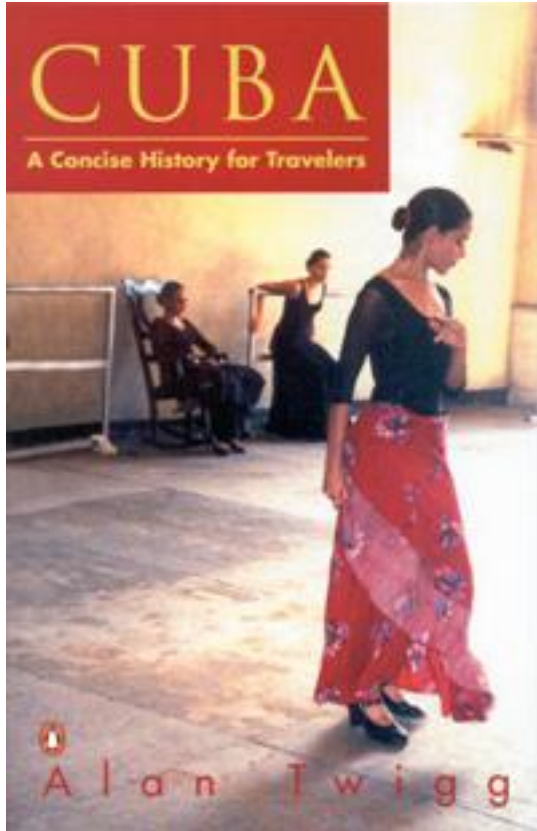


## **Cuba: A Concise History**

By Alan Twigg Bluefield, 176 pages, \$16.95

REVIEWED for the *Globe & Mail* by *Laszlo Buhasz*



Rivalled only by the Dominican Republic, Cuba has been a favourite Caribbean destination for Canadians for more than a decade. In 1999, 213,000 sun-starved Canucks took relatively cheap package tours to enjoy the beaches, architecture, cigars, *mojitos*, baseball, Hemingway haunts and Tropicana girlie shows. And, while there are many guidebooks filled with good practical information about island, few offer more than a rudimentary outline of its turbulent history.

Alan Twigg's *Cuba: A Concise History for Travellers* nicely fills that void. Lively, well-written, entertaining as well as informative, the book is brief enough to be read in one sitting. Twigg offers a perspective not unduly influenced by either American or Cuban prejudices and ideologies.

Beginning with the island's discovery by Columbus in 1492 and the next four centuries of unimaginably cruel Spanish occupation, Twigg outlines the escalating obsession of the

U.S. to control the island through military rule, economic imperialism and a series of puppet dictators. There is a fascinating section about the Mafia's grip on the island in the 1930s, 40s and early 50s before Twigg moves on to the main emphasis: the life of Fidel Castro and how his rag-tag revolutionaries managed to take control of Cuba in 1959 and remain in power.

Twigg, publisher of *B.C. BookWorld* and author of six previous books, masterfully summarizes the the Bay of Pigs disaster, the Cuban missile crisis, Castro's chaotic love life and dozens of CIA plots to assassinate him. There are separate chapters on how and why Che Guevara died, and a worldwide index of dictators and their unelected tenures. Castro's is the longest among those still alive.

*Laszlo Buhasz is The Globe and Mail's travel writer.*

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