



**Felix Masud-Piloto.** *From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants: Cuban Migration to the U.S., 1959-1995.* Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996. xxii + 168 pp. \$69.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8476-8148-8.



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Few can doubt the contemporary or historical significance of the topic Felix Masud-Piloto addresses in this book. The book does not attempt to discuss fully the Cuban-American community; reasonably, the author restricts his focus to the "reasons, motivations, and circumstances for the migration" (p. 2). First published in 1988 under the title *With Open Arms*, this revised and expanded edition is intended primarily to trace the "evolution of and contradictions in U.S. policy" (p. xxi) towards Cuban refugees in the post-Cold War period.

Masud-Piloto's central arguments offer few surprises. U.S. policies toward Cuban refugees generally have been crafted to undermine Fidel Castro's rule by draining Cuba of skilled personnel as well as by using the refugee flight as a symbol of the failure of Castro's revolution. U.S. administrations presumed that refugees were leaving for political reasons, not economic, and thus would be resident in the United States only temporarily. The Mariel exodus of 1980 brought the first widespread awareness of the faultiness of U.S. assumptions.

The dramatic changes in U.S. refugee policy in 1994 and 1995, when the U.S. effectively ended its

"open arms" policy, came about for several reasons. Masud-Piloto attributes lessened interest in the refugees to both the Soviet Union's collapse and the growth of popular anti-immigrant sentiments within the United States. Above all, there was a desire to prevent another Mariel. Thus the Clinton administration cooperated with Cuban authorities to restrict the flow of refugees even as essential policies toward Cuba (lack of recognition, the embargo, and travel restrictions) remained much the same.

Masud-Piloto also traces Castro's manipulation of refugees and U.S. policies towards them. At most, migration from 1959-1980 hurt the Cuban Revolution. It certainly did not destroy it. Even in the earliest years, migration helped Castro consolidate his power. That became evident even to the U.S. in 1980, when it became clear that a wide variety of reasons motivated those who left Cuba, not simply political opposition to Castro.

Some attempt is also made to put the Cuban migration of the last four decades in a broader context. A brief first chapter (10 pages of text) surveys "The United States, Cuba, and Cuban Exiles, 1868-1958," noting that political exile in Florida had a long tradition even before 1959. Another

chapter contrasts the Cuban story with that of Haitians and Central Americans. But this chapter suffers from dated sources. The discussion of both Haitians and Nicaraguans ends with 1985. The final chapter, which brings the Cuban refugee story to 1994 and 1995, does not effectively use the comparative framework this chapter might have provided.

While the work offers a reasonable overview of its topic, it does not offer much new material. Much of the material does not appear to have been significantly revised for this edition. It is based for the most part on published materials, including newspaper reports. The author notes the lack of archival sources, not only Cuban, but also American, due to the continuing classification of documents in Presidential libraries.

Masud-Piloto, a refugee himself, also incorporates the "views of family members and friends through a number of random interviews." He does so to "provide a more direct human perspective on the migration's effects" (p. xviii). As laudable as that intent is, it seems misplaced in a work that primarily surveys U.S. and Cuban policies. Much more remains to be learned of the origins and motivations of the migrants themselves.

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