



Secret Missions to Cuba: Fidel Castro, Bernardo Benes, and Cuban Miami

R. Levine

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Secret Missions to Cuba reveals new insights into Fidel Castro's personality, details secret missions to Cuba under the Carter and Reagan administrations to negotiate the restoration of US-Cuban relations and provides an in-depth look at Miami's exile community since 1959. This groundbreaking story is told through Bernardo Benes - a lawyer who joined the refugee exodus from Castro's Cuba in 1960. Benes quickly became one of the leading voices advocating the integration of Cubans into the city's Anglo, old-boy power structure. In 1978, Cuban Intelligence recruited him as an emissary between the Carter administration and Cuba. He did the same for the CIA under Reagan in the early 1980s. In all, Benes made seventy-five secret trips to meet with high-ranking Cuban officials, spending about 150 hours face-to-face with Fidel Castro. The 1978 dialogue resulted in the release of 3,600 Cuban political prisoners and the right for Cuban exiles to visit family members on the island. Rather than being received as a hero on his return to Miami, however, Benes was branded a traitor by the Miami Cuban media for having dealt personally with Castro. His career ruined, he became a pariah in the community. Secret Missions to Cuba also examines the motives of those who vilified Benes and explores why so many Cubans in Miami have permitted themselves to be silenced - much in the same ways, Levine claims, as Cubans under Castro. But what differentiates Levine's book from any other is that he is literally breaking new ground by documenting these top-secret missions to Cuba. Furthermore, he has the corroboration of key players like Ambler Moss, who was the Ambassador to Panama under Carter; Bob Pastor, who was Carter's Latin American advisor on the National Security Council, and General Vernon A. Walters, the former Deputy Director of the CIA. The twenty-five photos in the book, some which depict Bernardo Benes with Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Ted Kennedy and, of course, Fidel Castro, emphasize the importance of Benes' story internationally.

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