

the story of the racist massacre of 1912, a major but little-known event in the long history of repression against subordinated racial groups in the Americas. In contrast to most previous authors, Helg argues that this was a government-led racist massacre aimed at liquidating a political organization—the Partido Independiente de Color—that posed a fundamental challenge to Cuba’s racial and political order.

Governing elites had justified Afro-Cubans’ subordination through an ideology of white supremacy and a myth of racial equality, according to which cross-racial military cooperation during the war for independence had solved Cuba’s “race problem.” According to the elite-generated myth, after the war there were no blacks and whites anymore, just Cubans. Those who dared to voice their grievances in terms of racial discrimination consequently were portrayed as a threat to national unity. In 1912, this policy of suppression reached its most virulent extreme, as the army was deployed to attack those construed as rebels in Oriente Province.

Helg demonstrates that race remained a fundamental social construct in Cuba and that racism pervaded Cuban society, but this is just part of the story. By focusing on the pervasiveness of racism in postindependence Cuba and by studying the most extreme case of racial polarization in its postemancipation history, Helg diverts attention from numerous instances of cross-racial alliances and mobilization that, her own evidence suggests, were far from exceptional. Similarly, she presents the elite-generated myth of racial equality as a deterrent to Afro-Cubans’ mobilization, but forgets that once myths are incorporated into national political discourse and popular imagery, they can become major social forces. The myth of racial equality, however much it misrepresented reality, also considerably limited the elite’s ability to bar blacks from Cuba’s social and political life. Moreover, crucial issues such as blacks’ access to universal suffrage and their remarkable progress in areas like literacy, where “black men and women were rapidly closing the . . . gap between themselves and Cuban whites” (p. 130), receive little attention. These limitations are at least partly explained by Helg’s assumption that it is only through political mobilization on the basis of racial identity that effective social change benefiting subordinated groups can be achieved in a racist society.

Nevertheless, as an innovative work based on rich archival and periodical evidence, *Our Rightful Share* casts important light on a major problem in Cuban and Afro-Latin American history. It also raises a number of new and interesting questions that will, one hopes, be answered in future research.

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Covering Castro: Rise and Decline of Cuba’s Communist Dictator. By JAY MALLIN, SR. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994. Index. xii, 201 pp. Cloth. \$32.95.

Latin Americanists who came of age in the 1960s and early 1970s recall vividly journalist Jay Mallin’s many books and articles on Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution,

the U.S. invasions of the Dominican Republic and Grenada, and the Soviet penetration into the Caribbean. Mallin's strident anti-Communism was evident not only in his published works but also in his longtime position as news director of Radio Martí.

Thus this volume bears no ideological surprises, but it does have some historical value, because it is a veritable time capsule from the past. Mallin was an active participant from the outset, visiting Castro in the Sierra Maestra, accompanying him to Havana in 1959, and attending when Castro "betrayed the revolution." Mallin also participated in the U.S. invasions of the Dominican Republic (1965) and Grenada (1983).

The book is composed of 17 distinct chapters, 14 of which have been published before, either as news reports or as parts of Mallin's other books. The first two, "Guerrilla Campaign" and "Road to Havana," are wonderful period pieces, full of the euphoria so ubiquitous in 1958-59 and liberally sprinkled with quotes from the principal players. Mallin also repeats the greatest myth of the Cuban Revolution: "Starting with a tiny, bedraggled, fleeing band of men, in two years' time [Castro] defeated a professional army far larger and far better equipped than his own guerrillas" (p. 7).

From the third chapter ("Communist Takeover") on, however, Mallin the romantic becomes Mallin the archenemy of both Castro and creeping Communism in the Caribbean. There are chapters on Raúl Castro, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Dominican crisis, Grenada and Suriname, Angola, Soviet espionage (and its Cuban counterpart, the America Department), and Cuba as a Soviet military outpost "90 Miles from Home." Unfortunately, there is nothing new here, not even updating, and Lars Schoultz's *National Security and United States Policy Toward Latin America* (1987) remains the best account.

Mallin wrote the last four chapters specifically for this volume, thereby raising reader expectations. Chapters 14 and 15 deal rather pedantically with Castro's repression of the Cuban Communist Party and the 1962 missile crisis. But in chapters 16 and 17 ("Pulling the Plug" and "35 Years and Counting"), Mallin analyzes the collapse of the Soviet Union, its impact on Cuba, Castro's reaction, and the prognosis for the future of Fidelismo in Cuba, topics almost tailor-made for this decades-long "Cubanologist." Sadly, however, there is little here either; Carmelo Mesa-Lago's edited volume *Cuba After the Cold War* (1993) offers a far more cogent and rational discussion of these difficult subjects.

In this volume, Mallin had a superb opportunity to build on the past and offer a unique and perhaps meaningful scenario for the future; but he did not do so, and the U.S. and Cuban governments, the Cuban American community, and all students of Cuba are the losers for it.

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