

Politics and Education in Argentina, 1946–1962. By MÓNICA ESTI REIN.

Translated by MARTHA GREZENBACK. Latin American Realities. Armonk, N.Y.:

M. E. Sharpe, 1998. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiv, 225 pp. Cloth, \$59.95.

Paper, \$23.95.

Politics and Education in Argentina examines a sphere of social policy largely neglected by historians as a means for understanding the ways political discourse became public practice. Until recently the study of social politics in Latin America has gravitated toward labor relations, but governments with active labor policies have often focused considerable energy on public education as well. Ministries of labor and education were often founded at much the same time. As Rein explains, “the education system of a country tells us a good deal about the nature of the country’s political regime and its goals” (p. 201).

Like other governments concerned with strengthening national cohesion, such as Mexico after the revolution or Brazil during the Estado Novo, the Argentine government under Perón focused on education as an agent of change. Rein shows us in great detail how *justicialismo*, the rhetoric of social justice, entered into institutional practices affecting millions of lives.

Was Peronist educational policy an exercise in democracy or an instrument of political indoctrination? For Rein, educational policy reveals the fatal inconsistency between democracy and nationalism in the Peronist sense. Under Perón, nationalism meant Peronism, which in turn stood for attacking the oligarchy and foreign interests while fostering national unity. But, insofar as nationalism was equated with Peronism in the schools, the ability of teachers and students to consider alternatives was constrained.

Rein argues that Peronist educational policy was socially democratic because it quickly expanded educational opportunities while reducing or eliminating fees. For instance, the number of students completing elementary school that enrolled in secondary school jumped from 41.2 to 65 percent in the Perón years. On the other hand, education became increasingly undemocratic in its treatment of politics as Peronist ideology saturated the curriculum. By 1955, seven weeks of the nine-month school calendar were devoted to Peronism. As Rein concludes, the Peronist “drive toward uniformity in thought and national consciousness . . . naturally reduced considerably the possibility of opposition” (p. 201).

Rein extends her analysis of educational politics through the aftermath of Perón. In discussing the “Liberating Revolution,” Rein stresses the tragic shortsightedness of the military’s efforts to erase all memory of Perón and suggests that the program of de-Peronization in the schools contributed to the backlash in favor of Perón. The drive to eliminate his influence resulted in the resurrection of textbooks that had been in circulation before 1942. Rein ends with an analysis of the fascinating public battle between Arturo Frondizi, the president of Argentina from 1958 to 1962, and his younger brother Risieri Frondizi, the rector of the University of Buenos Aires. The rector fought to preserve the state monopoly on higher education against the president’s political objective of permitting Catholic universities.

Rein's discussion of university politics and of the Church's campaign for a greater role in education is the richest part of the book. Her political history of education is largely founded on an analysis of presidential and ministerial speeches, laws, textbooks, and treatises on education. These sources orient the study to federal-level educational politics, and naturally leave educational practices in the provinces aside. Given the dynamics of her study, Rein takes full advantage of the fact that the universities fell more directly under federal jurisdiction and participated actively in national political affairs in order to illustrate the fractious political conflicts that educational policy generated.

Politics and Education in Argentina is a valuable contribution to the study of Argentine history and the history of education in Latin America, and its clear language and style make it particularly suitable for undergraduate courses. Finally, Rein's book points to the richness of available material on education for studying the way political discourse is transformed into social policy.

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Through Corridors of Power: Institutions and Civil-Military Relations in Argentina.

By DAVID PION-BERLIN. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Tables. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xvii, 243 pp. Cloth, \$45.00. Paper, \$17.95.

The danger with this book is that it may be used as a model for studies of relations between institutions of civilian government and the armed forces in other countries, based solely on the Argentine national idiosyncracies it stresses. In other words, the argument is convincing. The book's value is that it makes it clear that national idiosyncracies must be taken into consideration in future studies of state-military relations anywhere. In other words, it is well researched and written.

Just over 50 pages into *Corridors of Power*, Pion-Berlin makes the most significant of several points about relations between armed forces and civilians in Argentina. It is his contention, expressed forcefully in chapter 3 (pp. 45–74), that relations now take place between the military and institutions of state, not between the military and sectors of civilian society. This is important not only for Argentina, but for other countries as well. Superficially, at least it is verifiable, not only in Argentina, but elsewhere. It also tells us a lot about the past and the future as well as the present.

Relations between military organizations and states and their institutions are far more complex today than they were in the past. The complexities are now better understood by both parties in the civil-military relationship. Pion-Berlin makes this point well in chapter 3, and again in 4 (pp. 75–106), wherein he discusses recent political change and human rights issues in the 1980s during the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín (1983–89). National variables and windows of opportunity that continue to characterize these relations have always been important. International influences play a significant role in the shaping of relations.