



Jose Marti: Mentor of the Cuban Nation (A University of South Florida book)

John M. Kirk

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Venerated as the creator of Cuba's first republic, declared by Fidel Castro to be the "intellectual author" of the second revolution, revered by Cuban exiles as the premier visionary of the democratic Cuban state, Jose Marti (1853-95) was a prolific and eclectic writer and a practical philosopher. In *Jose Marti: Mentor of the Cuban Nation*, John M. Kirk leads us to a better understanding of "the purest man" of the Latin race and one of the most underrated political thinkers of modern times.

As a scholarly statement, Kirk's work contributes to a necessary reappraisal of Marti; it is a quest after the true *esencia martiana*—the essence of Marti's sociopolitical thought. Kirk deliberately departs from a strictly theoretical viewpoint in his well-documented synthesis of Marti's theories. The result is partially an explanation for the Cuban leader's continued exaltation as the "apostle" of modern political movements of both the right and the left.

Kirk reviews the formative experiences of Marti's youth through his letters and early literary endeavors to his deportation to Spain before the age of eighteen. Marti's observations from his travels on the realities of North American democracy and the struggles of Latin American nations to emerge from colonialism are used by Kirk to trace Marti's sociopolitical development, culminating in his aspirations for Cuba following its independence from Spain.

Kirk clarifies Marti's visionary but quite specific designs for the moral foundation, social, political, and economic structures and policies of the liberated republic—concepts that Marti would have attempted to implement had he not been killed by Spanish forces.

Marti's own words, here translated by Kirk, show a wise and compassionate leader dedicated to the welfare of all peoples.

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