

In this book, Gitlitz is very successful in the level of detail he provides. Most studies of New Christians and crypto-Jewish families during the colonial period pay attention to the evidence of hidden religious practices and to the personal and professional networks of New Christians and alleged crypto-Jews. However, primary sources created by the Tribunal of the Inquisition do not always provide further details, which is why the scholarship always seems to be scratching the surface. By combining multiple sources, a large but clearly defined set of historical subjects, and following them for around a century, Gitlitz can use a very close lens. In addition to the discussion about commercial activities and hidden Jewish practices, he was able to identify different levels of adherence to such practices within extended families, including how marriage strategies affected the preservation of crypto-Jewish circles. In other words, the author explores how different degrees of endogamic (between New Christians and potential crypto-Jews) and exogamic marriages (with an Old Christian spouse) affected the preservation of crypto-Jewish circles. He was even able to include information about unhappy marriages and divorce as related to hidden religious practices. Other issues studied in the book include how a clandestine religious practice differed if sustained at the individual level or as a collective practice.

Finally, he can also follow up what happened to them after the resolution of the trials of faith, explain what happened to confiscated properties, and to children placed in foster homes after imprisonment. On the other hand, an aspect that could have been expanded is the historiographical discussion. The book analyses individuals that have already been studied by other authors (such as Eva Uchmany and Nathan Wachtel, whom Gitlitz abundantly cites), although in a different scale of analysis. While Gitlitz expands and contextualises the information, I think he could have been more specific in the discussion about how his work relates to that of these authors and how understanding the extended families improves the previous work done on these individuals. Despite this minor critique, I think Gitlitz wrote a phenomenal book that will be very useful for scholars and students interested in the topic.

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## ***Isabel Story, Soviet Influence on Cuban Culture, 1961–1987: When the Soviets Came to Stay***

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Soviet influence in and on Cuba since 1959 has been a consistent focus in literature on the Revolution. Often assumptions of Cuban subservience to the USSR have

been emphasised, with, in particular after 1968, several examples of 'Sovietization' confirming the small island as a satellite state. Political, economic, ideological and cultural transformations have been approached in the context of the Cold War binary, obfuscating Cuban expressions of nation-building and their national-historical antecedents. Isabel Story's *Soviet Influence on Cuban Culture, 1961–1987* – while not the first to do so – refutes these preconceptions of the Cuban–Soviet relationship, offering a fastidious study of the cultural trends and currents intrinsic to the Cuban Revolution. Tracing the myriad forms, expressions and tensions in socialist cultural production, both in the USSR and Cuba, this work repeatedly interrogates one principal question: what is the role of culture in the Revolution?

Underdevelopment, dependence and national-identity building are perennial issues within Cuba scholarship, particularly along political-economic strata. One of the most fascinating elements throughout this work is how these phenomena can be analysed through theatre and the plastic arts. Story's exploration of the Soviet influence on Cuban culture rejects notions of 'Sovietization', demonstrating that even in the minutiae of cultural policy, expressions of Cubanness, of independence, and rejections of subservience were made. One of the most interesting examples of this is perhaps the construction in Cuba of a monument to Vladimir Lenin. While the statue was a veneration of a Soviet leader, it was constructed with Cuban marble and unveiled to commemorate 25 years of the Revolution, despite Soviet pressure to use it to celebrate the October Revolution. Even within architecture – which Story shows interestingly moved closer to the Soviet style while the two nations moved further apart ideologically – subordination can be rejected.

Beginning with the Soviet–Cuban relationship, which began long before 1959 and was centred, of course, on sugar production, Story details the cultural exchanges between the two nations in the wake of the rebel victory. From the outset, Cuban cultural output sought to locate its own emergent revolutionary identity in an assertion of cultural independence, and free of 'perceived assumptions about small nations' cultural capacities and underdevelopment' (p. 6). Appropriately, 1961 is taken as the start of this fascinating analysis, with now-socialist Cuba sending 1,000 students to the USSR for technical and engineering training (p. 10). As well as key distinctions between the two nations' approaches to culture, many similarities are emphasised. For example, an interesting parallel is drawn between the conflicting debates around Cuban cultural policy and socialist realism debates in the USSR (p. 97).

In the same way Cuban socialism has been developed by competing approaches and debates, and has always drawn on Cuban and Latin American currents of thought as well as Soviet socialism, so it is in cultural production, as Story demonstrates. The disparate ideologies, movements and currents of thought, which exemplified the intense first years of the Revolution, had a concomitant role to play in the construction of a national identity. Theatre and arts were a participatory expression of this emergent national identity.

After the first decade of the Revolution, Cuban cultural policy underwent numerous contradictory and competing currents of thought. In the 1970s, Story illustrates how the regulation of theatre was accompanied by more didactic approaches, privileging cultural production that focused on Latin American history and the Revolution facing outwards; this current, the author argues, is comparable to what she terms 'late Stalinist socialist realism' (p. 125). The following decade,

meanwhile, would involve yet more introspection and debate on the role of culture under socialism. Part of this included more efforts to 'giv[e] cultural ownership to the majority of the Cuban population' (p. 108).

This was accompanied in the 1970s and 1980s by a 'deeper fusion of economy and culture' (p. 85), where cultural production was emphasised as an economic lever, with the assertion that 'culture is not a luxury' (p. 98). The role of the artist and intellectual came to be increasingly linked to both the national and global economy, and Story asserts that this trend can be considered a consequence of Cuba's integration into the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), the socialist trade bloc, although this argument could be developed further. However, in this confluence of culture and economy a conscious effort was made to prevent authenticity and organic cultural production from being compromised. Culture was still connected to national identity, still characterised by anti-imperialism, defence of the nation, and the continued fight against colonial legacies.

Story details the specific implementations in the early 1970s of a political, ideological, legal and cultural approximation to the USSR, indicating an end to *cubanía*-led nation (re)building and the institutionalising of a full-scale 'Sovietization' of Cuba. However, as the author demonstrates, Cuba in fact maintained its commitment to national culture, *cubanía* and Latin-Americanism. The nuanced analysis in this work emphasises these important distinctions. The Alamar housing unit construction, for example, was explicitly Soviet in its architectural style, but does this mean it is evidence of 'Sovietization'? It provided housing, fulfilling a Cuban revolutionary commitment.

The historic and global phenomena of the contradictions between town and country were no different in Cuba, and were consistently challenged, as Story demonstrates, through culture. The alienation inherent to rural-urban distinctions can be tackled through many forms, but here we learn how theatre groups (*instructores de arte*) and general efforts to decentralise culture and the arts were employed as part of this process.

Throughout this work cultural policies and debates are interrogated, and their shifts often explain broader political-economic changes. For example, Story explores the changing cultural trends along the tumultuous first few years of the Cuban Revolution, with increasing outside hostility inducing an 'insular introspection' in theatre (p. 117). Culture also became central to the most pressing economic challenges. Cuban culture was politicised and became 'a form of social production which could be used to help overcome the conditions of underdevelopment' (p. 75). Cultural underdevelopment – particularly in Cuban theatre – was tackled in diverse ways and through new and existing institutions and publications throughout the island.

*Soviet Influence on Cuban Culture* challenges simple preconceptions with complex – and contradictory – realities of the Cuban-Soviet cultural relationship, focusing specifically on how, within Cuban theatre and the plastic arts, Soviet forms were routinely adopted, rejected and interrogated, as well as how often these shifting cultural currents reflected broader political-economic tensions and transformations. What is the role of culture in the Revolution? Story's work offers an original and comprehensive answer to this question.