

and marginalization ingrained in the discourse of the elites. Among the subalterns, views on gender and race tended to reproduce (or were shared with) those of the elites; their constructions of community, identity, and nation were (and still are) as problematic and contradictory as those of the dominant sectors of society.

This book raises several important issues, and, obviously, offers some debatable interpretations. For instance, Guerra interprets the *jibarista* discourse of some intellectuals as a sort of guilty conscience because of their "collaboration" with the colonial system. Some readers might wish for a more in-depth discussion of the theoretical aspects of her research. Guerra does shed light on the constructions of national identities by the upper and lower classes, however, and this is no mean feat with regard to a problem that often seems like a cul-de-sac.

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JORGE IBARRA. *Prologue to Revolution: Cuba, 1898–1958*. Translated by MARJORIE MOORE. (Studies in Cuban History.) Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998. Pp. viii, 231. \$48.00.

Jorge Ibarra is a prominent and prolific Cuban historian. His *oeuvre* is a mainstay of the post-1959 historiography premised on continuity between the struggles for national independence and social justice during the nineteenth century and the revolutionary movement that overthrew Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship at the end of the 1950s. Ibarra wrote the history of Cuba that, since the 1960s, has served as the principal text on the subject on the island. He is also the author of a seminal monograph, *Ideología mambisa* (1967), in which he cogently argues the thesis of "One Hundred Years of Struggle"; in 1968, the Cuban leadership widely disseminated it to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Ten Years' War. Ibarra's careful eye has similarly gazed upon a broad range of historical and cultural aspects of Cuban historical development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In short, his work is an obligatory point of reference for all interested in the island's history.

This book is an exhaustive overview of socio-economic data, beginning with the U.S. occupation and ending on the eve of the revolution. Ibarra has culled a profile of the old Cuba from a wide variety of sources, which scholars will find useful as a bibliographic compendium. Based on well-known evidence, he asserts the island's modernity wrought by the sugar industry and catalogs the crises that befell the economy when sugar could no longer sustain growth rates after the 1920s. Cuba's development, of course, was of a peculiar sort—with the United States so preponderant, national aspirations so frustrated, popular movements often so militant—and Ibarra makes these familiar arguments. He rightly underscores the absence of an oligarchy, the weakness of the bourgeoisie,

and the centrality of the working class. Few would dispute his central thesis: Cuba was rapidly becoming a "proletarian" society (that is, a society where people increasingly depended on wage labor for their livelihood) that was not, however, creating enough jobs. What the author fails to do is live up to his title: this book is no prologue to the revolution of 1959. The facts simply do not speak for themselves, and Ibarra writes as if they do. Human agency, except in the clichéd recourse to "generations," falls through the cracks.

Ibarra's failure reflects the affliction besetting a once-vibrant historiography on the island. Amid the revolutionary effervescence of the 1960s, "One Hundred Years of Struggle" offered a provocative framework for understanding Cuban history and a platform for intellectuals hoping to become "organic" to the new Cuba then in process. From the outset, the thesis of continuous struggles confronted a serious dilemma: the closer in time to the revolutionary break of 1959, the harder it was to make use of it. A socio-economic profile of Cuba between the 1930s and 1950s just does not explain the revolution, not the least of the reasons being that, pace proletarianization, the syndicalized working class (whether led by Communists, *Auténticos*, or *batistianos*) constituted a bulwark of reform and had achieved notable gains. In the early 1960s, most workers indeed supported the revolution, but the "proletariat" was not the decisive actor in Batista's overthrow; Ibarra offers us no new insights on this crucial fact.

A century and a quarter of struggles may well characterize Cuban history since 1868, but the revolution can only be explained in the context of contingencies, and these are nowhere to be found in this book. The revolution, in fact, becomes more interesting, politically and intellectually, if we understand the failed alternatives. Why, for example, was Batista able to craft an impressive transition to democracy during the late 1930s and forge a social compromise in the Constitution of 1940 but unable to do the same during the 1950s? Although a complex web of political factors is the midwife of all revolutions, Ibarra focuses on caricatured versions of both republican politics and the revolutionary movement that toppled Batista. Forty years after 1959, and, given the greater understanding we now have of revolutionary transformations, Ibarra should have produced a mature, critical inquiry of the origins of the Cuban Revolution. Long ago, *Ideología mambisa* provoked; today, this book—unaided by a stilted translation—disappoints and saddens.

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