

poorer population. (2) Partly as a result of the unresponsiveness to local needs, state-owned enterprises are established. (3) Successful reform of the pharmaceutical industry requires continuous government support.

Although the book represents a major contribution to our understanding of the pharmaceutical industry in the Third World, it does not deal explicitly with many of the problems. Gereffi assumes his readers' knowledge of the desperate poverty, high birth rates, widespread malnutrition, and infectious diseases that are the result of environmental conditions, corruption, bribery and bureaucratic inefficiency, illiteracy, inadequate tax structures, and limited investments in health care in Third World nations. Had he included a larger number of countries at different levels of per capita income and social development, his study would have better reflected the social realities of the Third World.

There are a couple of inaccuracies in the book. Despite Gereffi's statement that the cost of prescription medicine is "usually the smallest component in the total health care expenditures of a nation," the World Bank in 1981 estimated pharmaceuticals to account for a quarter of the public health spending in less-developed countries. The percentage seems high, but a relatively small amount of money is involved. Then, too, more precise use of the word "prevalent" in discussing common diseases would have strengthened Gereffi's basically sound argument that inappropriate drugs are supplied to Third World countries in light of what is available.

Gereffi's work points toward potential political and social solutions or at least to improvements in the pervasive problem of TNC dominance of the pharmaceutical industry in the Third World. Despite such possibilities, however, the reader is left with overwhelming evidence that the global financial interests of TNCs appear to be an irresistible force. WV

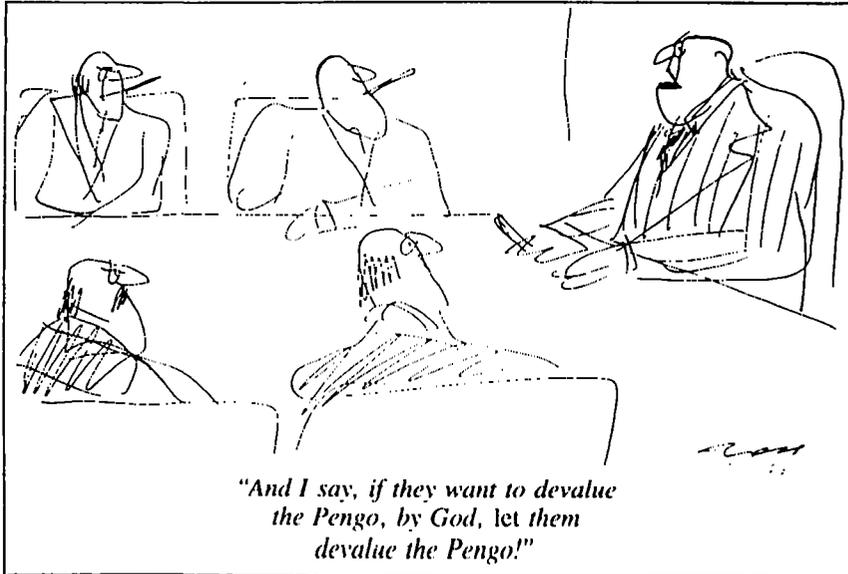
PERÓN—A BIOGRAPHY

by Joseph Page

(Random House; 594 pp.; \$25.00)

Ralph Buultjens

The life of Juan Domingo Perón is an astounding story of a soldier-politician who, at home and from afar, dominated Argentine life for almost forty years. The poor son of a Patagonian tenant farmer, without connections or higher education beyond



military academy, the young Perón evolved into an officer with strong neo-fascist leanings. Climbing up the military hierarchy, Perón obtained political power, became the champion of the underprivileged, was twice elected president of Argentina, and was then deposed by the army, exiled and reviled.

Seventeen years later, at the age of seventy-eight, he returned as a populist savior to a third presidency. Shortly after, Perón died in office as a revered national hero. Along the way he acquired two young, attractive, uneducated, and somewhat tasteless entertainer-wives, who themselves became powerful political figures. Evita, hailed as a kind of *descamisado* goddess, suffered a prolonged and highly publicized death. Isabel succeeded her husband as president, was also deposed and exiled by the army, and could in future make a political comeback. Between marriages, Perón sought solace in a fourteen-year-old mistress and, among other things, was both excommunicated and reinstated by the Catholic Church. For close to two decades, from his European retreat, he controlled the most formidable political movement in Latin America, retaining an undiminished hold over the Argentine masses. And now, almost ten years after his passing, Perón's shadow continues to haunt Argentine politics. As fiction, this saga would tax credibility.

Who was this extraordinary man and how did this improbable fantasy become political history? Professor Joseph Page of Georgetown University examines these questions at great length (including 1,651 notes). Unfortunately, despite exhaustive research, he achieves only partial success. Page's *Perón* is full of minor and often inconsequential detail; the bits and pieces

are painstakingly assembled, but the overall picture is fuzzy and poorly defined. Largely missing are the grand themes of Argentine politics, as well as any insight into the personality and meaning of Juan Perón.

In the past half-century, essentially the period covered by Page's work, Argentina has experienced an unusual process of development—descending from a European standard of prosperity to a Third World level of poverty. Was this negative trend responsible for the rise of Perón and Peronism? Apart from information on the benefits that Perón provided to the workers during the 1940s and 1950s, there is no discussion of this fundamental issue and of its consequences for Argentina today.

Page's extensive data are replete with little-known facts and well-founded gossip, which makes for interesting reading. The portrait of Perón that emerges is singularly unflattering. A shallow individual with great charisma and considerable manipulative skill, *El Conductor* appears as a master opportunist with no serious ideology or commitment, no intellectual depth, and little moral character—all surface and no substance. Perón believed that in politics, "like in chess, to win the game one must sacrifice pieces; except for the king, everything can be gambled to reach the final objective." In this way, Page's representation eludes the central points: What made Perón so attractive to so many people? How did this limited man modulate Argentine politics so effectively for so long? What were the well-springs of his motivation?

In discussing Perón's political world, Page makes three interesting observations. First, he suggests that Perón's wives were fundamentally his political creatures, made and used by him. To a large extent this may

have been true of Isabel Perón in the past, but it is not a fully accurate description of Evita. The earlier Mrs. Perón had a political identity of her own. Had she lived, it is possible that Perón would not have made the mistakes that led to his collapse in 1955—the conflict with the Catholic Church, the indulgent life-style that damaged his public esteem, the unwillingness to crush the anti-Peronist resistance by fully mobilizing his supporters and resources.

Second, Page concludes that Perón would not have blundered into the Falklands misadventure that has cost Argentina much in the past two years. Here he is probably correct. Perón was an army officer with a difference. Although his political ascent was through the military, he had built, unlike other praetorian politicians, a large civilian power base. Consequently, he owed the services nothing and tended to limit their involvement in policy-making.

Third, Page argues that Perón's greatness was only contextual—his stature enhanced by the mediocrity of his competitors and his successors. He does allow that Perón had a

certain genius for understanding, reflecting, and manipulating Argentina but does not accord him much credit beyond that. Perhaps this is to underestimate Perón. For all his imperfections, and they were considerable, he had a capacity to attract enormous loyalty to himself and to the vision of a new Argentina that he sold so well. His failure, ultimately, was not in acquiring power and influence but in using it.

One reads this book with some sadness. There are enough ingredients here for the making of a compelling narrative. Perón's story has the hallmark of high drama—power, mass struggles, sex, redemption, intrigue, and death, and all in one of the more interesting countries of this hemisphere. Perhaps it is Page's inexperience as a biographer that produces a monochromatic creation out of technicolor material. In any event, if it is to get full justice, the life of Juan Domingo Perón will have to await another telling. With Peronism still a major political force in Argentina and with increased interest in that nation, this should soon be forthcoming. **WV.**

muddles that perplex other historians, and to draw shrewd and witty portraits of the ambitious men and women of the period. To be sure, her quick sketches of Cassiodorus, Melania the Younger, Hilary of Arles, Gregory the Great, and Brunhilda, the wife of Sigebert, are, considering their conciseness, wonderfully three-dimensional. But there is little or no inquiry into the social significance of these men and women or into the values and functioning of the societies willing to grant them their importance. The frustrated reader longs for an understanding of the deeper realities of the early Middle Ages, craves some attempt, however minimal, by the author to perceive a bold pattern or grand design behind the chaos and turbulence of the times, thirsts for one magisterial generalization.

Barbarians and Romans has no single integrating viewpoint, offers no new interpretation, and tends to patronize "the historian who wants events tidily under his control." It is a book of scattered insights on the "birth struggle of Europe," some of which are perfectly on target, others misleading or mildly eccentric. For example, Randers-Pehrson laments the necessity of using Lucan as a source for a description of a Celtic sacred grove, citing out of context Robert Graves's flamboyant appraisal of Lucan as "the father of yellow journalism." She neglects to inform the general reader that Lucan was actually a young poet in Nero's court—not an historian or social scientist—who was indulging in a bit of poetic license in an extravagant epic, the *Pharsalia*, that teems with ghosts, witches, ghoulish inexactitudes, and other deliberate departures from fact. Elsewhere, the general reader is informed that the identity of the *geminis tyrannis* on line 284 in Claudian's *De bello getico* is a mystery without being told what *De bello getico* is about. On the other hand, the scholar who is familiar with Claudian's work is thought droll for attempting to unravel the mystery. And after a rigorous and rather detached account of the complex political games played by Richomer, Arbogast, Libanius, and Symmachus, Randers-Pehrson alludes to the marriage of Nicomachus Flavianus the Younger to Symmachus' daughter. Suddenly there is a jarring shift in tone: The author assumes a new and inappropriately chatty persona, remarking, as if penning a postcard to a precocious six-year-old, "This marriage was the occasion that inspired the charming ivory, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the one with the lovely priestess."

When Randers-Pehrson discusses the

BARBARIANS AND ROMANS: THE BIRTH STRUGGLE OF EUROPE, A.D. 400-700

by Justine Davis Randers-Pehrson

(University of Oklahoma Press; xix + 400 pp.; \$29.50)

Robert J. White

Originally a term of opprobrium coined by Renaissance intellectuals, "Dark Ages" is now used to identify the period of economic and demographic change that occurred in Europe between the fifth and tenth centuries—an age that began with the infiltration and conquest of the Roman Empire by various barbarian tribes. Today, moreover, "Dark Ages" refers as much to the lack of documentation that characterizes the period as to its barbarism. And, whereas historians such as Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* once argued that Germanic barbarism and Rome's acceptance of Christianity combined to topple the values and culture of the classical world, most modern medievalists contend that the Roman Empire did not end in a cataclysmic "fall" but declined slowly and steadily from the third century until 700 A.D.

In *Barbarians and Romans*, Justine Randers-Pehrson too argues that the barbarians' destructiveness was largely the result of their inexperience rather than of a desire to overthrow the Roman Empire and that neither the Germanic tribes nor the Romans were bent on annihilating one another. Despite

doubts and fears, the Romans, eminently practical, clearly perceived the barbarians' usefulness as fighters and farm workers—a pragmatism that eventually proved their undoing.

Organizing her material around significant cities and locales—Trier, the steppes of Asia, Milan, Constantinople, Rome, Ravenna, Carthage, and Celtic outposts in Britain, among others—Randers-Pehrson attempts to recreate, in mosaic fashion, the emergence of the new civilization that combined an inheritance of classical antiquity with Christian tradition and Celtic and Germanic social patterns.

Admirable in its intent, *Barbarians and Romans* is, ultimately, a disappointing book. Too often what greets the reader is a dense narration of events—disjointed and rambling—enlivened here and there by a clever observation or *bon mot*. Generally careful and certainly thorough in its scholarship, extensive in the range of topics peripherally touched upon, the book never goes far beneath the surface. Randers-Pehrson seems content simply to catalogue events, to identify (and dismiss too casually) the hopeless