

# BOOKS

## CUBAN FOREIGN POLICY: CARIBBEAN TEMPEST

by Pamela S. Falk

(Lexington Books; 192 pp.; \$23.00)

## CUBA, CASTRO, AND THE CARIBBEAN: THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND THE CRISIS IN WESTERN CONSCIENCE

by Carlos Alberto Montaner

(Transaction Press; 114 pp.; \$19.95)

Rhoda Rabkin

Anyone who picks up a new book on Cuba these days reads with one question uppermost in mind: What does the future hold for United States-Cuban relations? These two studies of Cuba, one by a foreign policy "expert," the other by a Cuban expatriate writer, represent strikingly different visions—each in its own way plausible and implausible—of what is to come.

In *Cuban Foreign Policy*, intended as a comprehensive and authoritative treatment of its subject matter, the vision follows an opinion that is near-universal in the United States foreign policy establishment. Falk proposes that the U.S. gradually wean Cuba from its alliance with the Soviet Union without challenging Cuba's domestic political philosophy. She claims that this is a feasible goal: As the good relations between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China allegedly demonstrate, "it is Cuba's familial alliance with the Soviet Union and not its ideological commitment to Communism that angers Washington."

But Falk presents no reason to believe—and many reasons to doubt—that Castro would be interested in a deal that requires Cuba to abstain from making and keeping commitments to revolutionary forces around the world. As she acknowledges, an ongoing rapprochement with Cuba during the Carter years came to grief over the presence of Cuban combat soldiers in Africa. According to her own analysis, Castro's military interventions did not come about because Cuba felt threatened by the U.S. but because détente policies of the Nixon and Carter administrations left Cuba feeling relatively more secure. Moreover, as Falk asserts, Castro's adventures in Africa served an important domestic political purpose: to provide a sense of revolutionary mission badly needed to reinvigorate revolutionary loyalty at home. This fact suggests a much closer connection between domestic ideology and foreign policy than Falk is willing

to acknowledge elsewhere.

Falk forthrightly describes the remarkable continuity in Cuba's programs of overt and covert aid to would-be revolutionaries in Latin America. "Cuba," she reports, "provided military assistance to guerrilla insurgents in every nation of the Western hemisphere except Mexico during the first two decades of revolutionary rule." During the 1970s—considered a "moderate" period during which Cuba stepped up diplomatic initiatives in Latin America—"Cuba assisted insurgents in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras." The predominant form this assistance took was the training and counseling of insurgents, although in the case of Nicaragua and El Salvador arms shipments were also important.

Falk believes that Cuban support for "progressive" causes everywhere responds to Cuban aspirations, not the dictates of Soviet power. This is no doubt true, but should Cuban aspirations ever change, it would be difficult to disengage the country from its ally and benefactor. Certainly the United States is not eager to be the one to replace such a mammoth Soviet subsidy to Cuba as Falk describes. Neither Washington's heart nor its pocketbook will support Cuba in the role of an independent Communist power on the model of China or Rumania.

In the end, Falk fails to draw the appropriate conclusions from her own premises and evidence. In her view, "ideology does not necessarily determine and shape Cuba's foreign policy," because it is primarily a frustrated sense of nationhood that drives Cuba toward a "highly visible, independent-minded, and interventionist" foreign policy. But if Cuba's support for revolution springs from a deeper source than ideological zeal, and if there is no major redefinition of its domestic ideology, there is even

less—not more—reason to believe Cuba will become a noninterventionist "good neighbor."

In *Cuba, Castro, and the Caribbean*, Montaner has written a provocative and compelling book about the sort of future Cubans can hope to build. He agrees with Falk that "the Cuban problem" is best explained by a deep-seated anxiety about national identity. In his view, Cuban nationalism has always been problematic because it formed itself not against a true adversary but the only available one—the Yankees, who were in fact co-responsible for the island's relative prosperity. Montaner sees Castro's foreign policy as a form of overcompensation for the historical weakness of and ambivalence about national identity. But whereas Falk accepts the national neurosis as a given, Montaner wants to change it.

For the author, it is above all the Cubans who have been the victims of their own grandiose conception of the national destiny:

"I wish I could write of a great, prosperous nation that contributes its creative efforts to Western civilization and solves its problems through dialogue. Such a country does not exist. It might have. It may yet exist, but the first requirement for its existence is that its budget be attuned to reality, to the acknowledgement of the bitter truth that we are nothing more than an insignificant Caribbean nation, periodically racked by violence and bloodshed. This belief does not preclude me from loving Cuba but it does determine the nature of that love, which is the dismayed tenderness that the most desperate causes often elicit."

For a country as modestly endowed as Cuba, Montaner believes, the extraordinary world leadership role that Communist Cuba has achieved could only be purchased at an unacceptable price in blood, indebtedness, and loss of freedom. Montaner proposes to his compatriots a drastic scaling down of national ambition. He wants Cubans to concentrate instead on what he believes is a more worthwhile goal: turning Cuba into a prosperous, technologically advanced society.

Actually, Montaner wants what Castro says *he* wants for Cuba: a modern, technologically innovative economy, based on the advanced knowledge and skills of the population. But Montaner believes that this ideal future can come about only through close collaboration with the United States. "Cuba's greatest potential resource," he writes, lies in its geographical location "next door to the world's most creative society."

One is tempted to say that Montaner advocates the "Americanization" of the island—except that he believes American cultural leadership is already making itself felt as the country is being "Sovietized." Instead of importing Western ideas and American influence directly, Cuba receives them third-hand—through Russia, a "thick and useless sieve." None of the scientific breakthroughs that have affected human welfare during the last quarter-century, he believes, began in the Communist world:

"Neither cybernetics, the new genetics, the breathtaking development of electronics, nor the enormous strides in the field of medicine—not a single discovery of this prodigious era of science and technology has been engendered within the Soviet bloc."

The Soviet Union, like Cuba, is "a dependent world."

Montaner believes that modern civilization is dominated by the products of technological innovation. "Cuba's alleged independence has not been able to free her from polyester fabrics, contact lenses, or pesticides." Since America is the source of this innovation, it "dominates" not just Cubans but 90 per cent of the world's population. In addition, having created an enormous

exile community in the U.S., Castro has laid the basis for an even greater future interpenetration between the United States and Cuba. Of the exile community Montaner says: "There is no doubt that it will be the most important economic and social element in the post-Castro period."

Montaner decries the preoccupation with self and national identity that he considers a weakness of most Caribbean intellectuals. He leaves little doubt as to how far he takes his rejection of such a preoccupation:

"The greatest virtue of the Caribbean islands lies in their very meekness. Indeed, meekness is a sign of maturity. There is nothing wrong with being the 'sugar bowl of the world,' exporting Calypso music, or making a living out of shaking one's ample bottom to the rhythm of a steel drum."

One may question, however, how many will follow Montaner down this road. It is one thing to sacrifice dreams of national greatness to become the "Holland of the Caribbean." But what if the prospect is to become another Jamaica or Puerto Rico? In order to succeed, Montaner must persuade the citizens of Cuba—no nation of shopkeepers—of the rightness of his vision. **WV**

ignoring the obvious fact that emotional slander of the Islamic Arab world is also, by definition, a form of anti-Semitism.

"Anti-Islamism," in fact, has come to share many of the features of visceral anticommunism in the United States. In both cases prejudices and stereotypes feed on fear of the unknown. Similarly, anyone who portrays Muslims and Islam in any light but that of the common stereotype is often suspected of harboring deep "anti-Semitic" tendencies. Those who have traveled in the Islamic world and gotten to know Muslims as ordinary human beings are often frustrated in their attempts to convey an objective picture of today's Muslims and the reality of Islamic life.

All this is by way of expressing a fear that the fine books offered by Marjorie Kelly and John Esposito may have less impact than they deserve, simply because they find much that is positive, if confused, in the current revival of Islam.

Neither book shies away from the hard questions that must be asked: Is Islam compatible with modernization? Is it hostile to individual freedoms? Why so much emphasis in certain countries on a "negative Islam"? Can Islam, despite its obvious shortcomings, really be relevant to the future of Muslim societies?

## **ISLAM: THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LIFE OF A WORLD COMMUNITY**

**edited by Marjorie Kelly**

(Praeger Publishers for the Foreign Policy Association; xii + 321 pp.; \$39.95/\$16.95)

## **ISLAM AND POLITICS**

**by John Esposito**

(Syracuse University Press; 445 pp.; \$28.00 \$12.95)

*Julian Crandall Hollick*

It's been almost six years since the overthrow of the shah of Iran. Much has been written in the West in general, and in the United States in particular, about the so-called Islamic resurgence. But little of it has really tried to analyze and comprehend from the Muslim perspective the causes for a revival of Islamic values throughout the world.

We admire many aspects of Catholic liberation theology and accept its application in Latin America. Why, then, do we consider as an anachronistic aberration a similar "Islamic liberation theology," which shares many of the same characteristics—a search for identity, a third way between capitalism and communism, social justice and development—all within an ethical framework that refuses to make a distinction between

the spiritual and the secular?

Recent events in Lebanon and elsewhere have also prompted a fashionable literature that talks about an "Islamic fundamentalist conspiracy" directed against the United States. The Muslims are said to hate the West and to be preparing, or even waging, jihad, or holy war, against U.S. Marines in the Middle East. In times of crisis or failure, the Crusader mentality—Christianity against Islam—still seems the quasi-automatic response of too many otherwise intelligent people.

What is sad is the willingness of so much of the news media to give legitimacy to such ideas. There is almost a fear that any serious attempt to report on what might be happening in the Islamic world would lay them open to the charge of "anti-Semitism."

Marjorie Kelly's edited volume, aimed at the general reader, consists of fourteen essays on the beliefs, history, and current role of Islam. Almost all are concise and admirable summaries, although the book as a whole would have benefitted from a less ideologically biased concluding essay, a piece at odds with much of what has gone before.

In her introduction Kelly stresses that Islam is not really an Eastern religion at all but should perhaps be seen as a first cousin to Judaism, with which it shares many beliefs and practices. Indeed, many Jews who have studied Islam would undoubtedly agree on the closeness of the two faiths with their elaborate systems of laws governing social and political life. Kelly also cautions against confusing the behavior of Muslims with Islam—veiling and the general treatment of women is one obvious example. Unfortunately, neither point is really followed up in the other essays in the volume. And more's the pity, because tackling these two issues squarely might do much to dissolve anti-Muslim prejudice in the U.S.

We would feel indignant if Christianity were condemned as bloodthirsty, immoral, and anachronistic because of high murder and divorce rates or the madness that took place in Jonestown. We know these don't