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James R. Scobie (1929-81)

JOHN V. LOMBARDI*

When faced with the untimely death of a friend and a colleague, we feel most the tremendous sense of loss and promise unfulfilled. Jim Scobie's sudden death on June 4, 1981, left a great deal of extraordinary scholarship incomplete and brought this fine scholarly career to an abrupt close. We know the significance of this loss from what Jim Scobie had already given us in his outstanding publications on the Argentine city. Indeed, while we may grieve for the loss of the future, it is only right that we rejoice in the past we received.

Jim Scobie, a pioneer in the development of the field of Latin American urban history, published a substantial body of scholarly work on Argentine history. Perhaps best known for his exceptional work on the emergence of Buenos Aires as a major Latin American and world metropolis, his brilliant synthesis of Argentine history in *Argentina: A City and a Nation* (1964) helped a generation of Latin Americanists understand the complex forces that shaped that fascinating country. In *Buenos Aires, Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910* (1974), Jim Scobie demonstrated his mastery of the subtle interplay of influence, culture, economics, and politics required to produce a major metropolitan center. This book, which formed the basis of a comparative study of urban development in Argentina, brought together his long-term interest in the conflict between the rural and urban dimensions of Argentine history touched on earlier in his excellent monograph *Revolution on the Pampas: A Social History of Argentine Wheat* (1964) and over a dozen articles in journals in the United States and Latin America. His latest book, virtually completed before his death, will surely demonstrate his great gift of scholarship.

Jim Scobie gave us not only his outstanding work as a historian, but also his excellent service to the profession. Always interested in the improvement of history, teaching, and university life, Jim Scobie participated actively in the life of the profession. Whether in the American Historical Association, the Conference on Latin American History, the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies, the Latin American Studies Association, or organizations such as the Pan American Institute

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of Geography and History and the Organization of American States, Jim Scobie served on committees, led sessions, developed programs, and in general provided the responsible and creative leadership that was his trademark. As became an outstanding scholar in his field, he participated in the work of such journals as the *American Historical Review*, the *Latin American Research Review*, and, of course, the *Hispanic American Historical Review*. In each university where he worked he left a legacy of creative, concerned, and imaginative leadership.

These symbols of Jim Scobie's contributions to scholarship and the profession do not capture the personal qualities that made him such a fine teacher and an excellent friend. Humane and sympathetic, understanding and rigorous, consistent, flexible, and faithful to his ideals, Jim Scobie gave unsparingly of himself to his friends, students, and colleagues. We miss him, and we are thankful to have known him.