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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

A History of Cuba and Its Relations with the United States, Vol. I. By Philip S. Foner. (New York: International Publishers, 1962. 255 pp. \$3.75.)

To satisfy the growing demand for additional information stimulated by current events in Cuba during the last few years, many writers, some professional historians, and other journalists and travelers, have produced a number of books purporting to explain the "current problems" of that Caribbean island. In dealing with contemporary events many of these writers have glossed over the past and in so doing have displayed a woeful lack of understanding of the influences of 450 years of Cuban history. No definitive work in English based on scholarly research has been produced since Professors Irene A. Wright and Willis F. Johnson published their books in 1916 and 1920 respectively. Much detailed research has been carried on in numerous archival collections since then and several significant monographs have appeared in both the United States and Cuba.

Therefore it was with much anticipation that Latin Americanists received the news that Philip S. Foner, editor of the Citadel Press and long-time student of American social and economic problems, was undertaking a multi-volume study of Cuba. This first volume covers the period from 1492 to 1845, the date of La Escalera, devoting only about one-fifth of the pages to the period prior to 1790. Obviously such brief coverage of 300 years cannot be called definitive.

Foner is not one to equivocate and he attributes much of Cuba's recent political, economic, and social troubles jointly to a senseless perpetuation of the institution of slavery until 1888 and to the Machiavellian self-interest of American presidents, secretaries of state, and diplomatic agents. He vigorously supports his rather unorthodox views (they are orthodox in Castro's Cuba) with numerous references to a wide variety of monographic material, much of it produced in Cuba in the last twenty years. Some scholars may disagree with Foner's constant harping on the slav-

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ery issue as one of the major factors contributing to Cuba's social and economic problems of the last century and a half.

Possibly Foner's major contribution is the wealth of secondary material employed in writing this book although some of the lengthy literary quotations could well have been curtailed. It is presumed that the final volume of the series will contain a bibliography. It is unfortunate that a number of errors in dating and inconsistencies in the use of proper names occur, and that there are numerous errors in pagination in the footnote references. For example, the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588 and not 1587 (p. 37); Clarence Harvey should be Clarence H. Haring (p. 42 and 230); Charles II had been dead for forty-eight years in 1748 (p. 42); Charles III died in 1788 and could not issue a decree in the next year (p. 43); the Holy Alliance was formed in September, 1815, and not in 1822 (p. 103); F. Wurdiman is presumably J. G. F. Wurdemann (p. 186), etc. In spite of these errors that may have resulted from hasty footnoting and writing, this volume makes an interesting and timely contribution to the "Cuban controversy" and it will be of some importance to see what Dr. Foner has to say of the more recent period.

RICHARD K. MURDOCH

University of Georgia

The Cuban Invasion: The Chronicle of a Disaster. By Karl E. Meyer and Tad Szulc. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962. 160 pp. Index. \$3.95.)

The calamitous invasion of Cuba, April 17, 1961, is the subject of this penetrating and thorough study by two journalists on the staff of the *Washington Post* and of the *New York Times* respectively. Each has behind him a half-dozen years of reporting on Latin America, and each has written a previous book dealing with basic problems of the contemporary Americas. Together they have come near to exhausting the primary sources for a definitive history of the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs.

Miami, the Ellis Island of the South, has often been described as a gateway to Latin America, and the melodrama provided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, shaping foreign policy exempt from any meaningful outside checks, took place in large

part in Florida although with little direct participation by Floridians. The CIA planned much of the invasion in Miami hotel lobbies and must accept a major share of blame for what ensued. Yet "the tragedy sprang from a conspiracy of circumstance." The Kennedy administration and the Cuban underground and counter-revolutionary leaders themselves were in a position to curb the CIA had they only listened to obvious common sense. Farther back, of course, the Eisenhower Administration had originally conceived the idea of a Cuban invasion.

Yet the purpose of the authors is not to provide a villain or villains on whom to pin responsibility for the unprecedented military disaster, but rather to chronicle the steps which led to the inevitable *fracaso*. This they have done well, and although their book is not documented, they have obviously talked to the most knowledgeable people, read the most pertinent firsthand reports, and visited the most relevant sites.

Meyer and Szulc feel the invasion was a failure of mechanics, of imagination, and of morality, yet the final note of this fascinating book is both sound and in the long run hopeful: "There was a reluctance to face the fact that Cuba was in rebellion against the past—a past in which American interests were deeply implicated. What happened in Cuba, in its initial phases, was a declaration of independence; if subsequently Castro perverted the revolution, he has not stifled the demand for independence. Indeed, the same impulse that he once encouraged may yet turn against him and bring about his downfall. The Cuban drama has not yet ended, and the island's genuine partisans of freedom will surely still have the last word."

FREDERICK E. KIDDER

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Magellan's Voyage Around the World: Three Contemporary Accounts. By Charles E. Nowell. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962. 351 pp. Maps and notes. \$7.50.)

The incomparable voyages of Christopher Columbus, Vasco de Gama, and Ferdinand Magellan are frequently considered to be the most important events of Europe's Age of Exploration. From these three unprecedented journeys sixteenth-century Eu-

rope acquired a new colonial world, an ocean route to the real Indies, and an eventual geographic understanding of the enormous extra-European sea and land universe that existed beyond the "old" continent's Atlantic shores. Dr. Nowell's modern analysis of the three year saga of Magellan's fleet thus contributes significantly to the historiography of the great Age of Exploration.

Even a cursory study of Charles Nowell's scholarly editing and critical examination of the numerous Magellan sources indicates that the author has provided a clear and instructive image of the man, his era, and his sailing achievement. While vividly discussing the ubiquitous power struggles of Spain and Portugal which were so evident in the international background of the sea adventure, the historian also relates the actual goals and plans that motivated Magellan to sail under the Spanish banner. Circumnavigation of the earth was not the Portuguese captain's objective. Magellan apparently sought to locate a western water passage to the Moluccas, and Tarshish and Ophir, the legendary lands known to the biblical King Solomon and Hiram of Tyre. Such a search became somewhat popular after Vasco de Gama's 1498 exploit revealed that India was not as opulent in spices as had been previously supposed. Anticipating that the Moluccas and surrounding areas would bear a treasure in precious metals, drugs, and spices, the famous seaman hoped to claim all his discoveries in the name of Charles V, King of Spain and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. As an *adelantado* of that monarch, Magellan was promised one-twentieth of his cargo upon returning to Spain as well as titles of power and position in the newly conquered territories.

Employing the descriptions and details of three sixteenth-century accounts, Charles Nowell has produced a colorful portrait of Magellan's sea story. Although the version of Antonio Pigafetta, who was among the eighteen surviving Europeans, is the most informative record of the long journey, the reports of Maximilian of Transylvania and the Portuguese historian, Gaspar Correa, add two other narrative dimensions to the Italian sailor's illuminating, but prejudicial presentation. Certainly, the latter two accounts supply modern readers with more knowledge of the destiny of the "Victoria" under the command of Sebastian del Cano after Magellan was killed in the Philippines. All three narratives,

skillfully edited and introduced by Dr. Nowell, therefore provide a definitive history of Ferdinand Magellan and his memorable expedition.

ROBERT L. GOLD

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Cabot to Cartier. By Bernard G. Hoffman. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961. xii, 287 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index.)

This is a difficult book to read, understand, and review. It is written by a very specialized expert on a very specialized subject for specialized experts in the same field (of which there are so very few). It is loaded with data, illustrations, and hypotheses. Its basic claim, as expressed in its subtitle, is to study "Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northeastern North America, 1497-1550." This is done but it is lost in too many details and in other considerations, such as lengthy cartographic discussions and comparisons. The next to the last chapter is entitled "Ethnographic Problems" and is interesting and useful. The final conclusions, such as, "Unfortunately, much of the earliest information is not localized and consequently it is not possible to identify the people and tribes to which it refers although in some cases we can make informed guesses," is disappointing in view of the amazing amount of work that this book reflects. But in all fairness to the author there are important conclusions (not important to Florida history) of a very restricted nature in terms of time, space, and events. The book reflects painstaking scholarship but dull style and presentation.

For Florida history Hoffman's work is of marginal value, more in terms of cartography than anything else. There is a good discussion of Barcia's work (pp. 180-186), and many of the maps and early voyages analyzed deal with the whole North American Atlantic coast and therefore Florida occupies a crucial spot. We must consider this book a new item for early Florida history, but it must be correlated with the works of David True, who still remains our best expert on this matter.

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