In Walsh’s narrative, this insertion of Radio Marti in national politics was both a key turning point and the prelude to another defeat of the CANF’s hard-liner agenda. In the context of Clinton’s ambiguous support for what would become the Helms-Burton Act, the successful launching of TV Marti landed on very difficult political terrain, for a new Cuban immigration crisis and Florida’s increasing electoral relevance changed the stakes of the administration’s policy towards Cuba, now directed towards securing votes from an increasingly moderate Cuban-American public. The final chapters in Walsh’s reconstruction of Radio Marti’s voyage through the labyrinths of the American political system provide a portrait of the swinging pendulum that would characterise the more recent developments of these ‘air wars’: the hijacking of the hard-liner agenda by Cuban-American representatives in Congress, and the shifts in the CANF’s position from the emphasis on de-stabilising the Castro regime to imagining the various scenarios of a post-Castro Cuba. Although Walsh’s conclusions or projections on the subject matter remain a bit unclear, the reader is left with the impression that the context that gave birth to Radio Marti is long gone, and that the ideological and political environment in which the station is now embedded carries far more implications for local and domestic politics than for the actual stability of the Cuban government.

At large, Walsh’s book is neither a rigorous historiographical treatise, nor simply a journalistic exposé. It strives, with relative success, to reconstruct specific processes and events with a clear prose, skilfully adorned with interesting anecdotes and an insistence on the ambivalent – when not outright futile – results of the lengthy ‘air war’ against Cuba. Thus, while not at the highest level of scholarly sophistication, An Air War With Cuba stands out as an interdisciplinary contribution to the re-inscription of US–Cuba relations in a transnational framework that takes into account the role of technology and communications, while stressing the historical shortcomings and political complications of waging wars through the airwaves.

Luis Herrán-Ávila, The New School for Social Research, USA


Reviewed by Rosa García-Chediak

When one wishes to know a specific society, it is vital to take into account its history. However, discourses about the social processes of a country are frequently imprecise, overloaded with topics, or often folkloric. In short, they are unable
to provide a basic understanding. In such cases, new questions are unlikely to arise and the image of the society will remain distorted. This book by Sergio Guerra Vilaboy and Oscar Loyola Vega should be considered a contribution in quite the opposite sense: it is indeed an accurate sketch of a very controversial Caribbean island.

The first observation to make about the book concerns the outstanding professional career of its authors. Both are veteran historians within the Cuban academy, contributing from different perspectives to achieve highly in the historical investigations sponsored by the University of Havana. While Guerra has dedicated more consideration to the wider perspective of the Latin-American context and its links with Cuban history or the study of revolutionary Cuba, Loyola has focused his attention on the specific process of building the Cuban nation. Though the authors share a relevant interest in how historiography discourse is constructed, these links have been reinforced by more than four decades as colleagues in the History Department at the University of Havana. Thanks to this mixture of differences and strong identifications, the overview of Cuban history offered by these writers shows at the same time a fluent synthesis and complex approach.

A summary of the chronological perspective would be enough to demonstrate that *Cuba: A History* is a deep and comprehensive work. Starting from the early dates of the first inhabitants of the archipelago, the book follows the conquest and colonization of the island by Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the origins and development of a national identity that ends in the independence wars in the second half of the nineteenth century, the establishment of a new Republic in 1902 and its difficulties to guarantee sovereignty and equality, to finally expose the most relevant events concerning the socialistic experience that have taken place in the largest of the Antilles from 1959 to the present day.

Besides the finely presented sequence of Cuban historical processes, there is another detail that reflects the authors’ well-articulated conception of what history is. Throughout the book, a deliberate attention to the economy and to politics is always balanced with considerations about how the cultural life and intellectual groups of Cuban society evolved. In particular, the passages dedicated to Creole society, the revolution of the 1930s and the different stages of the socialistic process, seem good examples of the authors’ aims.

Readers must be advised that the knowledge provided from this text is not reduced to logical conclusions, in other words is not Cartesian in any way. Guerra and Loyola seek to make the dignity of the Cuban people stand out. This is certainly a useful book for acquiring a subjective view of Cubans, but it is primarily a channel to discover, in that history, how surprising changes can emerge from difficulty.

*Rosa García-Chediak, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain*