



Cuba Rising

Jonathan Showe

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Many American pundits believed that Fidel Castro and his Revolution would be short-lived, and then the grouchy bearded guy proceeded to outlast ten U.S. Presidents. For a half century Cuba has been a key issue in U.S. foreign policy: sometimes an irritation, always an antagonist, and once bringing the world to within a blink of a nuclear World War III. How can this be, how can a small island country with few resources and of little consequence stand toe to toe with the global superpower for fifty years? It cant, but it did.

To understand how and why the proverbial elephant and mouse have shaken their fists at each other to a standoff its necessary to have a deeper understanding of Cuba and her people. It is so much more than tropical breezes, smooth rum, aromatic cigars and melodic salsa tunes. It is a legacy of colonial abuses, racial and religious conflict, raw Cold War politics, mafia meddling, pride which runs far deeper than mere machismo, U.S. presidential politics, and a family feud that spans the Florida Straits and extends to millions of people.

One could no more comprehend Cuba by reading bombastic speeches by political leaders than one could visualize a mosaic from a box of stone chips. Author Jonathan Showe had to experience it at ground level, through the eyes and experiences of humble farmers as well as erudite professionals, true Fidelistas as well as dissidents. How else could he understand the disconnect between the tale of the Cuban diplomat in Washington who had to persuade emergency room administrators that he would pay for treatment of his bleeding child with the words of the starry eyed teenager in Havana who explained there are machines all around Miami that will dispense money just by pushing a few buttons.

Cuba Rising will not guide you to Havanas famous monuments, restaurants or hotels, or to its vast array of historical and architectural wonderments - except in passing. But it will enable you to understand Cubas history of betrayal which has driven her to self reliance; her cultural traditions of synthesis which are fundamental from family through foreign policy, and; how Cubas national experience spanning centuries is propelling the country into a lively new posture in the 21st century. As U.S. foreign policy begins to embrace change, as Fidel Castro and his legacy pass from the spotlight, as China and Venezuela become players in Cuba, we can expect sweeping change in U.S.-Cuban relations and in Cubas role on the world stage. That may change the relationship from mainly noisy to vitally important. Preview it in these pages and understand it when you see it in the headlines.

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