
Sandra McGee Deutsch's admirably researched book treats the formation, composition, ideology, and activities of the Argentine Patriotic League, an ultraconservative movement established after the Semana Trágica in January 1919 to repress "bolshevism," and to create programs to "nationalize" the Argentine immigrant working class. The league's importance stems from its guise as the first movement of its kind in Argentina to command wide popular support; its attempts to institutionalize its support; and its role in developing Argentina's distinctive right-wing political culture. McGee Deutsch intends her work to be a case study of a "counterrevolutionary" movement, which she tries to locate within a taxonomy of broadly similar movements in Argentina and elsewhere. The book addresses theoretical issues (e.g., what is fascism?), and spans the period from 1900 to the early 1930s although its central concerns are with the years 1919 to 1923, the highpoint of the league's influence. The book treats the league's activities in Buenos Aires and beyond, and the growth of its philosophy of "practical humanitarianism" which was designed to promote class conciliation. Lastly, McGee Deutsch shows how counterrevolutionary ideas evolved into the early 1930s, and she contrasts the league's position with that of the Uribistas and early "nacionalistas." In addition to its central theme, the book deals with anti-Semitism, the activities of women in the league, and the issue of why Argentina failed to develop an institutionalized and representative conservative party.

I find much to praise in this book. McGee Deutsch, for example, has provided a much fuller account than any of its predecessors of the xenophobic incidents of 1909–10 that proved a foretaste of 1919. Her extensive discussion of women's activities in the league is handled with skill and persuasiveness: women appear here less as independent agents than as the instruments of men in their efforts to dominate other men, and as tools to indoctrinate forthcoming generations. The author sets anti-Semitism in its context (for this period) as sporadic and chaotic. She carefully illustrates the vital change that occurred in the ultraright at the end of the 1920s, as the essentially liberal Manuel Carlès, leader of the league, broke with the corporatist Uriburu on the issue of personal freedoms and political persecution. The book is excellently and often quite originally documented, and well balanced in its treatment and tone. It represents a most substantive contribution to the subject under study.

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