

Cuba: Order and Revolution

by Jorge I. Domínguez

(Harvard University Press; xix + 683 pp.; \$25.00)

Edward Gonzalez

Three years ago at the request of Harvard University Press I reviewed the manuscript of *Cuba: Order and Revolution* by Jorge I. Domínguez, associate professor of government at Harvard University. At that time I ventured the assessment that, when published, the book would become "the definitive, landmark study on Cuba." With the recent publication of this mammoth volume—spanning 540 pages of text and appendices, nearly 80 pages of documentation, and another 36 pages of bibliographical entries—it does indeed represent a decisive turning point in Cuban studies. No other book or set of articles on twentieth-century Cuba can match the Domínguez study in terms of its awesome comprehensiveness, analytical depth, and explanatory power. Simply stated, it is an impressive scholarly achievement, and one that will remain the indispensable source on Cuban politics for years to come.

What has Domínguez done? Among other things, he has provided us with a richly detailed, in-depth examination of Cuba's political development over the past seventy-five years, beginning with the island's independence from Spain and extending through such recent events as Cuba's new socialist constitution and heightened international activism in Africa. Domínguez traces the systemic continuities as well as changes that have characterized Cuba's three periods of development, from 1902-33, 1934-58, and 1959 to the present, and he has done so by rendering a remarkably dispassionate diagnosis of each of these three periods.

Moreover, Domínguez has achieved this kind of diagnosis by employing modern social science methods of analysis. Such an undertaking is in itself notable because empirical data on Cuba for this type of analysis is most difficult to find, and requires remarkable ingenuity as well as meticulous care in collecting bits and pieces of information. Domínguez has been exhaustive in his data-gathering, employing not only hard statistics, but also inferential evi-

dence and survey data to test the validity of various hypotheses or impressionistic conclusions concerning both pre- and post-1959 Cuba. In his chapter on political culture in Castro's Cuba, for example, Domínguez is not content to accept claims that a "new man"—with his new work ethic and sense of collective consciousness—has been forged as a result of the regime's intensified efforts to create a "genuine Communist society" after the mid-1960's. Analyzing the results of the government's own survey of students who volunteered for hard agricultural work in 1968, he finds instead that the primary motivation behind the students' action was their aversion to study. Similarly, in testing for the development of cooperative values among Cuban citizens, he finds that where such values exist among Cuban scientists, they stem far more from the specific needs of a particular scientific discipline than from the government's efforts to instill such norms. In examining still other areas, he agrees with the general assessment that Cuba has made substantial progress in reducing racial discrimination since 1959, and that the quality as well as availability of public health has improved since 1970 in particular. But upon closer examination of his data he also finds a continued correlation between racial inequality, income, and poorer health. He thus concludes that "Cuban blacks and mulattoes are demonstrably poorer; because they are poorer, they are more likely than whites to become sick. This was true before the revolution, and it is still true in the 1970s."

Domínguez does not confine himself to a micro-analysis. On the contrary, there is a large theoretical sweep to much of his study. To begin with, he shows the importance of international and transnational linkages in the formation of each of Cuba's three periods of political development. Thus in the initial postindependence period from 1902 to 1933, the impact of U.S. imperialism caused the "pluralization" of Cuban politics, resulting in the creation of

multiple centers of authority and influence in and out of Cuba. As Domínguez explains, the imperial relationship vested ultimate control over Cuban affairs in Washington and the U.S. embassy in Havana. This situation was formalized by the Platt Amendment in 1902, which granted the U.S. Government the right to intervene in Cuba's domestic affairs, and which in turn encouraged contending Cuban élites to press for U.S. intervention for their own partisan gain. In the meantime mounting U.S. private investments, totalling a billion dollars by 1927, further dispersed authority and influence to power centers outside Cuba. With the abrogation of the Platt Amendment in 1934, Washington ceased trying to supervise Cuban affairs directly, and thereafter allowed Cuban governments greater autonomy within the limits dictated by U.S. national interests.

The second period, from 1934 to 1958, was characterized by a new hegemonial (as opposed to imperial) relationship between the two countries, and it too had a profound effect upon Cuba's domestic order. As Domínguez demonstrates, Cuba's central government was strengthened as U.S. controls were loosened; and it governed through the politics of "regulation and distribution" whereby the island's economic and social affairs were regulated, and the "stakes of politics" were distributed, by successive regimes among pivotal political as well as economic and social groups. A principal consequence of this form of regulatory and distributive politics, most notably as practiced by Fulgencio Batista, was the emergence of strong interest-group associations that assumed direct supervision of those areas of government policy of concern to them. The result was that both government and interest-group structures became highly fragmented on the basis of particular partisan issues, the interest groups being unaccustomed to collaborating with each other on broader national issues. Thus weakened by the lack of cohesion, the interest-group structures of the second period were unable to withstand Fidel Castro's revolutionary onslaught after 1959.

In the third period, from 1959 onwards, the Castro regime's realignment with the Soviet Union, beginning in 1960, also changed the shape and form of Cuban domestic politics. Cuba's new international ties with the Soviets con-

tributed to heightened government "centralization" as the weight and strength of political institutions were vastly increased throughout Cuban society. Such a centralization and strengthening of political power was no doubt indispensable for the survival of the Cuban Revolution in the face of U.S. efforts to overthrow the Castro regime in the 1960's. Yet, as the Domínguez study notes, the centralization of political power in Cuba remains, although the U.S. threat has diminished. Since 1970 Cuba's political order has come to bear a closer resemblance to that of the Soviet Union.

Domínguez also sheds additional light on the political and economic breakdown of the old order and the political strengths of the new. He points out that economic performance was essential to the legitimacy of successive regimes prior to the revolution. When economic deterioration began to set in during the 1950's, not only the poor farmers but also elements from the upper, middle, and organized working classes—who had earlier been the principal beneficiaries of the politics of "regulation and distribution"—denied legitimacy to the corrupt and repressive Batista dictatorship and swung their support behind Castro's revolution. For his part, Castro promised an honest, nationalist, and reformist government for the renovation of Cuban life. With his spectacular triumph over Batista, the rebel leader acquired a charismatic legitimacy for governing Cuba that had eluded previous Cuban presidents. This charismatic basis, together with the commitment to redistributive justice and to a nationalist posture toward the United States, infused the Castro regime with its popular, revolutionary legitimacy.

This brief description of the introductory chapters in Domínguez's book simply cannot convey the full richness and power of his argumentation. In any event, his analysis of the political institutions, processes, and policies of the Castro regime from 1959 through 1977 accounts for nearly 75 per cent of the book, and it is an equally if not more impressive piece of scholarship. Here, Domínguez probes and diagnoses Cuba's contemporary body politic in a meticulous, judicious, and searching manner that is in the finest tradition of political science. Although he is a Cuban exile (he left the island when he was

fifteen), he has not allowed this to obstruct his scholarly approach to Cuban politics. On the contrary, he uses his intimate knowledge of his homeland to great intellectual advantage, while maintaining a disciplined, dispassionate outlook on Cuba today. Thus he acknowledges the Castro regime's notable accomplishments, particularly in the

area of social justice (which the regime's opponents are loathe to recognize), while also maintaining a discerning stance in order to separate the regime's intentions and claims from its actual performance (which the regime's defenders often ignore).

Domínguez's range of topics on post-1959 Cuba is encyclopedic. Chapters

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focus on the development of revolutionary institutions and the formalization of the state under the new 1976 Constitution; mass political participation; the structure and rôle of the Cuban Communist party; the socioeconomic, political, and military missions of the Cuban armed forces; the policymaking processes as they affect economic, scientific, and intellectual activities and society in general; agrarian politics and reform; and the formation of a new political culture. While it is beyond the scope of this review to touch on each of these chapters, at least three deserve more detailed treatment because they address issues that are key to understanding Cuba today: the Cuban military, mass participation in revolutionary politics, and rule by the Communist party of Cuba.

Long the leading authority on the Cuban military, Domínguez's chapter on the armed forces again demonstrates his mastery of the subject. He observes, for example, that Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) have performed, not only an indispensable military role in the defense of the homeland against the United States and Cuban exiles, but additional socioeconomic and political missions as well. In fact, contrary to the traditional distinction between civilian and military functions, in which the assumption of "unmilitary" roles is considered "unprofessional" for the military, the FAR has evolved the unique concept of the "civic soldier":

"Cuba has been ruled in large measure by military men who govern large segments of both military and civilian life, who are held up as paragons to both soldiers and civilians, who are the bearers of the revolutionary tradition and ideology, who have politicized themselves by absorbing the norms and organization of the Communist party, and who have educated themselves to become professional in political, economic, managerial, engineering, and educational as well as military affairs. Their civilian and their military lives are fused."

Part of the FAR's political mission has been to provide the Castro regime with a reservoir of political, organizational, and technical talent for appointment to top positions within the government and Communist party. Its socioeconomic mission was evident in the critical period, beginning in the late 1960's, when the FAR assumed direct

responsibility over certain sectors of the Cuban economy, particularly during the drive to attain a record ten million-ton sugar harvest in 1970. In that ill-fated effort the FAR cut 20 per cent of the sugarcane, organized and operated the combines that mechanized the harvesting, and coordinated the harvest effort throughout the island. As Domínguez explains, however, the functions of the Cuban military have been undergoing change since 1970. Resistance within the military to continued use of the FAR for economic tasks, as in the 1970 harvest, together with a strengthened civilian sector, have led to the FAR's greater concentration on its military mission. As a result, the armed forces have now entered a new stage of professionalization and specialization. A related consequence is that the FAR is now able to undertake a new "internationalist mission," as was first demonstrated in Angola and later in Ethiopia. Domínguez suggests that these trends may portend the eventual demise of Cuba's "civic soldier."

“. . . the 1970's have seen significant changes in the governing of Cuba.”

As have other observers, Domínguez points out that mass political participation is a major characteristic of the Castro regime and one of its principal sources of political strength. Yet he also makes clear that participation is tightly controlled by the regime through the Communist party and subordinate mass organizations; its effectiveness in policy matters is limited essentially to local or nonsensitive issues that do not affect the distribution of political power or scarce resources. Domínguez argues that this form of political participation—which largely involves implementation of decisions made by the governing élite—is in part the result of the society's low level of social mobilization (the vast majority of Cubans have not advanced beyond a sixth-grade education). The people are "not socially mobilized enough to have

the psychological resources to participate politically on their own." Of course the process of continued modernization, together with further advances in education, may create higher levels of social mobilization in the future, but Domínguez cautions that this need not lead to a qualitative change in mass participation: "Social mobilization makes people available for politics, but it does not automatically make them political." In the meantime, because of the continuation of limited political participation by the Cuban masses, "the potential for unrestrained oligarchy is quite high."

The Communist party of Cuba (PCC) has emerged as the "governing institution" in the Cuba of the 1970's, although the armed forces remain autonomous from, as well as influential in, the party itself. Domínguez not only stresses that the PCC exercises tight control over other political institutions and activities, but also that it is a highly centralized apparatus that is dominated by the ruling élite:

"The mass organizations are dependent on the party, lower units within any organization are dependent on their superiors, and the party in the provinces is subject to the Central Committee; everyone is subject to the party's Political Bureau and Secretariat, and they, finally, are subordinate to Fidel Castro. Control is so overwhelming that it is difficult to conceive how free discussion could possibly take place....The 'democratic' aspects of 'democratic centralism' in Cuba may under clearly defined conditions allow limited criticism by an individual party member, but they do not allow factional organization and dissent as legitimate activities within the party, although factionalism no doubt exists."

The Castro leadership's right to exclusive rule both within and outside the party rests upon its revolutionary legitimacy, beginning with its act of rebellion against Batista and extending to the rightness of its present revolutionary conduct. Thus, as in the 1960's, the élite's claims to legitimacy continue to "derive not from election but from the quality of the rulers and the way they rule."

But the 1970's have seen significant changes in the governing of Cuba. As Domínguez points out, the charismatic basis of Castro's authority has been diffused more broadly within a collective leadership and the party itself;

political order and stability have been advanced through institutional reforms and the formalization of the state structure; and the economy began to experience creditable rates of growth following years of decline in the 1960's. In short, a new pragmatism has replaced the radicalism of the past, with all its stresses and deprivations. Also, although authoritarian rule by the revolutionary élite was being institutionalized in the party, the quality of life for many Cubans is finally improving as a result of greater material prosperity. Thus, despite continued demands for political conformity, Domínguez observes that "the government, led by the party, did govern. The future had finally arrived. It was dull red, but it worked."

CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID S. MCLELLAN is Professor of Political Science at Miami University, Ohio.

JAMES A. NUECHTERLEIN is Professor of History at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

EDWARD GONZALEZ is Professor of Political Science at UCLA. He is the author of *Cuba Under Castro: The Limits of Charisma* (1974), as well as numerous articles and monographs on Cuban foreign and domestic affairs.

Briefly Noted

The Illegals
by *Grace Halsell*
(Stein and Day; 215 pp.; \$8.95)

"Undocumented Aliens," as they are called, will soon move Hispanics into the questionable status of our largest minority. This is a sympathetic telling of the story of Hispanic "illegals" by a woman who has traveled and listened to them in their communities here and in Mexico. Ms. Halsell does not claim to have the answers with respect to specifics of immigration policy, but she helps us to understand that any answers worthy of this nation must be informed by an understanding of real people, who persist in paying America the compliment of believing it is still the fabled land of opportunity.

Milton and the English Revolution

by *Christopher Hill*
(Viking Press; 539 pp.; \$20.00)

A marvelous surprise—or at least it will seem so to those not familiar with the imaginative vitality that Hill brings to his studies in English history. Dreary old "puritanical" John Milton comes alive as a radical thinker and activist in the tumults of the seventeenth century. Aside from delightful reading, this book offers the challenge to rethink the sources of Western democratic thought. Democratic theory attuned to the religious sensibilities of the American people can be better derived from seventeenth-century England than from eighteenth-century France, or at least that is one inference among many to be drawn from this masterful study.

Economics, Society and Culture

by *Robert Ghelardi*
(Delacorte; 403 pp.; \$12.95)

This spirited and often strident assault on "liberal ideology" should provoke useful debate in some quarters. The subtitle is "God, Money and the New Capitalism," which pretty well describes what the book is about. The author, who has done speechwriting for people like David Rockefeller, tends to think himself more radical than conservative; he proposes a redefinition of the connection between culture and state power that offends both liberal and laissez-faire capitalist ideologues. Hardly a conventional assumption is left undisturbed in this book. It should be relished by all who like a lively argument and who are suspicious of definitive answers.

Theology in a New Key
by *Robert McAfee Brown*
(Westminster; 212 pp.; \$6.95 [paper])

Brown is a well-known Protestant theologian who was earlier noted for his writings on the ecumenical movement. In recent years his attention has been turned to "liberation theology," especially as that putative synthesis of Marxism and Christianity has issued from Latin America. This popular and

for the most part uncritical promotion of that theological approach is designed to challenge North Americans to reexamine their complicity in the sufferings of the world's oppressed. The author admits to being on the moral defensive because he is white, male, and North American. He says he does not "relish criticizing my country," but he believes that "my joys and fulfillments are frequently purchased at the cost of misery and denial to others, and freedoms my country extends to me are freedoms it denies to small minorities at home and vast majorities abroad." The "new key" is by now a weary refrain; although there is nothing substantively new in this treatment, the case is made with an air of fresh discovery that may prove winsome to the uninitiated.

At the Edge of Hope: Christian Laity in Paradox
by *Howard Butt*
(Seabury Press; 211 pp.; \$8.95/3.95)

In February, 1978, Howard Butt's Texas-based foundation financed a "Congress of the Laity" in Los Angeles. It was by any measure a big event, aimed at bridging the gap between "evangelicals" and whoever those other Christians are. Not a few critics suggested that nothing good could come from a conference that had as its honorary chairman Gerald Ford, but in fact this book, written "with Elliott Wright" (a long-time *Worldview* contributor), reveals that significant exchanges did take place. The book is keyed to the differences between Malcolm Muggeridge and Peter Berger over the connection between "immanence" and "transcendence" in Christian faith and life. Berger, who in connection with the 1975 Hartford Appeal underscored the importance of transcendence, here comes out for the immanent against Muggeridge's disdain for worldly engagements; and that will strike followers of religious happenings as ironic. Some of the papers included in the book, such as that by *New York Times* man James Reston, are fearfully bland, but all in all the book conveys a sense of people coming together in their confusion to affirm, if not to prove, that there is indeed an "edge of hope" in thinking about the future of religious witness in this kind of world.