

***Improper Conduct:* Pro and Con**

I was dismayed by B. Ruby Rich's tendentious and misinformed review of *Improper Conduct* ["Point of View: Bay of Pix," July-August]. Rich seems to conclude that any publicity about the systematic brutalization of homosexuals in Cuba is part of a giant conspiracy to "smear" someone who is evidently a hero to Rich—Fidel Castro. Rich traces this alleged conspiracy in some detail and laments the lack of coverage for the years 1959–1965 and 1967–1979.

Rich can find this information in Allen Young's *Gays Under the Cuban Revolution*, published by Grey Fox Press a full three years ago—an all-important document of which Rich seems to be unaware. She should pay careful attention to the 1971 declaration by the First National Congress on Education and Culture, which says in part: "Finally, it was agreed to demand that severe penalties be applied to those who corrupt the morals of minors [where are you, Anita?], depraved repeat offenders [?!], and irredeemable antisocial elements [the true Stalinist touch].

"Cultural institutions cannot serve as a platform for false intellectuals who try to make snobbery, extravagant conduct, homosexuality, and other social aberrations into expressions of revolutionary spirit and art, isolated from the masses and the spirit of the revolution."

Does Rich imagine that thousands of gay men fled Cuba in 1980 because they were *happy* there?

One other point must be touched on. Rich declares that the film is determined "to ignore the advances in standard of living, education, health, and access to culture" that have allegedly occurred in Cuba.

But, according to Paul Johnson in *Modern Times*, "in 1981 it was calculated that, since Castro took charge, Cuba had had an annual growth rate *per capita* of minus 1.2 per cent; that from being one of the richest Latin-American countries it had become one of the poorest, and with a national income of only \$810 per head, worse off than neighboring Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Mexico; and . . . *per capita*, probably had more men under arms than any other country in the world." If culture is defined as military culture, and advances in the standard of living cause mass poverty, I guess Rich has a point.

Finally, Rich mentions in passing all the happy gays and lesbians she has met in jolly

old Havana—yet does not mention any of their names. Why would that be? Are they figments of Rich's imagination, or are they terrified of exposure?

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