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Recommended Citation

WKU Latin American Studis, "UA68/2/1 Intercambio Internacional, Vol. XII, No. 1" (1993). *WKU Archives Records*. Paper 3660. http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_records/3660

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FROM THE EDITOR

We are delighted to have a new issue of *Intercambio* to share with our many friends and colleagues. The Latin American Studies program here at Western is alive and flourishing and, after a 3-year hiatus, we hope to return to regular issues of *Intercambio*. Latin America offers wonderful and stimulating opportunities to explore the myriad relationships between our two realms. The region is undergoing a period of profound change, and many analysts view Latin America as a vital component of the post-cold war global economy and society.

More than ever, interdisciplinary approaches are needed to Latin America's most challenging problems if the region is to achieve long-term and sustained improvements in basic human welfare. In this issue, we focus on the socioeconomic restructuring underway in Argentina. A Fulbright-Hays trip in 1990 provided Dr. Mark Lowry an opportunity to examine how Argentina is coping with the aftermath of military repression. And after a visit to Buenos Aires in April 1993, your editor reflects on the economic changes underway in Argentina. As always, we encourage you to write to us with information about your Latin American activities. We invite submissions of short articles or reports (no more than 1500 words) to *Intercambio* and look forward to sharing with you the activities of Latin Americanists here at Western Kentucky University.

Hasta luego y un fuerte abrazo.

David J. Keeling, Editor
Department of Geography and Geology



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESTRUCTURING IN ARGENTINA: IS THE MEDICINE KILLING THE PATIENT?

David J. Keeling
Department of Geography and Geology

Walking around downtown Buenos Aires these last few months, you could be forgiven for thinking that both city and nation had fallen on hard times. Holes in the sidewalks, vacant lots, abandoned buildings, rubble collecting in construction skips, and increasing numbers of poor and homeless people on the streets suggest a serious social and economic crisis. The scars on the urban landscape, however, are evidence of the radical

surgery being performed on Argentina by the federal government. In an attempt to breathe life back into Argentina's sick and ailing economy, President Carlos Menem has instituted a program of socioeconomic restructuring. Relying on a major transfusion of capital and new free-market policies, Menem's government hopes to propel Argentina toward a period of socioeconomic growth unmatched since the golden years of the late nineteenth century.

You need to look no further than downtown Buenos Aires to appreciate the far-reaching implications of Argentina's restructuring efforts. Buenos Aires reflects the mood of the nation and the pulse of Argentine society. *Como va Buenos Aires, también la Argentina*—As Buenos Aires goes, so goes Argentina. The mood on the street suggests ambivalence about the possibilities of long-term success. The porteños (residents of the federal district), along with their fellow citizens, have reason to be skeptical about politically induced socioeconomic change. Sixty years of political instability, economic mismanagement, and public service inefficiency have left Argentina struggling to find its place in the

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Intercambio Internacional is a publication of the Center for Latin American Studies at Western Kentucky University with editorial offices in room 1 of Cherry Hall, telephone 502/745-5334. The opinions and conclusions contained in articles printed in this journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of Western Kentucky University nor the opinions of its officers.

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Manuscript contributions are welcome from anyone interested in Latin America and hemispheric cooperation and exchanges. Articles may be in English, Portuguese, or Spanish. Send your contributions (hard copy and 3.5" disk, DOS, WordPerfect 5.1) to: Center for Latin American Studies, Office of International Programs, Western Kentucky University, 1526 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101.

world. Argentinos are aware that their country has progressed from having a "brilliant future" to having a "brilliant past." A psychology of underdevelopment now permeates Argentina's institutional structures, weakening the planning and organizational capabilities of the country (Gamba-Stonehouse 1992).

ARGENTINA UP FOR SALE

Privatization and deregulation strategies, and decreased state involvement in the economy, form the backbone of the government's restructuring program. Drawing on the free market principles espoused by GATT and the dominant trading regions of the post-Cold War world economy (North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia), the Menem government is embracing foreign capital, multinational corporations, and regional neighbors as it attempts to revitalize the nation. Argentina is up for sale. Railroads, telephones, airlines, water works, roads, subways, manufacturing plants, and the electric and oil companies all have been placed on the auction block in recent months.

Holes in the Buenos Aires sidewalks are symbolic of the radical changes occurring in Argentina as the country's assets are sold to private concerns. The two companies that took over Argentina's state-run telecommunications system, Telecom Argentina and Telefónica de Argentina, are busy digging up the streets of Buenos Aires as they replace old cables and switching equipment. Curiously, Telecom received the rights to provide service in northern Argentina, while Telefónica services the south. There is no effective competition between the two companies. Even Buenos Aires is neatly divided between the two operators. Many people complain that the city's phone service has deteriorated rather than improved, and rates have increased dramatically since privatization.

Argentina's national railroad network, long a source of exasperation, embarrassment, and fiscal disaster for the federal government, is being sold piecemeal. A host of different companies and U.S./Argentine consortiums have bid for the rights to operate specific sections of track. Unfortunately, no national plan exists to rectify the system's gauge incompatibility (there are at least three different track widths) or to address the country's interurban and interregional passenger needs. Many passenger services to the interior have been withdrawn permanently or reduced to one train per week. Moreover, vital rail and road connections to neighboring countries still are inadequate and poorly maintained.

Even the subway system and suburban railroad network in Buenos Aires are up for sale. Several companies have bid successfully on portions of the network, and the transfer of ownership and operations is proceeding rapidly. Perhaps the familiar delays, cancellations, power failures, poorly maintained track, decrepit rolling stock, dingy stations, and broken windows and seats that characterize urban rail travel in Buenos Aires will become distant memories. Privatization rhetoric promises the swift transformation of the networks into models of urban transport efficiency befitting one of the

world's ten great megalopoli. However, porteños are not standing breathless on the threshold of anticipation!

Argentina's government believes it can assert itself in the new global political and economic environment by successfully implementing privatization and deregulation policies. Indeed, productive investments in the form of capital and infrastructural development are crucial to the country's long-term future. Unfortunately, to date, privatization strategies have not induced productive investment in Argentina. Rather, a speculative real estate boom has encouraged the construction of shopping malls, high-rise condominiums, elite sports facilities, and luxury boutique centers. Jobs are not being created, social issues are not being addressed, and the poor get poorer as the wealthy go on spending sprees (Barton 1992). Furthermore, the urban and rural infrastructure that Argentina so desperately needs has yet to materialize. New roads, railroads, sewer systems, water mains, electrical plants, hospitals, schools, and housing for the urban poor remain on the drawing board, victims of bureaucratic inertia and government corruption.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

At the regional level, President Menem and Domingo Cavallo, the Harvard-educated economic minister, are pursuing aggressively an economic alliance with Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. The Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) is scheduled to take effect fully in 1995. MERCOSUR's members hope to replicate the regional economic transformation occurring in Europe driven by the European Community's Single European Treaty. Argentina also is paying close attention to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the possibilities of long-term hemispheric economic integration. Although Chile has hesitated on committing to MERCOSUR, preferring instead to develop bilateral trade agreements, indications are that intraregional trade may develop substantially over the coming years in the Southern Cone.

Economic integration could open up new domestic and regional markets for Argentina's locally produced goods. It also could increase the circulation of Southern Cone capital, with obvious benefits for infrastructural development in the region. Argentina's consumers already are benefiting from increased regional trade. Cheaper Brazilian textiles, footwear, and automobiles are flowing more freely into the Argentine market. However, although much complementarity exists between the economies of the MERCOSUR countries, several sectors such as Brazilian agriculture and Argentine paper products are likely to suffer because of regional integration (Hinchberger 1992). Inefficient industries could be forced out of business if governments shy away from the protectionist policies that have characterized the region in the past.

PATIENT PROGNOSIS

The medicine of socioeconomic restructuring has

restored health to a small sector of Argentina's citizens and businesses. For the majority of the country's middle and working classes, however, the government's "medicine" has proved disastrous. Massive layoffs in state and private companies, deindustrialization, and economic recession have swelled the ranks of the under and unemployed. The *villa miserias* (urban slums) surrounding many of Argentina's major cities overflow with the socially and economically disadvantaged. Nearly 35 percent of Argentina's households now are below the poverty line, compared to less than 3 percent in 1975 (Carlevari 1993). Buenos Aires today is one of the world's most expensive cities in which to live, and most residents struggle on a daily basis just to survive.

Deregulation of industry in Argentina has proved disastrous for the environment. Toxic chemicals and industrial wastes routinely are illegally dumped into the waterways of Buenos Aires, in part because state inspections of disposal practices have been reduced dramatically. Poorly regulated bus companies contribute to the myriad traffic accidents that kill over 20 people each day. In Buenos Aires, pollution clogs the air, coastal waters are unsafe for bathers, and raw sewage floats down the gutters and open drains of many city suburbs. Urban crime, drug use, and truck hijacking have increased exponentially over the past two years as people struggle to cope with devastating poverty. Moreover, predominantly European Buenos Aires is facing a serious clash of cultures as increasing numbers of Bolivian and Paraguayan migrants flock to the city. Open and often hostile discrimination against migrants of mestizo and indigenous ethnic backgrounds is creating a climate of mistrust, fear, and resentment in a once open and accommodating city. Many people fear a return to the traumatic years of the late 1970s, when "undesirables" and perceived anti-establishment activists routinely were arrested, tortured, and eventually disappeared. Porteños are watching anxiously the Brazilian government's response to the slaughter of innocent street children in Sao Paulo by paramilitary groups.

A HEALTHY FUTURE?

Contemporary Argentina is undergoing profound and fundamental change. Argentinos have not faced such critical challenges since the genesis of the modern state in the late nineteenth century. Argentina's place in the world of the early 21st century may well be determined by the events unfolding today. As Juan Corradi noted recently, the prognosis for failure is far too gloomy to contemplate. If Argentina's socioeconomic restructuring strategies fail, "one can easily conjure up visions of Argentines leaving in droves, central power collapsing, and a territory divided between slums and fine chunks of empty real estate" (Corradi 1992,84).

However, despite the problems faced by Argentina, many observers are optimistic that the patient will soon recover to enjoy a prosperous future in the new global economy.

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ARGENTINA'S MADRES DE LA PLAZA DE MAYO: RELENTLESS PERSISTENCE - LINGERING HOPE

Mark Lowry II

Department of Geography and Geology

The giant 747 plowed a wide tunnel in the cold dark sky, crashing through night storms that lesser craft would avoid. The flight was violent, a symbolic portico to a troubled society far from the United States beyond great barriers of distance, time, and culture. Argentina afforded five weeks of complete, honest, naked exposure to one eager to see, hear, feel, and otherwise sense and experience as much as possible of that magnificent, intriguing country. This is just one of the resulting myriad impressions recorded in two volumes of journal notes and mountains of memories.¹

In la Plaza de Mayo of Buenos Aires, on June 28, 1990, the public address system was alive with poetry, stories, and the appeals of the women who long ago became known the world over as "las madres de La Plaza de Mayo." La Casa Rosada (Argentina's equivalent of the White House in Washington, D.C.) faces on this plaza. Every Thursday afternoon the Mothers gather here and in other plazas across the country, wearing white scarves on their heads as the distinguishing symbol of their cause. They march in a large circle, carrying pictures and other reminders of their sons, daughters, husbands, and other family members and friends who mysteriously disappeared during the "dirty war" (1976-1982), and of whom there has been no word or trace.²

Interpreting its anti-insurgency mission to the extreme, the Argentine military assumed authority for indiscriminate kidnaping, torture, interrogation, and execution of anyone suspected of subversive activities. An estimated 30,000 people in Argentina vanished, including some of the Mothers who were demonstrating and appealing for justice. In spite of the risk, the Mothers persisted, and they march still with the nearly exhausted hope that some of the missing will be found alive or that their deaths will be confirmed and explained. They hope that the responsible offenders will be identified and punished, and that people around the

world will remember what happened so that it will not happen again.³ Mimi Alvarez Rojas, one who told her story to this writer, lost a son and daughter-in-law fourteen years ago. She has not heard of them since, even after numerous attempts and appeals to the government. She gave me her address and said, "Please write to me." Though not spoken, it was clear that she wanted assurance that her message was getting out, that someone in another part of the world remembers and understands.

Whereas outsiders cannot possibly relive the events of the "dirty war," novels written by authors who were there can bring us close. A small book, Imagining Argentina by Lawrence Thornton (1988), allows the reader to experience the grief, misery, and coping mechanisms of the victims and their families.⁴ It is highly recommended. Douglas Unger's El Yanqui (1986) is a fictional story about an exchange student from the United States whose host family in Buenos Aires was reduced in resources, lifestyle, and numbers by the "dirty war."⁵ Both authors let the reader sense what it must have been like at the time of the disappearances, as only the novelist can.

Half a day's drive southwest of Buenos Aires, far out in the flat, fertile, seemingly endless Pampas, this writer sat face to face with the owner of a 70,000-acre farm that possesses vast fields of grain, great flocks of sheep, endless herds of cattle, and a generous measure of the affluence that an estancia affords. The twenty members of our group were enjoying the host's hospitality, which included five courses of possibly the best beef in the world with appropriate trimmings, prepared and served with insouciant grace. The conversation near the host drifted perforce to the anti-insurgency war and the disappearances. The host dropped a comment in passing that went unnoticed by the others, but fell heavily on this writer's ears. He said, "You have probably noticed that we have very few blacks in this country now." I had already noticed--and questioned. A few days earlier, a doctor who entertained me in his Buenos Aires home responded, "We have so few now that we can love them." During five weeks traveling in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Mendoza provinces, I saw only five individuals whose phenotypes clearly identified them as being of black African descent, and two of them were from the United States. In the 19th century, approximately 30 percent of Buenos Aires' population was black. The number dropped below 2 percent before the turn of the century, and there are no black settlements in the city today.

Notwithstanding the dramatic trends and any implications in these two observations, I have not found a direct link between the "dirty war" and the demise of Afro-Argentines. However, a documentation and analysis of their near disappearance, as presented by George Reid Andrews (1980) in The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900,⁶ points to causes such as disease, starvation, war, slavery, and the most interesting specter of a national philosophy that has willed the Afro-Argentines away.⁷ This gives one pause to ponder the fundamental traits of a society that might allow the consequences of the "dirty war."⁸

In Argentina I was privileged to confer with academicians and other specialists in disciplines such as history, sociology, law, economics, politics, the arts, geography, and international relations. Among the notable leaders with whom I met were former President Raúl Alfonsín, Governor Eduardo Ángelos of Córdoba Province (President Carlos Menem's opponent in the last presidential election), the mayor of Buenos Aires, and Vice Rector Atilio Borón of the University of Buenos Aires, the largest university in Argentina. All these individuals are deeply concerned with the many serious and seemingly insurmountable problems facing the country. Hyper-inflation, for example, is foremost in their minds. They all lived through the "dirty war" and were profoundly influenced by it. Some of them have had, and still are having, a hand in correcting problems that grew out of those years. With some exceptions, their general attitude toward the "disappeared" is that "all that can be done has been done" and "the country should put that period of its history behind and move on to solving today's problems." They are willing to tolerate the Mothers as little more than an annoyance, because they believe that the movement will fade away as the Mothers age and die.

I stood amid the majestic Argentine Andes, ankle deep in Argentina's winter snow, and gazed far off in wonderment at Aconcagua, the highest peak in the western hemisphere. The snow, the cold, and the mountain itself made any thought of reaching the summit at that time an impossible dream. I thought of las Madres de La Plaza de Mayo and their goals, many of which clearly are not achievable. One of the most cruel aspects of their situation is that they will never know which ones are not. But the mountain is still there, and they are not forgotten. In the dark solitude of my quiet study, listening to the faint whistle of a distant train, I can see Mimi Alvarez Rojas reading poetry into the microphone, marching in the circle, looking deep into my eyes with a bewildering, unfathomable mixture of dignity, grief, despair, determination, and hope, and then walking away into the crowd with the white scarf tied neatly over her graying red hair. She would demonstrate one more time near the main entrance to la Casa Rosada. They still will not let go.

Relentless Persistence: Nonviolent Action in Latin America documents the case of Argentina's "Mothers of Courage" and many other cases throughout Middle and South America.⁹ These events are happening now. The book is essential reading for anyone who cares.

END NOTES

1. The author traveled to Argentina in the Summer of 1990 on a Fulbright-Hays grant.
2. David Rock, Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonialization to Alfonsín (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 367-403. See also, Marjorie Agonsin, The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1990) and Jacobo Timerman, Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number (New York: Random House, 1982).
3. Bodies of a few of the "disappeared" were found in mass graves. Several of the high-ranking generals in the military junta were tried

and imprisoned.

4. Lawrence Thornton, Imagining Argentina (New York: Doubleday, 1988).
5. Douglas Unger, El Yanqui (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).
6. George Reid Andrews, The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).
7. The reduction in percentage of blacks is attributable in part to the end of slave importation and the immigration of Europeans.
8. Nicolas Shumway addresses the evolution of that philosophy and those traits in The Invention of Argentina (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).
9. Philip McManus and Gerald Schlabach, eds., Relentless Persistence: Nonviolent Action in Latin America, (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1991).



WKU AWARDS LATIN AMERICAN STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Maria Gamboa (sophomore from Colombia) and Marlon Calderon (graduate student from Honduras) were the recipients of the 1993 Latin American Student Scholarship Award. Each student was awarded \$100 applicable toward the purchase of books for the fall, 1993 semester. The award is given in recognition of the student's excellence in scholarship and contribution to international understanding. The awards were presented at the University Awards Ceremony on April 18, 1993.



LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER PROGRAMS FALL CONFERENCE

On October 15, 1992 Western Kentucky University hosted the Latin American Studies Center Fall Conference. The conference speaker was Dr. E. H. Moseley, professor of history and Director, Capstone International Program Center, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Dr. Moseley spoke on "Unity and Diversity in the Americas." The conference was well attended by university faculty and students and by members of the local community. An informal reception for Dr. Moseley followed the conference.



WKU FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Since the last issue of *Intercambio Internacional*, new members have joined the Latin American Studies Committee. **MS. DONNA K. CHESHIRE** came to Western from Miami University of Ohio in October of 1992 as the new Assistant Director of the Office of International Programs. She is writer and co-project director for a Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad grant to Argentina which, if funded, will send Western faculty and faculty from the local K-12 school districts to Argentina for five weeks during the summer of 1994.

Prior to coming to Western, Ms. Cheshire was a journalist for various international publications and taught at a community college in Ohio before returning to Miami University where she is completing her doctorate.

DR. DAVID J. KEELING, Department of Geography and Geology, enjoyed twenty years in the international business community before receiving a doctorate in geography at the University of Oregon in 1992. Dr. Keeling's dissertation examined regional development processes in Northwest Argentina and focused on the problems associated with a lack of integrated transport networks and services. During a research visit to Buenos Aires in April 1993, Dr. Keeling gave a lecture in the geography department of La Universidad del Salvador titled "A Framework for Analyzing Buenos Aires in the World City System." In recent months, Dr. Keeling has provided maps and tables for a chapter on Argentina's transport system by Dr. Juan Roccatagliata in "La Geografía Económica Argentina" (published by El Ateneo in Buenos Aires); presented a paper on MERCOSUR at the annual meeting of the Kentucky Academy of Sciences; and gave a talk on Buenos Aires' role in the emerging World City system at Portland State University. Dr. Keeling's article on transport and regional development in Argentina appears in Vol. 19 of the Yearbook of the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers. He currently is writing a book on Buenos Aires for the World City series published by John Wiley & Sons, and has begun research on "A Contemporary Geography of Argentina" scheduled for publication in 1995 by Westview Press. Dr. Keeling is a participant in the proposed Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad Program to Argentina scheduled for the summer of 1994.

DR. MARK LOWRY II, Department of Geography and Geology, has been active in travel and presentation of his research. He traveled in Argentina on a Fulbright travel seminar in 1990 and later that year conducted research in Ecuador. In 1991, he traveled and studied in Egypt, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait on a Joseph J. Malone Fellowship. He carried out research in Ecuador in 1993. He is co-director (with Donna K. Cheshire) on a proposal for a Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad grant in Argentina for the summer of 1994, and he is preparing for a sabbatical in Ecuador in the Fall of 1994. Among his recent publications are "Deliberate Race Change: Chinese in the Mississippi Delta," Proceedings, Kentucky Academy of Science, 1990, pp. 1-11; "Argentina's Madres de Plaza de Mayo: Relentless Persistence - Lingering Hope," Global Justice, vol. 2, no. 3, Sep./Oct. 1991, pp. 10-11; "Argentina's Mothers of Courage," Proceedings, Kentucky Academy of Science, 1992, pp. 1-5. Among his recent professional papers are "Ecuador's Colorado Indians: Production of a Video," Midwestern Association of Latin American Studies, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 1990; "Chota: All-Black Pueblo in the Andes of Ecuador," Midwestern Association of Latin American Studies, Cedar Falls, Iowa, October 1991; Same paper,

Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies, Charleston, South Carolina, April 1992; "Argentina's Disappeared: A Traveler's Observations," and "Moments in Cairo (Egypt)," International Women's Studies Conference, Bowling Green, KY, September 1992; "The Disappearance of Afro-Argentines and Suspected Subversive in Argentina," Midwestern Association of Latin American Studies, Edwardsville, Illinois, November 1992; "Evaluating Segregation Using Spatially Continuous Observational Units," Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1993; and "Chimborazo and Cotopaxi: Majestic Mountains of Ecuador," Midwestern Association of Latin American Studies, Dayton, Ohio, November 1993.

DR. JOHN H. PETERSEN, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Director of the Office of International Programs, and professor of government, as a board member of COBEC (Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation) is continuing to work with representatives of U.S. and Belize institutions of higher education to promote the consortium. Dr. Petersen will be

on sabbatical during the spring semester and will concentrate of research and writing.

DR. RICHARD V. SALISBURY, Chair of the Latin American Studies Committee and professor of history at Western, has been occupied with teaching, research, and writing since the last number of *Intercambio Internacional* (Spring 1990). He has published the following articles: "Revolution and Recognition: A British Perspective on Isthmian Affairs During the 1920's," in The Americas, January 1992 and "Carlos R. Tobar," in Statesmen Who Changed the World, (Greenwood Press, 1993); presented papers to the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, the Midwestern Association of Latin American Studies, the Southwest Social Science Association, and the Southern Historical Association; reviewed manuscripts for Pacific Historical Review, Latin American Research Review, The Americas, and The University of Kentucky Press; and reviewed books for Oral History Review, Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, The Americas, Revista Inter-Americana de Bibliografia, Hispanic American Historical Review, and The Park City Daily News.

12/93/1M/OIP/WKU--Printing paid from state funds, KRS 57.375

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