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Patagonian Rebellion Collection

1921-1965 (*Bulk:* 1921-1922)
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Read collection overview

In 1921-1922, Chilean workers on sheep ranches in Patagonia rebelled violently against their conditions, egged on by anarchist agitators. Under pressure from Conservatives to act decisively, the Radical government in Buenos Aires ordered the 10th Cavalry Regiment under Héctor Benigno Varela to quell the disturbance, which they did with a heavy hand.

The Patagonian Rebellion Collection consists of typescripts and photocopies of materials relating to the suppression of the workers' revolt of 1921-1922. The most significant items include the official diaries and reports of cavalry officers sent to quell the uprising, but the collection also includes correspondence after the fact, news clippings documenting public reaction, and photocopies of photographs depicting the principle individuals involved and the damage wrought.

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Background on Collector:

In 1916, the election of Radical Party candidate Hipólito Yrigoyen as President of Argentina initiated a particularly tumultuous period in the long-running conflict between conservatives and Radicals. Exacerbated by partisan posturing, unrest among the working classes peaked during the war years, resulting in a series of violent strikes and even more violent crackdowns, and spawning a series of vigilante attacks on alleged "Bolsheviks" that ultimately consolidated and strengthened the hand of the New Right and their supporters in the Army.

These tensions played out to unusually tragic ends in Patagonia. In 1920, a dramatic drop in the price of wool and lamb began to play havoc on the lives of workers

on sheep ranches throughout Patagonia, many of whom were Chilean immigrants laboring on ranches owned by British and other European landowners. Beginning with a series of strikes in the southern provinces of Chubut and Santa Cruz, and abetted by anarchist agitators, the farm workers struck out at ranchers, doing damage and alarming the elite.

In November 1921, Honorio Pueyrredon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs -- himself a major landowner and staunchly conservative opponent of Yrigoyen -- ordered a contingent of the 10th Cavalry Regiment to quell the disturbances. Under the command of Héctor Benigno Varela, the Husares de Pueyrredon initially succeeded in their task, and through negotiation with the workers, helped restore a measure of calm. The landowners, however, perceived Varela's approach to be akin to surrender and demanded a more forceful response.

When troubles flared up again in January 1922, the situation rapidly escalated. The interim governor of Santa Cruz, Francisco Céfalí, pleaded with the central government for decisive action and, prodded by the British and American legations in Buenos Aires, Pueyrredon guaranteed a solution. The 10th Cavalry crushed the rebellion in Santa Cruz with force, leaving an uncertain number of dead, but perhaps as many as 200.

This harsh reaction to the crisis further stained the reputation of the Yrigoyen administration, already stained by violence, labor unrest, and instability. Yrigoyen left office in 1922, replaced by the conservative Marcelo Alvear. Meanwhile, anarchists continued to lash out, seeking revenge on the military. On January 27, 1923, Varela was assassinated.

Scope of collection

The Patagonian Rebellion collection consists of photocopies of typescripts of materials relating to the suppression of the workers' revolt in Santa Cruz Province, Argentina, in 1921 and 1922. The most significant items include the official diaries and reports of cavalry officers sent to quell the uprising, but the collection also includes some correspondence after the fact, news clippings documenting public reaction, and photographs of the principle individuals involved and the damage wrought.

The official diaries kept by the officers, particularly Lt. Col. Héctor B. Varela of the 10th Cavalry Regiment and subordinates in the 10th and 2nd Cavalry, offer insight into the maneuvers of the regiments, intelligence received on the progress of the revolt and on the sheep ranches, and detailed descriptions of the terrain. The diaries and reports of Capt. Carlos Anaya, Lieutenant Emilio Correa Morales, and Sublieutenants Federico Sidders, and Rafael A. Loza (all 2nd Cavalry) are particularly detailed, and the reports of Correa and Anaya include a copy of the notice directed at the revolutionaries that was circulated among the sheep ranches. Written after the insurrection had been suppressed, the reports also provide mortality figures and proposals for restoring order to the ranches.

Although the correspondence in the collection is slight, it includes some valuable information on the army's early response to the outcome. The earliest letters commend the army's role in combating sedition and include proposals for distributing awards of merit to the officers leading the expedition. Other correspondence discusses the President's reaction to the affair in Santa Cruz and the later aftermath. There are four letters from 1964-1965 between Anaya and Juan Enrique Gugliamelli, Director of the Center of High Studies and of the Superior School of War, discussing the ongoing tribute paid to the uprising in Santa Cruz.

The photographs in the collection are poor quality photocopies depicting the soldiers involved in the as well as photographs of the sites of destruction. Correspondence dating from after the suppression of the upheaval illuminates the attitudes within the military about the situation and the men involved up until 1965. All of the materials in the collection are photocopied reproductions. The written materials have been transcribed and are arranged chronologically.

Inventory

Introduction, General Information, Geographical description of region
1921
Box 1: 1
Varela, Hector Benigno: Diary and list of officers, 10th Cavalry Regiment
1921 Nov. 11-Dec. 2
Box 1: 2
Viñas Ibarra, Pedro: Diary, 10th Cavalry Regiment
1921 Nov. 12-Dec. 13
Box 1: 3
Campos, Pedro E.: Diary, 10th Cavalry Regiment
1921 Nov. 12-Dec. 14
Box 1: 4
Anello, Alfredo: Diary, 10th Cavalry Regiment
1921 Nov. 17-Nov. 24
Box 1: 5
Anaya, E. Carlos and Federico Sidders: Diary and list of officers, 2nd Cavalry Regiment
1921 Nov. 21-Dec. 11
Box 1: 6
Anaya, E. Carlos and Federico Sidders: Diary and list of officers, 2nd Cavalry Regiment (copy 2)
1921 Nov. 21-Dec. 11
Box 1: 7
Sidders, Federico: Diary, 2nd Cavalry Regiment
1921 Dec. 30-1922 Jan. 9
Box 1: 8
Loza, Rafael A.: Diary, 2nd Cavalry Regiment
1921 Dec. 30-1922 Jan. 9
Box 1: 9
Correa Morales, Emilio: Report, 2nd Cavalry Regiment
1922 Feb. 19
Box 1: 10
Anaya, E. Carlos: Report, 2nd Cavalry Regiment (with copy)
1922 Feb. 27
Box 1: 11
Correspondence regarding the operations in Santa Cruz Province
1922-1965
Box 1: 12
News clippings, political cartoons, obituaries
1922
Box 1: 13
Photographs: portraits, group shots, sites of uprisings
1921-1922
Box 1: 14

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Robert Potash of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1988.

The diaries and reports were initially published on January 11, 1922, in Magellan Times, a newspaper from Punta Arenas, Chile. Original copies of the newspaper are now available only at the British Library. This collection was the property of Robert Etchepareborda, the late Argentine diplomat, archivist, and historian who served as Director of the Department of Culture for the Organization of American States and as Rector of the National University of the South in Argentina. Etchepareborda provided copies to Robert Potash of the Department of History, University of Massachusetts Amherst, who in turn donated them to SCUA in 1988.

Location of Originals

The originals from which these copies were made are housed in the National Archives of Argentina.

Processing Information

Processed by Madeleine Charney, February 1991.

Bibliography

Oyarzábal, Guillermo Andrés, "Las Fuerzas Armadas (1914-1943)," in Nueva Historia de la Nación Argentina, vol. 8 (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1999), 179-211.

Related Material

See also the papers of Robert Potash (FS 20) in SCUA.

Language:

Spanish

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Search terms

Subjects

- Argentina--History--1910-1943.
- Argentina. Ejército.

Contributors

- Potash, Robert [main entry]
- Anaya, E. Carlos.
- Anello, Alfredo.
- Campos, Pedro E.
- Loza, Rafael A.
- Correa Morales, Emilio.
- Sidders, Federico.
- Varela, Héctor B.
- Viñas Ibarra, Pedro.

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