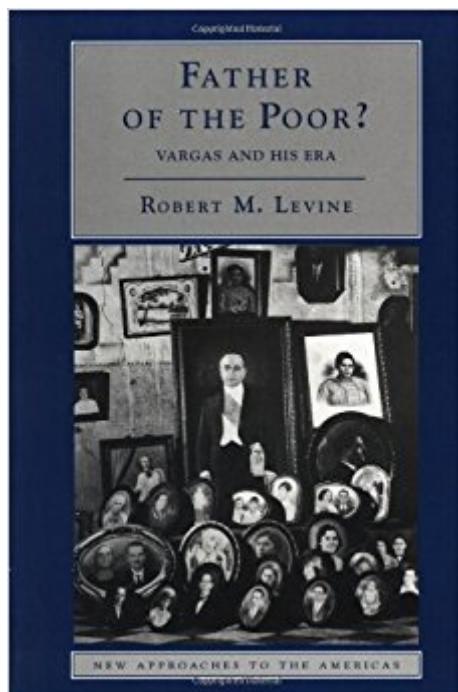


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Father Of The Poor?: Vargas And His Era (New Approaches To The Americas)



Synopsis

This book examines the life and times of Getúlio Vargas, Brazilian dictator and president for most of the period from 1930 to 1954. It asks how Vargas' legacy influenced Brazil, and to what extent his social legislation affected people's lives. Vargas ignored individual rights and devoted as much effort to manipulating workers as to benefiting them. He did not perceive the unequal distribution of power as a problem that needed to be solved. Although Vargas promised much and delivered little, Brazilians idolized him. Ordinary people would shrug and say, "The President always thought about us."

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Customer Reviews

"Father of the Poor is a compelling portrait of contemporary Brazil drawn from Brazilian archives, Vargas's personal diary of and suicide note, oral history testimony and photography, as well as recent Brazilian and non-Brazilian social history, anthropological and sociological scholarship." Michael LaRosa, H-Net Reviews "Levine provides a good picture of the extension of government social services under Vargas. The volume also has an excellent set of photographs and reprints interesting contemporary documents." Journal of Interdisciplinary History "...concise yet lively overview of the legacy of Vargas's government and the significance of his social policies. Levine's analysis moves adroitly between the voices of workers and their views of events and the musings of Brazil's most influential political, economic, and cultural leaders in the 1900s." Peter M. Beattie, Latin American Research Review "...a concise yet lively overview of the legacy of Vargas's

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Interesting biography of a powerful Brazilian Dictator. Covers his background & his rather eccentric policies. It's often hard to find in depth information about South American countries and this book gives you a quick overview of Brazil in the early first part of the 20th century. I'd have liked more information, but I've at least improved my knowledge of Vargas

We like this book we learn few new things about Getulio Vargas.

The book is a rather slim political biography of Getulio Vargas, undoubtedly the most important politician of the Brazilian 20th century. Not only did he stay in power for almost 19 years, but his legacy dominated Brazilian politics after his death. One defined oneself politically as to the extent of how one embraced this legacy. The very fact that Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in the 90s, felt obliged to say explicitly that Vargas was "history" points to that. Returning to the book, it is, as mentioned before, rather short and therefore introductory. It contains an useful chronology and an annotated bibliography (English-language titles only), as well as a small sourcebook, uneven in quality and relevance. It is clearly intended as an introductory book for undergraduate use. Unfortunately, as books by Brazilianists go by, it is more riddled with bloopers and factual mistakes than usual. A few examples might suffice: In a context describing Brazil in 1950, when Vargas returned to power, he mentions that "government-owned Petrobras controlled oil refining". In fact, Petrobras was created by Vargas in 1953 (as the author correctly notes in the chronology). Or "from 60 to 65 per cent of all Northeasterners were living below the poverty line in 1994; the figure may have been double that in earlier decades"-which is of course a mathematical impossibility. Or

"by the 1980s, when all Brazilians over sixteen were required to vote" (with sixteen in italics for emphasis), while actually voting is obligatory only after 18. From 16 to 18, you are allowed to vote. And so on and so on...Nevertheless, the real problem with the book is deeper. It implies that Vargas was a failure because a) he did not do all that he set out to do; b) he committed suicide to avoid being deposed; and c) he did not really care for the "poor and downtrodden" . As for a), the standard is impossibly high. No one, let alone politicians, would ever be able to achieve it. As for b) it is actually irrelevant and, as regards c), the whole point is that he cared enough. This reflects anachronistic thought, and a failure to conceptualize properly the constraints under which Vargas labored, even though Levine does lay out the facts in the book. Brazil, in 1930, was an agrarian society with some light industry, By 1954, although agriculture was still extremely important, there was a significant industrial sector, including heavy industry and machinery. At the same time, a comprehensive social security and labour protection net had been created, which still forms the basis of present-day legislation. It may not have reached everyone, but what was important was the principle. So, in fact, Vargas did play an important role in transforming the country. Another point he fails to take into account properly is the fact that Brazil was a poor country. It may sound heartless to say so, but the truth is that there was not enough capital during his lifetime to invest heavily both in the physical infrastructure necessary for economic development and in comprehensive social development. Some sort of compromise was necessary and, while one can dispute if Vargas' approach was the best, it is rather unfair to accuse him of not trying to do the impossible.

I read this book, in a translation to the portuguese, here in Brazil. I'm an agronomist. I like to read books. This book is about Getulio Vargas, the most important of brazilians presidents, in all times. And this book is concise and easy to read. The author fails many times. To example, in a sentence, on last page of chapter 4, the author seems to believe, that terrorism in Military times(1964-1985) as an effect of repressive actions by government. In fact in 1960, Che Guevara himself made a terrorist attack, here in Brazil. The target was a registry office in Parana, a Brazil's state. Since 1959, brazilian marxists were training guerrilla warfare, in Cuba. Terrorism in Latin America, between 1964 and 1985, was focused in democracies as his main victims. Brazil having more than 47% of the territory of South America, but had less than 0,5% of all terrorism in South America. And Brazil's GDP grew in average 7% between 1967 and 1985, against an average of 2% in a year between 1987 and 2006. Returning to Vargas and this book, the author isn't a tourist about Getulio Vargas. Like the author himselfs recognizes, in fact there's almost so many Vargas, as there is Jesus or Gods. Vargas has being used to help leftist from right wing, since while, he was

living. Vargas himself told many times, that he ever will be a mystery. And he got this wish. If the author of this book were a brazilian, I'll be giving 3 stars for this book. The author will have 4 stars for this book. Because the author know so much about Brazil and Vargas, to write this book, is a good made effort.

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