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# Political Parties And Generations In Paraguay's Liberal Era, 1869-1940



## **Synopsis**

From a North American perspective, the turbulence that dominated Paraguayan politics during the Liberal Era appears so pervasive as to approach anarchy. But in this seemingly haphazard succession of administrations, political machines, and governmental systems, Paul Lewis sees a pattern of evolution. His astute examination of political institutionalization employs the concept of political generations to explain Paraguayan conflict and change while analyzing a significant but understudied period of Paraguayan history. Lewis chronicles the growth of the two major Paraguayan parties, the Liberals and the Colorados, from their early days as political clubs through periods of personalist caudillo politics, national machine politics, and finally institutionalized party politics. Arguing that coalitions formed along generational lines and then held power until a new--and often younger--group pushed them aside, he ties the rise and fall of party fortunes to generational change. Lewis constructs a multistage theory of political party development that makes sense not only of Paraguay's Liberal Era but also of political turmoil in many Latin American states. Originally published in 1993. A UNC Press Enduring Edition -- UNC Press Enduring Editions use the latest in digital technology to make available again books from our distinguished backlist that were previously out of print. These editions are published unaltered from the original, and are presented in affordable paperback formats, bringing readers both historical and cultural value.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"An authoritative and valuable contribution to understanding the politics of a country presently in the

midst of change."--"Choice""A groundbreaking contribution. . . . Paul Lewis's research is meticulous, and this work is indispensable for any student of modern Paraguay."--Jerry W. Cooney, University of Louisville"A good, solid, historical work."--"American Historical Review" --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

An authoritative and valuable contribution to understanding the politics of a country presently in the midst of change.--ChoiceA groundbreaking contribution. . . . Paul Lewis's research is meticulous, and this work is indispensable for any student of modern Paraguay.--Jerry W. Cooney, University of LouisvilleA good, solid, historical work.--American Historical Review

I bought this book mainly because I'm interested in the period of Paraguayan political history from 1904-1940 and this is the only work in English that extensively covers that time period. Other books have focused on the time period from 1869-1904, which this work also covers, or the entire history of Paraguay, esp. the three primary dictators from 1814-1870. As the author points out, there really is not much ideological difference between the eternally competing Colorado and Liberal Parties, and both parties had their own significant internal divisions usually based on loyalty to a person (e.g., the Radical Liberal gondrista & schaererista wings battling it out in the 1920s). Both parties and most of their factions were essentially classical 19th century European liberals in outlook. They favored a small central government of limited powers and limited taxing authority that protected private property and contract rights, and promoted free trade while allowing the private sector to develop on its own. And while both wanted political stability, the personality-based factions led to incessant coups and counter-coups and periodic civil wars (e.g., 1911-1912 and 1921-1922). Lewis does a very good job explaining how the two parties failed to anticipate, co-opt, or adapt to the rise of communism/socialism, fascism, and nationalism, the "isms" that racked Europe from 1917-1945. Those players who lost faith in liberalism sought solutions elsewhere, mirroring nations like Spain, Germany, Mexico, and Italy, leading to the groundbreaking Febrerista revolution in 1936 and the rejection of liberalism by both the Liberal and Colorado parties, as both settled for military strongmen to rule as dictators. Do keep in mind that this is academic history. It is not designed for the general reader. The introducion and conclusion both are theoretical heavy as regards political science concepts. Lewis is often more focused on facts than he is on bringing either the people or place to life. But when he does, esp. in the period from 1911-1940, then the book shines. But the book is much better describing the people and nation from 1904-1940 than it is from 1869-1904. This may be due to the lack of sources or from Warren's earlier extensive groundbreaking works.

Thus, Lewis' primary contribution is in both integrating the two eras (Colorado and Liberal) and giving the Liberals their due. Lewis' thesis regarding political change and development is tied to the cohorts or generations when the various key players came of age, becoming politically active. He breaks these into 10 distinct periods. The author, a Poli Sci professor at Tulane University, is one of America's foremost experts on Paraguayan politics and political history. Besides this book, he also authored a 1968 work on Paraguay's Febrerista's Party (which overthrew the long-ruling Liberal Party in Feb. 1936 until its own overthrow in 1937) and a 1980 work on Paraguay's long-time Colorado dictator Gen. Stroessner (who took power in 1954/55 and held it for 25 years). There is historical material that overlaps all three books, esp. that covering the 19th Century and the Colorado/Liberal party eras from 1869-1940. Contents:- Preface, p. ix- 3 maps (eastern Paraguay, downtown Asuncion, & the Chaco), pgs.xi-xiv- Introduction, pgs. 1-14- 9 chapters, pgs. 15-183 - [The Colorado Era], pgs. 15-83 -- Family Origins (1850s-1869) -- From Family Origins to Personalismo (1869-1878) -- The Emergence of a Two-Party System (1878-1887) -- The Colorado Era (1887-1898) - [The Liberal Era], pgs. 84-183 -- Realignment and Regime Change (1898-1908) -- The Radical Liberals in Power (1908-1920) -- The Climax of Radical Liberal Rule (1921-1927) -- The Rise of Nationalism (1928-1936) -- Revolutionary Paraguay (1936-1942)- Summary and Conclusion, pgs. 184-193- Notes, pgs. 195-212- Bibliography, pgs. 213-219- Index, pgs. 221-227

Sadly, there are no photographs or portraits inside the book. The maps are quite good in light of how the text discusses places. The notes, while not extensive, are pretty thorough. The bibliography is outstanding, esp. as it puts Spanish and English works in separate sections. Anyone interested in this should also check out the other great Paraguayan academic, Harris Gaylord Warren, who wrote one book (in 1978) on the decade from 1869-1878 (the post-war decade) and another (in 1985) covering 1869-1904 (the Colorado Party Era). Both are cited extensively by Lewis. Oddly, Lewis fails to show or cite Warren's 1949 book, *Paraguay An Informal History*; this book has a wonderful listing of all of Paraguay's rulers/dictators/presidents from 1536 thru 1948. Most unfortunately, Lewis fails to include some helps for the reader that would've greatly enhanced his work. First and foremost, there is no listing covering the presidents and vice presidents of the Republic or of Colorado and Liberal Parties. So often the reader gets lost in the similar names. Also, the chapter titles should've included a reference to the time periods being discussed. Often Lewis fails to do a good job keeping the reader fully apprised of the specific year of events, esp. when they cross from one to the next. I've supplied approx. dates to the chapters shown above. I wish there were some pictures or portraits of the key figures. And I wish Lewis would've spent more time discussing what was happening to the common people and nation overall, in addition to expanding

some biographical information of the really key players (e.g., Gondra, the Ayalas); usually the biographies are very short and don't give too deep a picture of the man).

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