
This is a useful and informative book on Cuban climate, with emphasis on those factors which are beneficial or harmful to industrial and agricultural development. Like many other books published during the past six years in Cuba, it was originally written in Russian and later translated into Spanish. To this reviewer’s knowledge, it is the only book written to date on the climate of Cuba. It was made possible by the installation in Cuba, after 1961, of fifty new meteorological stations. As a result, unlike previously published studies, it carries the “ring” of authority.

The book is divided as follows: introduction; general climatic conditions; heat budget; annual temperature fluctuation; amount of rainfall; annual character of rainfall; maximum and minimum rainfall by months; variability in annual rainfall; evaporation and humidity balance; topographic provinces; climate and agricultural economy; agronomic-climatic conditions for cultivation of sugarcane; climate and problems of reforestation; importance of climatic resources in natural energy; relation of climate to industry and construction; development of spas and tourism; conclusions; and an appendix on the organization of the Meteorological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Cuba.

The nine maps in the pocket, five of them in color, are one of the better features of the book. They show mean temperature distribution for January, April, July, and October; mean annual temperatures and summary of temperatures greater than 10° C; isolines of total rainfall (in mm); coefficients of annual rainfall variation; annual distribution of rainfall in different regions of Cuba; and isolines of wet-season rainfall. The legend of each map states that the scale is 1:1,000,000, but no allowance was made for reduction; the actual scale is about 1:2,000,000. Reduction has made some of the printing difficult to read, but even the finest lettering—of which there is fortunately not too much—is just legible.

The general objectivity of the book is marred—but only slightly—by two defects. The first, and less objectionable, is the poetic quality of some of the descriptions. For example: “In summertime thousands of persons can visit Cuba, be cured, rest, and bask in the incomparable beauty of the natural surroundings, but even better for these pastimes is the
winter period. From December to April Cuba is a land of clear blue sky; there is almost no
rain or strong wind; the splendid tropical green vegetation delights the eye . . .” No one
can deny the great beauty of Cuba, but a Chamber of Commerce brochure would be a
better place for these passages.

The second defect is the reversion in a few places to the socialist dialectic. For example:
“Cuba has been fortunate in that her territory is the site of favorable socioeconomic and
natural conditions. This is a guarantee that she soon will be unconquerable, that her strength
will increase, and that the dazzling light of socialism which irradiates from the Island of
Liberty will shine even more brightly.”

Despite these few extraneous passages that the authors have permitted themselves, this
is a valuable reference work, which will be useful to many geographers and meteorologists.
Copies may be obtained (cash transactions are not permitted) by writing to the Instituto
Nacional de Recursos Hidráulicos, Humboldt 106, La Rampa, La Habana, Cuba.—A. A.
Meyerhoff

LES FRONTIERES DU NORD ET DE L’EST DE LA BELGIQUE: Étude de géographie
1966. 180 F.

One of the anachronisms of modern nationalism has been the survival, particularly in
Western Europe, of some extremely complicated international boundaries, sections of which
date from the late Middle Ages. These boundaries not only have survived but continue to
draw the attention of statesmen, international jurists, and geographers. One such boundary
is that which separates Belgium from its three eastern neighbors—Luxembourg, Germany,
and the Netherlands. Starting near the village of Althus, at the junction of France, Belgium,
and Luxembourg, the boundary meanders north, northwest, and then west for 760 kilo-
meters to reach the shore of the North Sea about seven miles west of the entrance of the
Schelde estuary leading to the port of Antwerp. As most geographers know, it has been
Dutch control of the lower Schelde that for centuries has colored the commercial rivalry
between Antwerp and the major Netherlands harbors.

Madame van Wettere-Verhasselt’s comprehensive study of Belgium’s eastern and
northern boundaries received the 1966 Maurice Rahir Geography Prize from the Royal
Belgian Geographical Society, in recognition of what is a judicious blending of the political
and cultural geography of a region defined by the existence of the boundary itself. Hartshorne,
Whittlesey, and others have repeatedly called for more studies on the impress of
political features on the landscape, and such a study the author has given us in her succinct
analysis of one of political geography’s better-known boundary lines. Starting with a
description of historical origins (one section of the central Dutch-Belgian boundary has
remained unchanged since the eleventh century), she then considers population densities,
the agricultural and industrial landscapes, the movement of frontier workers, the commu-
nications network, and finally the economic life of the border regions, including smug-
gling activities. The Dutch city of Maastricht is analyzed in detail as a representative border
town. The maps are extremely detailed and well produced, though the nonexpert might
wish for a fold-out map of the entire boundary zone showing all the place names mentioned
in the text. There is a wealth of tables, graphs, and photographs, and an extensive bibli-
ography.