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Cuba after Castro
Definitive Book by AEI Scholar Mark Falcoff
Challenges Preconceptions

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union more than a decade ago, media attention on Cuba has focused on the controversy over lifting the U.S. trade embargo. Mark Falcoff's new book, *Cuba the Morning After: Confronting Castro's Legacy* (AEI Press, September 17, 2003) argues that this debate is largely irrelevant. The wreckage of Cuba after forty years of Castro's rule is so profound that the country may never recover. According to Falcoff, lifting the U.S. embargo will be of negligible benefit to the country. Far more important are the formidable problems of Castro's legacy: political repression, a failed economy, environmental degradation, and a permanently impoverished population with expectations of free housing, free education, and free healthcare.

Falcoff reminds us that Cuba's economic downfall has been steep. In 1958, Cuba was in the top rank of most Latin American indices of development—urbanization, services, health, and literacy. Much of its prosperity was based on the favorable place reserved for its sugar harvest in the U.S. domestic market. Since then, the Cuban quota has been divided up among other countries, and sugar itself is no longer a particularly valuable commodity. Meanwhile, Cuba's antiquated sugar industry is near collapse; last year Fidel Castro was forced to shut down almost half of the country's mills.

Today, like most Caribbean islands, Cuba survives on tourism and remittances from Cubans living abroad. But, as Falcoff explains, neither source of income can replace the once-thriving sugar industry or the \$6 billion annual subsidy the island received for three decades from the Soviet Union. Cuba is poorer now than at any other time in its modern history and is unable to feed its people.

Many assume that Fidel Castro's death will transform the island into a capitalist paradise after the return of a successful and prosperous exile community from the United States. *Cuba the Morning After* challenges this assumption and makes the case that Cuba's revolutionary past cannot be un-lived.

Falcoff points out that a Cuba unable to earn a legitimate wage on the world market will be a prime candidate for exporting its internal crisis to the United States—from

uncontrolled outflows of migrants to the export of drugs and international criminals. Thus, forty years of communism and the expectations of 11 million Cubans will make the task of rebuilding the island much more complicated than imagined.

Falcoff makes clear in *Cuba the Morning After* that across the political spectrum, Americans will find their preconceptions of Cuba challenged—if not shattered—by the stark reality of post-Castro Cuba.

About the Author

Mark Falcoff is a resident scholar at the AEI, where he writes the monthly *Latin America Outlook* newsletter. He has taught at the universities of Illinois, Oregon, and California at Los Angeles, as well as at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute. He has served as a professional staff member on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (the Kissinger Commission), a senior consultant to the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, and a visiting fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on U.S.-Cuban Relations.

Mr. Falcoff is editor of *The Cuban Revolution and the United States, 1958–1960: A History in Documents* (2001) and author of numerous books, including *A Culture of Its Own: Taking Latin America Seriously* (1998) and *Panama's Canal: What Happens When the United States Gives a Small Country What It Wants* (1998).

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