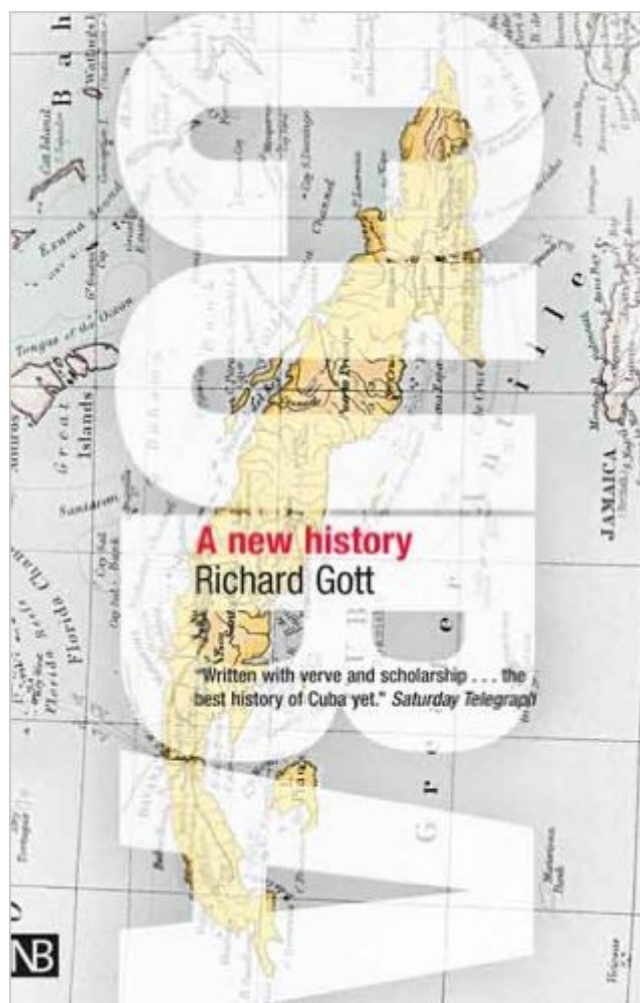


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Cuba: A New History (Yale Nota Bene)



Synopsis

Events in Fidel Castro's island nation often command international attention and just as often inspire controversy. Impassioned debate over situations as diverse as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Elián González affair is characteristic not only of modern times but of centuries of Cuban history. In this concise and up-to-date book, British journalist Richard Gott casts a fresh eye on the history of the Caribbean island from its pre-Columbian origins to the present day. He provides a European perspective on a country that is perhaps too frequently seen solely from the American point of view. The author emphasizes such little-known aspects of Cuba's history as its tradition of racism and violence, its black rebellions, the survival of its Indian peoples, and the lasting influence of Spain. The book also offers an original look at aspects of the Revolution, including Castro's relationship with the Soviet Union, military exploits in Africa, and his attempts to promote revolution in Latin America and among American blacks. In a concluding section, Gott tells the extraordinary story of the Revolution's survival in the post-Soviet years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For many, Cuban history started with Fidel Castro's political ascent in the 1950's. Nothing before seems relevant and sadly anything after has been a virtual black hole. Since the revolution of 1959, most writing about the island has been polarized, either ardently sympathetic or passionately hostile. But author Richard Gott, a British journalist and specialist in Latin American history, keeps a

level head, guiding us from the first attempt at colonization by the Spanish in 1511 to the present day. By providing a full historical context, the author gives a much needed contextual understanding of an island only ninety miles from the Florida Keys, yet a world away in almost every other respect. Gott dispels many convenient myths, such as the timing of the Communist influence. It didn't start with Castro but actually in 1907 with the Independent Party of Color, when socialists banded together to try to relieve themselves from the oppression they felt from U.S. occupation after the Spanish-American War. The group fomented into an embryonic Communist Party in 1925, which went unabated for years afterward. They even launched their own newspaper and promised then-revolutionary Fulgencio Batista the political support he needed to become Cuba's president during World War II. So, contrary to popular belief, Batista welcomed Communists into his government. But Batista became cruelly repressive during the 1950's, which triggered Castro to launch a failed armed attack on the Moncada fortress barracks in Santiago. It was at this time that Castro met Che Guevara, and Gott vividly describes their first meeting. The two men initially got on very well, brothers in arms. Guevara badly needed a political cause, while he gave Fidel valuable insights into other revolutionary experiments around Latin America.

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