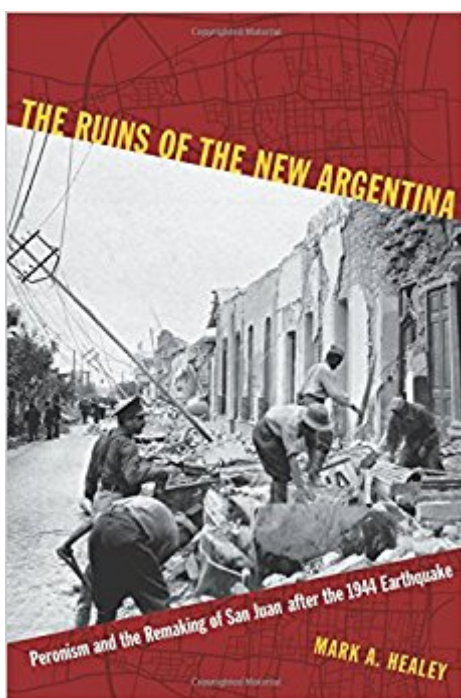


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# The Ruins Of The New Argentina: Peronism And The Remaking Of San Juan After The 1944 Earthquake



## Synopsis

In January 1944, an earthquake reduced the province of San Juan, Argentina, to rubble, leaving perhaps ten thousand dead and one hundred thousand homeless. In *The Ruins of the New Argentina*, Mark A. Healey argues that the disaster and the massive rebuilding project that followed transformed not only the province but also the nation. The earthquake was a shattering and galvanizing experience, an indictment of the old social order and an invitation to transform it. From the nation's capital, an obscure colonel in a recently installed military regime launched a relief campaign and rapidly commissioned plans to rebuild the province, especially its capital city. The campaign was a rousing success, launching the public career of its director, Juan Domingo Perón, who would soon found a movement, reach the presidency, and transform the politics and social structure of the country. Dreaming and building the new city became the landmark project for a generation of modernist architects and planners, as well as an enduring challenge and controversy for local residents and the Peronist state. By exploring the struggle to rebuild, Healey shows how this destroyed province played a crucial role in forging, testing, and ultimately limiting the Peronist project of transforming the nation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“*The Ruins of the New Argentina* is the best introduction that I know of to the baffling political movement that continues to rule Argentina after six decades full of sound and fury. Mark A. Healey makes sense of the Peronist revolution that transformed Argentina by considering it from the perspective of a provincial capital devastated by an earthquake during the formative years of

Peronism. Healey's counterintuitive approach pays off, yielding a fascinating account populated by a curious mix of reformist soldiers, provincial strongmen, labor activists, and modernist architects. • "Tulio Halperín Donghi, author of *The Contemporary History of Latin America* • Through the lens of the San Juan earthquake and the reconstruction efforts that followed, Mark A. Healey offers us a meticulously researched, rigorously argued, and beautifully written political and cultural history of modern Argentina. This tour de force teaches us new ways of thinking about Peronism, regional populist experiences, the interaction of national and local politics, and the sociopolitical dynamics produced by disasters. • "Javier Auyero, author of *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita* • Healey provides an integrated perspective that builds on recent work on disasters and makes important contributions to Argentine historiography and the history of urbanism and planning. • (Edward Murphy *Technology and Culture*) • Healey's book joins a historiography that has moved the study of Peronism away from the traditional focus on Buenos Aires and the labor movement. In line with current scholarship that has criticized the idea of "natural disasters" by focusing on their social, political, and cultural consequences, Healey innovatively looks at the San Juan earthquake as a crucible that sheds light on the emergence of Peronism, changes in local power, urban rebuilding, and the transformation of the fields of engineering and architecture. • (Natalia Milanesio *Hispanic American Historical Review*) • Healey's work is at once a tightly argued, well-sourced, and incredibly detailed account of mid-twentieth century San Juan and a nuanced and persuasive analysis of Peronist Argentina. • (Jonathan Hagood *The Americas*) • After reading this wonderful book, there is no doubt that historians will never think about this event, or the politics of natural disasters more broadly, in the same way again. It stands as a model for how scholars should study the political and social history of natural disasters, and it deserves to become required reading for historians interested in any or all of its four central areas of enquiry. • (Eduardo Elena *Social History*) • Healey deserves much praise for the many accomplishments of this book. What Healey masterfully underscores [ ] is that the relation between the state and the provinces is a fundamental angle of analysis that deserves further attention. This book is an excellent example of the value of such an enterprise. It is also an innovative and creative contribution to the study of Peronism that ventures beyond traditional thematic and geographic perimeters. • (Paula Alonso *American Historical Review*) • This is a book that will appeal to historians (and not only to urban historians), urban designers and architects, geographers, urban planners and political scientists. Healey uses the events surrounding this earthquake to recount a fresh story of the origins of Peronism. In doing so, the book paints a picture that will appeal to many scholars in a number of

disciplines. . . . Mark Healey has done an excellent job in reconstructing this key moment in Argentina's history and in showing Peronism on the move." (José A. Borello Journal of Latin American Geography)"Healey has given us a crucial study that allows us to see much more clearly what Peronism was and was not. For too long the interior provinces have been neglected, and with this extremely well-written book Healey has taken us several steps further down the road to understanding the founding era of Peronism and how it affected the lives of ordinary Argentines in ways that still matter." (Joel Horowitz Latin American Research Review)

Mark A. Healey is Assistant Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the translator of Roger Bartra's Blood, Ink, and Culture: Miseries and Splendors of the Post-Mexican Condition, also published by Duke University Press.

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