
This short work offers an interpretation of political and economic events in Argentina during the period of the conservative order from 1870 to 1914. It is not a piece of primary research, but rather a reinterpretation of that well-studied period, enlightened by dependency theory and focusing on the causes of social and economic marginality in contemporary Argentina.

The title serves as outline to the essay. The progress is the foundation of the conservative order directed by the generation of ‘80, emphasizing political cohesion among the elites and economic expansion in the world export market. The crisis is the appearance of the Radical party and the breakdown of the elite consensus in the 1890s, and the accompanying succession of financial and agricultural crises. The marginality appears most clearly in the first decade of the twentieth century, when it becomes apparent that economic expansion and political reform had been accomplished at the expense of regional balance in Argentina. The prosperity of the interior provinces was sacrificed, and their political independence undermined, by the growth of the export-oriented Littoral. A case study of the province of Santiago del Estero is employed to demonstrate that as Argentina was moving to the periphery of the world export market, so too were the interior provinces becoming marginal within the Argentine economy and political system.

As an interpretive work, the book relies on secondary sources, although there is an occasional citation from primary documents. It is also singularly uninformed by any sources originally published in English, including important works by Carlos F. Díaz Alejandro, Richard Walter, and David Rock. Major Argentine secondary sources are well covered, however.

The book does make a small contribution to the study of an issue of interest in Argentine economic history: the timing of the beginning of the demise of the export economy. Many earlier studies placed this at the time of the crash of 1929; some later ones began to push it back to World War I. Girbal de Blacha places it squarely, and rather convincingly, in the 1890s. She also makes a contribution to dependency literature with her study of Santiago del Estero as marginality in microcosm. For these reasons, the book holds some interest for specialists in the economic development of the period.

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