Lilian Guerra

Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. xiv + 467 pp. (Paper US\$ 29.95)

For five and a half decades, the topic of the Cuban Revolution has received massive and sustained attention from historians and social scientists. As it stands, the historiography on the subject is largely apologetic with very few instances of criticism even of the Revolution's shortcomings and crassest excesses. Only recently, with the publication of Samuel Faber's *Cuba since the Revolution of 1959* in 2011 and now Lilian Guerra's *Visions of Power in Cuba*, has the Revolution been subjected to a systematic analysis that produces a critical but fair picture of Cuba's revolutionary experience.

The book covers the first twelve years of the Revolution, with a focus on the complex and conflict-ridden process through which the revolutionary leadership achieved unconditional support and "verbal hegemony" (p. 7). This was accomplished gradually as the Revolution moved from a democratic reformist orientation toward autocratic radical socialism. Guerra explores the variety of actions and mechanisms used by Fidel Castro and his closest associates to marginalize, silence, and eventually eliminate voices that were not in line with the government's official rhetoric and ideology. This was true even for positions that Castro embraced early on such as anticommunism and aversion toward the Moscow-dominated Popular Socialist Party.

Visions of Power in Cuba rests on a large number of diverse secondary and primary sources, many of which had not been used before. These include photographs, manuscripts, and other materials from the Cuban Revolution Collection at the Yale University Library and manuscripts and transcribed oral histories from the José Martí National Library and the Berta Martínez Páez Oral History Collection, respectively. Guerra also conducted interviews with a dozen or so protagonists and contemporaries of the Cuban Revolution, including Carlos Franqui and Manolo Ray. Among the myriad of other sources are satirical magazines, newspapers, films, and photographs.

Guerra puts forth several related theses. First, that the regime used various strategies in the process of creating an ideological consensus. These included indoctrination of the peasant rebel army; media censorship followed by complete control of all media, literature, and the arts; incarceration of critics such as Huber Matos; intimidation by state authorities and mobilized civilians; and persecution of homosexuals, intellectuals, and even jeans-clad Beatles' fans. She argues, moreover, that resistance to government orthodoxy and cultural impositions persisted throughout the first decade of the Revolution, and beyond. This was manifested in a variety of forms, ranging from actual peasant

revolts to humorous mockery of authority, and from veiled criticism in films to the wearing of extravagant clothing and hairstyles.

The book ends with a surprise—the revelation of heretofore unknown documents from the Ministry of Culture that Guerra found in the archives of the José Martí National Library. The documents include evidence of the systematic repression of Cuban artists and writers and a memo listing the names of leftist foreign authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa, whose books were banned from circulation soon after they and other authors signed a letter protesting the repression unleashed against Cuban poet Heberto Padilla. It is in the book's epilogue that Guerra launches her harshest criticisms of the Revolution.

Visions of Power in Cuba is a creative and extraordinary book that dares to criticize the Cuban Revolution and its leadership. Why it took so long for this to happen should be the subject of yet another book.

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