstanding members of the so-called Generation of '80 in Argentina. For over thirty years, from 1872 until his death in 1906, he played a prominent role in *criollo* politics, holding the offices of provincial deputy in Buenos Aires, national senator, cabinet minister, vice-president, president, and finally (as leader of a reform faction within the elite) national deputy. That Pellegrini possessed an active mind is shown both by his observations on the contemporary scene and by his analyses of Argentina's economic and social problems. He founded or helped to found the Argentine National Bank and a club of industrialists which later became the Unión Industrial Argentina. At the end of his career he organized an opposition faction that eventually sponsored the electoral reform laws of 1911-1912, paving the way for the victory of the Radical Party in 1916. Pellegrini had the rare ability to stand outside his group and to compare it to other ruling elites, while at the same time taking part in its social and economic activities. A biography of this extraordinary figure thus could be the story of an important period in Argentine history and an examination of the men who guided the country's destinies for almost fifty years.

The book under review unfortunately does not realize the possibilities inherent in its subject. Newton concentrates primarily upon political events, interspersing his narrative with excerpts from Pellegrini's writings which provide only glimpses of the thinker or economist. The work presents Pellegrini's life and times but does not balance one against the other or use the central character as a means through which to examine the period as a whole. Pellegrini becomes just another politician lost in a maze of anecdotal material and cumbersome detail. For example, we learn the fate of his commanding officer in the Paraguayan War (p. 23), and the author dedicates thirty pages to the Revolution of 1890 (pp. 104-134), but there is