

Book Reviews

South America south

by Paul George

Geopolitics of the Southern Cone and Antarctica edited by Philip Kelly and Jack Child. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988, 273 pages, US\$35.00.

The democratic trend in Latin American politics has encouraged many outside observers to predict the emergence of the Southern Cone as an independent force in the global geopolitical system. This may be a premature forecast but it is worth taking seriously. After all, as the British discovered in 1982, an awareness of the geopolitical underpinnings of Southern Cone politics is a prerequisite for avoiding unexpected problems. The Falklands/Malvinas War would have come as no surprise to anyone who had read the Argentine geopolitical literature.

The essential problem of the distance of the Southern Cone from the crucible of Western security concerns forms the core of this useful book. The editors handle this by presenting a wide ranging collection of essays which draw attention to the geopolitical imperatives of the regional states. Given the complexity of the continent, however, the parameters of the study are inadequately defined. The Southern Cone is more than an arbitrary latitudinal concept. To designate it as "South American territorial and maritime spaces below 10 degrees south latitude" simply does not do justice to the cultural and historical traditions of the region. For example, to explain the exclusion of Peru from this collection because, "its geopolitical involvement for the most part has been more internal than external in scope," is not only historically debatable, but it ignores the potential geopolitical impact of the burgeoning Shining Path revolution.

The geopolitical heritage of South America has been overshadowed by the dominant East-West axis of postwar rivalry and by the disgrace the study of geopolitics suffered in the northern hemisphere as a result of World War II. South American geopolitics is also not without its own disreputable practitioners; General Augusto Pinochet of Chile, for example, has taught and written on the subject. Unfortunately, this has tended to make the Southern Cone's isolation as much perceptual as physical and it is lamentable that contem-

porary Anglo-American strategic writing largely ignores the region. Nevertheless, a vigorous geopolitical tradition has developed in the Southern Cone and the extensive bibliography demonstrates just how much Spanish-language geopolitical material has been produced.

Of more theoretical significance, the collection confronts the misunderstood breadth of geopolitical thought. Geopolitics is more than the study of geostrategy and national security; the chapters dealing with the economy of the La Plata basin are particularly useful as counterweights to the more conventional studies of applied geopolitics in Chile, Argentina and Brazil. The book also provides a useful assessment of regional aspirations in Antarctica, where the Southern Cone states will be crucial players in the future settlement of the status of the frozen continent.

Although several economic, social, political and international problems remain to be resolved before the Southern Cone can attain a degree of regional geopolitical cohesion, few observers can doubt that it will ultimately be achieved. The editors have provided an effective introduction to the wealth of geopolitical writing from the region.

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British Wright brothers

by A. J. Shortt

Patrick Y. Alexander (1867-1943): Patron and Pioneer of Aeronautics by Gordon Cullingham. Bath, England: Cross Manufacturing Co., 1984, 292 pages, £7.50.

Histories of aviation's pioneer days are punctuated with well-known names of successful inventors and aviators such as (the brothers) Wright, Codey, Bleriot and Bell. Others made substantial contributions but are virtually unknown. One such man is Patrick Young Alexander.

In this book the life of Alexander, a man who made substantial and significant contributions to British and world aeronautics, is detailed, perhaps for the first time. Permanently lame from a youthful accident at sea, he turned to aviation and devoted his life and inherited fortune to the advance-

ment of aeronautics. He excelled at ballooning and experimented with heavier-than-air-flight; he began the aeronautical collection of the Kensington Science Museum; his financial support saved the Aeronautical Society; in 1910 he sponsored a successful competition for an efficient British aircraft engine. These and other acts were performed in a typically selfless manner with no anticipation of reward. Alexander travelled extensively and was accepted worldwide as a leading aeronautical authority. At a time when accurate aeronautical information was rare, he did much to report events and progress objectively.

This book, based on Alexander's own collections and papers held by the Science Museum in Britain, is not easy reading. It is extensively illustrated with rare photos, but the text tends to read somewhat like a manual. However, because it documents such an extraordinary career, as well as that important era when the airplane advanced from dream to reality, the book is both educational and rewarding.

In spite of the author's diligent research, Alexander remains an enigma. His personal life seems to have been lonely and his research lacked focus. He was convinced that he would die by the age of fifty, and by that time had given away most of his inheritance. He lived on in difficult circumstances until he was seventy-six, sustained by generous assistance from friends, but with no official recognition. Alexander deserved better from his country and from the aviation industry. Gordon Cullingham (not the Editor of this journal. Ed.) is to be congratulated for recording at long last the contribution of this unusual and significant historic figure.

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