MARGARET RANDALL

EXPORTING REVOLUTION

Cuba's Global Solidarity

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For Mark Behr

1963–2015

wise and courageous friend,

brilliant thinker, writer,

and teacher

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This inquiry has been a journey. For decades I witnessed the Cuban Revolution's extraordinary internationalism, so familiar it seemed hardly out of the ordinary. When I lived in the country it was a daily presence in the moral stance of individuals as well as on the part of the population as a whole. After I left, its profile began to stand out against an increasingly mean-spirited backdrop of global greed, violence, and plunder. Why was no one writing about the phenomenon?

When I decided to do so, many friends and others offered their ideas, experiences, questions, and support. My beloved life partner, Barbara Byers, made room for the new inhabitant in our lives and helped make my work possible with her clarity and feedback. Gisela Fosado, my editor at Duke University Press, was an inspiration: enthusiastic, critical, and as encouraging as she has been with the earlier books we've done together; her assistant, Lydia Rose Rappoport-Hankins, was knowledgeable and helpful. As always, Duke assigned a patient and capable production editor to the project; thank you, Liz Smith. The two anonymous reviewers who read my original proposal offered suggestions that encouraged me to ask the hard questions, and I am grateful to them as well.

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My conclusions, as always, are my own.

Thank you all, and may the conversations continue.

1

HOW THESE IDEAS TOOK SHAPE

Exporting revolution: that was the accusation the United States launched at Cuba for years, the one it used to justify all manner of subterfuge and attack. Exaggerating the threat of "communism at our doorstep" and creating an aura of fear toward the tiny island nation were part of U.S. governmental strategy from the beginning and continued to be for more than half a century—even when many in the corporate community began pleading for policy changes that would facilitate doing business on the island. Yet even with the reestablished relations between our two countries, regime change and nation building clearly remain part of the U.S. agenda.

It's time we claim the old phrase *exporting revolution*, free it from its cold war aura, and acknowledge its legitimate meaning.

Exporting revolutionary aid—not imposing its way of life on other countries but lending military support to movements fighting for independence in Africa or aiding insurgent groups attempting to defeat cruel dictatorships in Latin America—has always been Cuban revolutionary policy. Unlike powerful nations occupying weaker ones at will for geopolitical gain or in order to take possession of their natural resources, Cuba's international outreach constituted a new and far-reaching model of solidarity. That solidarity continues to be seen in the Revolution's extraordinary humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

The Uruguayan poet and public intellectual Mario Benedetti, writing in 1973, addressed the U.S. accusation that Cuba was exporting revolution by going to the grain: "The truth is . . . the revolution has ceased to be an abstract possibility and become a real transformation,

a believable image. The imperialists have never tired of accusing Cuba of exporting revolution. But of course the real and unforgivable export for which Cuba is responsible (just like Vietnam) is the example of a small country far from the great powers, that is capable of defeating the empire and even humiliating it in the eyes of the world."[1]

During the Cuban Revolution's first months a group of Nicaraguan rebels were already undergoing rudimentary military training on the island, and a Guatemalan group planned to set sail from its coast and establish a base on home soil. Cuba's leadership denied having anything to do with either (failed) effort, although we now know that wasn't true. It was important to establish a political identity that would ensure the country a respected place in the community of nations, which meant going slowly with both Washington and the Kremlin. At the same time Cuba's increased isolation as well as its rapidly consolidating ideology made its government eager to support guerrilla warfare, especially in Latin America. As U.S. covert and overt attacks intensified, the Revolution also felt justified in defending itself and in countering a policy of ongoing attack with a strategy of supporting liberation struggles throughout the world.

It was logical that a small island nation that had successfully defeated a dictatorial government would be eager to help others do the same. Cuba was the last Latin American or Caribbean country to liberate itself from colonialism and the first to free itself from imperialist control. As such it had tremendous moral support from its neighbors in the region, all of whom endured some degree of exploitation and humiliation from decades of U.S. interference in their internal affairs, unfair economic and trade policies, and their own governments' brutal treatment of dissidents. Domestic national security forces learned many of the techniques employed in that brutal treatment (among them extreme interrogation methods, often tantamount to torture) at U.S. academies in Panama and Georgia.[2]

Following its own victory the Cuban Revolution naturally began to see itself as part of a worldwide movement to extend freedom and the promise of social justice to a number of Third World countries where liberation struggles were under way. Its military aid to these insurgencies took place in the 1970s and 1980s and had pretty much run its course by the end of the latter decade.

But Cuba's internationalism is not limited to battlefield assistance. It includes helping others out of poverty and backwardness, shaping new ideas about the causes of underdevelopment, teaching adult literacy, coming to the aid of nations suffering dramatic natural disasters, and sending teachers

and medical personnel to dozens of poor countries. It involves lending its experts in fields ranging from agriculture to fishing and biotechnology. It encompasses bringing tens of thousands of young people to study in Cuba, including hundreds to obtain medical degrees—all tuition-free. This internationalism is ongoing and spectacular.

In fact Cuba's aid to those mired in poverty and underdevelopment has evolved as one of the Revolution's most profound and emblematic characteristics, a quality consciously cultivated in the new human being who emerged in the throes of such profound social change. The Cuban internationalist is the New Man (and Woman) of whom Ernesto "Che" Guevara spoke.[3] As a revolutionary virtue, then, Cuba's internationalism is more complex and multifaceted than simply going elsewhere to fight or heal or teach. It is a quality the Revolution has consciously and systematically instilled in its citizens.

The accusation that Cuba was exporting revolution surged immediately following Fidel Castro's victory at the beginning of 1959. In the Soviet Union in January of that year Khrushchev and others in the Kremlin already had their eyes on Che Guevara and Raul Castro, who, they believed, had Marxist tendencies. Cuba did not yet have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, so the Soviets tried sending a security agent disguised as a journalist to the Caribbean island to find out what kind of a revolution had taken place.[4] They attempted to get information from their embassy in Mexico as well. No one really knew who those bearded rebels were.

In the United States the questions struck closer to home and were even more urgent, and plenty of undercover investigation was also going on. In April 1959 Fidel Castro made his first trip to Cuba's neighbor to the north. Much has been written about his meeting with Vice President Richard Nixon (neither man impressed the other) and his unsuccessful attempts to get the United States to increase its sugar quota or otherwise invest in the new Cuba. In all his U.S. venues Fidel denied that he was a communist. Pride in victory was high, popular participation the name of the game, and free elections were promised.

In fact Fidel may not have been a Marxist at the time, in the strictly academic sense, and he did not belong to his country's Communist Party (the People's Socialist Party, PSP), but this had little effect on what others thought, or on the direction his revolution would take. He certainly believed in the egalitarian nature of socialism, an egalitarianism long suspect in the United States. Despite discussions within his administration about whether to try to control or eliminate Cuba's new leader, President Dwight D. Eisenhower

soon authorized the first of many covert programs aimed at destroying the Revolution and bringing the island back into the U.S. fold.

In Cuba Che was also being questioned by representatives of a number of nations and their security agents. He too denied communist affiliation and described a revolution intent upon serving the needs of the Cuban people. As was true of Fidel, Che had never been a member of the Communist Party. It seemed important to emphasize the movement's originality and not make pronouncements of concern to governments whose recognition and support were needed.

The Soviets were courting Cuba's revolutionaries, who just might have pulled off the first socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere. The United States was becoming ever more alarmed. Today, when it is possible to read some of the intelligence from those years, what we find seems uniformly inept when not frankly out of synch with reality (although clues can be gleaned to support several different hypotheses). The relationships of powerful countries with those that suddenly become players and must be taken into account are always beset with intrigue.

Raul and Che had read Marx and Lenin, and Fidel was well read in all the philosophical classics. There were also a number of high-level members of the PSP—Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, Juan Marinello, and Blas Roca among them—who possessed a profound knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and were fully integrated into the new government. Like most communist parties of the era, the PSP had opposed armed struggle and had come on board only toward the end of the war, when the July 26 Movement's victory seemed inevitable.[5] In postwar Cuba some of its members began to occupy positions of power. Over the next several decades their influence led the country into more than one economic error. It also did harm in the cultural arena, although this eventually proved easier to reverse. The Revolution's leadership, finally fully concentrated in the men and women who had come to political maturity through the recent struggle, was developing a uniquely Cuban ideological identity. For the first time Cubans themselves were deciding their future and devising ways to bring hundreds of thousands of men and women—most of whom were brought up on a discourse of virulent anticommunism—to understand what socialism could mean for them.

These positions radiated outward. Following the 1959 Revolution, the small Caribbean island country exerted an influence far beyond its size or population and in areas in which it might not have been expected to do so. This is a book about that influence and solidarity. Much of it is a product of the Revolution, though some of its roots can be traced to earlier times. My

association with Cuba has been long and close, but my realization of its influence and exceptional world presence in so many different areas came about in an unexpected way.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2015 I was putting the finishing touches on a bilingual anthology of Cuban poetry.[6] The volume covers eight decades and includes the work of fifty-six poets, from the diaspora as well as the island. The selection process wasn't easy. My exploration led me from one poet to another, and I read poems by Nicolás Guillén, Dulce María Loynaz, Virgilio Piñera, José Lezama Lima, Gastón Baquero, Fayad Jamís, Roberto Fernández Retamar, Fina García Marruz, Antón Arrufat, Nancy Morejón, and Reina María Rodríguez, among others. Although I had known many of these poets and their work for years, I can only describe as breathtaking the experience of reading with an eye to translating for this collection.

As I worked I realized that more than a few Cubans had influenced Latin American poetry far beyond the country's borders. I discerned a transition from modernism to conversational mode earlier than when that transition occurred elsewhere, and a leading-edge vernacular. I found an engagement with humanity emblematic of the socially conscious but not bogged down by clichéd or propagandistic images of worker-owned factories or farms. I listened to powerful voices reinventing language and leading in directions not yet explored in Spanish elsewhere—or in English. Younger poets less well known internationally were just as impressive. Other Spanish-speaking countries have had their brilliant voices: Spain's Lorca, Peru's Vallejo, Chile's Neruda, Uruguay's Benedetti, Mexico's Paz.[7] But for its size and population Cuba has produced poets with an inordinate impact.

I immediately intuited that I was looking at a sociocultural phenomenon, and needed to explore it more closely. At any given time intellectuals and artists, perhaps especially poets, are a nation's social conscience. In the most propitious circumstances they are a chorus of its diverse voices, reflecting character and circumstance. In the least their silence speaks for cultures that have been stifled, forced underground, or even decimated by the numbing mentality that so often results from endless war, an impoverished socioeconomic climate, or heavy-handed political control (although when poets strive to escape their suffocating effects such situations themselves have also generated great poetry). Throughout history and across the globe poems smuggled out of prisons have borne truths rarely plumbed in the history books or on what passes for the nightly news.

All revolutions, in the creative convulsions of their immediate aftermath, have given birth to exciting art. In the Soviet Union the years 1917 to 1925 were marked by artistic innovation. The filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, poet Osip Mandelstam, and painter Wassily Kandinsky were but three among an explosion of artists who emerged in that place and time.[8] As the Russian Revolution struggled to survive, the work of such luminaries fell victim to a politics of bureaucratic rigidity and censorship. This happened in Cuba as well, but the most powerful voices were eventually able to prevail. I wanted to understand why creativity and freedom of expression survived in Cuba when it suffered more definitive repression in other twentieth-century revolutions.

Poets also create and project a nation's imaginary: glimpses of a future unique to its history and culture and, when endowed with a profound understanding of the intersections of chance, ideas, collective feeling, and praxis, trace fragments of the roadmap by which a people may claim that future. Centuries later we often look to an era's major poets for clues to that era's significance and complexities. The poetic genre, so little appreciated here in the United States, mirrors who we have been and are in ways that invite exploration (think Whitman, Ginsberg, Rich, di Prima, Harjo).[9] So when one nation's poets exert an influence on others, it is noteworthy, especially when that nation is a small and beleaguered island struggling to survive.

Cuba's rich intellectual and artistic history goes back centuries, issuing from diverse cultures even as its people came up against class and racial barriers. In poetry one need think only of José María de Heredia, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, or Nicolás Guillén. The U.S. poet, translator, publisher, and editor Mark Weiss writes, "Cuba has had an active literary culture for four hundred years, which since the late nineteenth century has had a disproportionate influence on the literatures of all the Spanish speaking Americas."[10]

Other artistic genres also offer important figures. In music there were such greats as Ernesto Lucuona, Bola de Nieve, Sindo Garay, and those other old men now most commonly referred to as the *vieja trova* (veteran troubadours). In the visual arts were Víctor Manuel, Wilfredo Lam, René Portocarero, Mariano Rodríguez, and Antonia Eiriz.[11] The work of Amelia Peláez still reflects the island's colors and light, and one can see the luminous *media lunas* that inspired her unique vision in some of the country's older buildings.[12] Crossover genres unique to the country, such as those in which artists have reproduced those half-moon stained glass windows or preserved the Santería signatures or symbols, also feed a rich ambience.

That so much of this ambience has gone to ruin during recent decades of privation makes these glimpses of art all the more precious and magical.

A nineteenth-century novel translated into dozens of languages, which has always remained in print in Spanish, has been reproduced in several genres both before and since the Revolution of 1959. It is *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirillo Villaverde. The book was first published in Havana in 1839 and, demonstrating its cross-border appeal, came out in an expanded version in New York in 1882. Gonzalo Roig composed a two-act zarzuela based on the novel, which had its Havana premier in 1932 and was staged by New York's Metropolitan Opera Company in 1965. In 1981 the Cuban filmmaker Humberto Solás made *Cecilia*, the most expensive production launched by Cuba's film industry to that moment.[13] The domestic version was four hours long; the one for international release ran two hours. A six-hour television miniseries of the novel was launched in Spain around the same time.

I mention *Cecilia* because, in different ways, in its book and film versions, it forefronts issues that remain unresolved in today's Cuba, issues with which Cuban artists in all genres continue to struggle. And when a Cuban work, even one based on a text written a century and a half earlier, goes out into the world, the fact that it comes from a country in revolution changes its impact and meaning: inevitably it is interrogated differently.

The novel *Cecilia Valdés* tells the story of a young, nineteenth-century mulata woman and her white lover. Race is not their only conflict; unbeknownst to them they are also brother and sister. Their ill-fated love story, a Caribbean version of the myth common to so many different cultures, is set against the beginnings of Cuba's slave rebellions. But when the novel became a film it was panned by every Cuban critic. Almost all were outraged at Solás's reinterpretation of the canonical work. The filmmaker omitted the subtext of incest but foregrounded Santería, an African religious practice that had been impossible to write about in the nineteenth century. His Cecilia is a practitioner, and he portrays that religion as the force that shapes his characters' destinies.

These are familiar themes. It isn't primarily the novel's content that claims my attention here but how Cuban artists embraced that content then and now. In the 1980s, when the film was made, Santería remained suppressed within the Revolution, and Solás's version of the story allowed him to look at something that had been driven underground but retained the power to subvert the dominant paradigms. The immediate response came from a familiar place of fear. The critic Mario Rodríguez Alemán called the film's ending repulsive and condemned it for what he termed its excessive religious

charge. He claimed it overshadowed Villaverde's original political and social intentions.[14]

The *Cecilia Valdés* story continues to be the subject of symposia, lectures, and other events, on the island and beyond its borders, devoted to untangling its subtexts in twenty-first-century Cuban life. The issues of power, race, class, gender, sexuality, and ideology put forth in the novel, film, and television versions and in scholarly papers continue to kindle passions in Cuba and elsewhere. The backdrop of a socialist revolution takes these issues out of the realm of intellectual discussion and situates them within the context of social change. They evoke heated discussions and demand solutions, practical as well as emotional.

I have lingered with the *Cecilia Valdés* phenomenon because I believe that the way Cuban artists explore the social consequences of our most intimate dilemmas is one of the attributes that makes their work so powerful and augurs for a healthy freedom of expression, and also because it may be a useful backdrop when discussing the subject of this book: the Cuban Revolution's unique solidarity exemplified by its hundreds of internationalist missions to countries where most people are dark-skinned, desperately poor, and in dire need of humanitarian aid.

There is no question that Cuba follows a different moral imperative in this regard, one that has been impossible for U.S. citizens (Democrats as well as Republicans) to comprehend. Speaking about its military aid Tom Hayden put it well: "Rarely had such a small third world country intervened militarily on such faraway battlegrounds, a global reach previously monopolized by the white colonial and imperial powers. This Cuban internationalism also was contrary to the mainstream political theory that nation states follow narrow state interests and hew to their geographic spheres of interest, doctrines developed from Machiavelli to Metternich. Cuba was the exception."[15]

Cuba has also been the exception with regard to its vast outreach in the areas of disaster relief, health care, and adult education. The Revolution's extraordinary internationalism is indeed contrary to mainstream Western political theory and has become a profound aspect of the Cuban people's collective identity over the past half century. It was Fidel Castro who said "Cuba doesn't give what is left over; rather it shares what it has without asking for anything in return."[16]

I want to explore how the foreign aid offered by Cuba differs from that offered by the large imperialist nations: the United States, Russia, and China.

The refusal of the United States to peaceably coexist with the neighboring country helped push Cuba into the Soviet orb. Declaring their revolution socialist, Cuban leaders made the choice to be part of the Eastern European economic bloc. Depending on one's perspective, this move was made either freely or out of necessity; I would say both came into play. Whichever predominated, however, a country traditionally considered within the U.S. political sphere was suddenly part of an opposing axis of power.

In 1972 Cuba joined the Council of Mutual Economic Aid, the socialist bloc's internationalist collective of nations in which each was charged with producing products or services for the benefit of all, itself a form of socialist internationalism.[17] This facilitated Cuba's being able to sell its raw materials and buy what it needed under favorable conditions, but it also meant trading much farther afield, incurring greater transportation costs, and created a new dependency that in the long run proved almost as detrimental as its previous reliance upon the United States.

These and many other aspects of its particular island identity have affected Cuba's growth, development, human and trade histories, culture, and attitude toward the rest of the world—as well as the world's attitude toward it. They have made Cubans feel strongly rooted in their own cultures and history: isolated, proud, and determined, as well as capable of feeling the pain of others and ready to ameliorate that pain. (I explore Cuba's island condition more deeply in chapter 4.)

The 1959 Revolution marked a dramatic *before* and *after* for those who opposed it as well as for those who embraced its possibilities. The Revolution declared itself socialist in 1961. Ideology, history, and world events provoked an identification—sometimes easier, sometimes beset by disagreement—with the Soviet-style socialism then existent in Eastern Europe, what eventually came to be known (not without irony) as "real socialism."

This identification with the first socialist revolution is understandable. The Russian Revolution of 1917 offered a heroic history to which new generations of rebels could look for solidarity, and for clues about taking power, the ferocious counterattacks they would face, how to make a socialist society work (or avoid errors that keep it from becoming truly socialist), and how to move toward the eventual goal of communism, in which citizens contribute according to their abilities and receive according to their needs.

The exuberance and accomplishments of the Russian Revolution's first years imbued it with a glory that overshadowed the problems of subsequent

decades. China provided another example, rooted in an agricultural rather than industrial model. But both the Soviet Union and China are immense countries, spanning many time zones and with a number of internal nationalities that have their own customs, belief system, and language. In both cases, as it turned out, their accomplishments and errors responded to realities too different from those of Cuba to offer much in the way of a recipe to be followed.

The Soviet Union had a strong internationalist tradition, evidenced in its interest in disseminating socialism globally as well as in the presence of its advisors and technicians in the countries it helped. A large number of Soviet internationalists fought for the Spanish Republic. Many experts from the Soviet Union and other socialist bloc countries worked in Cuba during the Revolution's first decades; I remember scientists and engineers as well as educators and specialists in the social sciences. In retrospect what is absolutely clear is that, given U.S. efforts at destabilization, Cuba could not have survived without Soviet and socialist bloc support. But as Soviet socialism became vitiated, the USSR broke apart and its aid as well as its internal political strategies acquired capitalist characteristics. This shift was experienced quite dramatically in Cuba.

It is to the Cuban Revolution's enduring credit that it eventually managed to facilitate homegrown prescriptions for change, from its particular latitude and tense proximity to its most aggressive enemy, and out of its island identity, geographical location, rebel history, cultures, racial mix, and the historic moment in which its revolution took place. It is also noteworthy that, although it has not yet been able to adequately develop its own economy, it has been so willing, indeed eager to aid those still strangled by underdevelopment.

In the Soviet Union, Josef Stalin's coercive philosophy and policies overtook less dogmatic approaches by Lenin and Trotsky, and Stalinism reigned by the time the Cuban revolutionaries came to power. The novelist, short story writer, and cultural critic Arturo Arango concisely sums up the Cuban experience with regard to its Eastern European older sibling; he asks us to understand Stalinism not simply as a dogmatic and repressive way of treating ideological processes but, above all, as a way of understanding socialism itself as a construction centralized in the state: the economy, ideology, and so forth.

In the West, Stalin is best known for the atrocities he committed against intellectuals and artists, as well as for the thousands who died of hunger during his command. For a more balanced view we should also remember

that Stalin was Georgian—a hated minority—and inherited the world's first socialist revolution at a time of almost insurmountable obstacles: a backward nation of impoverished peasants and workers besieged by the entire Western world. The imperative was to industrialize as rapidly as possible while embroiled in a brutal war against fascism that took twenty million lives. There is no doubt that Stalin's measures saved an extremely complex situation, and that centralism was necessary to emerge from it. Still dogmatism (and at times a murderous brutality) led to fear, masses of dead, bureaucracy, corruption, and, ultimately, a weakening of the system itself. One of the Soviet Communist Party's debilitating legacies was its belief that one size fits all, that what worked in the motherland (or even what didn't) necessarily applied to the creation of successive experiments in social change elsewhere.

Arango looks at Stalinism with regard to the arts. It is clear, he says, that Cuba installed a Stalinist system, remnants of which remain to this day. And he focuses on one of the key features of that system: democratic centralism.[18] We cannot know what might have happened in the Soviet Union had Lenin lived longer or Trotsky not been forced out and his more sophisticated way of looking at creativity been allowed to flourish. Arango analyzes the influence Stalinist thought had on culture in Cuba:

> Everything derives from this centralism, something that in one way or another negates the options that make possible the creation of participatory democracy. But Cuba's political and revolutionary traditions differ from Russia's and from that of the Soviet Union overall, just as Fidel and Stalin had very different personalities. Cuban culture put up the strongest resistance to Stalinism. From the nineteenth century on, Cuba possessed a cultural tradition that was revolutionary, liberating and emancipating. For this reason, after 1959 important revolutionary groups existed that were already anti-Stalinist in nature. It is important to note that Fidel's role in that period included mediating and achieving a balance between the various currents present within the revolutionary leadership, principally the July 26 Movement (in its beginnings composed of a strong bourgeois element that was later eliminated as the process radicalized), the old-time communists (all of them Stalinists), and other groups such as The Student Directorate (made up of those who came predominantly from the petit bourgeoisie).
>
> During those early years some strong contradictions with Soviet ideology emerged. And this is where a very important factor came into

play: Cuba's position within Latin America and its identification with the Nonaligned Nations and countries of the Third World. This is what separated us from Soviet orthodoxy. Fidel not only sympathized with this oppositional tendency, he was its leader. This generated a great many contradictions with the Soviets and also with the Latin American communist parties of the era.

In Cuba, already back then and in several different arenas, intellectual currents existed that rejected Stalinism as a cultural concept. It was too dogmatic, too programmatic for the Cuban leadership, even if those same currents supported Stalin's views with regard to the economy. One of the most important of these currents was the one that produced the magazine *Pensamiento Crítico*. Another, although with some ups and downs, can be seen in Casa de las Américas.[19]

Che saw the problems in the Soviet Union early on. He traveled to the first socialist republic as early as 1960 and questioned its cultural concepts as well as its economic model. He had read Trotsky and studied the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions and other socialist processes. In a number of articles and speeches he made clear his disagreement with the Soviets. But Cuba had already made its alliance with the Soviet Union. As recently as 2005 Fidel Castro, the great architect of the Revolution and its most brilliant spokesperson, reminisced, "Of the many mistakes we have committed, the most important was thinking we knew about socialism, or that anyone knew how one constructs a socialist society."[20]

From its inception, and especially in terms of its aesthetic considerations, the Cuban process differed substantially from that of the Soviets. Powerful forces on the island rejected socialist realism, for example, although a core group of old Cuban Communist Party members tried to impose it, and in one notorious period their efforts gained dangerous momentum.[21] During those times when Cuba was most economically dependent upon the Soviet Union, this dependency exerted its most damaging influence. Fortunately the Revolution's history, culture, climate, temperament, originality, and Latin American—or more specifically Caribbean—identity eventually enabled it to throw off the Stalinist approach to art and letters and return to its more authentic self. I discuss this in more detail later.

By this time in my musings, however, it was clear to me that long before the 1959 Revolution Cuba had produced and nurtured cultural tendencies that made the Revolution's job easier. Central among these was its nuanced brand of nationalism. The Cuban cultural critic Julio César Guanche points

out that the country's movements for independence were rooted in a strong republican or universalist ideology and were committed as well to the liberation of the other nations of the Americas.[22] In this sense Cuba's concept of *nation* was never inscribed within a narrow or chauvinist philosophy.

The nineteenth-century revolutionary intellectual José Martí had spoken clearly for a single Latin American identity and unity, and from that century on Cuban patriots conceived of *nation* in its broadest terms: as humanity.[23] This conviction powerfully underwrites Cuba's internationalism, as seen in its heroic aid to other liberation struggles and in its tens of thousands of teachers, health care personnel, and others who continue to take their solidarity to remote regions of the world.

Martí is regarded as the father of the nation, both politically and philosophically and by revolutionaries as well as by those opposed to the Revolution's socialist ideology. The cultural and literary critic Ambrosio Fornet, reviewing a study of Martí by the country's first minister of culture, Armando Hart, considers four points Hart makes as he analyzes Martí's role in shaping Cuban intellectuality.[24] Because they bear on my ideas, I enumerate them here. The first concerns the two currents present in the formation of Cuban consciousness, one intellectual in nature, the other ethical. The intellectual current is rooted in the ideas of the Enlightenment, including scientific reflection. The ethical current embraces Christianity's philosophy of morality, oriented toward human community and solidarity. The second point is that in Cuba, as in most of the colonial world, nation does not precede revolution but rather is one of its offshoots. A Cuban nationality existed before Céspedes's cry of independence in 1868,[25] but the idea of Nation, with a capital N—that is to say, a community of interests and intentions shared by the majority of the island's inhabitants—emerges organically, one might say, from that event. Third, given that a system of slavery dominated the island, coloring not only its relations of production but also its human relations into the foreseeable future, political independence alone was not enough to forge a sense of nationhood. The promise of independence had to be accompanied by a promise of social justice. Fourth, and following from the three preceding points, Martí's thought was central in shaping the political and social ideology of the Revolution that came to power in 1959.

Bear in mind that it was Hart who elucidated these four points, the person tapped as the country's first minister of culture, the man who would guide Cuban intellectuals and artists out of the repressive period that began in 1971 and could so easily have curtailed their freedom from then on. It was

a complex task, requiring intellectual sophistication, intuition, brilliance, compassion, and above all confidence in the creativity of men and women with everything to give and everything to lose.[26]

This was as good a starting point as any in my effort to understand why the country's intellectuals and artists have been in the forefront of Latin American debate since the 1960s and why their poetry, prose, painting, music, and other creative production has been so outstanding when compared with that of countries with much larger populations.

Historically all the nations of the Caribbean have seen large numbers of their citizens emigrate. But up until the 1930s Cuba was more a nation of immigrants than emigrants; in other words, more people were arriving than leaving. Spaniards (from diverse provincial cultures), Africans (also of differing cultures), Jews, and Chinese all made important contributions to a multifaceted Cuban identity. Creoles from nearby Haiti arrived to work in the sugarcane and coffee fields. Mexican laborers arrived from the port of Veracruz. Cuba's proximity to the United States also made for a great deal of cultural exchange. All this produced a discourse of *mestizaje* as the essence of Cuban nationality. And this discourse, reflecting a sense of *cubanía*, also informs the Revolution's internationalism.[27] After 1959 this history, linked to a powerful antidictator stance, sparked values of solidarity toward other oppressed peoples.

The unusually powerful role Cuban poetry has played with regard to that of other Spanish-speaking countries took me by surprise. It wasn't long before I began thinking about additional artistic genres: the novel, essay, film, and visual arts, including photography and architecture, and performance arts, such as music, theater, and dance. In some of these genres Cuba also excels: its film industry has had a global impact, the *nueva trova* (new song movement) contributed powerfully to the protest song movement that swept the world in the 1960s and 1970s,[28] and the posters it produced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s were enormously influential. It is clear that Cuba exerted an important influence on filmmakers, singer-songwriters, and artists in other parts of the Americas, perhaps even other parts of the world.

In other genres—architecture comes to mind—the Revolution produced renowned artists such as Emilio del Junco, Tonino Quintana, Ricardo Porro, Mario Coyula, and Roberto Segre, whose work began to speak an original, organic language only to suffer an opposition that took years to overcome.[29] Many believe architecture still suffers from that stifling. Innovative architectural design was quickly replaced by the worst elements of Soviet influence, seen in the heavy blocks of cement buildings, inappropriate to the island's

heat and humidity, that still scar Cuba's tropical landscape. This may be the artistic genre in which the struggle between freedom and suppression took its greatest toll. I sought lessons from the country's intellectual and artistic successes and also from its painful setbacks (which, notably, in Cuba's revolutionary history have eventually given birth to counterattacks engendering useful analysis, reassessment, and even remedy).

From pondering the country's intellectual and artistic creativity I naturally moved on to consider Cuba's impressive outreach in the areas of adult education and health care, its twentieth-century support for the nonaligned nations movement and for liberation struggles that were taking up arms against dictatorial states, its support for other social change experiences that gained governance through electoral politics, its international primacy in sports, and its example as a tiny country resisting subordination by hegemonic powers. What struck me most forcefully was not only the fact that such a small, isolated, and besieged island nation managed to survive and develop, but that its internationalist solidarity became one of the pillars of its identity. In Cuba we have a country that has given—and continues to give—more than its share of morality, ideas, expertise, talent, heavy lifting, and concrete aid to peoples everywhere. A number of other Latin American countries—Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela, to mention some of the largest with rich histories and cultures—have produced their share of world-class poets, novelists, painters, and public intellectuals. Yet Cuba's contributions stand out.

In the United States ignorance of all things Cuban that comes from so many years of media blackout and distortion has now been replaced by a frenzy of interest sparked by the sudden attention that began to surge when our countries reestablished diplomatic relations at the end of 2014. In a longer-range evaluation such trends tend to even out. Eventually we should be able to enjoy the more balanced perspective that will come when we are able to look at the neighboring nation and situate it realistically within its own cultural, social, and political history. Yet the current increase in attention also provides us an opportunity to examine what Cuba gives.

I lived in Cuba from mid-1969 to the end of 1980, the Revolution's exuberant second decade. I raised my four children there, worked for several cultural institutions, and wrote numerous books. Like most citizens and residents, I participated in the everyday efforts to create a different, more egalitarian society: joining a monthly street patrol to keep my neighborhood safe, doing voluntary work, and gathering with colleagues to discuss drafts of new laws. As a mother I got a close look at the educational system. I valued

the safety net of universal health care and appreciated Havana's drug-free, violence-free streets. Although I wasn't yet able to plumb it deeply back then, I intuited the ways the Revolution drew on tradition as well as its particular recipe for change in attempting to shape new values.

Those were years of scarcity, rationing, and other hardships. And although we didn't know it at the time, things would get much worse in the early 1990s.[30] Yet I cannot remember ever feeling as if my family and I didn't have enough. On the contrary, I shared with others a deep sense of satisfaction at living in a place where equality was the goal. It is hard to describe this feeling to those who have never experienced it.

At the same time, as Cuba's leaders constantly reminded us, the war had been the easy part; constructing a justice-based society would be much harder. The Revolution wasn't a fairy-tale adventure; problems inevitably arose. Economic experiments didn't always turn out well, and changes in course were frequent. In the search for equilibrium bureaucracy often showed its ugly face. Repressive periods took their toll.

I can attest to this from firsthand experience. For several years, along with many others I felt the heavy hand of official marginalization. I lost my job but never stopped receiving a salary. Certain "friends" stopped coming around, yet my work continued to be published in Cuban journals. It was all very confusing. My attempts to find out what was happening and why met with a frustrating silence. At the time I had no idea that others were suffering similar dilemmas; we were all too fearful to speak openly about our situations and so were unable to see them as part of a sociopolitical phenomenon. It would take two decades for Cuba's artists and writers to grapple publicly and productively with that dark time.[31] I remained in Cuba until I received an explanation for what had happened to me.[32] Then I moved on. I did not blame the Revolution. It was always clear to me that social change is made by human beings, those who may be mediocre and cowardly as well as those who are brilliant and visionary.

So the Revolution's successes and failures were my successes and failures. When I left Cuba in December 1980, I didn't leave the country behind. My two older children stayed, and I visited often. Then, back in the United States throughout the 1990s, I periodically took groups of U.S. feminists to the island on trips sponsored by Global Exchange.[33] In 2011 I was invited to be a judge at Casa de las Américas' yearly literary contest. This was my second such invitation; I had been a member of its jury forty-one years earlier, in 1970.

In 2014 I returned to the island to undertake the fieldwork for *Haydée Santamaría, Cuban Revolutionary: She Led by Transgression*. A great deal had changed, even since my previous visit two years before. After each day's research I would meet with old friends or walk Havana's streets, noting the rehabilitation of some of the many buildings that were disintegrating from lack of upkeep. Schools and hospitals were being renovated first: Cuba still had its priorities straight.

In April 2015 my partner and I visited again, this time to participate in the thirtieth-anniversary celebration of Vigía, a publishing collective in the province of Matanzas, whose handmade books have gained worldwide recognition for their literary content and artistic beauty. Some consider Vigía an anomaly, but in my mind it is one example of the many truly revolutionary spaces that can be found throughout the island, often in surprising iterations. These spaces develop simultaneously out of a revolutionary consciousness and in response to moments of repressive error; their courage and complexity have much to teach us. Spending a week with the folks at Vigía, studying its more than five hundred titles, and observing the inclusive community-based way it commemorated its anniversary, I felt I was inhabiting a magical multidimensional venue the majority of Cuba lovers have no idea exists.

Each successive visit allowed me to witness a rapidly changing reality. The ration book, which three decades before had determined what my family and I ate, remained as a way of ensuring the basic necessities at accessible prices but had lost its centrality in Cuban life. Despite the ongoing stress of the U.S. embargo, growers' markets and moderately well-stocked grocery stores existed now. Small restaurants were everywhere, many of them independent endeavors, and their creative offerings and gracious service were proving important competition to their state-run counterparts, most of the latter faring poorly by comparison.

By 2011 a great many people had cell phones. By 2014 Wi-Fi hot spots had been established, and Internet communication with the outside world was easier than it had been, although still far from economically accessible to most Cubans. In April 2016 the Cuban government announced an average 6 percent reduction in the prices of a number of food staples and other household goods. The country's dual currency was still a problem, and when I asked people what change they would be most eager to see, without exception everyone with whom I spoke told me they needed to be able to live on their salary, lessening the temptation for petty but widespread corruption

that has been a reality for several decades. To a person those with whom I spoke felt that Raul Castro, who had assumed the country's presidency in 2008, was doing an excellent job.

Although some hospitals looked rundown and I knew the country suffered from a lack of some expensive diagnostic equipment, health care continued to be exemplary. Foreigners still travel to the island for procedures that would cost them much more at home; Cuba was finally charging modest fees for health care for non-Cubans that I remember it giving freely when I lived there. Education at all levels enjoys an excellent reputation.[34]

Life for gay Cubans is markedly easier today, although prejudices remain among the older population and marriage equality has yet to be established. Raul Castro's daughter, Mariela Castro, heads a sexual outreach and education project that has achieved a good deal of progress for LGBTQ Cubans.[35] Gay Cubans appreciate her efforts, but some would like to see a movement with more effective input from the base. Hundreds of books that would not have been published even ten years earlier because their authors were considered problematic for one reason or another appear in beautiful editions and fly off bookstore shelves.[36]

The long U.S. trade embargo and the collapse of the Soviet Union have both taken their toll. Understandably in 2015 people seemed much more exhausted than when I'd lived among them. Many young people especially were leaving the country. But among the many more who were staying, that unique Cuban pride and dignity continued to be palpable.

Much has been made in the foreign anti-Castro press about the large numbers of Cubans who leave. But few speak about the many who choose to stay even now that travel restrictions have been lifted, or of the trend—involving far fewer people but steadily increasing—of those who left and are coming back as hopeful entrepreneurs.[37] Nor has there been much discussion about the tens of thousands of Cubans who immigrated to the United States in hope of a better life. Many are forced to work in jobs far below their professional level, and continue to struggle with poverty and a lack of basic human services.

Over the years, and in vastly differing moments of Cuban revolutionary history, I have written a number of books and dozens of articles about Cuba.[38] I have been engaged with the country and its revolution continually, suffering its problems, praising its achievements, critiquing the process when I felt it necessary, and delighting in its astonishing resiliency. I have close friends on the island, with whom I am in constant conversation, and close Cuban friends who have moved elsewhere, comfortable in their per-

sonal decision even as they may be grappling with that sense of displacement that transplantation inevitably brings. In spite of this long familiarity perhaps I had internalized Cuba's solidarity to the point where I couldn't see how unusual, even extraordinary it is.

As a poet I should not be surprised that my realization that the country's influence is unusual came first after reading Cuban poetry. A number of people with whom I spoke about my idea for this book urged me to limit its scope; they feared I was taking on too much. Why don't you just write about the arts, they said, or limit your focus to Cuba's internationalism, its outreach in the areas of adult education or public health? It's true that any one of these subjects would make for an interesting book, but what fascinates me is the overall phenomenon: What compels a small, poor, as yet underdeveloped country that has been forced to face more than half a century of attack and privation to be so consistently generous with those who have less, often in some distant part of the world? I am interested in Cuba's multifaceted interdisciplinary approach to internationalism and in the ways it draws on its domestic experiences when it initiates programs overseas.

Cubans are not known for their inhibitions. Ambrosio Fornet writes, "Our history is palpably marked by a lack of restraint. It might be said that to Cubans, limited because they inhabit such a tiny floating space, the Island has always felt small."[39] When I broached my ideas about the country's influence to another friend and cultural critic, Jorge Fornet, Ambrosio's son, he responded with equally powerful words of caution: "What you say seems obvious, but we need to think about it carefully. On the one hand, we Cubans have always thought of ourselves as exceptional. On the other, we don't think we exert much of an influence beyond our borders because in a certain sense we do not see ourselves as being a part of the larger world. Our excellence in all the fields you mention may give us an illusion of grandeur."[40]

As I have mentioned, Cuba's influence is not limited to the arts. The Revolution extends its outreach to humanity, in moments of natural disasters, during wars of liberation, and in the many poor countries where health care, education, and other requirements for human well-being are denied to the vast majorities. Cuban teachers and health professionals have labored in remote areas across the globe; their human and material aid to Haiti following the 2010 earthquake and their work in several African countries to combat the Ebola epidemic overshadowed that offered by larger and wealthier countries and has been praised by international bodies.

Another motivating factor is the Revolution's mix of ideas and praxis. A radically changing society is ideal terrain on which to move in different

directions, assessing successes and errors. Beginning in 1959 the whole country became a laboratory, in which a vast range of talents were called upon and constant feedback demonstrated what worked and what didn't. Programs were designed to deal with specific problems or address immediate needs and were often launched before formal studies were carried out, that is to say, without the input of experts. This meant mistakes were made but also that the services were immediately made available.

These programs were particularly visible in the area of education, where the first effort was to give every Cuban child and adult the opportunity to study—even when it would be years before educational strategies could be systematized and refined. My own children's Cuban education, although wanting in some aspects, combined theory and practice, intellectual work and manual labor, in ways that produced practical benefits in their lives.[41]

Thinking of all this, I was powerfully struck, on the one hand, by Cuba's small size, scant resources, and history of resisting years of aggression and, on the other, by the quantity and quality of its output in so many different fields. Its apparent lack of self-interest and the generosity in its manner of giving are palpable. To begin to trace this solidarity it is important to look first at the initiatives taken within Cuban society. The Revolution's homegrown experiments—what has worked and what hasn't—have shaped its internationalist efforts. This is why in each chapter I look at national accomplishments before examining international outreach.

It was also important that I ask the hard questions. What is the difference, for example, between U.S. aid programs and those launched by Cuba? Does not every country involved in overseas work hope to get something in return? In terms of military involvement, how does responding to the call of a government differ from responding to the call of a liberation movement struggling against a government in power? What do the younger generations of Cubans think about their country's internationalism? And how do countries that send teachers, doctors, agricultural experts, or others to places needing their expertise hope to redeem their investment: in monetary terms? Geopolitical control? Oil? Water? Ideological currency? The simple satisfaction of having gone where they were needed?

Some nations invade and occupy, claiming they are doing so in defense of their own national security or even pretending such occupation is good for the country. They inevitably devastate infrastructures and economies, do gross collateral damage, kill tens of thousands, and turn millions into displaced persons forced into endless migration. In recent years U.S. aggression in the Middle East has created a chaos that seems irreversible and

has helped spark a jihadist response that has become ever more threatening throughout the world.

Cuba continues to send its teachers and health care personnel, disaster relief teams, and experts in dozens of fields to work in countries throughout the developing world. There have been problems, and I do not claim that altruism alone is involved or that the Cuban Revolution gets nothing in return. In humanitarian terms, however, and by all possible measures, comparison favors these efforts over imperialism's bully presence.

This book is my attempt to explore a reality that has not received the attention it deserves.

NOTES

1. HOW THESE IDEAS TOOK SHAPE

1. Reloba, *De/sobre Mario Benedetti*, 128. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

2. The School of the Americas (SOA) is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers located at Fort Benning, Georgia. It was initially established in Panama in 1946 but was expelled from that country in 1984 under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty (Article 4). In 2001 it was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). The SOA has left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned. For this reason it has been dubbed the "School of Assassins" and has attracted yearly protest demonstrations. Since 1946 the SOA has trained over sixty-four thousand Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence, and interrogation tactics. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people. Among those targeted are educators, union organizers, priests, nuns and other religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared," massacred, and forced into refugee status by those trained at the School of Assassins.

3. Idea expressed most explicitly in Che's 1965 "Socialism and Man in Cuba."

4. Anderson, *Che*, 392–94.

5. The July 26 Movement, named for the attack on Moncada Barracks on that date in 1953, was Fidel Castro's organization. It gained adepts, went on to win the war of liberation, and eventually morphed, along with members of other progressive organizations, into Cuba's Communist Party.

6. Randall, *Only the Road / Solo el camino*.

7. Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) was a Spanish poet murdered during his country's civil war. César Vallejo (1892–1938) was born in Peru but lived most of his life in Paris, where he died of tuberculosis. Pablo Neruda (1904–73) was a Chilean communist and Nobel laureate who died days after the overthrow of his country's three-year socialist experiment. Uruguay's Mario Benedetti (1920–2009) is one of the most widely read poets on the continent. Octavio Paz (1914–98) was an important Mexican intellectual and poet. All five were radical in their use of language and continue to be major influences on poetry in Spanish and beyond.

8. The filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (1891–1938), the poet Osip Mandelstam (1891–1938), and the painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) were Russian artists whose work strained against official rigidity and who were greatly influential in their fields.

9. Walt Whitman (1819–92), Allen Ginsberg (1926–97), Adrienne Rich (1929–2012), Diane di Prima (b. 1934), and Joy Harjo (b. 1951) are U.S. American poets who have written the American identity in an American idiom.

10. Weiss, *The Whole Island*, 1.

11. Víctor Manuel (1897–1969), Wifredo Lam (1902–82), René Portocarrero (1912–85), Mariano Rodríguez (1912–90), Antonia Eiríz (1929–83), and Amelia Peláez (1896–1968) were important Cuban painters whose work was honored during the Revolution.

12. *Media lunas* are half-moon-shaped transoms above doors or windows in which segments of colored glass filter the island's tropical light.

13. Humberto Solás (1941–2008) was an important Cuban filmmaker who embarked on his career at the age of eighteen, just as the Cuban Revolution was about to be victorious. He is best known for *Manuela* (1966), *Lucía* (1968), *Cantata de Chile* (1975), and *Cecilia* (1981).

14. Mario Rodríguez Alemán writing in *Trabajadores*, July 1982, quoted in Chanan, *Cuban Cinema*, 393.

15. Hayden, *Listen, Yankee!*, 136.

16. Castro, *Fidel Castro Reader*, 33.

17. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) was an economic organization under the leadership of the Soviet Union in existence from 1949 to 1991. It comprised the countries of the Eastern Bloc along with a number of communist states elsewhere in the world and was the Eastern Bloc's reply to Western Europe's formation of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (EEC). COMECON's founding countries were Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union. Albania participated until 1961, when the Soviet-Albanian split occurred. In 1950 East Germany joined, in 1962 Mongolia, in 1972 Cuba, and in 1978 Vietnam. Observer status was held at various times by North Korea, Yugoslavia, Finland, Iraq, Mexico, Angola, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Laos, and South Yemen. By the 1970s COMECON was no longer geographical but included countries around the world. Wide variations in economic status and level of economic development generated divergent interests. In the 1980s the EEC incorporated the 270 million people in Europe into an economic association through intergovernmental agreements aimed at maximizing profits and economic efficiency on a national and international scale. COMECON, on the other hand, joined together 450 million people in ten countries on three continents, but its effectiveness was not nearly as great.

18. In conversation with the author, October 2015, my translation.

19. The importance of *Pensamiento Crítico* cannot be overstated in the Cuban Revolution's struggle for analysis and freedom of thought. The journal ran from 1967 through 1971, producing fifty-three issues, and published the most important currents of revolutionary thought. From its inception the important Cuban theoretician Fernando Martínez Heredia was its editor in chief; he also headed the University of Havana's Philosophy Department at the time. Others associated with the publication

were Jesús Díaz, Thalia Fung Riverón, José Bell Lara, and Mireya Crespo. During the repressive period that began to exert control over Cuban culture in 1971, both the Philosophy Department and the journal were shut down. Casa de las América's journal, *Revista Casa*, has enjoyed an unbroken run of close to three hundred issues. It too consistently includes diverse voices, but the prestige of its founder, Haydée Santamaría, the eminent poet and essayist Roberto Fernández Retamar, and a roster of Latin America's most outstanding minds (Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Mario Benedetti, Julio Cortázar, Eduardo Galeano, among others) allowed it to continue through the repressive period, hampered but maintaining an important presence.

20. Fidel Castro, speech at the University of Havana's Aula Magna, November 17, 2005, my translation.

21. From 1971 to 1975, or the mid-1980s, depending on one's point of view. This period, known as El Quinquenio Gris (the Five Gray Years), saw bureaucrats, most of them from the old Moscow-oriented Communist Party, gain control over artistic freedom. Many homosexuals and artists critical of the Revolution were marginalized. Eventually broader minds prevailed and the repression eased.

It wasn't only Cuba's artists and writers who railed against the stagnant art form. In his important 1965 "Socialism and Man in Cuba," Che wrote, "[Socialist realism is] the kind of 'art' that bureaucrats understand. True artistic values were disregarded, and the problem of general culture was reduced to taking some things from the socialist present and some from the dead (and, hence, not dangerous, past). Thus, socialist realism arose upon the foundations of the past century. But the realistic art of the 19th century is also a class art, more purely capitalist than this decadent art of the 20th century which reveals the anguish of alienated people. Why, then, try to find the only valid prescription for art in the frozen forms of socialist realism?" Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba," n.p.

22. This and other opinions by Guanche from a letter to the author in October 2015, my translation.

23. José Martí (1853–95) was a patriot, thinker, writer, and revolutionary considered the father of the Cuban nation. He was imprisoned, exiled to Spain, and spent time organizing Cubans inside the United States in the period leading up to Cuba's last war of independence from Spain. He foresaw future U.S. designs on Cuba and conceived of a single America, which he called "our America." He was killed in the first battle of the War of Independence at Dos Ríos. His thought influenced Fidel Castro's generation of revolutionaries, and thousands of identical plaster busts of Martí can be seen everywhere on the island. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's 1966 film, *Death of a Bureaucrat*, makes fun of those busts, an example of the ability of Cubans to laugh at themselves.

24. Fornet, *Rutas críticas*, 109–13. I have quoted and also paraphrased Fornet's observations, as I find them pertinent to my argument.

25. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, a wealthy landowner and patriot, initiated Cuba's Ten Years' War (for independence from Spain) on his sugar plantation, La Demajagua, on October 10, 1868, with what is known as "el grito de Yara," a battle cry that has come to symbolize that war of independence. The Cuban patriots were called

mambises. Independence would not be won until the end of the century, and no sooner was Spain defeated than the United States stepped in and took control of the island.

26. Like all experiences of profound social change, the Cuban Revolution's first decade was rich in creative exuberance and freedom of expression. In 1968 the first glimmers of excessive control could be seen, and by 1971 a group of old-time Moscow-oriented communists dominated the cultural and artistic sphere. Many brilliant talents suffered during this Quinquenio Gris. In 1975, with the inauguration of a Ministry of Culture, the repressive measures were reversed. But it wouldn't be until 2007 that Cuban writers and artists demanded accountability for what had happened and, more important, public discussion of how the marginalization of valuable creative minds had been allowed to take place, with an eye to making sure nothing similar could happen again. For a more detailed description of El Quinquenio Gris, see Randall, *To Change the World*, 171–90.

27. Cubanía, or Cubanness, is an identification as rich as it has sometimes been suspect in speaking of what it means to be Cuban.

28. The first generation of the nueva trova was defined by the singer-songwriters Silvio Rodríguez (b. 1946), Pablo Milanés (b. 1943), Noël Nicola (1946–2005), and Sara González (1951–2012). Rodríguez especially, and to a lesser extent the other three, are known for lyrics that, when they first appeared, were too complex for Cuba's then narrow-minded bureaucracy. The group caught the attention of Haydée Santamaría at Casa de las Américas and people in the country's film industry, enabling them to flourish. At least two subsequent generations of Cuban singer-songwriters followed, and their most important exponents continue to perform throughout the world.

29. Emilio del Junco (1915–74), Antonio "Tonino" Quintana (1919–93), Ricardo Porro (1925–2014), Mario Coyula (1935–2014), and Roberto Segre (1934–2013) were architects, some Cuban and others who worked for long periods in Cuba, who made outstanding contributions to Cuban architecture of the 1960s through 1990s that can still be appreciated in the country.

30. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, Soviet aid to Cuba was reduced dramatically, practically from one day to the next. Cuba's economic situation became dire. The government pronounced the four or five years beginning in 1991 to be a Special Period in Peacetime.

31. This marginalization affected many artists, writers, and others during El Quinquenio Gris, which actually stretched from 1971 through the mid-1980s. I was only one of many affected. I tell my personal experience of this in my memoir, *To Change the World*, 171–90.

32. I was told that my marginalization was due to the fact that I had a close friendship with a Canadian accused of working for the CIA. I accepted this, although with reservations, since my partner at the time was also a friend of this person and had not been marginalized. I believe my unabashed feminism also may have played a part, as well as the fact that my home was frequented by people from a number of revolutionary organizations, not all of them favored by the Cuban party.

33. Global Exchange is a San Francisco–based international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic, and environmental justice around

the world and bringing attention to domestic problems as well. It sponsors reality tours to several countries, educates to counteract U.S. media distortion, hosts seminars and public actions, and engages in campaigns designed to bring awareness to issues of injustice. www.globalexchange.org.

34. The United Nations Development Program records an average 11.5 years of education for Cubans over twenty-five. The population completes 13.8 years of schooling (almost through the second year of university). The World Bank has Cuba at the top of its list in terms of its investment in education for 2009–13 (13 percent of its gross national product).

35. Cuban National Center for Sex Education. Mariela Castro, who does not identify as gay, has made eradicating discrimination against and improving life for gay and transgender Cubans a serious pursuit. As the daughter of President Raul Castro and Vilma Espín, who founded and for many years was president of the Federation of Cuban Women, Mariela has a voice many others do not have.

36. Gay authors, whose work was not published during the country's repressive years but has since come out in significant editions, include Gastón Barquero, Antón Arrufat, and José Lezama Lima.

37. According to Nick Miroff's article "Despite Changes, U.S. Businesses Still Face a Minefield of Sanctions in Cuba" (*Washington Post*, January 11, 2015), "Not since the early years of Fidel Castro's rule, when his leftist ideals brought home a number of exiles initially sympathetic to the 1959 revolution, have so many Cubans voluntarily returned. The difference is that today's repatriates are not coming back for socialism [but] as capitalists. . . . Prompted by President Raúl Castro's limited opening to small business and his 2011 move allowing Cubans to buy and sell real estate, the repatriates are using money saved abroad to acquire property and open private restaurants, guesthouses, spas and retail shops."

38. Among the books are *Cuban Women Now*, *Women in Cuba Twenty Years Later*, *Breaking the Silences*, *Gathering Rage*, *To Change the World*, *Che on My Mind*, *Haydée Santamaría, Cuban Revolutionary: She Led by Transgression*, and *Only the Road / Solo el camino*.

39. "Sobre José Martí y el equilibrio del mundo," in Fornet, *Rutas críticas*, 108.

40. Letter to the author, summer 2015, my translation.

41. Students studied a certain number of hours a day and also worked on farms or in special factories, putting what they learned into everyday practice. Even in the day care centers very young children tended little vegetable plots, harvested their produce, and ate the results of their labor. By middle and high school their efforts were economically viable. At university the combination of work and study gave students a genuine sense of how their chosen field functions.

2. TALENT AND INFLUENCE BEYOND NUMBERS

1. *El Corno Emplumado / The Plumed Horn* was a bilingual literary journal that appeared quarterly between January 1962 and July 1969. It published vanguard work of the era. All its issues can be accessed at https://opendoor.northwestern.edu/archive/.

2. The Soviet influence in architecture left many heavy blocks of buildings, antithetical to Cuba's tropical climate and exuberant culture, poorly finished and soon in