Luis Alberto Romero has written a book that is comprehensive, balanced, and full of insights into the development—and turmoil—of modern Argentine history. This book can serve as a starter for anyone interested in the topic. Specialists too will rely on it for its analysis and detail. James Brennan’s translation is outstanding.—Jeremy Adelman, Princeton University

The purpose of this book is to provide a straightforward synthesis of twentieth-century Argentine history in all its complexity and paradox. . . . Romero focuses on Argentina’s place in the larger world, the role of the state, and the influence of culture and intellectuals on the nation’s development.—Richard J. Walter, reviewing the Spanish-language edition in The American Historical Review

A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century, originally published in Buenos Aires in 1994, attained instantaneous status as a classic. Written as an introductory text for university students and the general public, it is a profound reflection on the Argentine dilemma and the challenges that the country faces as it tries to rebuild democracy. In the book, Romero painstakingly and brilliantly reconstructs and analyzes Argentina’s tortuous, often tragic modern history, from the alluvial society born of mass immigration, to the dramatic years of Juan and Eva Perón, to the recent period of military dictatorship and democracy. For this first English-language edition, Romero has written a new chapter covering the decade of the 1990s. A rare book combining great erudition with an engaging narrative, it is destined to be the standard English-language history of Argentina for many years to come. The son of Argentina’s greatest twentieth-century historian, José Luis Romero, Luis Alberto Romero has emerged as one of the leading historians of his generation in Argentina. Romero's generation is one that has witnessed the most dramatic decades of the country’s modern history, the decline of Argentina and its descent into violence, dictatorship, and despair, but also the hopeful if often difficult process of rebuilding democracy since the mid-1980s. Combining the rigor of the professional historian with a passionate...
commitment to his country’s future, Romero’s work is a major contribution to our understanding of one of Latin America’s most important nations. This translation by James Brennan, himself a leading English-speaking historian of Argentina, makes this valuable book available to a wide readership in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

My Personal Review:
This interesting book is a translation of Breve Historia Contemporanea de Argentina, and it is a good way to start studying Argentina’s history if you don’t speak Spanish. However, if you can speak that language, I strongly recommend you to buy the original version in Spanish. The reason for that is, in my opinion, that it is always better to read a book in the language it was written, so as not to miss any nuances in meaning, and in order to appreciate better the style of the author. Disregarding how good a translator is, he is bound to make at least some mistakes, sometimes ignoring slight degrees of difference that convey not only meaning, but also feeling.

In this version there are parts where it isn’t easy to follow the authors ideas, but from my point of view that is due to two things. To start with, it isn’t easy to explain Argentina’s history, because it is quite complex. As a result, explanations regarding that theme are frequently complicated, even in the original version of this book in Spanish. Secondly, translating a book to another language is never easy, and I think that the interpreter (James Brennan) did his job incredibly well.

The structure of A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century is quite simple, but really useful and eminently practical. After a short introduction, the author starts this book with Yrigoyen’s first presidential term, continues with Alvear’s presidency and then carries on with Yrigoyen’s unfinished second term. He delves deeply into the conservative restoration, and then tries to explain what Perón meant to Argentina, and the polarization of society that his presidency produced. From then on, democratic governments would be constantly interrupted by revolts, and the military would have the final word regarding all matters of importance in Argentina. That, until the Malvinas defeat, which ended up in the collapse of the military regime, and the beginning of a fledgling democracy... This, the first edition in English of Breve Historia Contemporanea de Argentina, has also a new chapter that delves into the decade of the 1990s, and that wasn’t included in the 1994 Spanish edition.

Luis Alberto Romero is a very well known Argentinian historian, author of other good books. Despite that, this is the one I prefer, at least so far. Notwithstanding the fact that it deals mainly with historical facts, it also includes his interpretation regarding what happened. Some people criticize the author because he ask them to accept his interpretation of History. I don’t think that is the case. The aim of the author was to write an useful and short book for his students and the average reader interested in History, and in order to do so he sometimes had to write directly what he thought about a period, instead of saying what many authors thought about the same period. On the other hand, he does that as little as possible and only in order to keep the number of pages in his book
from growing too much, and he never forgets to include in the bibliography reading material from authors that think differently.
On the whole, I think this is an outstanding book. It gives a very good introduction to Argentina's Contemporary History, and even though it isn't overly long, it is remarkably thorough and well documented. I prefer the Spanish version, but I think that this version is also very good, and I must recognize that it has a merit that the other didn't: it allows those who don't speak Spanish to read it.
Belen Alcat

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