

A History of the Bahamas. By MICHAEL CRATON. London, 1962. Collins Clear-Type Press. Illustrations. Tables. Charts. Bibliography. Appendices. Index. Pp. 320.

From the footsteps of colonizing Puritans on a pristine Bahamian beach in 1647 until today's ebb and flow of fashionable tourists, not a single Bahamian has turned historian to record the full story of this handful of isolated islands, thrown upon the sea as casually as dice across a gaming table. When he came the historian was an outsider, and that is just as well. Islanders are notorious in-scrappers with long memories; please one faction and you inflame another.

Michael Craton left his native England to teach high school in Nassau. It was not a lorelei upon a gleaming beach that lured him from his purpose but the sniff of ancient records in the Bahamas Registry. For four years, both in Nassau and among the Colonial Records in London, he assembled the fascinating pieces and today they are packaged in the first complete, detailed, and authentic history of the Bahama Islands. Mr. Craton is both a good researcher and a good writer. His listing of sources alone will be worth the price of the volume to many historians. Graduate students on the prowl for thesis topics will find new grist to grind, and novelists should have a heyday.

The dull entr'actes in Bahamian history only serve to heighten the drama. Early adventures gave way to pirates and the descendants of "reformed" pirates became privateers. Privateers were as apt to trade with the enemy as to prey upon him. The children of privateers grew up to be wreckers (an honorable profession) often practiced dishonorably (the "fixed" light around the neck of a perambulating mule). The sons of wreckers entered joyfully into blockade-running during the American Civil War and their great grandsons capitalized on the Great American Thirst of the roaring twenties. The "rum running" period had scarcely ended when the Duke and Duchess of Windsor took up residence in famed Government House, the duke as governor. Mr. Craton has omitted no one, not even the enigmatic and fabulously wealthy Sir Harry Oakes who was murdered in his bed.

Although the author deals with dramatic events and colorful people he does it in a thoroughly scholarly manner. The humdrum struggle to make a living from land too rocky and too dry, the treachery as well as the bounty of the sea, the isolation, the hurricanes, and finally the emerging tourism, these too are in the book. He develops the strong sense of continuity in Bahamian history; the old names of two or three centuries ago are in Nassau's phone book today.

While Mr. Craton made good use of his Nassau and London sources

it is to be regretted that he did not dig into American archives. The bonds between Americans and Bahamians have been strong if somewhat intermittent. Perhaps he did not know that the *Boston Gazette* would have given him a new slant on the bold capture of Nassau by a Yankee commodore, Ezekiel Hopkins, in 1776.

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THELMA PETERS

Cuba, the Economic and Social Revolution. Edited by DUDLEY SEERS. Chapel Hill, 1964. University of North Carolina Press. Notes. Tables. Charts. Index. Pp. 432. \$7.50.

This book should be required reading for all government officials who have anything to do with Latin American affairs. It is a scholarly, dispassionate analysis in depth of selected aspects of the Cuban Revolution for the period 1959 through 1962, and for the areas studied it is the most definitive work published to date. The authors are honestly interested in understanding the Revolution, and have assembled and interpreted a vast amount of data. The conclusions presented are objective and balanced. The successes and failures of the Revolution are analyzed in non-dogmatic terms. The authors have done their work as scholars and not as partisan debaters.

One of the major problems faced by this group was the gathering and weighing of evidence. The authors are quite frank in presenting the difficulties involved. As Dudley Seers explains in his preface:

The incompleteness of the data and the impossibility of a comprehensive analysis must, however, be emphasized. The conclusions are inevitably tentative in many places, and should be so judged by the reader. Because information is incomplete and because a revolutionary situation precludes a strictly economic analysis, the margin for personal judgment is considerable.

This judgment has been exercised with care. The authors have skillfully weighed the information supplied by the Cuban government, and have subjected this (and other) evidence to cross examination. This process involved the use of materials supplied by local administrators, personal observation, statistical projection from established data, and a generous dose of common sense. The discussion does not always make for easy reading, but the results are well worth the effort involved.

In 1962 Dudley Seers (an English economist currently with the UN) did research in Cuba, and decided that a team of scholars could