

Programs and Student Affairs at the university's Center for Latin American Studies, a position that he held until a matter of days before his death. It is indicative of Richmond's modesty and generosity of spirit that he began the letter to his colleagues announcing his retirement with "I hope you've all had a good summer." Indeed, it bears repeating the words that appeared in his formal obituary: "All of us who love Richmond say good-bye with heavy hearts, even as we treasure our memories of this extraordinary man who gave so much to so many and never thought of himself as extraordinary."

Richmond is survived by his beloved wife, Ida; his parents Richmond P. and Laura Frances Brown of Arley, Alabama; brother Kevin Brown and his wife Traci and children Campbell and Cameron of Montgomery, Alabama; brother John Brown and his wife Marie and son Aidan of Boston, Massachusetts; and by many friends, colleagues, and students. Richmond faced many challenges, not the least of which were Hurricane Katrina and multiple bouts with cancer, but he never lost his indefatigable good spirit. He was an enormously positive presence in the lives of many.

Donations may be made to the Richmond F. Brown Graduate Fund, established in his honor by the University of Florida Center for Latin American Studies to support the master's degree students to whom he was so devoted. Checks should be made payable to the UF Foundation, Inc. (indicate on the memo line "Fund 020871") and sent to the Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, 319 Grinter Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611. Donations in Richmond's name to the Southern Poverty Law Center are also welcome.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-3933868

### **Robert A. Potash (1921–2016)**

Robert A. Potash, who died at the age of 95, left an indelible mark on the writing of twentieth-century Argentine history. Few North Americans who have written on that perplexing nation's history have had such remarkable influence or enjoyed a more widespread reputation.

Potash was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1921 and retained his New England roots throughout his life. Educated at the prestigious Boston Latin

Special thanks to Potash's graduate student Jim Buchanan for his insights and assistance in the preparation of this obituary.

School, where he graduated first in his class in 1938, he enrolled at Harvard University, where he majored in history with an emphasis on Latin America. His entrance into the doctoral program in history at Harvard was interrupted by a four-year stint in the army during World War II, an experience that would do much to shape his later scholarly interests. Returning to Harvard to resume his graduate work, he was one of the many distinguished Latin Americanists trained by Clarence Haring. Originally intending to focus on Argentina, Potash was redirected, for financial and other reasons, to Mexico for his dissertation research. The result was a finely crafted study of an industrial development bank in the immediate postindependence period, the Banco de Avío. The revised dissertation was published in 1959 by Mexico's Fondo de Cultura Económica under the title *El Banco de Avío de México: El fomento de la industria, 1821-1846*. An English-language version, dedicated to "scholar and friend" Charles Gibson, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 1983.

With his dissertation completed, Potash accepted a position as an instructor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1950. As he recalled, the teaching load was 12 hours, 9 of which were dedicated to European history. He was able to offer one course a semester on Latin America; in later years, especially after a two-year leave at the State Department in the mid-1950s, he was able to focus more of his teaching on his specialty. Potash remained at the University of Massachusetts Amherst until his retirement in 1986 as the Clarence and Helen Haring Professor of History. During his time at the university, he served as head of the History Department, chair of the Committee on Latin American Studies, and director of the University Argentine Program.

As with his military service, Potash's two years at the State Department, from 1955 to 1957, did much to influence his scholarly trajectory. At State, he worked in the Latin American Research and Intelligence Division, where he was an analyst of developments in Argentina during the tumultuous period following the fall of Juan D. Perón. Potash's brief stint in Washington thus became the springboard for his three groundbreaking studies of the role of arguably the most important single actor in Argentine political history from the 1920s to the 1980s: the Argentine Army.

Potash's first volume, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1928-1945: Yrigoyen to Perón*, appeared in 1969. It was marked by the same careful scholarship and archival research that had characterized his book on the Banco de Avío. It also had two features that were up to then relatively uncommon in the writing of Argentine political history. One was the extensive use of oral interviews of major military and civilian political figures interwoven into the text. Another was a reliance on US diplomatic reports on Argentina found at the US National

Archives for insights into internal political developments given the unavailability of (or difficulty of access to) manuscript sources in that country. In this volume, then, could be seen the influence of Potash's own military experiences as well as his exposure to the records of the State Department and firsthand appreciation of the richness of the documentary evidence available there. The second volume of Potash's trilogy, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1945–1962: Perón to Frondizi*, was published in 1980. The third volume, which Potash hesitated at first to write until various members of the military offered him unprecedented access to archives and interviews, appeared in 1996 under the title *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1962–1973: From Frondizi's Fall to the Peronist Restoration*.

All three of these volumes were published by Stanford University Press. Significantly, soon after they appeared they were translated into Spanish by the prestigious Argentine publishing house Editorial Sudamericana. From the first volume on, they became instant best sellers in Argentina, prominently displayed in the shop windows of bookstores in Buenos Aires and as eagerly awaited as the next John Grisham thriller. Argentine readers appreciated the thoroughness and balance provided by Potash's scholarship and the frequent behind-the-scenes looks into a recent past that many knew so well. Potash brought an integrity, objectivity, and perspective to the writing of Argentine political history that stood out from domestic accounts, which were often partisan and argumentative. He also benefited from a reputation that encouraged major players to open up to him as one who would treat them fairly (and perhaps to grasp the opportunity to have their version of events enter into a respected historical record). I heard more than one Argentine historian remark, perhaps with a bit of envy, that Potash was able to elicit interviews from major figures in the military regimes who would never allow them such access. Whatever the case, Potash produced three extraordinary volumes that set the standard for any subsequent treatment of the subject. To the benefit of future historians, Potash donated his papers, including his extensive interviews with the major Argentine political figures, to the University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, where they are available for consultation.

The respect that Potash enjoyed in Argentina was evident in the many honors that he received from institutions in that country. These included being named a corresponding member of the National Academy of History of the Argentine Republic and being awarded the Distinguished Service Order by the Argentine Army. In addition, in 1997, 11 years after retirement, he became an elected corresponding member of the Academic Committee of the Commission of Enquiry into the Activities of Nazism in Argentina.

Despite his celebrity, Potash remained modest and unassuming. His graduate students remembered him as self-disciplined and serious, encouraging them to pursue their own research paths with helpful suggestions if they veered off course. As a mentor, he was as generous and accessible as he was demanding, guiding his students in pursuit of the standards that he unfailingly modeled himself.

Potash had a truly memorable career. Few North American historians were as well-known, more highly respected, and more influential in the Latin American country that they studied and wrote about than he. In 2008, he self-published a personal memoir, *Looking Back at My First Eighty Years: A Mostly Professional Memoir*. It is scheduled to appear in a Spanish translation and, if history is any guide, will soon be another best seller in the country to which Potash devoted so much of his time, effort, and talent.

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DOI 10.1215/00182168-3933880