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REVOLUTION ON THE MIND:
CUBA, BETWEEN FACT AND FABLE

To make a world safe for revolution: Cuba's foreign policy. JORGE I. DOMÍNGUEZ. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989. viii + 365 pp. (Cloth US\$ 35.00)

U.S. – Cuba relations in the 1990s. JORGE I. DOMÍNGUEZ & RAFAEL HERNÁNDEZ (eds.). Boulder CO: Westview, 1989. ix + 324 pp. (Cloth US\$ 42.00, Paper US\$ 15.95)

Transformation and struggle: Cuba faces the 1990s. SANDOR HALEBSKY & JOHN M. KIRK (eds.). with the assistance of Rafael Hernández. New York: Praeger, 1990. xxvi + 291 pp. (Cloth US\$ 45.00, Paper US\$ 17.95)

“A masterpiece of political intrigue” was one description of Jorge Domínguez’ earlier book, *Cuba: order and revolution*; and it is a fitting comment for its sequel foreign policy volume. Domínguez himself opens with: “This is not a book of fiction, yet much of the story seems a fantasy.” The story is how, from 1959 to 1988, Cuban leaders sought “to make a world safe for revolution” and, in the process, that small country Cuba came to have “the foreign policy of a big power.” In his thorough, methodical fashion, Domínguez marshalls a wealth of documentary evidence from varied and conflicting sources, backed with extensive interview material, to paint a “behind the scenes” story of policymakers and their policy.

The first two chapters on the “formative years” and the “security regime” chart the demise of U.S. hegemony, and lead into two subsequent chapters on Cuba’s 1960s challenge to the Soviet Union and the reestablishment of Soviet hegemony. All too often, perceptions of Cuba’s foreign relations stop right there. Domínguez, however, carries his analysis well beyond, and

argues that there is such a thing as a specifically Cuban foreign policy, poised between hegemony and autonomy, militancy and pragmatism. He depicts the gradual building of a foreign strategy grounded on a managed relationship with the Soviet Union, support for revolutionary movements and states, reconstruction of relations with capitalist countries, and diplomacy in the Americas and the Third World. The guiding principle to this strategy, beyond sheer survival, he claims, quoting Castro and other leading Cuban statesmen, has been a deep hostility to the United States and global imperialism, and Cuba has been astute in looking to exploit conflicts between the United States and other countries, including U.S. allies.

Domínguez is perhaps at his best in providing the detail that is the product of meticulous scholarship, as in his accounts of Cuban involvement in Angola, Ethiopia, and Grenada. This proven eye for detail is what informs his many insights into broader policy arenas, whether on Cuba's support for revolutionary movements, some of which he would consider "worthwhile" and some "untrustworthy", Cuba's adroit maneuvering within non-alignment, or Cuba's greater adeptness at handling foreign relations of austerity than abundance when it comes to the West.

The broader frame of reference is understandably missing in the more narrowly focused Domínguez & Hernández edition on U.S.-Cuban relations in the 1990s. What is fabulous about this book, however, and almost to the point of fable, is the engaged juxtaposition of sharply differing treatments of ostensibly the same subject matter, such that it is at times hard to see a) how the subject can possibly be the same and b) what relation either treatment bears to reality as opposed to ideas. Have the authors, like their countries, ultimately become so wrapped up in their perceptions as not to touch ground?

The whole aim behind the project – including a 1988 contributors' workshop in Havana – was to have an exchange of highly differing views, in the hopes of airing substantive differences wherein there might be space for exploring possible convergences. The book pairs U.S. and Cuban scholars writing on five broad topics. Cuban-American Jorge Domínguez and Cuban-Cuban Rafael Hernández provide opening thirty-year overviews of the relationship between Cuba and the United States. They agree that each country's government rests on contrasting interests and values, but feel, in differing degrees, that a "dialogue regime" is possible; with this in mind, each entreats the reader to see the problem from the perspective of the adversary. Gregory Trevorton and Carlos Alzugaray approach national security questions as strategists and paint the security threat the other poses as they see it. While exploring forms of containing conflict, they are both pessimistic in seeing how conflict might be overcome. Michael Clough and

Armando Entralgo & David González focus on southwest Africa and are able to document a success story on a negotiated solution to conflict.

The widest divergences are between Howard Wiarda and Juan Valdés on – significantly – Latin America. Wiarda finds U.S. policy increasing in effectiveness in Latin America and sees Cuba's rigid interpretation of Marxism-Leninism causing it to be increasingly marginal to Latin American affairs. Valdés, on the other hand, believes U.S. policy toward Latin America has continued to fail because it has been unable to address key Latin American concerns and aspirations, whereas Cuba's has been successful because it has. Kenneth Jameson and Alfonso Casanova & Pedro Monreal evidence a different form of divergence on economic relations. Jameson sees these as unimportant to the United States, whereas the Cuban authors take a more micro view of their importance to U.S. firms. Again significantly, the greatest convergence would seem to be on the use of international law, which, James Rowles and Miguel D'Estefano believe, might be a common framework for substantive agreements between the two governments.

Switching from Cuba abroad to Cuba at home, Sandor Halebsky & John Kirk, as in their previous reader, defy narrow definitions of policy and politics. The contributors include established and new scholars, Cuban, North American and one Swede: Max Azicri, Marifeli Pérez-Stable, Carollee Bengelsdorf, Debra Evenson, Tony Platt & Ed McCaughan on the state and citizenry; José Luis Rodríguez, Eugenio R. Balari, Mieke Meurs, Andrew Zimbalist and Claes Brundenius on the economy and development; Lois Smith & Alfred Padula, Frank Fitzgerald, Mayra Espina & Lilia Núñez, Aurelion Alonso, Jill Hamberg and Sarah Santana on society and the social system. All support the ideals of the revolution but are aware also of the dilemmas of transformation and struggle.

Some display greater depth and are more thought-provoking than others, whose contributions remain at best bland, and rather less than "snapshots" – to borrow from the title of one which is in fact something more. It certainly warrants reflection that the 1960s, though perhaps heroic in content, were also anti-democratic in form (as Pérez-Stable and Bengelsdorf point out) and far less legally accountable (see Evenson). Given the obvious parallels with the late 1980s, this inevitably raises questions for today. Also, Meurs asks, is there not a latent conflict between state control and cooperative incentives, efficiency, and productivity? Similarly, Brundenius questions, is private sector activity so intrinsically antithetical to socialism? The extent to which state and family are in conflict, not consonance, needs to be further explored, postulate Smith & Padula. Could Cuba not have handled the housing problem better, one is left wondering after Hamberg's account? And, as Fitzgerald asks, what will be the role of Cuba's new professionals?

On its own description, the Halebsky & Kirk collection attempts to portray a Cuba facing the 1990s with a burst of increased vigor. Its seventeen chapters describe major changes in the economic realm under the rectification campaign, a slow process of liberalization in the political sphere, and a Cuba that in social terms is far better off than any other Latin American country. However, from the vantage point of summer 1991, in the context of severe external and internal dislocation, there is little ground for the kind of "linear" projections perhaps most implicit in the Cuban contributions. Many of the policies of rectification would seem to be spent and, more importantly, to be perceived in this way by a growing body of local opinion. Sooner rather than later, there is the likelihood of renewed pragmatism on the home front to match that already in place in foreign affairs, where there are signs of the socialism being played down, in favor of a more nationalist, Latin American and Caribbean, and Third World bent. Similarly, some form of political pluralism and mixed economy would seem to be in the cards, not least to safeguard some of those much-celebrated social gains.

Given the prolific nature of the authors reviewed, such issues will no doubt be at the heart of their next spate of writing.

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