

only permanently changed Panama's history but also positively affected the trajectory of many other smaller developing states of the time.

Brown's work is a welcome addition to our understanding of the evolution of modern Panama and the seminal role Torrijos played in its modern history as well as that of the Western world. This is a treasure trove of information that deepens our understanding of the man who was easily Latin America's most enigmatic leader.

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### CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY STATE EVOLUTION

*Patriots and Traitors in Revolutionary Cuba. 1961–1981.* By Lillian Guerra. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2023. Pp. 508. \$70.00 cloth.  
 doi:[10.1017/tam.2024.186](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2024.186)

In a thorough examination of the Cuban revolutionary state evolution from a “grassroots dictatorship” to a “total state” encapsulated by the criminalizing binary slogan turned state-philosophy, “*Patria o Muerte*,” historian Lillian Guerra achieves two significant feats (12–13). Firstly, she departs from a tradition of regime apologia and celebration that has marred American scholarly work on the Cuban Revolution. Secondly, in doing so, Guerra recovers an authentic history from below of this critical juncture in Cuba's past. In a tour de force, Guerra challenges scholars, activists, and politicians “who have ignored or are politically reluctant to acknowledge the brutality inherent to Communist rule consolidation in Cuba” (ix).

By deconstructing the philosophy of “*Patria o Muerte*” tasking Cubans with matching the “selfless example of Fidel Castro” via “the rendering of free labor and the combination of study and field work in the schools” (8), Guerra details the evolution of an “all-encompassing state that claimed the right to infuse citizens’ consciousness” with a commitment to “‘the Revolution’ before self, family, friends, dreams, or desires” (23). But as Guerra demonstrates, by the 1980s the hegemony of the Cuban state was largely cosmetic, and scores of Cubans, heavily indoctrinated in the state schools, created alternatives and questioned the shallowness of a system that relied on keeping its people ignorant of the world, Cuban history, and its present realities.

Chapter 8, “The Road to Mariel,” is the most authoritative account of the local conditions leading to the exodus of over 124,000 Cubans through the 1980 Mariel Boatlift. Guerra convincingly shows that the age, class, and color of those who left indicated that the absolute gratitude and loyalty of Black Cubans, the workers, and the youth born after the revolution were more state-created myth than truth. Challenges to state control were apparent among the youth, itself targeted by the state to embody the

New Man and the Communist Man ideological models of perfectionism (“*perfeccionamiento*”) (303–4). The youth tried to achieve *perfeccionamiento*, as demonstrated by the Federation of Middle School Students determining in 1978 “that never disappointing Fidel Castro was every individual’s duty” (305). However, programmatic education failed to achieve its hegemonic goals of pairing the individual’s existence to the socialist state, and the “grand effort striving toward perfection had exhausted and deceived a large swath of what should have been Cuba’s most revolutionary generation,” who quit the Revolution and the “treadmill of controlled existence of life under Communist party rule” (338).

The book’s 16-page bibliography’s quality sets it apart. It includes papers from the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, several American University collections, oral history projects, private collections, interviews conducted by Guerra, Cuban and American government publications, 40 periodicals, and secondary sources of rigor along with 50 pages of notes.

Guerra closes hoping that Cubans come together demanding “diversity, pluralism, and debate” and that the “recovery of alternative histories, identities, self-expression, economic models, and political paths” pave the way for radical change and freedom (408). In a brave defense of the Cuban people who have never experienced freedom and democracy, neither before nor after the revolution, and perhaps as a warning to politicians and scholars who have engaged in regime defense at the expense of the people, Guerra warns us that: “Cuba is itself an archive that can no longer afford to be curated, silenced, or denied” (408).

We can only hope that, as the Cubans choose “*Patria y Vida*” (Homeland and Life)—as Gente de Zona’s YouTube hit and challenge to the regime ideology that helped spark the widespread, organic, and spontaneous protests of July 2021 invited them to do—we do not ignore, once more, a people who are still subject to a philosophy that mandates complete compliance under the threat of criminalization, or worse.

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### POLITICS OF CUBAN EXILE IN MIAMI

*Only a Few Blocks to Cuba: Cold War Refugee Policy, the Cuban Diaspora, and the Transformations of Miami.* By Mauricio Castro. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024. Pp. x, 296. Note on terms. Illustrations. Archives, Collections, and Oral History Sources. Notes. Index. \$49.95 cloth; \$49.95 eBook. doi:[10.1017/tam.2024.173](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2024.173)

In examining the impact of the mass influx of Cuban immigrants over the decades following the 1959 revolution, Mauricio Castro traces the politics of exile in Miami and