



Review: The Field of Cuban Studies

Reviewed Work(s):

Cuba's Socialist Economy: Toward the 1990s. by Andrew Zimbalist

Cuban Political Economy: Controversies in Cubanology. by Andrew Zimbalist

A Study of Cuba's Material Product System, Its Conversion to the System of National Accounts, and Estimates of Gross Domestic Product per Capita and Growth Rates. by Carmelo Mesa-Lago; Jorge F. Perez-Lopez

Measuring Cuban Economic Performance. by Jorge F. Perez-Lopez

Sugar, "Dependency," and the Cuban Revolution. by Brian H. Pollitt

Revolution and Criminal Justice: The Cuban Experiment, 1959-1983. by Adele G. van der Plas

Political Imprisonment in Cuba. A Special Report from Amnesty International.

Against All Hope. by Armando Valladares

The Cuban University under the Revolution. by Eusebio Mujal-Leon

Cuba Annual Report, 1985. by Office of Research and Policy Radio Marti Program.

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THE FIELD OF CUBAN STUDIES

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- CUBA'S SOCIALIST ECONOMY: TOWARD THE 1990s. Edited by Andrew Zimbalist. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987. Pp. 188. \$28.50 cloth, \$13.50 paper.)
- CUBAN POLITICAL ECONOMY: CONTROVERSIES IN CUBANOLOGY. Edited by Andrew Zimbalist. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988. Pp. 240. \$42.50.)
- A STUDY OF CUBA'S MATERIAL PRODUCT SYSTEM, ITS CONVERSION TO THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS, AND ESTIMATES OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT PER CAPITA AND GROWTH RATES. By Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge F. Pérez-López. World Bank Staff Working Papers no. 770. (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1985. Pp. 104. \$6.95.)
- MEASURING CUBAN ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE. By Jorge F. Pérez-López. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987. Pp. 202. \$25.00.)
- SUGAR, "DEPENDENCY," AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION. By Brian H. Pollitt. Occasional Paper no. 43. (Glasgow, Scotland: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1985. Pp. 44.)
- REVOLUTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE: THE CUBAN EXPERIMENT, 1959-1983. By Adèle G. van der Plas. (Amsterdam: Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation, 1987. Pp. 328.)
- POLITICAL IMPRISONMENT IN CUBA. A SPECIAL REPORT FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. (Washington, D.C.: Cuban American National Foundation, 1987. Pp. 36.)
- AGAINST ALL HOPE. By Armando Valladares. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986. Pp. 381. \$18.95.)
- THE CUBAN UNIVERSITY UNDER THE REVOLUTION. By Eusebio Mujal-León. (Washington, D.C.: Cuban American National Foundation, 1988. Pp. 65. \$5.00.)
- CUBA ANNUAL REPORT, 1985. By the Office of Research and Policy Radio Martí Program. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1988. Pp. 289. \$34.95.)

The Cuban Revolution never fails to arouse controversy. A great schism divides its discussion: paradise or hell, progress or ruin, democracy or tyranny. Intellectual discourse on Cuba is rarely just about schol-

arship. Instead, its analysis is colored by notions of the good society, human rights, and individual ethics. Choices are clear, indictments scathing, praises unbounded—prime examples of all-or-nothing thinking. Since 1959, the Revolution has become a litmus test for justice or freedom or both. Scholars are given passing or failing marks, and the field of Cuban studies becomes merely a casualty along the way. This great divide is plainly evident in most of the works under review. Indeed, the whole subject of Cuba has become a *trinchera*.

The entire field of Cuban studies is in dire need of new thinking. Raising fresh questions and reworking old ones do not require impartiality, however. No one is impartial about Cuba. What new thinking demands is a willingness to identify paradigms, reconsider concepts and methods, and engage in civil discourse. Without new thinking, Cuban studies face stagnation and decay because repetition and reinforcement do not lead to innovation and breakthroughs. Examining old facts under new light and uncovering new data to broaden the scope of inquiry and analysis are central to the task of scholarship. The question is whether those of us who specialize in studying Cuba are capable of measuring up to the task.

Democracy, Human Rights, and Paradigms

No other discussion of Cuban topics has become as convoluted as the debate over democracy and human rights. The issue is customarily posed in terms of the compatibility of attaining economic and social rights while guaranteeing individual liberties—the ultimate test. Extreme partisans deny that the goals of freedom and justice are irreconcilable: the pursuit of one is the *sine qua non* of the other. Most of us, however, choose to emphasize one set of benefits and play down the costs of the others. Thus the great divide in Cuban studies has impoverished the quality of scholarship on politics since the Revolution. More than any other subject, the topic of democracy and human rights in Cuba requires that paradigms be identified, concepts and methods be reconsidered, and discourse remain civil.

The *cause célèbre* of human rights in Cuba has been Armando Valladares. Imprisoned for twenty-two years (1960–1982), he claims to have been a prisoner of conscience whose only crime was voicing his anticommunism. While in prison, Valladares gained visibility for his resistance to reeducation programs, his temporary paralysis, and his poetry. On the other side, the Cuban government contends that Valladares was engaged in a terrorist plot to bomb commercial districts in Havana and has disclosed that he was a member of the Batista police force. Valladares dismisses all these charges as fabrications. Records in Havana nevertheless document his having been a low-level police employee.

Moreover, film footage made by the Cuban government when Valladares was allegedly paralyzed and writing *Desde mi silla de rueda* show him exercising. When he was finally released, Valladares wrote his prison memoirs, *Against All Hope*, which earned him the ambassadorship of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights and a mention by Vice President George Bush in the second presidential debate with Governor Michael Dukakis.

The credibility of *Against All Hope* hinges on the authenticity of Armando Valladares. His account narrates an unrelenting process of denigrations, violations, and tortures of inmates by Cuban authorities, charges that undoubtedly contain some truth. In 1968, however, Ramiro Valdés was replaced by Sergio del Valle at the helm of the Ministerio del Interior. This change and the subsequent initiation of a prisoner rehabilitation program signaled implicit official recognition of the need for a better policy toward its prison population. Since the late 1960s, conditions in Cuban jails have improved noticeably, as documented in recent inspections and reports.¹ Meanwhile, Valladares continues to give testimony and denounce—legitimate enterprises, but they are not scholarship. By unabashedly pursuing a political agenda in concert with the U.S. government, Valladares has placed the discussion of human rights in a highly charged atmosphere where both sides often twist the truth into propaganda.

In contrast, Amnesty International's *Political Imprisonment in Cuba* was written with careful attention to the facts the organization gathered on prisoners of conscience. Published in 1986, the report has dated quickly. Some of the prisoners it mentions are no longer in jail. For instance, Ricardo Bofill presided over one of the two Cuban Human Rights Committees until 1988, when he left Cuba to receive medical attention and resettled in Miami. Ariel Hidalgo is also free and living in Miami after eight years of imprisonment. In addition, important developments in Cuba since 1986 have overtaken *Political Imprisonment in Cuba*. Recently, Elizardo Sánchez and two other human rights activists were tried and sentenced to prison terms of two to four years. They were charged with disseminating false information to the foreign press during the July 1989 proceedings against Division General Arnaldo Ochoa and thirteen other military and security officers who were being tried for drug-trafficking. Like Valladares, Amnesty International denounces human rights violations in Cuba but does so with greater credibility. Neither work, however, was undertaken in the pursuit of scholarship.

In *Revolution and Criminal Justice*, Adèle van der Plas presents an overview of the judicial system in relation to changing political contexts

1. *The New York Times*, 18 Dec. 1988, p. 12; and Institute for Policy Studies, "Cuban Prisons: A Preliminary Report," *Social Justice* 15 (Summer 1988):55-62.

between 1959 and 1983. She documents the transformation of the legal system from the early revolutionary base tribunals to the current municipal popular tribunals. Van der Plas does not, however, address the problems entailed in exercising the law in a political system where institutional autonomy is limited. Her study nevertheless contributes to the literature by detailing the relationship between law and society as it has evolved since the Revolution with the participation of lay judges, lawyers, defendants, prosecutors, professional judges, and average Cuban citizens. According to the logic of the Revolution, one element of democracy in Cuba is to involve ordinary citizens in the administration of justice. Van der Plas's study provides a useful overview of Cuban society, where most citizens are neither causes célèbres nor prisoners of conscience. How their society, at least in principle, provides for the conduct of justice is an important point of departure for discussing vital aspects of human rights in Cuba.

The actual complexity of Cuban society is nowhere to be found in the assumption of totalitarianism that permeates Eusebio Mujal-León's *The Cuban University under the Revolution* and Radio Martí's *Cuba Annual Report, 1985*. In accordance with this perspective, Mujal-León argues that universities in Cuba have no autonomy and are little more than regime appendages. He also dismisses diverse cultural currents during the 1960s as indications of Fidel Castro's concern with his international image (p. 19). Mujal-León omits any mention of the philosophy department of the University of Havana and its journal, *Pensamiento Crítico* (1967-1971), which represented an alternative to orthodox Marxism. He makes the astounding claim that the only contributions of the "Castro regime" to culture and the world of ideas have come from Cuban intellectuals in exile or in prison (p. 36). In response, the accomplishments of Cuban films, historiography, testimonial literature, and the *Nueva Trova* (the New Song Movement), among others, immediately come to mind, but Mujal-León would presumably deny their significance. He nevertheless acknowledges the Revolution's achievements in expanding university enrollments. Similarly, Radio Martí interprets the events of 1985 in Cuba without devoting much attention to Cuban society except as an expression of Fidel Castro's power and struggles among elites. Even so, the *Cuba Annual Report* is a useful tool for scholars because of its wealth of information. Researchers who have honed their evaluative skills by sifting data from *Granma* and other official Cuban sources can now apply them to the publications of the Cuban American National Foundation and Radio Martí.

Mujal-León does identify one important topic regarding Cuban society: the limitations on intellectual discourse in Cuba. Academic freedom as it is known in the United States does not exist on the island. Yet Cuban universities and research institutions make important intellectual

contributions nevertheless. For example, faculty and students in the history department at the University of Havana are engaged in promising research on prerevolutionary twentieth-century Cuba. *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*, the journal of the Centro de Estudios sobre América, is a serious publication that presents interesting analyses of Latin American societies and the United States. The work of Casa de las Américas on Latin American cultures is widely respected. These examples are only a few of such accomplishments.

José Luis Rodríguez's contribution to *Cuban Political Economy: Controversies in Cubanology*, "The Antecedents and Theoretical Characteristics of Cubanology," berates the field of Cuban studies for allegedly responding to the political exigencies of U.S. policy toward Cuba. Rodríguez sees the hand of the U.S. government in every turn in the field. He fails to substantiate his argument convincingly, however, an unfortunate outcome that leads the reader to dismiss his point that scholarship is sometimes susceptible to government influences and directions.² More important, Rodríguez does not address the issue of the lack of studies of contemporary Cuba within Cuba. Why is there no Cuban social science literature on the Revolution? As an example, why does Alexis Codina Jiménez's essay in *Cuba's Socialist Economy: Toward the 1990s* discuss the evolution of worker incentives in Cuba with only passing mention of the tumultuous changes undergone by the Revolution at each turn? The establishment of a credible field of Cuban studies by scholars on the island would be the best response that Cuba could give to "Cubanology." Its absence gives credence to the assertion that intellectual discourse in Cuba is indeed constrained.

Totalitarianism notwithstanding, mainstream Cuban studies have been dominated by the modernization paradigm crafted from Western historical experience, an approach that was prevalent in U.S. social sciences a quarter of a century ago. Using this paradigm requires spelling out its presumptions and its limitations. Yet few social scientists adhere to classical modernization tenets as fiercely as mainstream Cuba specialists. As Carollee Bengelsdorf has observed in her critique of Jorge Domínguez's analysis of the legislative body Poder Popular:

What becomes clear in Domínguez's formulation of the criteria and the measuring rods for a fair campaign and a fair election is that there is an implicit model operating close to the surface of his discussion. That model is the idealized electoral process of the idealized society at the apex of the modernization paradigm, . . . the United States. We leave in abeyance questions that might be raised by a thorough application of these measuring rods to the United States. . . .

2. In "Sovietology as a Vocation," Stephen F. Cohen traces the development of Soviet studies in response to cold war imperatives. His article succeeds where Rodríguez's fails in providing insights useful to understanding the field of Cuban studies. See Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3-37.

Domínguez's application of a modernization paradigm to Cuba is misleading not only in its own terms but also because he seeks to apply it wholesale to a system consciously formulated with an entirely different frame of reference, as if that other frame of reference did not exist or had no validity. (In *Cuban Political Economy*, p. 221).

While Bengelsdorf's criticism is accurate, she falls short of advancing a critique of the frame of reference that is more appropriate for analyzing Poder Popular. She stresses instead the lack of quality of alternative scholarship on contemporary Cuba as a major reason for Cubanists' failure to challenge the mainstream convincingly. "Distinguished" by a "lack of distinction," alternative scholars have adopted a "defensive posture" and have failed to forge appropriate analytical categories (Bengelsdorf in *Cuban Political Economy*, pp. 222-23).

The survival of modernization as a paradigm for Cuban studies after it has been laid to rest almost everywhere else is as much an indictment of alternative scholarship as it is of mainstream research. Cubanists must develop concepts and methods for grasping the reality of contemporary Cuba because neither modernization nor classical Marxism is adequate to the task. Bengelsdorf, for example, rightfully stresses the limits of both traditions in studying women in Cuba. Scholars must come to grips intellectually with the real limitations and constraints under which the Revolution occurred, consolidated, and developed. Tough questions must be raised even if answers are not readily apparent or evidence is not easily available. Is meaningful political participation possible without some form of plural and competitive politics? Can a single party homogenize the interests of the largely urban, educated, and healthy citizens of Cuba, most of whom were born or became adults after 1959? Can the problems of central planning be resolved without complementary market mechanisms? These are only a few of the many questions that come to mind.

The task facing Cubanists with alternative perspectives is daunting. Only future work can offer absolution from the failure to challenge mainstream Cuban studies and contribute to understanding the Cuban Revolution without blinders. A central task is to break the impasse on the discussion of democracy and human rights in which opponents of the Revolution charge that democratic and individual rights are the antithesis of socialism while the Revolution's supporters contend that such rights are class-defined and already guaranteed in Cuba. Such a break entails in part analyzing the exercise of power as relatively autonomous from the socialist organization of the economy. As Alberto Mora (a participant in the "Great Debate" over incentives) noted insightfully in 1965, "We must . . . assure that the superstructure is so organized as to prevent the substitution of the money motive by the power motive."³

3. Alberto Mora, "On Certain Problems of Building Socialism," in *Man and Socialism in Cuba*, edited by Bertram Silverman (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 334.

Fidel Castro and the Study of Cuban Society

Fidel Castro poses a problem for Cuban studies because of his overpowering determination, historic vision, and incontestable leadership. It can hardly be surprising that he dominates Cuban studies as completely as he has the Revolution. Yet no leader exercises authority in a vacuum. History and society provide the context for leadership. Successful leaders convey visions that move citizens. The pursuit of power for its own sake rarely suffices to explain genuine leadership. Nevertheless, mainstream Cuban studies are trapped by their perception of Fidel Castro, which acts as a blinder that hinders understanding of the larger Cuban reality.

In another contribution to *Cuban Political Economy*, Nelson Valdés presents a useful overview of various Castro-centered interpretations of the Revolution, which he finds unconvincing even within Max Weber's charisma paradigm. Weber viewed charismatic authority as resulting from special social circumstances that are seldom addressed in analyses of Fidel Castro. The link between the "great man" and society is never emphasized by mainstream Cubanists. Similarly, the elite model, which analyzes the Revolution according to struggles for leadership, divorces the process of change from social forces. Moreover, as time passes, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify factions and positions with these struggles. Bengelsdorf summarizes the weaknesses that beset elite-based research on Cuba: "An ever-increasing number of people cannot be categorized because they were not in circles of power in 1959. . . . we are given a fundamentally static interpretation of a society that has been anything but static. . . . The crucible for interpreting the Cuban reality of 1968 or 1978 or 1986 remains always the Cuba of 1959. . . . It denies a priori a role to anybody in the society other than the top ranks of the leadership" (in *Cuban Political Economy*, p. 213).

Analyses centering on Fidel Castro and elites also tend to overlook or downplay the dynamics of Cuban society. Some excellent essays featuring much-needed emphasis on society can be found in the other volume edited by Andrew Zimbalist, *Cuba's Socialist Economy*. In "Gender Issues in Contemporary Cuban Tobacco Farming," Jean Stubbs examines the role of women in two cooperative farms in Pinar del Río and Sancti Spíritus. She argues that women strongly supported the formation of cooperatives because they offered easier access to running water, electricity, and other amenities. After women became more active participants, cooperatives began to address the obstacles preventing them from fuller incorporation. In the process, the sexual double standard and the sharing of domestic responsibilities emerged as topics for public discussion. Women's growing economic input will make it harder for cooperatives to eschew issues of gender in the continuing transformation of

Cuban agriculture. Sarah Santana surveys changes in health care and medical services in relation to new needs. The family doctor program and an improving network of secondary and tertiary care represent responses to the Cuban population's changing health profile. Santana's article, however, would have greatly benefited from including specific references to health care at each level of delivery. In another essay, Linda Fuller examines the resolution of worker-management conflict in Cuba since 1959. Her informative essay carefully documents changes in the administration of labor justice and incorporates responses from workers interviewed in 1982 and 1983. By focusing on women in agriculture, health care and delivery, and labor-management grievances, Stubbs, Santana, and Fuller rightly remind researchers that most Cubans conduct their daily lives without the direct interference of Fidel Castro or other elite members.

The analysis of charismatic leadership is nonetheless crucial for understanding the Cuban Revolution. Castro also looms blindingly large for scholars who contest mainstream analyses. Some of Zimbalist's writings under review provide a good example of how alternative scholarship has failed to incorporate Fidel into its analysis of the Revolution. In his essays introducing *Cuban Political Economy* and interpreting Cuban planning, Zimbalist offers some salutary counterbalances to interpretations offered by mainstream Cuban studies of the *rectificación* (the term used by Castro to refer to the correction of errors in the Cuban revolutionary process). The rectification does not represent the 1960s revisited if only because domestic and international contexts differ. Zimbalist, however, perceives an underlying continuity that is somewhat misleading. He argues that current policies constitute another corrective to the problems besetting centrally planned economies, not unlike those decreed by the Hungarian state in 1972. While Zimbalist clarifies that by that time decentralization had advanced much further in Hungary than in Cuba (during the late 1970s and early 1980s), he still makes an implicit comparison that is partially specious (*Cuban Political Economy*, p. 71). Zimbalist views the rectification as an outcome of the Communist Party Congress held in February 1986: "The year 1986 . . . saw continuous and intense discussions of economic policy and orientation, kicked off at the first sessions of the Third Party Congress in February, carried on at a variety of local, provincial, and national enterprise meetings, and culminating at the final sessions of the party congress in early December" (p. 10).

But the sequence was not as orderly as Zimbalist suggests. The party conclave issued strong criticisms of the system of economic management and planning but did not orient what later became the rectification. It would be difficult to extract the full extent of the rectification campaign's ideological and economic directions from the documents issued by this party congress. For example, Cuban economist Codina Jiménez apparently wrote his overview of worker incentives since 1961

right after the first party congress session but before the rectification. The resulting essay is informative but somewhat dated. The last few paragraphs do not reflect the emphasis on moral incentives and the weaknesses of the system of economic management and planning that the rectification was to underscore shortly thereafter (see Zimbalist, *Cuba's Socialist Economy*, p. 139).

The origins of the rectification can be traced instead to Fidel Castro's speech of 19 April 1986 (the twenty-fifth anniversary of Playa Girón) and to his remarks on the May closure of the peasants' markets, the Havana enterprise meetings in June, and the July central committee meeting that issued general directives on the problems of the economic management and planning system. Overall, the central committee's *Plan de acción* was far more exhaustive, critical, and radical than the program adopted at the party congress.⁴ Did the central committee know a great deal more in July than the party congress knew in February? Not much more, I suspect. The problems that the rectification identified and purported to address did not develop between February and July of 1986. Rather, the intervening variable was Fidel Castro. His initiatives may or may not be constructive, but we Cubanists certainly cannot advance our understanding of Cuba by ignoring them. The myopia of mainstream Cuban studies cannot be superseded if Cubanists with alternative perspectives persist in their own kind of nearsightedness.

The Cuban Economy

Attempts to evaluate Cuban economic performance always become tangled in webs of technical difficulties. Planned and market economies use different accounting systems to measure output of goods and services. While gross domestic product (GDP) in market economies is based on the value added and includes nonproductive services, the gross social product (GSP) in planned economies measures gross value of output and excludes nonproductive services. Two major problems arise when economists attempt to compare data resulting from these two measurements. One relates to how value is determined. GSP tends to inflate total production because it is based on gross value. For example, a shoe factory will include the value of leather and other inputs in calculating its output. GDP, in contrast, is computed according to value added, which is to say that only the value added at the shoe factory is counted in its output. A second problem emerges in estimating nonproductive services in centrally planned economies. For GSP and GDP to be comparable, a common

4. *Programa del Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Havana: Editora Política, 1986); and *Plan de acción contra las irregularidades administrativas y los errores y debilidades del sistema de dirección de la economía* (Havana: n.p., 1986).

denominator for value and nonproductive services must be established. Evaluating Cuban economic performance is even more troublesome because different methodologies have been used to measure the value of output, with the result being that no consistent data series exist for the years since 1959. Also, the availability and quality of statistical data on the Cuban economy are less than optimal, although they are improving over time.

The morass of technical problems besetting evaluation of the Cuban economy is discussed in essays by Claes Brundenius and Andrew Zimbalist in the two volumes edited by the latter and also in Jorge Pérez-López's *Measuring Cuban Economic Performance* and Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López's report to the World Bank on the Cuban economy, *A Study of Cuba's Material Product System*.⁵ Questions on this topic abound. Did changes in the methodology used to measure the value of output inflate official rates of growth? What is the share of nonproductive services in the Cuban economy? What is the weight of the industrial sector? How central is sugar production to the economy thirty years after the Revolution? Brundenius and Zimbalist disagree with Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López about Cuban rates of growth, the extent of industrialization, and the degree of dependence on sugar. Generally, Brundenius and Zimbalist defend higher rates of growth for the Cuban economy (although lower than official claims) than do Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López. Brundenius and Zimbalist also tend to downplay the impact of methodological changes and upgrade the share of nonproductive services. They depict a healthier industrial sector and overall lower dependence on sugar than that estimated by Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López.

Although crucial to the particular issue, this debate on the Cuban economy appears rather inscrutable to non-economists. Moreover, minute analyses of technical issues overlook the social context in which the economy operates. For example, whatever the centrality of sugar, the industry's transformation over the past three decades has been notable indeed. Its domestic consequences have been mitigated to the point that it is no longer the scourge of rural Cuba. Employment is no longer determined by the seasonality of cane agriculture. Modernization of the sugar industry has also established forward and backward linkages by develop-

5. The works under review essentially represent the positions debated by these four authors in *Comparative Economic Studies*. See Claes Brundenius and Andrew Zimbalist, "Recent Studies on Cuban Economic Growth: A Review," *Comparative Economic Studies* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1985):22-46; and in the same issue, Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge F. Pérez-López, "Imbroglios on the Cuban Economy: A Reply to Brundenius and Zimbalist," 47-83. See also Brundenius and Zimbalist, "Cuban Economic Growth One More Time: A Response to 'Imbroglios,'" *Comparative Economic Studies* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1985):115-31; Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López, "The Endless Cuban Economy Saga: A Terminal Rebuttal," *Comparative Economic Studies* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1985):67-82; and in the same issue, Brundenius and Zimbalist, "Cuban Growth: A Final Word," 83-84.

ing a capital goods industry and promoting the consumption of bagasse as a source of energy. Indispensable background for evaluating the role of sugar in contemporary Cuba is provided in Brundenius's "Development and Prospects of Capital Goods Production in Revolutionary Cuba" and Carl Henry Feuer's "The Performance of the Cuban Sugar Industry, 1981-1985" in *Cuban Political Economy* and Brian Pollitt's monograph, *Sugar, "Dependency," and the Cuban Revolution*. Their works bring to life aspects of the Cuban economy that are otherwise nearly impenetrable.

Technical and methodological questions alone do not provide sufficient perspective for evaluating the Cuban economy. Analysis is also entangled in political webs. Although the combined toll of U.S. economic embargo and military aggression is steep, it has not subverted the revolutionary government that defied the odds only ninety miles away. Cuban leadership projects the island as an alternative to capitalism in the Third World while U.S. administrations project it as a basket case. Thus the political stakes for claiming success or imputing failure are high. In addition, Cuba's commitment to satisfying basic needs while promoting economic growth have set higher standards for success and more onerous consequences for failure. The economic performance of no other Latin American country is scrutinized as resolutely or debated with such vehemence.

The web is further tangled by the complexity of Cuba-U.S. historic ties and the presence of 10 percent of the island's population in the United States. Three decades of socialism notwithstanding, the United States constitutes Cuba's second culture and the point of reference for the Cuban people. No other socialist country is as intimately linked to the United States. Moreover, the Revolution's redistributive policies have heightened consumerist aspirations. Yet no Latin American country—including Cuba before or after 1959—can possibly satisfy these aspirations on a mass basis. It is therefore crucial to determine, within the realm of realistic expectations, the consequences of economic performance on standards of living. The debate over the Cuban economy needs to expand its horizons and broaden its perspectives.⁶

Concluding Remarks

The works under review are disparate in theme and orientation, yet they are representative of the malaise afflicting the field of Cuban

6. Earlier works by Mesa-Lago and Brundenius have evaluated Cuban economic performance within broader contexts from contending perspectives. See Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *The Economy of Socialist Cuba* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981); and Claes Brundenius, *Revolutionary Cuba: The Challenge of Economic Growth with Equity* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1984).

studies. The study of society and power structures in Cuba requires new analytical categories. Until Cubanists develop them, alternative scholarship on contemporary Cuba will not successfully challenge the mainstream. At the same time, the weight of leadership cannot be ignored when explaining change. Although debates over Cuban economic performance often seem obscure to non-economists, all social scientists need to be able to assess the Cuban economy's consequences on standards of living. Choices regarding data and methods cannot be divorced from the real world in which Cuba generates such controversy.

Indeed, new thinking is imperative. But new thinking should have a new name. Cuban studies and Cubanists deserve more exact and less loaded terms than "Cubanology" and "Cubanologists," which were derived from "Sovietology" and "Sovietologists." Whatever the nature of Cuba's uniqueness, it is part of the Latin American experience. I at least view myself as a Cubanist and my area of specialization as Cuban studies.