

tence of concentration camps if the book had not been published in Moscow.

Rutgers University

ROBERT J. ALEXANDER

*Los centros agrícolas en la provincia de Buenos Aires.* By NOEMÍ M. GIRBAL DE BLACHA. Buenos Aires: Fundación para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, 1980. Tables. Maps. Appendixes. Bibliography. Pp. 184. Paper.

This interesting and factual book will appeal to scholars concerned with Argentine socioeconomic history during the speculative boom of the late 1880s (and during the subsequent economic crash) and particularly to students of land policy. It is a doctoral dissertation and exhibits many of the common problems of that genre: poor organization, redundancy, and needless detail. Nonetheless, Noemí M. Girbal de Blacha's book, which focuses on an important and often forgotten Buenos Aires land law of 1887, makes a significant contribution to Argentine historiography.

With the aim of promoting agricultural development and settlement, the Buenos Aires legislature passed a law to permit the formation of *centros agrícolas*, or communities of small owner-operator farmers. Despite this lofty purpose, the law contained fundamental flaws and was a disastrous failure. Entrepreneurs who took advantage of the large and extremely favorable mortgage loans that the province's Banco Hipotecario made available to buy land for the *centros* often charged such high prices that farmers were unable to acquire their own plots. In the meantime, these entrepreneurs used both lands and loans for their own purposes. This process helped wreck the Banco Hipotecario and added to the already staggering provincial debt. The provincial administration, which by 1890 had entered a period of complete chaos, failed to enforce the law's safeguards, and permitted this speculative abuse to continue for several years. Of the 295 *centros* created under the law, only 12 were complying with its terms in 1894. Thus, speculators gained, while the public lost and while most Buenos Aires farmers remained without their own land.

University of Washington

CARL E. SOLBERG

*Los estancieros.* By MARÍA SÁENZ QUESADA. Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1980. Bibliography. Pp. 339. Paper.

This book is the third published to date as part of a series (*Conflictos y armonías en la historia argentina*) under the editorial guidance of the prolific writer Félix Luna. This is María Sáenz Quesada's second book, but her writing is well known in a variety of occasional and periodical publications. She is a niece of Justo P. Sáenz (h), who was in his lifetime the charismatic doyen of Argentine folklorists, bound together, as many still are, by consuming interests in estancia and gaucho history, lore, and culture. Doubtless her family affiliations, transcending those to her uncle, served to nurture in her a sentimental affection and broad knowledge concerning the topic she now treats. She is also a teacher of history at the Universidad de Belgrano. Her intellectual gifts as well as her expressive artistry are amply displayed in this informative and useful popular history of the estancieros, chiefly Porteños, who have figured prominently, often decisively, in the long history of Argentina and especially in that of the humid pampas.

This work is clearly intended for the lay reader. Sáenz Quesada warns us in her introduction (p. 13) that hers is not an empirical study based on unimpeachable archival sources, but an effort to exploit the best of a vast literature on the theme. Her bibliography contains 160 citations. Perceptive and demanding scholars will be disappointed, perhaps even appalled, that indispensable contributions are omitted.

The virtue of *Los estancieros* is that María Sáenz Quesada set out to produce a readable panorama of the ranching history of her country, emphasizing the important role played in its formation and development by identifiable persons who, she rightly acknowledges, occupy a highly controversial place in making Argentina the nation it has become. This large book was not aimed at the invention of an apologia. Sáenz Quesada is candid in avowing that she is not prepared to offer any conclusive or final judgments, moral or scientific, on such a diverse and variable group of people as were and are the estancieros of Argentina.

She tells her story elegantly and encyclopedically, admittedly stressing its positive side and thereby risking the hostility and resentment of those who, with or without reason, have chosen to regard all estancieros as sinister and destructive.

This reviewer is especially grateful to María Sáenz Quesada for including considerable information on Black slaves and their descendants who once played a vital role in Argentina's development.

This is not an unflawed book. The author falls short in demonstrating satisfactorily the power allegedly wielded by *inmigrantes chacareros* (p. 12 *passim*). She is wrong in assuming that the failure for so long to plant trees in the pampas can be attributed merely to the fear of settlers that in so doing they would obstruct the horizon of prompt sight of hostile

Indians (p. 30). And she may be justly chided for suggesting that Africans failed to reproduce themselves because it was so cold in Argentina's plains (p. 39). These are among the smaller disappointments found in this otherwise readable and honest book. Not least of its charms are the five brief commentaries at the end of the book by historic personalities who offer reminiscences of their lives on estancias, each a reminder of the enormous variability of motives characteristic of estancieros.

California State University, Long Beach

WILLIAM R. SVEC

*Judge and Jury in Imperial Brazil, 1808–1871: Social Control and Political Stability in the New State.* By THOMAS FLORY. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiii, 268. Cloth. \$19.95.

Some ideologies are so potent and so fascinating that they compel their devotees to apply them to conditions radically different from those that engendered them. As it is with Marxism in the late twentieth century, so it was with liberalism in the early nineteenth. The application of liberalism to Brazil in the first two decades after Independence (1822–42) and the consequences of that application are the themes of Thomas Flory's solidly researched and well-written book.

As the first part of Flory's study shows, liberal principles tended to reduce government to a nightwatchman role and to exalt the law as the indispensable and neutral guarantor of, and arbitrator between, individual citizens' rights and liberties. Justice being an emanation of the nation, identified with the people, meant that the judiciary should, at least at the lower levels, be democratically elected. In the French Revolution these imperatives produced the *juge de paix*, the archetypal institution that was authorized by the Brazilian Constitution of 1824 and enacted by the law reforming municipal government in 1828.

It is upon the office of the *juiz de paz* ("justice of the peace"), its functioning from 1828 to 1841, and the causes for its failure within the Brazilian context that Flory's study focuses. The author's treatment of the subject is pioneering and sound, but his *engagé* stance, while it adds spice and fire to the work, is not always advantageous. We are, quite simply, not allowed to forget that the liberals wore white hats, and that any foes were bad guys, acting out of reactionary or meretricious motives. This ideological stance is serious since, in this particular case, the black hats won. The *juizes de paz* as originally constituted lasted only thirteen years, while the "reactionary" system that replaced them in 1841 has endured with modifications to the present.