

COMMENT

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Milton Vanger's review of my volume, *Uruguay: The Politics of Failure* ("Uruguay: The Fall," LARR 14, no. 2 [1979]:254–57), made for interesting summer reading. One can appreciate the effort involved in his extensive essay. At the same time, I found several of his arguments and observations worthy of a reply.

Vanger's criticisms of my approach may stem largely from the literal interpretation he appears to give my models and images. I see the urban-rural dichotomy in Uruguay as a symptom of the lack of effective nation-building. In this context, the triumph of a rural-inspired conservatism over a progressive, urban-oriented *Batllismo* is not a geographic determinism, the triumph of "country over city" as Vanger interprets it, but the victory of one idea-system over another. In a similar vein, Vanger's understanding of the concept of corporatism leads him to suggest that its use in describing the political system of Uruguay is unwarranted because the dictatorship has accepted a free market economic model (Chicago School) and makes arbitrary and isolated decisions. These are insufficient grounds for rejecting the classification of a system as corporatist.

Vanger takes exception to my "prediction" that Uruguay's current rulers would not pursue a course of industrialization. He offers contrary evidence by citing government statistics on the growth of "nontraditional exports." Actually, the bulk of these exports are skins, hides, leather and textiles, i.e., processed agricultural products. The production of these items has long been part of the Uruguayan economic scene. More importantly, the growth in exports of these products has not resulted in an increase in manufacturing jobs. Such employment, as a percentage of the labor force in Montevideo, declined from 31.5 percent in 1970 to 28.9 percent in 1977. Unemployment in this sector increased from 7.5 to 10.1 percent during the same period. Similarly, Vanger cites population statistics in an attempt to discount the importance I attach to the immigrant base of Batlle's successful populist politics. However, according to Vanger's own figures, as late as 1908, almost one-third of the population of Montevideo was foreign born.

Vanger faults the insufficient use of primary sources and what he calls "factual errors." There is room for debate as to what constitutes a primary source, although much of the material that Vanger comments on is based on electoral and census data, constitutional debates and legislation, i.e., primary sources published by the Uruguayan government. There is no room for debate on the question of "factual errors," since Vanger does not clarify his statement by offering any examples.

The above discrepancies aside, I found Vanger's treatment of the dedication of my book to be particularly disturbing. He ascribes unwarranted and misleading implications by quoting and commenting on the dedication out of context. My own analysis of Uruguay's Tupamaros, as is evident from a dispassionate reading of my last chapter, is that while they raised important questions about the nature of Uruguayan society, the Tupamaros were partly responsible for the destruction of democracy in Uruguay. However, as I also indicate, the Tupamaros had been destroyed by the military before the generals took power and imposed their now more than six-year-old dictatorship.