
This excellent book exults the author's affection for his beloved Magallanes. In well-written prose, he presents the story of the Straits of Magellan from the time Ferdinand Magellan made his extraordinary contribution to the expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century. We witness a parade of explorers, filibusters, colonizers, scientists, and entrepreneurs from many lands; we learn about remarkable men and ships and the cycles of prosperity and oblivion experienced in such confines, and the swift transit of the centuries takes us from Magellan's fragile ships to today's supertankers.

Martínic emphasizes the significance of the effective control of the region exercised by Chile since 1843. Especially useful is his description of the economic development during the last century, the evolution of Punta Arenas, and the commercial golden age of the area, which came to an end with the opening of the Panama Canal. Throughout the narrative flows the central theme of this work—Chile's rightful claim to her sovereignty over the full length of the straits. Martínic's contention strikes at the heart of the conflict between Chile and Argentina. Chile asserts that by the 1902 treaty she must have unrestricted sovereignty on the Pacific, while Argentina will exercise an exclusive domain on the Atlantic side. Argentine authors also disagree with other Martínic viewpoints, as exemplified in his judgment of Luis Piedra Buena [sic], upon whom Argentina bestows the status of a national hero.

This work is enriched by excellent illustrations, appendices, indexes, and a number of statistics. Especially valuable is an enlarged map of the straits. At a time when Chilean and Argentine presses are producing a plethora of publications filled with nationalistic overtones about their southern territories, Martínic's study adds a patriotic contribution to the cause of chilenidad.

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