
**Claudio Fuentes Armadans 2016, *La maldición del legionario*, Asunción, Paraguay:
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Political history is perhaps the most developed subject of historical inquiry in Paraguayan historiography. Yet the field remains vastly unsophisticated considering the production of political history in other Southern Cone Countries. In this regard, Claudio Fuentes Armadans' *La maldición del legionario* (*The Legionary's Curse*) comes as a significant contribution to the study of Paraguayan politics, adding not only a rigorous archival work but also building from a more complex perspective. The book's provocative title hints toward an old topic in Paraguayan politics. During the Paraguayan War (1864–1870) that pitted Paraguay against Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, a number of Paraguayan exiles living in Argentina formed their own battalion of legionaries to serve with the Triple Alliance army as an independent Paraguayan corp. Most of them were exiled during the Carlos Antonio and Francisco Solano Lopez governments (1842–1870). As political exiles, these men saw the war as an opportunity to unleash their compatriots from the late Francisco Solano López's dictatorial regime. Ever since the label "legionario" was strategically used in Paraguayan politics to slander political opponents for representing the idea of the anti-nation.

Fuentes' work explains the making of the legionary's label in Paraguayan politics between 1870 and 2012. The long narrative arc serves to emphasize how this old political concept still rules Paraguayan politics as it was still applied to political opponents during the last impeachment process that removed from power President Fernando Lugo in 2012. From a conceptual viewpoint, Fuentes unveils how this heavily loaded concept came handy to divide "good" Paraguayan citizens from the

so-called infiltrated legionaries with allegiance to neighboring political superpowers Brazil and Argentina.

Fuentes builds on Michael Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* to unpack the larger role that the idea of legionary plays in the hegemonic nationalist political discourse. To achieve that, Fuentes brings in as many historical discourses of power inflicted by the concept of legionary as he can. In the end, he aims to clarify the use of the idea of legionary as a discursive dispositive in the sense that Foucault uses it in order to explain power structures.

The book is divided in three sections. The first part, the narrative section, follows the building of the concept of legionary in a chronological sense. The second part studies the concept of legionary through thematic discussions. Finally, the third section brings in the political speeches, journal articles, letters, short stories, op-eds, government publications, and a vast array of references to the concept of legionary that the author read closely to build his arguments.

The long arc allows the reader to see how the concept of legionary was used during troublesome times of political confrontation. The author details how politically charged debates took place even during Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship (1954–1989) in light of political confrontations over sovereignty issues with neighboring countries. The case of the debates over the ownership of the Parana River energy potential during the 1970s, with both the Brazilian and the Argentinean governments, proved the author's point that legionary was a concept not only used by the Stroessner's dictatorship but also by its political opponents in order to undermine the government's right to represent the national interests. Interestingly enough, Fuentes shows how political opponents of all political parties, right and left, and at different political regimes, democracy and dictatorship, share the same nationalist concept of legionary. Also interesting is the role that international intellectuals played in the construction of the concept of legionary. Many journalists, writers, and

politicians at different times spent time in Paraguay and ended up writing pieces of opinion for international audiences reproducing the very same concept of legionary used in Paraguayan politics. Even more troublesome is the fact that even Paraguayan exiles relied on the same idea to refute accusations of legionarism from government officials working for the Stroessner's dictatorship. Furthermore, in our current times of social media, Fuentes goes deeper to show how ordinary Paraguayan citizens, including egregious journalists, rely on the old idea of legionary to disparage political ideas different than their own during conflictive political times.

La maldición del legionario is an original addition to Paraguayan historiography on nationalism and political discourse. Fuentes' careful research has proved the paradox that Paraguayan politicians faced throughout history by trying to advance different political projects while relying on the same set of political ideas. This nationalist kit of political ideas proved, as the author shows, part of the very same hegemonic authoritarian project. As such, this political mindset is incapable of producing the changes that Paraguayan politics need to undergo in order to work for a truly pluralistic, and legionary-free, democracy as the author calls for in the end of the book.