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Maria Cristina Garcia. *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. xiii + 290 pp. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-520-20131-6.

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Maria Cristina Garcia has undertaken a much needed historical investigation: the Cuban presence in South Florida since the triumph of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959. Garcia, a Cuban emigre herself, has dug deeply into several archives seeking to explain the players, the reasons for their actions, and the outcomes. She offers a very accurate and dispassionate analysis of the Cuban emigre community's struggles, hopes, and destination.

Havana USA, following an introductory analysis, is divided into two parts. Part One, "The Emigration" is subdivided into two sections, 1) "Exiles, Not Immigrants, Cuban Immigration to the United States,1959-1973," and 2) "The Mariel Boatlift of 1980, Origins and Consequences." Part Two, "The Emigres" is subdivided thusly: 3) "Defining an Identity in the United States," 4) "The Evolution of Cuban Exile Politics," and 5) "Cuban Writers and Scholars in Exile." The book ends with Maria Cristina Garcia's Conclusion. There are forty-five pages of notes, a twenty-one page bibliography, and an index.

Garcia's purpose is to provide historians and sociologists with a fascinating case study in American immigration and ethnic history from the perspective of the immigrants' response to life in the United States. Professor Garcia asserts that Cuban exiles have developed a dual identity as both Cuban exiles and Cuban Americans. She refers to this phenomenon as cultural negotiation.

Nonetheless, Garcia's *Havana USA* barely scratches the surface of the real motives of one of the largest, most complex contemporary immigrations into the United States. *Havana USA*, while trying to explain a controversial and very fluid environment, leaves us with more questions than it answers. New and oftentimes unexpected elements may, in some cases, alter or tweak the definition being attempted.

The sections on the emigrations is straightforward historical reporting utilizing newspaper articles, journal studies, private interviews, oral histories, archival documents, and government sources. It is disappointing, however, how Garcia glosses over that first major wave of immigration that took place under the Dwight D. Eisenhower

administration. The section from early 1961 to the beginning of the massive refugee airlift ordered by Lyndon Johnson occupies most of her attention. There are no references to archival materials from the Eisenhower administration.[1]

It is now a well established fact that Cubans came to the United States in several waves. The defeat of the Batista regime on January 1, 1959 initiated a mass exodus with South Florida, specifically the Miami area, as its destination. Local residents began to resent the influx of these Caribbean refugees. Cuban exile politics and culture began to permeate the sultry, rather quiet, South Florida environment. That neighborhoods began to fill with the aromas and sounds of a very dynamic people was not appreciated by everyone.

Cuban politics, motivated from Washington, spilled daily onto the first pages of Miami newspapers. As the refugee influx grew, more complications arose that affected civil and political life in Dade County, Florida. The local government was reeling from unemployment and a mild recession. Exiles were vocal opponents of the Castro regime and they saw fit to demonstrate their anger in public places. This was new to an area that prized itself for its calm and its tourist flavor.

A considerable number of refugees arrived following the Bay of Pigs defeat. The administration of John F. Kennedy, while seeking to destroy Castro and his regime in a secret war, decided to help the refugees by relocating and retraining them to obtain gainful employment in the United States.

The October 1962 crisis stopped the massive refugee influx for several months. Private and official rescue efforts to bring back to the United States the captured Bay of Pig "brigadista" invaders, included a decision to bring the "brigadista" families as well. Many more Cubans saw in this an opportunity to seek asylum in the United States, creating a crisis situation for the Castro regime.

On September 28, 1965, Fidel Castro announced that Cubans with relatives in the United States could leave the island. Professor Garcia does not provide us with a definite answer as to whether Castro's pronouncement was either a calculated or a spontaneous act to control dissent by allowing massive emigration to take place. Exiles sailed to Cuba, without permission from U.S. authorities, starting the Camarioca Boatlift, precursor of the Mariel Boatlift. Lyndon Johnson's administration decided to accept these Cuban refugees and more, but in an orderly manner. The Freedom Flights commenced in 1965 and the Immigration Act of 1952 was amended to take in these newcomers.

Most of the Cubans settled again in South Florida, although resettlement to northern cities was in keeping with the Eisenhower-Kennedy policies between 1960 to 1962. The Freedom Flights ended in 1973 during the Richard Nixon administration.

Garcia indicates that the Johnson administration already was molding Cuban desires and attitudes. She states, "even though the Johnson administration articulated its 'strong desire' that Cuba should 'be freed from Communist domination,' the administration hoped to encourage emigres to establish psychological ties to the United States rather than to cling to the hope that they would soon return to their homeland" (p. 42).

The duality of this policy, to publicly encourage Cubans to seek freedom for their homeland, but at the same time, pressing them to work within the system and become Americans is not fully analyzed in *Havana USA*. The 1960s brought a number of exile operations against the Castro regime--some apparently sanctioned by government officials, some endorsed by the Central Intelligence Agency, and others without U.S. support. If Professor Garcia had discussed in more detail the various administrations' roles in encouraging the exiles to seek a free Cuba, one might better under-

stand the motivations for patently illegal activities by some exiles.

On the other hand, precious little is said about Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford regarding Cuban refugee policy. Both presidents were very popular among the Cuban exiles. Were they providing false hopes while seeking political support? Professor Garcia's discussion instead centers around several isolated, but highly publicized, incidents of outrage perpetrated by some exile groups or individuals. A more ample discussion of the administrations' activities among exiles would have shed more light on the events that took place in the mid to late seventies, which exploded with the 1980 massive Mariel exodus. Very few archival references are made of this period. This reviewer finds this well researched book deficient in this area.

By September 1977, 665,043 Cubans had arrived in the United States. Garcia affirms that "the Castro government's official policy of externalizing dissent ceased" (p. 45). This externalization of dissent was hinted at, but not previously discussed in her book.

This reviewer cannot fathom whether it was the recency or the massive media play of the event which caused Professor Garcia to dedicate an entire chapter to the Mariel Boatlift of 1980. She does report accurately the sequence of events that led to that massive refugee wave. Migratory waves from Cuba have been associated with a great deal of upheaval within the island.

Between 1969 and 1970, Castro committed the entire nation's resources to a gigantic sugar harvest to free Cuba from economic distress. The 10 Million Ton Harvest--la zafra de los 10 millones--was officially touted as Cuba's salvation or cure-all for the nation's stagnant economy. The harvest was a dismal failure. Not only had Castro exacted an extremely high price from the Cuban people, but also from the industrial and economic infrastructures of the island nation. A sense of frustration and defeat permeated the Cuban society. Castro even suggested publicly on his 26 July, 1970, speech that he would resign if the people willed it.

As a result, Cuba in the 1970s underwent tremendous change in both its government and economic structures, spurred by the Soviet Union. The Soviets demanded more discipline from their Caribbean ally. Sugar prices were high and Cuba made some progress in her development programs. A new constitution was adopted, modeled after that of the Soviet Union. But Cuba was becoming drawn militarily into African conflicts as her leaders proclaimed internationalism as an objective of their socialist society. This tremendous manpower and resource drain began to fray the fragile island economy and its society.

Professor Garcia discusses the controversial "dialogo" overtures to dialog between the Cuban government and approved sectors of the Cuban community living abroad. This idea of "dialogo" was, and still is, extremely controversial and sensitive among the greater majority of exiles.

The result of this new rapprochement, was the Carter administration's 1979 decision to allow exiles to travel to Cuba for short family visits and return to the United States. Exiled Cubans saw this as an opportunity to be reunited with their families after many years of separation. The Castro authorities allowed these seemingly unsupervised visits to take place for about one year.

Cubans on the island could appreciate first hand the prosperity--real or imagined--of those who had emigrated. Visitors carried dollars, food stuffs, clothes, appliances, electronic gadgets, and tales of income earning and buying power. These visitors also carried their unswerving dislike for the Cuban regime and made it patently obvious that exile life was not all that bad. Disaffection permeated the air. A wave of embassy invasions by Cubans seeking political asylum followed. The events at the Peruvian Embassy are well documented by Garcia. This was the catalyst for the Mariel Boatlift.

In April 1980, over 10,000 Cubans invaded the Peruvian embassy in Havana, creating a potentially explosive situation for the Castro government. It was a public relations fiasco for Castro and the regime. Castro spoke to the Cuban nation in April 1980 and stated that anyone not wanting to live in a revolutionary Cuba could leave. He followed the same strategy devised back on his September 28, 1965 speech, which resulted in the Camarioca boatlift, followed by the Freedom Flights. This speech started one of the most massive and dangerous boatlifts of all times. Over 124,000 Cubans arrived in the United States over about thirty days onboard a flotilla of exile vessels. Nearly 1,500 hard core criminals and undesirables had been placed onboard and banished to the United States by the Cuban authorities.

The Carter administration, faced with massive uncontrolled immigration from Haiti and Cuba, determined to grant a new migratory status to both groups of refugees. The new term, "entrant," spelled, for all practical purposes, a radical change in the historical migratory policy towards Cubans. Most exile Cuban commentators realized that American emotions towards refugees would never be the same and that Cubans would be treated just as any other foreign national seeking refuge in the United States.

A newly elected President Ronald Reagan warned Castro that another uncontrolled, massive emigration to the United States would not be tolerated and that it would be considered a serious act against the United States. A restructuring of the migratory accords between the United States and Cuba resulted in the establishment of immigration quotas for Cubans.

In the early 1990s, a new wave of uncontrolled immigration from Cuba occurred under Bill Clinton's administration. Over 17,000 Cuban rafters tried to enter the United States illegally. Rafts were makeshift floating vessels made with old inner tubes, styrofoam, wood, or empty gasoline drums. Sometimes these rafters ñ "balseris" came in old, unseaworthy, fishing boats.

After a controversial and bitter debate that pitted segments of the exile community against one another, the Clinton administration and Cuba subscribed to a quota of 20,000 Cubans per year in 1994. That same number had been agreed upon by the Reagan administration in 1984.

The Clinton administration practically rescinded the liberal Cuban Adjustment Act, whose intention had been to help refugees from a communist regime become U.S. residents. The Act was replaced by the New York, Washington, and Havana Immigration Accords of 1994 whereby the term "refugee" was supplanted by that of "illegal immigrant." An era had closed. Clinton had effectively reversed a thirty-year old American Cuban refugee policy.

Garcia's Chapter 3, "Defining an Identity in the United States," reviews the cultural and political considerations of the Cuban exiles. She speaks of the imperative of preserving "cubanidad." She states that this feat was easier in Miami than in any other place in the United States.

Cubans pride themselves of believing that modern Miami is their creation. Cuban entrepreneurial spirit and dynamism opened untold possibilities for other arrivals--not exclusively Cubans--to South Florida. Cuban food and restaurants, businesses, associations, theaters, newspapers, schools, bookstores and publishing houses, "tertulias" (conversation and discussion groups), workshops, university courses, educational curricula, fairs, and carnivals mushroomed. These outward symbols of a transplanted culture indicate, as Professor Garcia points out, a desire to maintain Cuban roots intact at all costs. However, Cubans have never likened their exile to a permanent one.

Garcia's attempt to find answers to this phenomenon makes her concentrate on the more obvious economic power, followed by political power. The psychological engine has been the realiza-

tion that maintaining Cuban identity was a top priority for the rescue and survival of "la Cuba tradicional." Exiles have gauged daily Castro's onslaught against Cuban republican ideals and structures. Their preeminent role has been to maintain alive the idea of the Cuban nation, "independiente y soberana,"--independent and unfettered.

Professor Garcia's discussion of the "municipios"--associations that group exiles by their places of regional origin--exemplifies how active this cultural mission has been. Garcia does not, however, investigate whether this concept of maintaining national links through the immigrants' municipalities, townships, or counties, was ever applied by other exile groups.

The Cubans' links to "la patria"--motherland--were obviously, and have been necessarily, beneficial. These links were provided also by an extremely active exile media. Not only have the fires of freedom been stoked daily, but the concept of nationhood was kept alive. Professor Garcia's investigation and exposition of the differing media available to exiles, such as tabloids, is extremely accurate. Very little is known outside the Cuban community about the work carried out by the editors and writers of these seemingly insignificant newspapers.

It is unfortunate, however, that *Havana USA* does not dedicate a more detailed description and analysis to the role of radio, and even television, in perpetuating exile views and generating public opinion. Exile Cuban radio is an extension of one of Cuba's most dynamic national media. Radio has been effectively utilized in maintaining Cuban cultural awareness and, most importantly, in creating unswerving public opinion against the Castro government. Exile Cuban radio has also been instrumental in keeping a very strong link between the exile community and the people on the island.

Garcia's discussion of this medium could have been more extensive. She fails to highlight the movers and shakers, the true opinion makers, of Cuban exile politics. She fails to explain ownership of the radio stations, their goals and objectives, and, above all, she does not delve into any of the frequent radio wars to capture exile audience points.

Historians are trained to follow the printed record, the official extant documents. An ephemeral medium, such as radio programming, is much harder to study, investigate, and analyze. Nonetheless, in the case of the Cuban exile community, it is critical to deal with this phenomenon. A more extensive study is required. Professor Garcia deserves credit for pointing to a controversial radio program, "Transicion," where a less conservative, more centrist, political exile line is followed. Those studying the Cuban exile phenomenon can attest to a community where differing points of view can be expressed without fear of retaliation.

Garcia points to the 1970s as the time when Cubans perceived themselves as permanent residents of the U.S. rather than refugees. This is a very controversial statement, albeit apparently accurate. There was a pragmatic move within many exile sectors to take political control of the community. Exiles did it consciously, without forgetting either the reasons for their being in the United States or their ultimate, primordial, objective: to see Cuba free of the current dictatorship (p. 113).

Garcia attributes the Cubans' (economic) success to the high rate of female participation in the labor force, the structure of the Cuban household, a low fertility rate, and high rates of school completion. Professor Garcia is absolutely correct in making these affirmations.

In this reviewer's estimation, there is still another factor for the Cuban economic success story: Cubans have historically reinvested all earned capital within the community instead of expatriating hard earned dollars. This is a most important factor of economic power and growth. This

trend, however, is being reversed and should be investigated. There have been reports that nearly $1 billion a year is being sent to relatives in Cuba. The dollar drain, if kept unchecked, could create potential economic problems in this immigrant society. One must be reminded that although there is a limit to the numbers of Cubans entering the United States, it remains an impressive 20,000 persons a year.

The Cuban identity in exile is safe, according to Garcia. She affirms that during the "1980s and 1990s, the emigres learned to view their experience within a broader historical context" (p. 118). She closes this chapter with a beautiful statement: the emigres "no longer had to rely on dead heroes from the nineteenth-century wars of independence. They had their own story to tell" (p. 119).

Havana USA dedicates an entire chapter to exile politics. The chapter reflects on the many points found in previous sections, but examines them from a political angle. To Garcia's credit, she does touch on painful subjects within the community. Her investigation includes U.S. government dealings with Cuban exile leaders, the CIA's role in paramilitary and covert activities, plots, exile raids on the island, and terrorism.[2]

Garcia's analysis of the Cuban American National Foundation and its leader, the late Jorge Mas Canosa, is written in an extremely well-balanced manner. She explains Cuba Independiente y Democratica and its leader, Major Huber Matos. Her discussion of these two exile groups illustrates how divergent and similar exile organizations can be. These two organizations are representative of a vertical, historical, anti-Castro opposition.

Garcia also discusses some of the most obvious exile opposition groups. Some of these are clearly pro-Castro, yet others promote a less confrontational or hostile position towards the Cuban regime. These groups do not represent a large segment of the Cuban exile population. Upon reading Professor Garcia's analysis, the careful observer cannot fail but grasp that this degree of tolerance towards these groups is an indication that a belief in democratic principles, such as freedom of speech, is operating among Cuban exiles. This fact should discredit, or prove false, many accusations hurled at the Cuban exile community for its perceived intolerance.

Maria Cristina Garcia's *Havana USA* closes with a discussion on Cuban writers and scholars in exile. Her analysis of Cuban exile literature accurately portrays the many talents of contemporary Cuban literature. This group of writers, while motivated by very strong Cuban cultural roots, are dealing with the reality of their dual lives, an unresolved existential problem.

Garcia's critiques stem from a mere sociological perspective of the works and the writers: satire of the hybrid culture, questioning the duality of the existential experience, failing to comprehend the new Cuban American identity, the sense of confusion stemming from the fact of living in two worlds, and the theme of return or inability to return to the homeland. Absent from her critique are two greats of Cuban exile letters, Hilda Perera and Matias Montes Huidobro. There are many more Cuban exile writers, including novelists, short story writers, historians, poets, literary critics, playwrights, and essayists, who have dealt with the problems of being Cuban in borrowed time and space.

Maria Cristina Garcia's *Havana USA* is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand a vibrant, dynamic, and complex community. The Cuban experience in the United States well deserves thorough analysis. This book should be considered a seminal work.

Notes

[1]. A more detailed analysis of the first wave of Cuban exile immigrants, from January 1, 1959 to the commencement of the Kennedy administration, and the role the U.S. government may have had in opening the refugee floodgates, would have shed much light into later behavior, atti-

tudes, and actions of a great number of Cuban exiles.

Cuban immigration to the United States began in the early hours of January 1, 1959 and has continued practically uninterrupted until today. There have been few books describing the various migratory waves from Cuba to the United States. One of the earliest, using surveying and interviewing techniques, was Richard R. Fagen, Richard A. Brody and Thomas J. O'Leary's ***Cubans in Exile: Disaffection and the Revolution***, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).

Garcia's perfunctory review of the Eisenhower administration shows the risks historians face when dealing with sensitive and controversial (and possibly very embarrassing) government actions. The records are often not made available.

A review of indexed extant archival materials at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, obtained via the internet by this reviewer, indicates that there are still a great number of classified documents, and, specifically, that Cuban files are extremely limited. In view of the degree of discussions and actions taken by the likes of C.D. Jackson, Tracy Voorhees, Allen Dulles, Christian Herter, Richard Nixon, and Eisenhower himself, to name just a few, on the Cuban problem, it may be surmised that those records are not available to researchers for reasons beyond our comprehension.

Recent revelations discredit the view that Eisenhower was not involved in the Cuban problem. The record, however, strongly points to such agencies as the Central Intelligence Agency and a great many Cold War warriors as having a plan or program to politically destroy Castro's fledgling revolution. A recent study by Peter Grose on the life of Allen Dulles, ***Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles*** (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), dedicates a great number of pages to the administration's preoccupation with the Castro problem.

The fact that President Eisenhower approved a program to topple the Castro regime in March 1960 must be an indication that a greater number of people than we have been led to believe were actively engaged. Mr. Tracy Voorhees, a longtime aide of the president, in November 1960, presented the president with a report on Cuban refugees. He was given charge of the Cuban refugee office in Miami by the end of 1960, just before John F. Kennedy assumed the presidency.

Totally missing from Garcia's discussion is Vice President Richard Nixon's role in the Cuban refugee problem and destabilizing program. He was in charge of the secret program, although Allen Dulles and his operations deputy, Richard Bissell, were developing and implementing the plan. One of the key points of the plan devised by the Central Intelligence Agency was the recruitment of political exiles. Without a pool of able-bodied men there could not have been an invasion. What was the role of big U.S. corporations, the American Embassy in Havana, and other engaged individuals, both in the United States, Cuba, and possibly other countries, in promoting the massive exodus? Garcia's book fails to make these connections.

It is obvious that the Castro government was a source of embarrassment and frustration for the U.S. government. There are strong indications that early on, beginning in 1959 and continuing through 1960, a campaign of disinformation, propaganda, and psychological warfare was already taking place. This campaign was aimed at the general population and, as a result, a great number of Cubans sought asylum in the United States. These facts could have been analyzed by Garcia in her sections on exile politics. It is in the scope of the study to offer such a discussion.

Garcia refers to Operation Peter Pan which in 1960 was referred to as Operation Exodus. Revelations about this secret operation to rescue Cuban children, mainly in their teens, did not appear in the press until 1962. The Catholic hierarchy and Eisenhower's advisors saw Cuba as another Hungary. Little of the record, however, is shared in

this book. Garcia does reveal previously secret details about several key players of this underground railroad and their actions. The ***Miami Herald*** printed a story out of Chicago on January 12, 1997 revealing that De Paul University professor Maria de los Angeles Torres was suing the Central Intelligence Agency under the Freedom of Information Act for the release of any documents relating to the airlift of Cuban children to the United States after Fidel Castro seized power. However, there are allegations that the Central Intelligence Agency was promoting this evacuation. This operation and its aftermath are still felt in the Cuban exile community.

One particular aspect of the Cuban immigration that could enlighten future readers is a discussion or analysis of the formulation of Cuban refugee policy. The Kennedy administration was instrumental in setting up the necessary mechanisms to implement the policy: financial aid, resettlement, educational programs, work related training, and other welfare programs. We can see that two very defining moments occurred on the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion and right after the October 1962 missile crisis.

In spite of these setbacks, the Kennedy administration, after wrestling operational control away from the CIA, decided to go ahead with a secret war against Castro which included the possibility of a second invasion. Robert Kennedy was in charge of this operation. By April 1963, the war against Fidel Castro was, for all practical purposes, an American endeavor and the Cubans were left out. It is not too difficult to understand why Cubans felt betrayed by the Kennedys. These aspects are not discussed in ***Havana USA***.

[2]. This chapter does not mention any of the exiles' accusations against the U.S. administrations, specifically the Johnson administration, of betrayal of a number of anti-Castro fighters. Garcia apparently did not feel the need to dig deep into these allegations. Her references do not reflect work with documents from the Johnson, Nixon, Ford, or Reagan administrations. This reviewer recommends that a more thorough and comprehensive investigation, utilizing archival and newly declassified documents be undertaken to better explain this topic.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at https://networks.h-net.org/h-latam

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