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Pérez-Stable, Marifeli, ed. *Looking Forward: Comparative Perspectives on Cuba's Transition*. Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2007. 360 pp. ISBN 978-0-268-03891-5, \$27.00 (pb).

"The world still awaits." That is the first sentence in this brilliant analysis of potential political change in Cuba after the Castro era comes to an end. That era hasn't ended yet. Yes, early in the winter of 2008 Castro resigned from power but only to pass it on to his younger brother Raul who promised to consult his older brother on a regular basis. Raul Castro has implemented small changes-allowing the sale of cell phones, DVDs, and microwaves, and permitting people to buy milk anywhere they want rather than at the grocery store assigned by the government-but the power still rests in the hands of one maximum leader. Therefore, the bigger question is not what happens after Fidel Castro, but what happens after there is no longer a Castro in power.

To portray a new Cuban society, editor Pérez-Stable posited three questions: What are the experiences of new democracies after the end of totalitarian rule? How might the Cuba of the twenty-first century transition to democracy? What are the plausible alternatives? To answer these questions, the professor from Florida International University gathered scholars of great renown, such as Jorge I. Domínguez, Harvard University, and Carmelo Mesa Largo, University of Pittsburgh, among others. The first scholar predicted exactly what has taken place: Raul Castro would be the successor (this book was published before Castro's resignation). He also suggests that Raul Castro will follow the Chinese model of change: small liberties to obtain material needs while maintaining political power centralized.

Mesa Largo shares this view. In his chapter "Social Policy and Social Welfare," he essentially debunks the myth of economic equality in Cuba-for example, people in Havana are wealthier and receive better educational and health services than most in the rest of the island-and summarizes failures in economic policies which result in a taxi driver earning a lot more money than a doctor or a teacher. Mesa Largo doesn't present this information from a partisan point of view but simply based on statistical analysis done by Cuban scholars in Cuba. What Mesa Largo suggests will take place during the next ten years is the privatization of national enterprises to allow the Cuban people to shape a new economic market and a new society.

The collection of essays is not restricted to economic matters alone. There are chapters on religion and race, gender equality, ideology, and the relationship with both the Cuban community in exile and the United States. There is also an informative section on the failures of the democratic process and the rise of the strongman in places such as Russia, a country that as part of the former Soviet Union had supported Cuba and Castro.

The essays are surprisingly far from theoretical but essentially practical and highly accessible. Early in the revolution, Castro liked to say that Cuba represented socialism with a human face. Well, that is so with the essays in this volume. The best proof of that approach is the preface by Pérez-Stable in which she humanizes the process of departure from the island and assimilation to the United States by narrating her father's life, the life of a man who refused to shave his very Cuban mustache but eagerly embraced a very American sport: football.

Whatever happens on the island, this book will serve as a guide to readers trying to understand social developments and political transformation in post-Castro Cuba.

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