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Refuge in Revolution: Chilean and Uruguayan Exiles in Cuba, 1973-1990

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the refuge revolutionary Cuba offered to Chilean and Uruguayan exiles. Fleeing dictatorships during Latin America's Cold War, thousands arrived in, or passed through, Cuba. Cuba was a logical refuge, representing a revolution suffused with promises of solidarity, internationalism and socialist modernity. It was also conceived as a route of resistance and return. Centring the memories of former exiles, this article examines expectations and reality of refuge in Cuba. Revealing a diversity of exile experiences, it asks what different forms of refuge existed in Cuba, how these evolved and with what significance for understanding the Cold War.

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In 1960, Fidel Castro proclaimed Cuba would provide refuge for Latin Americans in need. 'When you are persecuted', he told delegates at a mass rally that ended the First Congress of Latin American Youth, 'here in Cuba you also have your homeland'.[1] Just over a decade later, at the height of Latin America's Cold War, his promise was put to the test as thousands of exiles arrived on the island fleeing Southern Cone dictatorships. This is not to say that Cuba received more exiles than other countries. In the case of Chilean exiles, estimates of those who spent time on the island after the coup of 1973 vary but numbers were probably somewhere between 3,000-5000.[2] Paola Parella Meny and Valentina Curto Fonsalías meanwhile calculate that 1,200 Uruguayans found refuge on the island.[3] Even if conservative estimates, in terms of

[1]'Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario, en el Acto de Clausura del Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Juventudes, el 6 de Agosto de 1960', http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1960/esp/f060860e.html

[2]It is impossible to get precise figures for Chilean exiles in Cuba and/or those who visited the island for a period from exile elsewhere. Some suggest up to 10,000 were in Cuba or passed through the island at least briefly between 1973 and 1990. For estimates of 3-5,000, see interviews with Camila Krauss, Zoom (Santiago, Chile), 5 and 13 August 2021. For the impression at the time that there were 'hundreds of thousands' of Chileans in Cuba, see author's interview with Rita and Marina Cultelli, Zoom (Rocha, Uruguay), 25 May 2021.

[3]Paola Parrella Meny and Valentina Curto Fonsalías, 'En Cuba, experiencias con muchos contrastes', in *El Uruguay del exilio: gente, circunstancias, escenarios*, ed. Silvia Dutrénit Bielous (Montevideo: Trilce, 2006), 189. Parrella and Curto break down this figure into 500 MLNT militants and 700 PCU members. It is unclear whether these figures include children and dependents or simply party members.

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exile destinations overall, these were far smaller sums than Southern Cone exiles who made Venezuela their home, the 10,000 Chileans who sought exile in Mexico or the figures for Uruguayans living in Argentina (109,000) and Brazil (21,238) in the 1980s.[4] These statistics also do not represent the entirety of Southern Cone displacement during the 1970s and 1980s. In the case of Uruguayans who left the country, disentangling numbers of political exiles from the larger diaspora is particularly difficult. Figures available suggest that between 1963 and 1975, 200,000 migrated, of which 88.3% did so at the height of repression of the Left between 1970 and 1975, with a further 133,000 leaving between 1976 and 1981.[5] In the Chilean case, scholars now estimate at least 500,000 political exiles left the country after 1973 and that hundreds of thousands more joined them amidst economic crises at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s.[6]

Exile in Cuba was nevertheless unique and especially important. To be exiled on the island, either through choice or necessity – or directed by party leaders, as many militants were – held political, ideological and strategic significance. For many it meant the continuation of revolutionary projects, an opportunity conceived in theory at least, as Uruguayan scholar Silvia Dutrénit puts it, 'to contribute to the revolution and prepare oneself militarily'.[7] To receive refuge in revolutionary Cuba was therefore not only to find sanctuary from harm. It was also considered a means of maintaining a revolutionary identity; of actively developing or fulfilling learnt praxis with a view to working for a revolutionary future. This was true of institutionalised politics and resistance (armed or otherwise) to Southern Cone dictatorships. However, as we shall see, it was also – and in some cases more powerfully– reflected in exiles' private and everyday lives. At a moment when counterrevolutionary forces were advancing through Latin America, Cuba became, in the words of one observer in close contact with exile groups at the time, 'a base, where they could sit down, discuss, meet, train, heal, etc'.[8] And contributing to Cuba's revolutionary society was considered, for many, a way to fight back.

Focusing on the experiences of Chilean and Uruguayan exiles in Cuba during the 1970s and 1980s, this article explores the opportunities and limitations the island's refuge offered left-wing militants to sustain and develop a range of revolutionary objectives and identities in the wake of catastrophic defeat. It examines exiles' arrival in Cuba and how they adapted to life in exile on the island, as well as how this affected their political identities. In choosing to compare and contrast different Chilean and Uruguayan communities in Cuba, it also probes the diverse forms of refuge left-wing militants received

[4]Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger refer to a study of Chileans abroad undertaken by Jaime Llambias-Wolff that suggested 44% of Chileans abroad by the mid-1980s lived in Venezuela compared to 3% in all other Latin American countries, 10% in Spain, 8.3% in France, 6.6% in Italy, 5% in Australia and 3% in Eastern Europe. By the 1980s, 7,007 Uruguayans were living in Venezuela. See Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger, *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 233, 237, 246.

[5]Estimates of those who left Uruguay during the dictatorship (1973-1985) range from 28,000 to 62,000. See Sznajder and Roniger, *The Politics of Exile*, 244, 245.

[6]Luis Roniger et al., *Exile, Diaspora, and Return: Changing Cultural Landscapes in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 114, 118-19. Previously, scholars estimated 200,000 left the country but this is now generally regarded as a significant underestimate. See, for example, Thomas C Wright and Rody Oñate, 'Chilean Political Exile', in *Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in the Americas*, ed. Luis Roniger, James N. Green, and Pablo Yankelevich (Eastbourne; Portland, Or: Sussex Academic Press, 2012), 145; Sznajder and Roniger, *The Politics of Exile in Latin America*, 230. Estimates of Brazilian political exiles range between 10-15,000 and 30,000. See Sznajder and Roniger, *The Politics of Exile*, 196.

[7]Silvia Dutrénit Bielous, *El Uruguay del exilio: gente, circunstancias, escenarios* (Montevideo: Trilce, 2006), 8.

[8]Author's interview with Gregory Randall, Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 10 June 2021.

depending on their political affiliation and status, revealing that there was no uniform Cuban approach to exiles.[9] Charting the history of exile on the island through this comparative lens thus provides insight into the plurality of revolutionary identities at the height of Latin America's Cold War. It also helps us grapple with Cuba's own complex, shifting and multifaceted relationship with different groups as a central pivot in the conflict. This is particularly important in shedding new light on the significance of 1975-76 as a turning point in Cuba's realignment to the Soviet camp and for its relationship with Latin America's Left. Last but by no means least, a history of refugees in Cuba provides a window through which to understand the human dimensions and unintended centrifugal consequences of the ideological battles raging in the Southern Cone. It provides insight into the Cold War's costs in uprooting people, disrupting lives and tearing families apart. And it asks how, in this context, exiles were able to find new spaces of belonging, either locally in neighbourhoods across the island, in forging anti-dictatorial resistance or as revolutionary internationalists.

Approaching Exile in Cuba

To date, the experience of Southern Cone exiles in Cuba has received limited attention from historians.[10] Some documentary films and memoirs have shed light on refugees who spent time on the island but far more remains to be learnt.[11] To some extent, the dearth of information relates to limited archival access on the island. However, it also reflects the Cold War's enduring legacies in silencing former exiles and those they met on the island. This is partly the result of an internal battle many exiles face, between the act of remembering to retain the Left's place in history and offer testimony of dictatorial repression on the one hand, and preferring not to relive painful years of loss, hardship, displacement and violence during the dictatorship on the other. To revisit exile, after all, is to revisit the Cold War's trauma that continues to this day.

At the same time, public memory wars relating to the Cold War are alive and powerful throughout Latin America, compounding a reluctance to return to the past and concerns about how testimonies might be instrumentalised to fight such battles.[12] History – and how it is constructed – has a bearing on contemporary politics, attracting interest and polemics. Cuba, as a socialist revolutionary state at the centre of the Cold War, has

[9]Throughout this article I use 'exile' rather than 'refugee' as this was the language that Chileans and Uruguayans used to describe themselves, though the Cubans used both terms interchangeably.

[10]Existing studies include Luis Roniger, 'Displacement and Testimony: Recent History and the Study of Exile and Post-Exile', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 29, no. 2 (2016): 116–17; Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, experiencias con muchos contrastes', 184–214; Tanya Harmer, 'The View from Havana: Chilean Exiles in Cuba and Early Resistance to Chile's Dictatorship, 1973-1977', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 96, no. 1 (2016): 109–46. For studies of Argentine Montoneros in Cuba, see Isabella Cosse, 'Childhood, Love and Politics: The Montonero 'Nursery' in Cuba during the Cold War', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 55, no. 1 (2023), 1-26. On Cuba's place within a broader comparative study of exile, see also Claudia Rojas Mira and Alessandro Santoni, 'Geografía política del exilio chileno: Los diferentes rostros de la solidaridad', *Perfiles Latinoamericanos* 21, no. 41 (2013): 123–42.

[11]See for example, 'El edificio de los chilenos' dir. Macarena Aguiló and Susana Foxley (Chile/France: Magic Lantern Films, 2010); 'El telón de azúcar', dir. Camila Guzmán Urzúa (Brooklyn: First Run/Icarus Films, 2006); Gregory Randall, *Estar ahí entonces: Recuerdos de Cuba, 1969-1983* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2010); Darío Croc Ures, *La colonia tupamara en Cuba: un testimonio* (Montevideo: Argumento, 2019); Judith Friedmann Volosky, *Mi hijo Raúl Pellegrin Comandante José Miguel*, Kindle edition (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2008).

[12]See for example, Michael J. Bustamante, *Cuban Memory Wars: Retrospective Politics in Revolution and Exile*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021); Francesca Lessa, *Memory and Transitional Justice in Argentina and Uruguay: Against Impunity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan., 2013).

a particular place in these battles and ideological divides that persist in the region. It is obvious that this shapes the way former exiles who resided on the island have spoken about their memories and what they choose to share. In part, for example, speaking about an exile in Cuba carries potential risks when facing right-wing enemies and custodians of a constrained and managed transition to democracy in the 1980s and 1990s, who prefer not to acknowledge the island's pivotal support for left-wing exiles and anti-dictatorial resistance. On another level, saying too much could betray Cuban confidences when it came to supporting this resistance and revolution or other comrades' identities and roles.[13] Speaking about the limits encountered in political and everyday life on the island or conflicts exiles experienced also carries risks of admonishment from friends and colleagues. Some admitted to me that they might be more critical of their experience on the island among close friends or family in private, but that they were unprepared to go on the record to air grievances. And those who were critical of Cuba – or their time there – admitted this stance had proved complicated within left-wing circles. Their complaints were perceived as churlish in retrospect, betraying collective obligation to support Cuba in its long-standing struggle against the United States and in return for Cuba's solidarity towards them during the bleak years of dictatorship and exile. Indeed, in some cases, the prospect of inciting hostility towards the island was considered too costly to speak openly. As one interviewee noted, he would not consent to share his story with me if his memories were used in any way to harm 'the Revolution' (as Cuba's post-1959 state is commonly referred to).

Although less so than was the case in the 1990s or early 2000s, in fact, information about the covert and military training exiles received on the island or the support Cuba offered resistance struggles against the Southern Cone's dictatorships is still considered sensitive, both personally and politically. 'Laura', for example, preferred to use a pseudonym when talking to me because much of her family in Uruguay to this day do not know she spent part of her exile in Cuba (and she would prefer they did not know).[14] The Cold War era allegation that local left-wing parties were foreign creations, sponsored from abroad, is still a pervasive reason for staying silent, heightened today by the accusation that Cuba sponsors 'terrorism' abroad. Sensationalist journalistic accounts have fed into Cold War narratives that depict the Cubans as manipulating Latin America's left-wing parties and exploiting their members to further global conspiracies.[15] Concerns about incriminating others involved in what were collective and transnational endeavours also play a part in silences. In the context of the democratic transitions in the Southern Cone, armed struggle, revolutionary insurgency and remembering aspirations to participate in them seem relics of a bygone era. With the defeat of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in 1990, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the peace accords in El Salvador and Guatemala, military strategies were no longer viewed by the majority on the Left as viable instruments of politics. Cuba's own disavowal of armed struggle in the post-Cold War era also made it difficult to remember a time when it had shaped left-wing identities. As Victor Figueroa-Clark argues, since the 1990s, histories of left-wing armed apparatuses, 'became something of an embarrassment,

[13]On this point, see also, Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 185.

[14]Author's interviews with 'Laura' [pseudonym], Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 15 April and 6 May 2021.

[15]See for example Cristián Bofill and Javier Ortega, 'La Historia Inédita de Los Años Verde Olivo. Capítulo I', *La Tercera*, 22 April 2001, sec. Reportajes - Serie Especial.

a cumbersome legacy', that proved difficult to navigate.[16] Taboos, silences and the tendency toward self-censorship, not to mention only recent efforts to recover histories of revolutionary internationalist missions in Nicaragua, for example, can only be understood by grasping this context.[17]

This landscape needs to be taken into account when approaching oral histories of refuge in Cuba. However, it is also essential that we acknowledge the potential personal testimonies have to drive forward histories of exile. Particularly in the case where archives silence the voices of the displaced in a sea of statistics and institutional records or are simply not available to researchers, they provide an opportunity to understand refugees as 'historical subjects' and 'witnesses with their own voice'.[18] As Nando Sigona has noted, this can correct trauma discourses which tend to depoliticise and dehistoricise refugees, ascribing them victim status rather than agency in their own history.[19] Oral history is therefore important for historians of what Lauren Banko, Katarzyna Nowak and Peter Gatrell have termed 'refugeedom': 'a refugee-focused approach' that includes the perspective of refugee regimes, institutions and relief workers but, crucially makes 'the displaced more visible as purposeful agents by locating them on their own terms rather than those imposed by governments'.[20] Significantly, for delineating the contours of a divided Left within Latin America's Cold War, histories centred on exiles' testimonies also reveal the complexity, objectives, problems and plurality of revolutionary identities, strategies and lived experiences.[21]

To examine the intersection of refugeedom and the Cold War in the case of Cuba's reception of Southern Cone exiles, this article draws on existing archives, memoirs, documentary films and published sources alongside interviews with over 40 former exiles of different generations, genders and political affiliations across Latin America's left-wing spectrum. Interviewees pertained to what was known at the 'revolutionary Left' – such as those who militated for the Uruguayan Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros (MLNT) and the Chilean Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) – as well as members of Soviet-aligned Uruguayan (PCU) and Chilean Communist Parties (PCCh) and the more heterodox Chilean Socialist Party (PS). Although the opportunity to write a history solely of exiled leaders and formal party politics on the island exists, I have opted to focus mainly on the experience of rank-and-file militants and those who held mid-level leadership positions. This perspective offers the opportunity to understand revolutionary projects in the Cold War as the widespread ones they were, shaped by and affecting millions, rather than narrow top-down processes. This is important as a means of more fully understanding the dimensions of refugeedom in relation to Cuba, allowing us to understand how different refugees navigated the Cuban landscape, what their

[16]Victor Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean Internationalism and the Sandinista Revolution 1978-1988' (PhD diss., UK, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011), 17.

[17]Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 185, 200.

[18]Roniger, 'Displacement and Testimony', 122.

[19]Nando Sigona, 'The Politics of Refugee Voices: Representations, Narratives, and Memories', in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, and Nando Sigona (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 372.

[20]Lauren Banko, Katarzyna Nowak and Peter Gatrell, 'What is Refugee History Now?' *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 1 (2022), 2-3.

[21]Luis Roniger, 'Displacement and Testimony', 114. On the impossibility of understanding exile as a singular experience, see Dutrénit, *El Uruguay del exilio*, 14; Sigona, 'The Politics of Refugee Voices', 369.

experiences were like, how/if they changed over time and with what effect for evolving Cold War struggles in Latin America.

Routes

Whether they actively chose to go to Cuba or were sent by party leaders, Chilean and Uruguayans had similar expectations of what they would encounter when they reached the island. 'Cuba was a kind of guide that we had of what we wanted for our country's society: a radical change in the style of Cuba', one Uruguayan MLNT member, remembered, 'we fully trusted that we would feel identification there and, well, Cuba also identified with our struggle'.[22] This was particularly true for those belonging to Latin America's revolutionary Left, who regarded Cuba's idiosyncratic revolutionary project with its emphasis on the inevitability and desirability of armed struggle as a model to follow. Yet, it was also true of communists who arrived in Cuba during the years of the Southern Cone dictatorships, who had to this point predominantly ascribed to Soviet ideas of peaceful co-existence and non-armed strategies for revolution.

For the most part, whatever their affiliation, Uruguayans and Chileans travelled to Cuba via a first exile in another country. In the case of Uruguayans, this tended to mean arriving from Chile (before the country's military coup in 1973) or Argentina. Chileans similarly arrived via a first exile elsewhere in Latin America (most obviously Argentina) or Europe (including but not exclusively Sweden, Italy, France, Britain, East and West Germany or Romania). In all cases, exiles arrived either because of opportunities and instructions from their parties or to join family members who were themselves linked to political parties. In the case of exiles traveling to the island to be reunited with family members, Chileans in Cuba noted that it would help if they had political affiliations 'that assured good revolutionary behaviour'.[23] As one exile noted, to be in Cuba without some kind of political connection was to be lost at sea, 'with neither god, nor law'.[24] Exiles arriving in Cuba also commonly saw the island as a stepping stone; a transitory place that would allow them to return to their home countries as part of a broader resistance to the dictatorships at home or 'a route to return' as Fernando Mazzeo, a member of the MLNT, remembered. Aged 18 and exiled in Sweden after escaping repression in Uruguay and Chile, Mazzeo explained his choice as being a way 'to go back to Uruguay': 'I wanted to prepare myself, politically, militarily to come back . . . that was my objective'.[25] For those in Europe, struggling to learn a different language and find opportunities to work or study, Cuba was also an attractive alternative. That it was in Latin America, closer to home, drew many with political connections and professional expertise to visit Cuban embassies abroad to ask for a means of travelling to the island.[26]

[22]Author's interview with Daniel Muzio Lladó, Zoom (La Paloma, Uruguay), 22 July 2021. See also author's interviews with Hugo Wilkins, Havana, Cuba, 8 November 2022 (being sent to Cuba was akin to winning a 'prize'); Isolina Lincolao, Whatsapp (Santiago, Chile) 1 June 2021 ('we had dreams of seeing Cuba'); Olga Estevez, Whatsapp (Montevideo, Uruguay, 22 May 2021 ('Cuba for us was Ché, Camilo, it was idealized').

[23]Memorandum, 'Pauta de acción del Comité para los meses futuros', enclosure, Francisco Fernández, President, Comité Chileno, to Arturo Espinoza, Director General, ICAP, 11 March 1975, Carpeta 1/Documentos Históricos del Comité Chileno Antifascista/Centro de Documentación de ICAP, Havana, Cuba (DHCCA/CDICAP).

[24]Author's interview with María Inés Ruz Zañartu, Zoom (Santiago, Chile), 5 September 2021.

[25]Author's interview with Fernando Mazzeo, Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 29 April 2021.

[26]Author's interviews with Andrea Pellegrin, Zoom (Santiago, Chile), 13 October 2020; 'Augustín and Raquel Rossetti' [pseudonyms], Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 30 June 2021; Ricardo Elena, Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 3 July 2021; Edith Benado, Whatsapp (Snatiago, Chile), 13 July 2023.

If not individually via Cuban embassies, exiles arrived with the help of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organisations, or, as part of programmes agreed between political parties and the Cuban government. As we shall see below, from 1972-76, for example, around 450 Tupamaros were welcomed as part of a very particular agreement between the MLNT and the Cuban government to provide a clandestine refuge for the organisation.[27] Later, in the context of targeted repression of Uruguayan Communist Party members, as well as the murder of Uruguayan exiles of various political tendencies in Argentina in 1976, PCU militants in Buenos Aires were transferred to the island thanks to an agreement between the Party's leadership and the Cuban government.[28] According to Parella and Curto, four flights carrying PCU militants left Buenos Aires in 1976, carrying around 150 passengers each with safe passage provided by the Red Cross, the UNHCR, the Comité Intergubermenal para las Migraciones Europeans (Intergovernmental Committee for European Migrations, CIME) and the Catholic Commission. Another group of PCU members also arrived in Cuba via Mexico.[29]

Whatever their route to Cuba, exiles recalled confronting Caribbean heat as they stepped off planes in Havana and feeling immense emotion and relief that can only be understood in the context of Cold War politics and ideology. The young PCU militant, Miguel Millán, had been able to escape Uruguay via the Venezuelan embassy in Montevideo after having been arrested, imprisoned and tortured. It was from there he got to Cuba. 'I remember perfectly the emotion I felt when the plane landed at Havana's airport', he explained, 'The emotion was so great I can't describe it'. When I probed what this indescribable emotion was like, he underlined the particular significance of Cuba in Latin America during the Cold War and how this subsequently impacted his arrival. His request to write his testimony also suggested a need to retain control of his narrative and the feelings that his exile to Cuba still provoked, 45 years later.

> The emotion of feeling that the plane was descending in Cuban territory was due to a combination of sensations that I can only explain with difficulty. I had been imprisoned at the age of 17, I was tortured savagely, in one of the torture sessions the torturer captain shouted at me: 'Ché Guevara said that a minute of suffering for a revolutionary is a minute of glory. Do you know what I say? That a minute of your suffering is an insignificant annoyance [*pelotudez*]'. I had heard a lot about Ché Guevara, but I hadn't read anything written by him. This was in 1975. Then I read and when I felt that I was arriving at the land for which Ché Guevara had given the best of his life, I literally exploded . . .[30]

Millán was not the only one to convey the psychological impact of arriving in Cuba. Many of those who spoke to me struggled to hold back tears. Rita Cultelli, the Uruguayan daughter of an MLNT leader, whose mother had fled with four children to Chile and then to Cuba, vividly remembered a sense of 'relief'. 'The anguish left me, it was amazing . . . no one was chasing me anymore, they weren't going to kill me . . . it was a relief. Because no one was going to kill us'.[31]

[27]Hugo Wilkins in *Memorias de insurgencia: historias de vida y militancia en el MLN-Tupamaros 1965-1975* ed. Clara Aldrighi (Montevideo, Uruguay: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2009), 266.

[28]Dutrénit, *El Uruguay del exilio*, 11.

[29]Meny and Curto, 'En Cuba, experiencias con muchos contrastes', 188–89.

[30]Author's correspondence with Miguel Millán, 16-17 June 2021. Regarding the relief PCU militants felt arriving in Cuba in 1976, having lived through years of state terror, see Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 193.

[31]Cultelli interview.

Arriving as an MLNT militant from Chile, Laura also remembered feeling 'freedom' and 'protection', but at the same time 'excitement' at the thought of encountering a place so many of her generation admired.[32] Cecilia la Rivera, a militant in the MIR, coming to Cuba from four years of exile in England felt something similar: compared to the sadness she felt arriving from Chile as an exile in London after 1973, she felt hopeful expectation that she would now, from Cuba, be able to contribute more effectively to resisting and eventually bringing down the dictatorship back home.[33]

Refuge (I)

The refuge that the Cubans offered exiles to develop these prospects depended to a large extent on the political affiliation, rank and individual circumstances. The various configurations of left-wing groups embedded within the Latin American Cold War struggle – and their varied views on the correct 'path' to revolution, as militants understood it at the time – mattered enormously in conditioning how refugees were treated, the autonomy they had and the life in exile they were able to build. Indeed, rather than trying to forge bridges between different groups, the Cubans, with their own shifting approaches to ideological strategy and alignments within the international communist camp, appear to have juggled polices towards factions separately and simultaneously. In this respect, they welcomed all those in need, as Castro had promised, but did so without imposing any unified direction. Different Cubans managed relations with different parties and factions within them in a strictly 'compartmentalised' system. The headquarters of different parties, where they existed, were spread out around different parts of Havana and its outskirts. Th expectation was that the different organisations and their militants would not encounter each other. This exacerbated a broader trend worldwide, as Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger have suggested, whereby tensions between different left-wing tendencies were 'transplanted' into exile and endured.[34] But compartmentalisation was also considered imperative for security of the different parties to protect the identities and strategies of resistance they were pursuing, avoid infiltration by the enemy or the risk of individuals compromising others if they or their possessions were captured.[35]

Until 1976, for example, rank and file Uruguayan Tupamaros in Cuba had a very particular compartmentalised experience. From the minute they arrived – or very soon after for those who passed through hotels and 'protocol' (a secure house belonging to the Cuban state) or 'security' houses, albeit separate from other exiles – they were housed in 'colonias' (colonies or communities) of 30-50 people.[36] These *colonias* were spread out in different locations and pre-arranged by the MLNT leadership and the Cuban authorities. Within them, exiles received food and supplies, which were brought to them directly from 'industrial kitchens' in thermos containers.[37] The Ministry of the Interior and more

[32]Laura interviews.
[33]Author's interview with Cecilia de la Rivera, Zoom (Santiago, Chile), 15 September 2021.
[34]On this as a broad phenomenon of political exile, see Sznajder and Roniger, *The Politics of Exile*, 153.
[35]See for example, author's interviews with Muzio, Wilkins, Laura, 'Paula' [pseudonym], 21 September 2020, and Gonzalo Vidal, Havana, Cuba, 13 November 2022.
[36]Author's interviews with Mazzeo, Rossetii and Estevez. See also Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 191.
[37]Mazzeo and Laura interviews. See also Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 199.

precisely the office within it responsible for Cuba's revolutionary policies in Latin America – what would become the Cuban Communist Party's Americas Department under Manuel Piñeiro's direction from 1975 – coordinated the delivery of these meals and all supplies to the *colonias*.[38]

The *colonias* had been set up in the wake of the Tupamaros' defeats in Uruguay in 1972 and their retreat to Chile. With the possibility of a coup looming in Chile, hundreds of MLNT militants who had sought refuge in makeshift camps in the country became particularly vulnerable and a source of tension for Chilean President Salvador Allende and the left-wing coalition Unidad Popular government, as it sought to stave off its opponents' criticism of foreign revolutionary intervention.[39] In this context, the Cuban government secretly offered to provide a rear-guard base for the organisation. Concurrently, the arrangement was designed to address past failings of the MLNT, deemed at a meeting in Viña del Mar, Chile, in early 1973 to have been the product of insufficient ideological training and militants' 'petite bourgeois' backgrounds. The *colonias* were thus intended to provide a revolutionary refuge that included physical training, a 'proletarian' working environment and political education, all of which were regarded essential for regeneration and a future return to Uruguay.[40] With the Cuban government's agreement, the MLNT leadership now set about changing the movement, heretofore a heterogenous mix of different social classes, by reconditioning the individuals inside it, the majority of them aged 17-30 and already in exile.[41]

Many threw themselves into the experience, which, as one participant remembered, they had initially envisaged as a sort of '3-month internship'.[42] For the most part, MLNT militants henceforth worked in construction eight, ten or twelve hours a day. The work was 'hard, very hard', Olga Estevez remembered, 'But we also wanted this'. Women worked as hard as men in this regard: 'We did everything, with the enthusiasm'.[43] Although just under 50 kilos at the time, Laura, then in her early twenties, remembered unloading bags of cement that weighed the same as her from trucks and it being painful, but believing this was part of a process that was necessary to leave petty bourgeois traits behind.[44] In the Cuban resort of Tarará, one *colonia* helped construct, decorate and maintain what would be the island's foremost camp for Cuba's young pioneers. There and elsewhere along the coast and the outskirts of Havana, they worked in carpentry, electricity, construction, painting and sanitation. Many recalled a sense of fulfilment and pride in their work.[45] For those like Fernando Mazzeo, without any prior experience, the Cubans also provided training both in carpentry and electrical engineering.[46] The *colonias'* members then studied Marxist theory or held political meetings in the evening. As Marisa Adano told Parrella and Curto, 'fundamentally ... it was the era when we read most Marxism, because we had more time'.[47] However, the 'plenaries', as one Uruguayan remembered, were often hard going ('pesadas') and could last two days.[48] They

[38]Mazzeo interview; Parrella and Curto, 199; Ures, *La colonia tupamara en Cuba*, 82, 133.
[39]Wilkins interview.
[40]Parella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 191.
[41]Ures, *La colonia tupamara en Cuba*, 65–66.
[42]Laura interviews.
[43]Estevez interview.
[44]Laura interviews.
[45]Rossetti interview.
[46]Mazzeo interview.
[47]Laura interviews; Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 191-92.
[48]Estevez interview.

also rarely dealt with news directly from Uruguay, which proved almost impossible to get hold of. What little news arrived was 'filtered', Laura remembered, through party leaders who travelled and through Cuban intelligence.[49] In fact, for those who had envisaged the *colonias* would be a route of return, this lack of contact with home, and the sense of being even more distant from the 'front' (Uruguay), would be a source of disillusionment.[50]

One of the specificities of the *colonias*' experiment, after all, was the way in which those involved viewed themselves. Instead of 'exiles', they regarded themselves as militants in training, fulfilling a revolutionary mission that would lead them to Uruguay.[51] Although those who participated were never promised any kind of military training ('the Cubans never committed to this', an MLNT leader in Cuba insisted decades later) many hoped they would receive some.[52] Particularly for those who arrived in Cuba before the Chilean coup, there was still an expectation that they were part of a broader revolutionary project that would 'change the world; that it could be done'. From 11 September 1973, when a right-wing military coup toppled Allende's government in Chile, however, there was a gradual diminishing sense of expectation as news from the Southern Cone grew worse.[53] In this context, although the 'uncertainty' and 'isolation' began to weigh heavy on some of the *colonias*' inhabitants, the desire to repay Cuban solidarity and support motivated members to remain committed to the experience.[54] As Mazzeo recalled, as well as training them, the work was 'also to give back to some extent the solidarity that Cuba gave us'. Tellingly, his most cherished memory of more than ten years in exile in Cuba was the moment Tarará's beachside pioneer camp, that he had helped construct, was inaugurated: 'it was the prize of a lot of effort, we worked ten, twelve hours a day voluntarily, we had no obligation to go to work all those hours. We did it because we wanted to contribute to that'.[55] 'We were young', Olga Estevez remembered, 'we felt good, very identified with the Cuban Revolution. So, there was no drama with this [work]'.[56]

However, there were also very few alternatives available. From their inception, the *colonias* were entirely clandestine entities, with exiles receiving false identities which they upheld between each other as well as in their interactions with the Cuban population they encountered. As far as Cubans who lived nearby or who worked with the Uruguayan Tupamaros were concerned, they were either Argentine or Ecuadorian members of Latin American solidarity brigades who came to help the Revolution. This had implications. As Laura reflected, while arriving in Cuba had represented 'freedom' in some respects, they were not 'free to move around or decide what to do'. They understood their position in Cuba as being 'illegal' with protection of Cuban security and the Cuban government so they had to 'respect the rules'.[57] As Fernando Butazzoni told Parrella and Curto, the relationship with Cuban society was meanwhile 'tenuous ... we lived almost on the

[49]Laura interviews. On the difficulty of getting information from Uruguay, see also Wilkins interview.
[50]Laura interviews; Ures, *La colonia tupamara en Cuba*, 86.
[51]Mazzeo and Estevez interviews.
[52]Wilkins interview.
[53]Estevez interview; Ana Casamayou in *Memorias de insurgencia*, ed. Aldrighi, 294. On diminishing possibilities, especially after the MLNT split in 1974, see Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 194; and as a result of news of the fall of Miguel Enríquez in Chile, Ures, *La colonia tupamara en Cuba*, 130.
[54]Laura interviews.
[55]Mazzeo interview.
[56]Muzio interview.
[57]Laura interviews.

margins, much more linked to the political life of our organization . . . we lived in a kind of ghetto, a sect, we also had our own codes, our own rites, our own scale of values . . . we were in a kind of very long standby waiting to know what was happening in Uruguay'.[58] And as months turned into years, this distance from Uruguay, mounting repression throughout the Southern Cone and diminishing prospects of return contributed to divisions within the MLNT both in exile in Argentina and in Cuba as it struggled to define a unified strategy of resistance moving forward.[59]

Refuge (II)

There is little to suggest that Chilean exiles, arriving more publicly *en masse* after 1973 knew anything of the Tupamaros' *colonias*. Many of the Chileans I interviewed were surprised when I spoke about them almost five decades later, either believing that Tupamaros on the island had been engaged in secret military training or had not been there at all. When the MLNT split in 1974-75, it also meant the Cubans had to create new *colonias* from scratch to separate the different factions of the same party, who were to henceforth have no contact with each other. There were times when this compartmentalisation and the layers of bureaucracy needed to challenge this were excessive. Recalling having to fight for permission to see her sister's partner when he arrived in Cuba so that she could ask after her sister, who was imprisoned back in Uruguay, Laura would describe the restrictions on seeing anyone outside your own colony as 'cruel'.[60] On the whole, however, Uruguayan militants accepted this need for compartmentalisation and kept to the parameters imposed on their refuge.

The mass public arrival of Chilean exiles after September 1973, at least initially, made clandestine work and compartmentalisation between different Chilean political factions more difficult. For all except top leaders and personalities, the first stop was generally a hotel in Havana or a beach resort, with Chileans taking over the whole of the Hotel Presidente in Havana's Vedado district. More prominent personalities, such as Beatriz Allende, the daughter of Chile's former president exiled on the island since 13 September 1973, and members of Allende's presidential staff were initially accommodated in government properties, or 'protocol houses', before receiving their own homes.[61] In the cases when exiled party members arrived clandestine on the island or were involved in covert training and operations, they also tended to be housed in these protocol houses.[62] Cuba's Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, ICAP) was responsible for the everyday needs and logistics of exiles, while Manuel Piñeiro's team at the Ministry of the Interior and later the Americas Department dealt with political and strategic matters.[63]

[58]Fernando Butazzoni as quoted in Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 192.

[59]Vania Markarian, *Left in Transformation: Uruguayan Exiles and the Latin American Human Rights Networks, 1967-1984* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 70.

[60]Laura interviews.

[61]Tanya Harmer, *Beatriz Allende: A Revolutionary Life in Cold War Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 214.

[62]Author's interview with Juan Saavedra, Zoom (Santiago, Chile), 12 May 2021.

[63]Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 193; author's interviews with Laura, Wilkins, Pellegrín, Krauss; José Pommerenck, 26 May 2021; Beatriz Torres, Zoom (Mexico City, Mexico), 13 May 2021; Ariel Ulloa, Whatsapp (Concepción, Chile), 5 May 2021.

Cuba's government meanwhile represented the public mass arrival of Chilean exiles – and those from elsewhere in Latin America who arrived openly – as reconfirming its own *raison d'être* and revolutionary know-how in an ongoing Cold War struggle. In an era of 'obsessive' commemorations, as recently termed by Michael Bustamente, of a Cuban state in the 1970s trying to remind and retain support for its narrative or revolution and citizenship, Chilean exiles provided an obvious focal point of mobilisation and renewed evidence of the virtue of the island's revolutionary project.[64] Contrary to Chileans elsewhere who encountered a 'loss of power' and purpose, as Diane Kay has detailed in the case of Britain, those in Cuba were feted.[65] As Camila Krauss, the daughter of an MIR militant killed soon after the Chilean coup recalled:

> Growing up in that environment, I learned from a very young age that my father had been a hero, a revolutionary. He and many others like my uncle Ricardo Ruz, embodied all the virtues of martyrs. That dimension of their lives was reaffirmed in each act of commemoration and in each of the meetings that our elders organised to remember and honour the dead. In these acts, the heroic existence of fallen comrades, the qualities of their thought, their dedication to the revolutionary struggle, and their capacity for sacrifice were remembered and exalted.[66]

Even so, this commemoration of revolutionary martyrs had a conflictive side to it. Some Chileans remember experiencing criticism and recrimination in exile – veiled or otherwise – regarding the lack of their own resistance to the coup, to the extent that this even made the island feel 'inhospitable'.[67] The violent defeat of Chile's so-called 'peaceful road to revolution' was simultaneously presented as a vindication of Cuba's revolutionary story of heroic armed insurgency. And this stance reverberated at a day-to-day level, with Cuban school children openly discussing how they would have stood up to defend Allende's government against the military coup better than their Chilean counterparts' parents.[68] Manuel Fernando Contreras, a militant in the Chilean Communist Party that had wedded itself to the democratic, non-armed path to revolution prior to 1973, went so far as to remember the island as 'anti-communist' when he arrived in 1974, in the sense of the Cuban leadership's view that the PCCh had 'lost the revolution'. This in turn, he noted, contributed to a profound feeling of 'remorse and guilt' that led PCCh militants to re-evaluate their past, adapt and try to prove their worth and 'bravery' on the island. 'Cojonismo' – showing you had the 'balls' to fight – he remembered, was important.[69] Indeed, refuge in revolutionary Cuba often delineated the decisions exiles made regarding political and revolutionary action. While a discourse of resistance and revolution was more common than one of victimhood associated with trauma, this had its own repercussions for exiles' autonomy to determine their day-to-day lives, their future and the way they made sense of their own past. As Camila Krauss reflected, while appropriation

[64]Bustamante, *Cuban Memory Wars*, 156.

[65]Diana Kay, *Chileans in Exile: Private Struggles, Public Lives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 60.

[66]Camila Krauss, 'Historia de una carta' in *Fuego de puro amor: mensajes desde la Resistencia*, ed. Axel Pickett Lazo (Santiago: Cinco Ases, 2021), 203-4.

[67]Roniger, 'Displacement and Testimony', 116–17. Bofill and Ortega, 'Historia Inédita', 7.

[68]'Los ojos de mi papa' dir. Pedro Chaskel.

[69]Author's interview with Manuel Fernando Contreras, Santiago, Chile, 23 March 2023. On a generalised feeling of 'guilt' and remorse among PCCh militants in exile, including in East Germany and the Soviet Union, see Rolando Álvarez Vallejos, *Arriba los pobres del mundo: cultura e identidad política del Partido Communista de Chile entre democracia y dictadura, 1965-1990*, (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2011), Kindle, chap. 4.

of her father's memory by the Cuban state and Chilean parties gave her a sense of belonging, it *also* deprived her of understanding who her father had been besides a symbolic revolutionary martyr.[70]

Integration into everyday life meanwhile took time and adjustment. For a country facing housing shortages in the early 1970s, the arrival of exiles posed a particular problem and, for rank-and-file militants at least, it took time to resolve. Prolonged stays in hotels also caused a certain degree of resentment, leading to complaints and even a hunger strike among one group, while others who insisted on expressing gratitude to the island's revolutionary government, watched with deep embarrassment.[71] When the Cuban government initiated the process of redistributing exiles around the island, some in the exile community resisted the move. With party leaders remaining in Havana, many feared relocations to the interior would cut them off from political activities and news from home. But others noted it also had a lot to do with exiles' former identities as inhabitants of Santiago, a capital city with overrepresentation and power. In fact, those who tended to accept or even embrace the move tended to be those who did not come from their own country's capital. In their own recollections of their decision to volunteer to leave Havana, they also expressed pride in having done so, conveying the sense that this was the right – and *revolutionary* – thing to have done to help the Cuban state.[72]

Whether in Havana's outer districts, most prominently Alamar, a large new housing complex east of Havana built by 'micro-brigades' since 1971, or around the island, exiles generally moved into fully furbished apartments within a year after they arrived in Cuba. In accordance with Fidel Castro's request to workers at the Thirteenth Congress of the Confederation of Cuban Workers in mid-November 1973 to donate one apartment in every building constructed at the time to Chilean refugees ('refugiados'), exiles were generally embedded within communities.[73] The apartments – each furnished with beds, linen, a dining room table, stove, refrigerator, television – were symbols of revolutionary morality and modernity, confirming the image of the Cuban state as a provider, in the words of one Chilean, of 'everything a human being requires'.[74] As one UNHCR representative noted in 1978, 'there is little doubt that the condition of the refugees in Cuba is the best that refugees can have'.[75]

Another dispersal of exiles occurred when the Tupamaros' *colonias* were disbanded in 1976, in the context of the MLNT's division and shifts in Havana's strategic alignments. On one level, the division of the MLNT in 1975, and the departure of a significant part of its leadership from Argentina to Europe, had impaired networks that might have helped reintegrate those in Cuba back into Uruguay. On another level, though in part a reaction to the Revolutionary Left's rapidly diminishing prospects, at a meeting of Latin American communist parties, Cuba had signalled its adherence to the idea that communist parties – rather than revolutionary organisations like the MLNT or MIR – would lead anti-

[70] Krauss, 'Historia de una carta', 204.
[71] See, for example, Torres and Wilkins interviews; Harmer, *Beatriz Allende*, 231-32.
[72] See, for example, author's interviews with Torres, Saavedra, Ulloa, Muzio and Lincolao.
[73] Harmer, *Beatriz Allende*, 229. On this promise extending to Uruguayans see also Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 194. Multiple interviewees repeated this practice of having one apartment in each building.
[74] Lincolao interview.
[75] Memorandum, Hugo Idoyaga, UNHCR Regional Representative for Northern Latin America to UNHCR Representative in France, 13 July 1978, Fonds 11/Series 2/Box 73, UNHCR Archives, Geneva.

imperialist struggles in Latin America. The delegates' call for a broad united front against fascism and the admonishment of 'erroneous views and adventurist actions' in the meeting's final declaration spelt out a significant shift in Cuba's strategic priorities.[76] Then, much to the surprise of MLNT militants, who watched his speech to the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party live at the end of 1975, Fidel Castro publicly underlined Cuba's allegiance to the Soviet Union and peaceful coexistence, thereby distancing the island from support for guerrilla insurgencies and armed resistance in Latin America. As he announced, 'Latin America is not now on the immediate eve of global changes that could lead, as in Cuba, to sudden socialist transformations'.[77]

With the MLNT in disarray and this strategic line now official Cuban policy, colony members were offered the chance to leave the island or to renounce political militancy and live as 'any other Cuban'. This was a 'free decision' taken following meetings held in each *colonia*. Personal revolutionary projects and priorities, not to mention differing experiences they had had, shaped their decision. The majority left, believing that they could regroup and organise politically in Europe, and from there return to Uruguay. Others left to recover their individual identities and prioritise family life, put on hold for years as clandestine militants in Cuba to this point.[78] For others, however, the prospect of a second – or in many cases, third – exile elsewhere, with no clear route home, proved daunting and unattractive.[79] One of those who stayed in Cuba was Daniel Muzio Lladó, who recalled this seemed like the only feasible way to maintain his revolutionary commitments:

> I can tell you sincerely why I stayed: first ... I shared the principles of the Revolution. Second, the exit option was to Europe. There was no possibility of going to [Latin] America. And I was not interested in going to Europe. It was not within the expectations and motivations that guided my life that were to change Latin America's reality ... I believed that in Europe I was not going to change it. I say no. Thank you very much, but I stay and if possible, of course [I opt] to work for the Revolution and for Cuban society.[80]

If the decision to stay or leave Cuba was one individuals made themselves, those who stayed were 'sent' to different locations to live and to work in groups of five or six families, with no choice as to where they went.[81] This was a 'political decision', Hugo Wilkins later explained, reflecting the Cubans' desire to avoid an intensification of conflicts between different MLNT factions. However, it also precluded the opportunity, at the time, of building any kind of collective institution of platform on the island.[82] ICAP organised sporadic meetings and commemorative events, generally around anniversaries that brought different exile communities together.[83] For the most part, however,

[76]'Declaration of the Meeting of Communist Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean, Havana, June 1975' (Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1975), 51-52; Hugo Wilkins in *Memorías de insurgencia*, 279.

[77]Fidel Castro Ruz, *Informe Del Comite Central Del PCC al Primer Congreso* (Havana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1975), 228.

[78]Laura interviews.

[79]Wilkins interview.

[80]Muzio interview.

[81]Interviews with Mazzeo, Wilkins and Estevez. So far, I have traced Uruguayans who relocated to Santiago, Palma Sorino, Santa Clara, Guantanamo, and neighbouring provinces of Havana though others are reported to have gone to Pinar del Rio, Holguín and La Yaya as well.

[82]Wilkins interview.

[83]Estevez and Guyer interviews.

Uruguayans dispersed beyond greater Havana now focused on integrating into Cuban society, work and daily life with their own names and a new 'legal' status.

As with other exiles, they received fully furnished apartments and were offered work and study. Many also saw this as an opportunity to start a family, to focus on romantic partnerships and return to their studies, cut short by repression and exile years earlier.[84] The shift nevertheless entailed significant adjustment. The majority, now focusing on quotidian life, renounced formal political militancy they had had since late adolescence and retained since leaving Uruguay. The reality of exile, loss and distance from home also became stark. 'From that moment on', Mazzeo remembered, '[being in Cuba] ceased to be transitory … [and meant] admitting that exile would be prologued'. He and his partner cried the whole night when they arrived in Santiago de Cuba, he explained: 'Real exile started there for us'.[85]

Refuge (III)

Among various other groups that received customised forms of refuge in revolutionary Cuba, there are two that deserve mention here to illustrate the diverse ways the Cuban state accommodated exiles from the Southern Cone in the mid-1970s. One comprised the female militants of the MIR, all widows (or partners) of male Miristas killed or underground in Chile, who arrived with small children. Instead of receiving one apartment in a building of Cuban families, female Mirista militants and their children were given the majority in an entire apartment block (D-2), known as the 'edificio de los chilenos' (Chilean building), that was inaugurated for them in Alamar in 1975.[86] This offer also marked a new stage in the MIR's resistance strategy: from a firm position of no asylum immediately after the coup to the formation of a temporary rear-guard abroad in the context of catastrophic defeats that included the death of the organisation's leader, Miguel Enríquez on 5 October 1974. When the decision was taken by the MIR to send militants, both male and female, back to Chile to fight against the dictatorship at the end of the 1970s as part of what was known as 'Operación Retorno' (Operation Return), another 'Chilean building' was established in Alamar. This block (D-22) housed Mirista children, who would henceforth live with 'social [or adopted] parents' while their biological parents trained for or partook in clandestine operations back in Chile.[87]

Another distinct group comprised of members of the PCU arriving in 1976. As Luis Cubas remembered, the Party's Secretary General, Rodney Arismendi, exiled in Moscow, was in Cuba to meet arrivals and explained the scarcities that existed there in part because of the influx of so many Chilean exiles in previous years. Seeing the PCU's situation in Argentina as a matter of 'life or death', he explained, Fidel Castro had extended support, making a 'supreme effort'. In return, PCU militants were not to demand anything; they had to be grateful for anything the Cubans could offer. Cubas also recalled Arismendi's

[84]Estevez, Laura and Mazzeo interviews.

[85]Mazzeo interview.

[86]Aside from female Miristas, two apartments in the bloc were given to the family of Argentine leader of Argentina's Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, Mario Roberto Santucho. Carlos Gómez, a Chilean Socialist with long-standing ties to Cuba and its internationalist missions abroad, was given a third apartment in this block for him, his wife and four children. The MIR's leader in Cuba in the 1970s, Manuel Cabieses, and his family, also lived in the building. See author's interviews with Krauss and Manuel Llorca Jaña, Zoom (Santiago, Chile), 24 June 2021.

[87]'El edificio de los chilenos' dir. Aguiló and Foxley.

guidance on what constituted revolutionary behaviour on the island henceforth: 'in Cuba, to be a revolutionary is to work ... We are here to help move the [Cuban] economy forward', he remembered. Like their Chilean and MLNT counterparts, PCU exiles would soon move into individual apartments, some in Havana and others around the island (Cubas's family went to Santa Clara).[88]

Interactions with Cuban society for the majority of PCU exiles was nevertheless limited compared to former MLNT colony members now living as 'any other Cuban'. This had a lot to do with security concerns and a permanent preparedness to leave the island at any moment to return to Uruguay, potentially clandestinely. 'The PCU communities had very strict security standards and standards to maintain their fighting position', the daughter of PCU exiles in Cuba explained. 'Exile was not a break from the struggle and exposing their location in some countries, in the case of having to return, could put them in a situation of vulnerability. For example, photos were never taken outside the house where identifiable landscapes or constructions could be seen, because it was feared that if they did, this would reveal where they had been ... children's messages could not be recorded to send to family [back in Uruguay], because of accents'. In letters to family, PCU militants always used false names and pretended they were writing from Mexico (letters were taken from the island to Mexico by those travelling and were posted from there). This was as much to do with the security of the PCU as it was to do with the safety of family members in Uruguay, under surveillance by the dictatorship.[89]

When it came to the refuge provided by Cuba's revolutionary state, then, Chilean and Uruguayan exile communities who arrived on the island in the 1970s and 1980s were separated primarily by political affiliation, rank and purpose. Political identities prior to exile were largely maintained, at least initially, even if, for many, these would evolve in response to the development of new circumstances, party strategies and further fragmentation of the Left. The plurality of exile groups – and types of refuge they received – in Cuba in turn had obvious consequences for forging unified national, let alone regional, revolutionary projects. In this respect, Cuba became a microcosm of a fragmented left-wing world that tells us a lot about the messy configurations of the late Cold War period. This was not a Cuban invention; it reflected the divisions and splits already in existence that would be magnified and exacerbated over the course of a long period of exile. However, there is also no evidence to suggest the Cubans did anything to bridge divisions. Moreover, the growing support it offered to communist party militants from 1975 onward, both in the case of the PCCh and the PCU, is noteworthy as indicative of a decisive Cuban strategic shift towards coordinated long-term planning and resistance strategies with the Soviet bloc.

Opportunities and Expectations

One of the most important opportunities a Cuban exile afforded was the island's logistical and financial support to organise and establish political institutions, which could sustain parties' legitimacy and authority. The most prominent and public of these –

[88]Author's interviews with 'Tania' [pseudonym], Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 25 June and 9 September 2021 and Luis and Leticia Cubas, Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 8 July 2021.
[89]Tania interview.

and what appears to have been the only organisation that attempted to bring different left-wing parties together – was the Comité Chileno de Solidaridad con la Resistencia Antifascista (Chilean Committee of Solidarity with the Antifascist Resistance), established on 8 October 1973 by Salvador Allende's daughter, Beatriz, and staff of what had been the old Chilean embassy in Havana's Vedado district. With separate offices for seven constitutive left-wing political parties on the second floor of the building, it was designed to coordinate strategy and negotiate differences. The statutes of the committee also underlined the pivotal role that the Cuban Revolution's 'militant internationalism' had played in 'creating, supporting and propelling' it forward.[90]

Although, internally, intra-left political disputes and tensions persisted, the Comité Chileno managed a collective platform dealing with three issues: refugees, solidarity and information.[91] At least initially, it served as an intermediary between the Cuban government, its institutions and the Chilean exile community in Cuba. Its main work was nevertheless orientated towards challenging Chile's dictatorship abroad in international forums, mobilising support for anti-dictatorial activities through global solidarity campaigns and supporting those in Chile living under repression. The Cuban state, through ICAP, paid the Comité Chileno's staff, numbering 25 full-time members by early 1975, and provided logistical support for distributing its publications, among them a weekly information bulletin *Chile informativo* which, by mid-1975, was distributed to over 400 solidarity committees, key personalities and organizations in the United States and Latin America. From Cuba, Beatriz Allende managed at least two bank accounts that collected solidarity funds from campaigns abroad that were then shared among Chile's left-wing parties and in part smuggled back into Chile. Cuba's government meanwhile helped coordinate campaigns in international forums such as the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement. For chosen representatives of political parties and the exile community, the Cubans facilitated travel away from the island for solidarity events and political meetings. And Chilean exiles working at the Comité Chileno were frequently invited to diplomatic events and receptions in Havana, allowing them to publicise their cause.[92] Responding to a joint request from the PCCh and PS in May 1975, the Cuban government would also provide the facilities via Radio Habana Cuba to record a programme each week which was broadcast via long wave radio to Chile.[93] Exiles at the Comité Chileno meanwhile cooperated in films produced about Chile by the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (Cuban Institute of Art and Cinematography) and cultural programmes throughout the island. They facilitated the distribution of artisan products – primarily 'arpilleras' (tapestries) and 'soporopos' (handmade dolls) – produced by exiles in Cuba for sale in Europe for the cause of solidarity.[94] Moreover, the central hub for culture and intellectuals on the island, Casa de las Americas, gave prizes

[90]The seven parties with representation in Cuba were the PCCh, PS, MIR, Partido Radical, Partido Organización de Izquierda Cristiana, Partido MAPU and Partido MAPU Obrero y Campesino. On governing structure of the Comité and its remit, see, 'Estatutos de Comité Chileno de Solidaridad con la Resistencia Antifascista', no date, Carpeta 1/ DHCCA/ CDICAP.

[91]Francisco Fernández, President, Comité Chileno, to Guillermo Pavez, San José, 6 February 1975, Carpeta 1/DHCCA/ CDICAP.

[92]Memorandum, 'Pauta de acción del Comité para los meses futuros'; Harmer, 'The View from Havana', 111–12, 120, 125-28, 134-36.

[93]Letter, Hernán del Canto to Beatriz Allende, no date, Archivo Beatriz Allende.

[94]See for example, 'Cantata de Chile' dir. Humberto Solás (ICAIC, 1975); author's correspondence with Enrique San Martín González, 30 August 2013; Krauss interviews.

to, or hosted exhibitions, concerts and plays by Latin American exiles, many of them writing about dictatorship, repression and resistance.

The Cuban state therefore provided exiles with a platform to project their cause and further political objectives. There was also a strong expectation that they should. As one of those worked for the Comité Chileno recalled, exiles felt a sense of obligation to prove their revolutionary credentials and duty to Cuba's leadership, an obligation that they carried forth, at least in his recollection, with pride and willingness:

> Being a Socialist, for us, meant proudly carrying a backpack of duties, commitments and respect for the highest figure of the institution: Allende. We had to show Cuba, its Revolution and its people that we were worthy followers of the President's example and that we would truly defeat fascism in Chile and [Latin] America. We did not rest, we had weekly core meetings, with political education classes, with simple and complex tasks.[95]

Beyond the Comité Chileno and Cuban institutional platforms, individual political parties also established their own offices in Cuba. The MIR, which chose Havana along with Paris as its headquarters abroad, had two offices, separate from the Comité Chileno: one in Alamar, that analysed the international press and news from Chile, and one in the southern outskirts of Havana, that provided training in intelligence for eventual return to Chile, known to those involved as the office of 'tareas cerradas' (closed or restricted tasks).[96] Beyond the Comité Chileno, it does not appear that the PS and PCCh had their own centralised offices.[97] From at least 1976, following the arrival of PCU militants, however, the Communist Party of Uruguay established an office in Vedado, Havana, above a shop and close to the city's famous and frequently populated ice-cream parlour, Copelia. It was here that the recording for the Party's radio broadcasts for Uruguay were made. Much like the Comité Chileno, the office also served as a base for anti-dictatorial solidarity campaigns, the coordination of relations between exiles within Cuba and with those elsewhere, or friends, comrades and families back in Uruguay.[98]

Within these institutions, political parties and organisations appear to have been independent rather than manipulated or directed by their Cuban hosts. It does not seem, for example, that the Cubans intervened in political meetings in the Tupamaro *colonias* or the way they were run, even if the Ministry of Interior supplied their food and in some cases personnel to train and support the work that went on within them. Cuban authorities negotiated more directly with party leaderships and responded to requests for support.[99] Those involved in the MIR also remember the Cubans facilitated the party's operations but stood aside, assuming a clear position of not interfering in internal party decisions, even when it had intelligence that Miristas would have benefitted from.[100] However, refuge in revolutionary Cuba meant having to operate within what were sometimes seemingly absurd rules regarding compartmentalisation such as attending meetings in masks when all those present knew each other well, either from Chile or from their time in exile. Others involved in clandestine operations remembered escaping secretly across town to see friends from other parties or factions within their own party

[95]San Martín correspondence.
[96]Krauss, Ruz and Llorca interviews.
[97]Contreras interview.
[98]Tania interview.
[99]Estevez, Wilkins and Laura interviews; Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean internationalism'.
[100]Ruz interview.

that they were not meant to know were on the island or contact. Although it is not entirely clear whether the Cubans or the MIR's leadership imposed such rules, life on the island was characterised by the mystique of clandestine revolutionary operations.[101] There was also very little room for militants to explore different ideas and question their parties' guidance or instructions. As María Inés Ruz Zañartu recalled, it was only when sent to Europe that she encountered others who shared her privately guarded questions. Meeting them empowered her – gave her 'oxygen' – to have confidence in her own personal critiques of the MIR's strategy in the 1980s, to such an extent that she left the movement, an uncomfortable position to be in on an island where affiliations and connections were so important.[102]

Political life was also confined on the island in other ways. When it came to running a political office, for example, exiles found themselves dealing with shortages of essential materials (ie. ink, batteries, paper).[103] Communication with the outside world also presented problems, relying on people traveling abroad and posting letters or materials from there, or Cuban embassies distributing information.[104] For some, these logistical constraints were enough to lead them to relocate abroad; in the case of both Chilean and Uruguayan exiles, often to Mexico, which took on growing importance as a hub of solidarity organising at the end of the 1970s and the 1980s.[105]

Moreover, helping left-wing parties continue operating and offering exiles the opportunity to maintain political identities and militancy did not necessarily tally with the expectations of support many exiles had envisaged when they arrived in Cuba. Crucially, and in part a reason for Cuba's strategic shift in 1975-76 as noted above, Fidel Castro did not believe the conditions existed for a guerrilla insurgency or civil war, let alone a revolutionary offensive, after the Left's catastrophic defeat in Chile – and its retreat across the Southern Cone as a whole. As one Cuban intelligence official explained, at least at the beginning, 'we couldn't send them to Chile because there was no way of entering or receiving them. The internal resistance movement was very fragile'.[106] Francisco Fernández, the first president of the Comité Chileno, recalled exiles arriving in Cuba were frustrated with this news and 'impatient . . . they believed it was simply a case of being in Cuba three or four months to receive training and then returning to incorporate themselves into the struggle'.[107] When offered jobs or study in Cuba, some Chilean exiles refused, wanting 'preparation to go and fight' instead. When they were told this was not on offer, some left. As Enrique San Martín, a coordinator for PS residents at the Hotel Presidente, recalled, their departure proved to be 'a natural and positive filter'. He also couched his decision to stay as a revolutionary decision: 'Those of us who stayed did so out of principle, out of gratitude and why not say it, for our families' safety'.[108]

The disjuncture between expectations of immediate military training and a return to the Southern Cone echoed the MLNT's experience. At the time the *colonias* were disbanded in 1976, no MLNT members had returned to Uruguay to resist the

[101]Vidal interview.
[102]Ruz interview.
[103]See, for example, Francisco Fernández to Guillermo Pavez, 6 February 1975, 1/DHCC/CDICAP.
[104]Harmer, *Beatriz Allende*, 248.
[105]Harmer, 'The View from Havana', 141–42.
[106]Author's interview with Ulises Estrada, Havana, Cuba, 19 April 2011.
[107]Author's interview with Francisco Fernández, Santiago, Chile, 8 July 2013.
[108]San Martín correspondence.

dictatorship from inside the country, despite the *colonias* project having been conceptualised as a transitory refuge and route to return. Some MLNT militants did train but, according to Hugo Wilkins, one of the MLNT leaders in Cuba at the time, they were a small, select group (un 'grupito').[109] As one woman involved in such training recalls, 'we trained hard, to return'.[110] However, as with Chilean exiles who wanted to take up arms against the dictatorship, the conditions were not deemed sufficient, with those who returned to the Southern Cone (not specifically Uruguay) being killed or taken prisoner shortly after arriving. As Wilkins explained, 'going back implied – in the case of [those] we were training here [Cuba] – having a very solid infrastructure that was never achieved'.[111] Looking back, Olga Estevez, who had to withdraw from a mission to Argentina at the last minute due to illness, recalled feeling 'sad' that she had not been able to return to the Southern Cone: 'But after a while when everything there happened I thought, I said, it was because this was not for me, to die at that moment. Because that was what it was'.[112] As noted above, the division of the MLNT and the emergence of a strong current of thought that advocated for retreat was also significant in ending the prospect of an armed resistance from within Uruguay. Very few MLNT individuals were able to enter the country after 1976, Wilkins recalled, and when they did, it was not in any organised, systematised way.[113]

Cuban training and logistical support for clandestine revolutionary missions against Chile's dictatorship developed more substantially in the late 1970s and 1980s. Although costly, for example, the MIR's unsuccessful attempt to launch a guerrilla insurgency in the south of Chile at Neltume and a broader 'Return Operation', by which they infiltrated cadres back into Chile from 1979-85, relied to a large degree on Cuban support. Miristas were offered intelligence training and courses in urban and rural guerrilla warfare that ranged from three months to a year and were coordinated by the Americas Department. Although numbers are hard to verify, estimates of those who received Cuban support for the MIR's Operation Return range from 400 to 1000.[114] In this respect, Cuba was fundamentally important to the maintenance of the MIR's political identity as a movement on the revolutionary Left.

Crucially, however, the lens that exiles on the island provides illustrates that while the MIR was receiving this kind of support in the late 1970s and 1980s, Cuba had already simultaneously shifted the majority of resources and attention, in line with reorientation in 1975-76, towards a long-term strategy focused on sustained professional military, intelligence and political training of Communist Party cadres that had previously been somewhat marginal to Cuba's revolutionary policies in the region. Specifically, from 1975, and then increasingly towards the end of the decade and into the 1980s, the Chilean Communist Party and its youth wing, the Juventud Comunista (JJCC), began a programme of clandestine training and reorganisation in line with what would become a new political policy favouring *all* forms of struggle against the dictatorship, including military insurrection.[115] This expansive strategy to fill what was conceived and

[109]Wilkins interview.
[110]Estevez interview; Ana Casamayou in *Memorias de insurgencia*, 294-95.
[111]Wilkins interview.
[112]Estevez interview
[113]Wilkins interview.
[114]Figueroa-Clark, 'Chilean internationalism and the Sandinista Revolution', 83, 93-94.
[115]On the development of this line, see Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres*, chaps.3-5.

acknowledged from 1977 as a historic vacuum when it came to an independent military capacity and policy, required extreme secrecy in the name of security and was coordinated across the Soviet bloc.[116]

Indeed, the development of this line, what became known as the 'Rebelión Popular de Masas' (Mass Popular Rebellion), was part of a global shift in the PCCh's strategy that spanned a transnational network operating between Chile and those in exile in Cuba, Europe, primarily in East Germany and the Soviet Union. Cuba was a central node in this evolution, with the experience and particularity of exile on the island serving as an important context for the Party's evolving political identity. As Rolando Álvarez argues, criticism of the PCCh's inability to defend Chile's revolutionary government in Cuba, the Soviet Union and East Germany sparked intense discussions in exile and within the clandestine interior Party structure in Chile about role of violence in politics: what became known as the so-called military question or problem. The recrimination in 1974 from a Soviet Communist Party Central Committee member, Boris Ponomarev, that all revolutions should know how to defend themselves was a particularly significant turning point in sparking discussion both in exile and inside Chile.[117] Meanwhile, in Cuba, young PCCh militants who had been studying medicine on the island and found themselves stuck after the coup swiftly radicalised, losing interest in their studies and increasingly demanding the opportunity to fight against the dictatorship, pleading with their hosts for armed training.[118] It was in response to these demands and to offer a means of overcoming what were seen as past deficits that Fidel Castro offered to train the PCCh students within Cuba's Armed Forces (FAR) at the end of 1974. It was an offer that would shape the future of the Party and resistance to the dictatorship in the years that followed; a 'Pandora's Box' in Álvarez's words, that transformed the PCCh's political identity and strategy moving forward.[119]

In April 1975, between fifty and sixty young Chilean communists had subsequently begun courses of professional armed training, half of them enrolled in Cuba's foremost military academy, the Escuela Militar General Antonio Maceo to the west of Havana, and another half at La Cabaña military fortress to the east. This first generation of graduating officers became a prized component of the PCCh's new long-term strategy to build up professional military and intelligence forces. They were also the first foreigners to receive such training alongside Cubans, although eight Uruguayan communists are also said to have received similar training at some point after this.[120] In 1981, Cuba then agreed to welcome 21 young Chilean Communists who had graduated from officer training in Bulgaria's prestigious Vasil Levski military academy since 1977, another component of a coordinated global PCCh strategy to address past military deficiencies.[121] In the early 1980s a new generation of young Chilean communist militants in their late adolescence

[116]This 'vacío histórico' was identified formally by the PCCh in 1977. See Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres*, chap. 3; Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean internationalism', 71.

[117]Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres del mundo*, chap. 4.

[118]Author's interviews with Ulises Mitodio, Havana, Cuba, 8 November and 13 November 2022.

[119]Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres del mundo*, chap. 3.

[120]See Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres*, chaps. 3-4; Mitodio interview; Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean internationalism' 88-91. Mitodio and Figueroa Clark refer to 60 starting this training, while Álvarez puts the number around 50. Regarding Uruguayans who also trained with the FAR, see Mazzeo interview. Figueroa Clark also mentions the figure of 8 Uruguayan officers who went to Nicaragua. Figueroa Clark, 148.

[121]Mauricio Leandro Osorio, *Búlgaros: el ejército entrenado para matar a Pinochet* (Santiago de Chile: Aguilar, 2021), 86.

and early twenties also passed through the island, arriving from around the world and from Chile itself, undertaking political and military training as part of new resistance operations.[122] Indeed, hundreds more PCCh cadres followed the example of the initial medical students, undertaking courses at Cuba's various military installations.[123] Whilst in Cuba, they used 'chapas' or pseudonyms and were housed semi-clandestinely and separately from other exile communities in different locations around Havana. Some militants also arrived in small groups to undertake year-long political courses at the Cuban Communist Youth cadre school east of Havana.[124]

In contrast to those from the PS and MIR who undertook short-term guerrilla training at encampments like Punto Cero east of Havana, from 1975 on, PCCh recruits were initially intended to be trained for eventual service in a new Chilean military after the fall of the dictatorship. As Fidel Castro reportedly challenged PCCh leaders in February 1975, 'Why have you lost so much time? Why haven't you formed military cadres? Not only to fight now, but when you can, in 12, 15 or 20 years more, you could have 200, 300 or 400 trained officers … .even if there is a political solution [to the dictatorship], you are going to need them … as the backbone of a new army'.[125] However, from 1980 onwards, with the PCCh's development of a policy of Popular Mass Rebellion, they were also considered central to a new phase of anti-dictatorial resistance.[126] Although not envisaged from the outset of their military training, the officers who graduated in 1978, many of whom had fought in the Nicaraguan Revolution, would overcome internal divisions within the PCCh to persuade their superiors to go to Chile. From 1983 onwards, they would then go on to lead the PCCh's new armed wing that operated from 1983, the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (FPMR).[127] The FPMR in turn received Cuban logistical, military, intelligence and moral support, with some mid-rank recruits also receiving guerrilla training on the island.[128] And, continuing Cuba's patterns of supporting different factions of revolutionary organisations simultaneously, when the Frente split in 1987 following the fallout from a failed attempt to assassinate Chile's military dictator, Augusto Pinochet, in September 1986, it retained close relations with both wings.[129]

The direct assistance Cuba gave to anti-dictatorial resistance struggles was therefore enormously significant to the maintenance, development and formation of revolutionary identities and strategies. For the young Chilean communist exiles in Cuba in particular, it entailed a process of radicalisation that centred on military power and strategies of resistance. However, professional military and clandestine political training was by no means the sum of the refuge that the island provided in the late 1970s and 1980s. To the contrary, for the majority, exile by this point meant adjusting to the prospect of

[122]Author's interviews with César Quiroz, Santiago, Chile, 21 March and 4 April 2023 and Paula; Bofill and Ortega, 'Historia Inédita', 9; Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres*, chap. 5.

[123]Bofill and Ortega, 'Historia Inédita', 9-11.

[124]Paula interview; Bofill and Ortega, 9.

[125]Castro as cited in Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres*, chap. 4.

[126]Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres*, chaps.3-4.

[127]See Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean internationalism', 81; Victor Figueroa Clark, 'The Forgotten History of the Chilean Transition: Armed Resistance Against Pinochet and US Policy toward Chile in the 1980s', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no.3 (2015): 501; Jorge Arrate and Eduardo Rojas, eds., *Memoria de la izquierda chilena: Tomo II (1970-2000)* (Barcelona; Santiago de Chile: Ediciones B, 2003), 279.

[128]Bofill and Ortega, 'Historia Inédita', 8.

[129]See interviews with Alberto Reyes, Havana, Cuba, 13 November 2022 and Mitodio.

remaining in Cuba over the long-term. Two years after arriving on the island and working on a farm in rural Matanzas, Isolina Lincolao, a militant in the PS, who had fled Chile soon after the coup, recalled she faced a decision of what to do long-term:

> at first . . . we all thought that our life [in exile] would be temporary brief . . . that we were going to come back fast. That's why we went to Argentina . . . thinking we could come back fast . . . and the plan . . . failed . . . in Cuba we also thought it was going to be brief . . . that we were going to prepare, become better leaders. And from there, nothing! . . . [So] we started to put our feet on the ground [and admit that] this would be long and we asked 'what should I do?[130]

Living the Revolution

For the exiles and their families not selected for clandestine return missions to the Southern Cone, military training or solidarity work, refuge in Cuba was shaped by the experience of living within 'the Revolution', as country's society and politics were known. Recalling these years, former exiles invariably referred to the sense of solidarity and support they received at a community level. Although the idea of one apartment in every new building being given to refugees came from the government, for example, exiles overwhelming received apartments as gifts from the population; an act of autonomous sacrifice rather than a provision of the Cuban state. 'Imagine what it cost for a Cuban to give you houses, share all their achievements . . . the Cubans gave us the little they were already working [to build]', a Chilean exile assigned to an apartment in Santiago would recall.[131] As Andrea Pellegrin remembered, Chilean exiles also learnt to be 'good neighbours' in Cuba in the sense of sharing food and looking out for each other.[132] For the MLNT militants who stayed in Cuba, a sense of everyday equality ('en la calle') and the 'solid values' that they encountered living as any other Cuban, marked the 1970s and 80s out as 'a very nice period', particularly compared to changes in Cuban society from the 1990s onwards, as one commented in retrospect.[133] As Estevez recalled, 'it was impressive as everyone had the same thing. It was one thing that impacted us. Well, I come from a very, very poor family. So, to get there and see that everybody had more or less the same thing, it was exciting . . . Exile in Cuba was good, with its low points that we all had. Sadness, anguish, suddenly [as in 1975] the Cubans were on one side and you on the other, but we were in a country that was welcoming to us . . . '[134] Many interviewees also recalled neighbours who went out of their way to welcome newcomers and assist them in day-to-day needs such as childcare and the logistics of navigating Cuba's ration system.[135]

In this context, former exiles invariably recalled being guided in their daily lives by a sense of paying back Cuban hospitality. This, they explained, meant contributing to 'the Revolution' by working, studying and participating in everyday Cuban life. When it came to work and study, in fact, many opted to combine the two, believing full-time study went

[130]Lincolao and interviews.
[131]Lincolao interview.
[132]Pellegrin interview.
[133]Wilkins interview
[134]Estevez interview
[135]Author's interviews with Saavedra, Tania, Andrea Polanco, Whatsapp (Santiago, Chile), 16 April 2021 and Soledad Guyer, Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 9 August 2021.

against their revolutionary duties as recipients of solidarity from the Cuban state to contribute to the workforce.[136] In this respect, many took advantage of the new flexible programmes that allowed Cubans to study at night or at the weekend.[137] Those without experience as professionals – and adolescents arriving with their exiled parents who enrolled full-time in university programmes – thus had the opportunity to embark on careers such as telecommunications, teaching, medicine, architecture, journalism, accountancy, agronomy and livestock engineering. As Rachel Hynson has argued, from the early 1960s, revolutionary citizenship on the island was constructed through labour, and exiles' path to integration was no different.[138] A UNHCR report on refugees situation on the island also noted that 'according to the ideological background of Cuba, every able person must work'.[139] In addition, the expectation of work and/or study was crucially geared towards preparing exiles for future careers back home once the dictatorships in Uruguay and Chile ended, an opportunity that many took up eagerly.[140]

For Fernando Mazzeo, who had initially gone to Cuba as a means of returning to Uruguay, the refuge he received evolved significantly, with the opportunities he was given going far beyond what he had initially expected. Yet, it was these, and not the military training he had hoped for, that shaped his idea of Cuba in retrospect:

> For me it was a time of hard work, a lot of learning, a lot of comradeship [*compañerismo*], a lot of fraternity and a lot of suffering in the sense of being so far from family, from one's own country and how exile hurts when one is living in a culture that does not belong to its idiosyncrasy. Perhaps because of the character of the Cubans, much less than if we had been in England. It would have been more difficult, but, in addition – there is another very important thing: not only from the material point of view, Cuba provided us with what we needed . . . a house, furnished, you paid absolutely nothing. [But they also asked:] 'What job would you like?' I wanted to work as an electrician . . . And I wanted to study, so I continued to work in technology, I could have done engineering, I could have done medicine, I could have done what I wanted. Because simply [they asked] 'what do you want to do?'[141]

Aside from work and study, former exiles recounted life in Cuba as revolving around day-to-day revolutionary obligations on the island, such as participating in neighbourhood Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, (Revolutionary Defence Committees, CDRs) and 'voluntary work'. This voluntary work varied from cutting cane, painting railings and maintaining neighbourhood gardens and buildings at weekends to extended coffee-picking trips and major construction brigades (the so-called 'micro-brigades' that built districts like Alamar).[142] It should be noted that 'voluntary' work was an *expected* feature of weekly life for everyone on the island, but this did not mean it was not embraced and remembered by many former exiles with fondness. As Parrella and Curto have noted, it provided a means of integration and, alongside formal

[136]Lincolao, Muzio, Guyer and Rossetti interviews.
[137]Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 91.
[138]Rachel Hynson, *Laboring for the State: Women, Family and Work in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959-1971* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 17.
[139]Memorandum, Hugo Idoyaga, UNHCR Regional Representative for Northern Latin America to UNHCR Representative in France, 13 July 1978.
[140]Author's interviews with Gonzalo Serantes López, Zoom (Montevideo, Uruguay), 17 June 2021; Nestor Luzardo, Whatsapp (Montevideo, Uruguay), 24 April and 2 May 2021; Cultelli and Muzio.
[141]Mazzeo interview. On the importance of work and a commitment to contribute to the revolution, see also Ulloa interview.
[142]See for example, Ulloa, Muzio, Cubas, Estevez interviews.

work, another route to revolutionary citizenship.[143] It was also a social activity that involved whole families and friendship groups. In some cases, it caused problems when non-involvement, even on health grounds, was criticised by employers.[144] However, for those who had admired the Cuban Revolution from afar and wanted to show solidarity with it prior to arriving as an exile, it now offered a tangible way to live that reality and contribute to it. As Chilean Socialist, Ariel Ulloa, recalled, he even got into trouble for criticising the *lack* of commitment by members of the local Cuban Communist Youth when it came to weekend voluntary work. Juan Saavedara, a former leader of the MIR living in Santa Clara, similarly recalled that he appeared more eager to commit to goals and work than those for whom living the Revolution was no longer a novelty.[145]

Alongside work and political commitments, however, such obligations of everyday revolutionary life filled exiles' time. In this respect, refuge in revolution had distinct and oftentimes conflictive implications for family life. Many parents recalled being enormously grateful of the schooling that their children received and the chance to dedicate themselves to living 'the Revolution' in Cuba.[146] However, for some second generation exiles in Cuba, this meant they missed out on time with their parents, who were constantly in meetings, rarely at home or around during the holidays.[147] For those living outside Havana, and isolated from other exiles, such as Soledad Guyer, who grew up with her mother and brother in Guantánamo, life was remembered as a struggle of feeling as if she did not fit in. She recalled worrying about keeping her school uniform clean on the long dusty walk to school, and coming second to her mother's work and educational aspirations.[148] Camila Krauss, meanwhile, remembered being put under pressure at school to conform, and being publicly berated for betraying the Revolution and her country's fallen martyrs, her father included, for not living up to the school's revolutionary standards when it came to how she looked, what she wore or how she behaved.[149] For adults, too, refuge in revolution carried a price. Certainly, the opportunity – or expectation – for exiles to maintain their militancy and commitment to politics alongside work and community 'volunteering' had personal implications, with some coming to regret not having spent more time with their children.[150]

Crucially, the Cuban state's childcare provision to help exiles take up the opportunity to work, study and remain politically active shaped the type of revolutionary refuge children received. The Cubans appear to have considered it particularly important for Mirista women who arrived as widows or alone with their children to be relieved of childcare responsibilities, whether this was something they consciously wanted themselves or not. In 1974, Fidel Castro inaugurated the Escuela de Solidaridad con Chile, a boarding school for primary school aged children in Miramar, Havana, a formally upper-class district of the city where the revolution's leaders, prominent personalities and ambassadors to the island lived after 1959.[151] For some children, sent as young as four years old after traumatic years of escape and refuge, this

[143]Parrella and Curto, 'En Cuba, Experiencias Con Muchos Contrastes', 194.
[144]Ulloa interview.
[145]Saavedra interview.
[146]See for example, Cubas and Rosetti interviews.
[147]Tania and Krauss interviews.
[148]Guyer interview.
[149]Kruass interviews.
[150]See for example, Ruz and Estevez interviews.
[151]On Fidel inaugurating the school, see correspondence with San Martín.

experience was hard.[152] However, for many, it would become 'normal' to be away for the week at boarding school.[153] Especially at secondary school age, boarding schools were common in 1970s and 1980s Cuba – including the famous Escuelas Basicas Secundarias del Campo in the countryside, where children undertook agricultural work alongside their studies. Where they did not board, adolescents were obliged to spend two weeks per year participating in rural work brigades.

Education in Cuba during the 1970s and 1980s placed emphasis on this blend of study and work as a means of providing children with a 'revolutionary ethic' and encouraging children from different backgrounds (urban and rural, classes) to mix. Schools purposefully aimed to rid children of individualism and foster collective consciousness within the concept of community-based extended 'families'.[154] Children of exiles in Cuba grew up absorbing this Cuban socialist education while remaining proud of their left-wing Southern Cone origins. At the Solidaridad con Chile in particular, they also had the opportunity at school to mix with children from other parts of Latin America, particularly Central America in the 1980s. In the documentary film, 'Los ojos como mi papa', directed by Pedro Chaskel, a German-Chilean filmmaker living in exile in Cuba and released in Havana in February 1979, children at the school were depicted as the future of revolutionary struggle. They openly talked about 'returning' to fight ('luchar') and of their parents' hope that they would help build a better, socialist world. Physically assembling a giant map of Latin America together, children were pictured quite literally building a collective future for the region. In this respect, the symbolism of the film mirrored Cuban state discourse at the time regarding children's 'indispensable' and 'active' role as 'drivers of progress'.[155]

Adolescents growing up in Cuba imbibed these messages and took ownership of them in their recreational activities and social lives. In 1978 and throughout the 1980s, for example, a group of Uruguayan and Chilean university students were among those who organised a 'Brigada Internacional Juvenil de Amistad' (International Friendship Youth Brigade), which volunteered in mines, factories and construction for 20 days each summer. There was an immense camaraderie between members of the Brigade and an interest in what was happening both around Cuba and abroad. On buses from Havana, Rita Cultelli, who had grown up in Cuba since arriving in exile in 1973 and was one of the founders of the Brigade, remembers singing Nicaraguan revolutionary songs. Arriving at their place of work, up to 150 brigadistas, aged between 13 and 25, would work from six in the morning to contribute to building Cuba's socialist economy.[156] The idea was to repay 'the Revolution' by 'giving it part of their holidays', a Uruguayan who took part in the Brigade explained. Like many of the children of exiles who participated recalled, this yearly Brigade was also vital to their sense of belonging and

[152]Krauss interviews.

[153]Author's interviews with Leticia Cubas and Cecilia Millán, Zoom (Santiago, Chile), 19 July 2021.

[154]Rosi Smith, 'The "Three Ps" (Perfecting, Professionalization, and Pragmatism) and Their Limitations for Understanding Cuban Education in the 1970s', in *Cuba's Forgotten Decade: How the 1970s Shaped the Revolution*, ed. Emily J Kirk, Anna Clayfield, and Isabel Story (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 133–34; Marvin Leiner, *Children Are the Revolution: Day Care in Cuba* (New York: Penguin, 1978), 18–20.

[155]*'Los ojos como mi papa'* dir. Chaskel. On the notion that children were 'indispensable' to the construction of revolutionary socialism in 1970s Cuba, see Anne Luke, 'Within the Revolution, Everyone: Cuba, Youth, and Interrogating the 1970s Paradigm' in *Cuba's Forgotten Decade*, 230-31.

[156]Cultelli interview; Randall, *Estar ahí entonces*, 113.

revolutionary identity in Cuba.[157] 'It is very difficult for a young person today to imagine that. I mean, instead of going on vacation and going to the beach ... or to the disco, or a dance or going out on a date, we organized a brigade', José Pommerenck explained.[158] Even so, evenings were extremely social, with brigadistas gathering for 'peñas' (folk clubs) and dances, or visiting local populations to learn more about everyday life in Cuba and to speak about their own backgrounds as well as what was happening in their home countries. Indeed, for these young adults growing up as exiled children and adolescents in Cuba, social lives often revolved around collective revolutionary activities, exchanges and friendships forged through them; to be revolutionary meant giving back to Cuba, working together and identifying with struggles elsewhere.[159]

This regional and internationalist revolutionary identity that children and young adults absorbed was also reflected in the names Cuban schools were given, which helped Cuban children and their classmates from refugee communities on the island identify with exile communities and revolutionary struggles. Three primary schools carried Uruguayan names, for example: Carlos Chassale (an PCU exile in Cuba who died from cancer in 1978), Héctor 'Meme' Altesor (named after a PCU member who died fighting in Nicaragua with the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) and José Gevacio Artígas (Uruguay's founding father). As well as the boarding school, 'Solidaridad con Chile' others were named after Chilean revolutionary leaders such as the MIR's Miguel Enríquez. Children of exiles also attended schools that represented Cuba's global role and orientation: The school, 'Mártires de Angola' (Angolan Martyrs), for example, in Guanabo, a beach town 26 kilometers east of Havana.[160]

Revolutionary Internationalism

This transnational outlook points a final but by no means insignificant chapter of exiles' experience in revolutionary Cuba that deserves attention for its global significance in the late Cold War: the history of exiles' contribution to other concurrent revolutionary processes in Latin (mostly Central) America and Africa as a result of the refuge Cuba offered. Specifically, but by no means exclusively, in this phase of peripatetic internationalism in the 1980s, Southern Cone exiles travelled to Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru and Colombia.[161] With chances of fighting against dictatorship back home still limited and difficult, exiles took up the opportunities that presented themselves to serve the wider cause of revolution as internationalists abroad. For some, this was a way of gaining experience that could be useful for future return missions to their home countries. For others, like the Chileans who had trained militarily in Cuba, and were growing impatient for an opportunity to return home to overthrow Pinochet's dictatorship, internationalism also acted as a 'pressure valve' to assuage demands to act after intense and prolonged training.[162] This was especially true of the Chileans who had

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[157]Serantes interview.

[158]Author's interview with José Pommerenck, Zoom (Barcelona, Spain).

[159]Cultelli, Randall and Serantes interviews.

[160]Tania interview.

[161]Wilkins in *Memorias de insurgencia*, 271; Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean internationalism', 95; Mitodio and Quiroz interviews; Osorio, *Búlgaros*, 114, 159-62, 168-203.

[162]Javier Ortega, 'La Historia Inédita de Los Años Verde Olivo. Capítulo II', *La Tercera*, 22 April 2001, sec. Reportajes - Serie Especial, 29 April 2001, 2; Contreras interview; Osorio, *Búlgaros*.

trained with the FAR and graduated in 1978. For other exiles, particularly the former members of the Tupamaro *colonias* who had stayed in Cuba, it was an end in itself: a way of serving a cause they believed and wanted to participate in. Compared to the years of defeat amidst right-wing military coups in the 1970s, the Nicaraguan Revolution and the post-colonial project in Angola were symbols of revolutionary progress, representing the possibility that history was, after all, moving in the right direction

Exiled in Buenos Aires, this was the logic that led members of the PCU in 1976 to form a civilian internationalist brigade to go to Angola. Traveling first to Cuba when the political situation deteriorated in Argentina, the brigade, initially numbering 28 before later rising to 43, was integrated into the Misión Civil Cubana (Cuban Civil Mission) in Angola. The mission coordinated accommodation, food and clothing as well as facilitated work placements within the new Angolan state. Members received no salary until 1980 and thereafter dedicated half of what they earnt to clandestine struggles back in Uruguay. Indeed, brigade members, comprising mechanics, medics, psychologists, teachers, agronomists, social assistants and dentists, were there *both* to offer solidarity to Angola *and* as a means of keeping the PCU alive and contributing to resistance against the dictatorship in Uruguay from abroad. It was thus one of many instances in which global Cold War configurations served to remap people's lives and networks. And Cuba provided the route and the means for such transnational ventures.[163]

Cuba also facilitated the incorporation of Southern Cone exiles into revolutionary struggles in Central America. Most obviously, in agreement with Chile's Communist Party, it sent exiles who had trained with Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces since 1975 along with a smaller group of Chilean Socialists to fight with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) on its southern offensive in Nicaragua in 1979.[164] From 1979-83, Chileans were instrumental in helping the FSLN set up the country's new revolutionary armed forces, the Ejército Popular Sandinista. From 1983 onward, other Chileans, including those who had arrived in Cuba in the 1980s as new recruits from Chile and those trained in Bulgaria, went to Nicaragua to participate in the Batallones de Lucha Irregular (Irregular Battalions, BLI) used by the Sandinistas to fight against US-backed counter-revolutionary or 'Contra' forces. Altogether, Victor Figueroa Clark notes that up to 1000 Chileans probably served in Nicaragua between 1979 and 1990. As alluded to above, the experience also contributed to a significant extent in the formation and experience of the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez with many of those who fought in Nicaragua going on to Chile as 'Manuelistas' after returning to Cuba.[165]

Although far less known about them than their Chilean counterparts, 52 Uruguayans (49 MLNT members and 3 PCU militants) also went to Nicaragua to fight alongside the FSLN.[166] Hearing about the FSLN struggle in Santiago de Cuba, Fernando Mazzeo recalled collecting signatures of Uruguayan exiles who wanted to volunteer to fight in

[163]Fernando Rama, 'La Brigade Del PCU En Angola', in *Lídice: Memoria, espacio público, acción política. Y otras memorias subalternas*, ed. Gustavo Faget Caballero and Marcelo Fernández Pavlovich (Montevideo: Miradas sobre educación, Cuarto Libro, 2018), 198–200.

[164]Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean Internationalism'.

[165]Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean internationalism', 15; Figueroa Clark, 'The Forgotten History'; Friedmann Volosky, *Mi hijo Raúl Pellegrin*.

[166]See 'Combatientes uruguayos en la Revolución Sandinista (promocional)' (2021) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C3cshmFgz4; Figueroa Clark refers to 8 Uruguayan officers arriving from Cuba to take part in the FSLN's southern front, though it is unclear which 8 these were or indeed whether there may have been more PCU members with FAR training who participated. Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean internationalism', 148.

Nicaragua with the Sandinistas. These signatures were sent to the FSLN and to the Cuban authorities, who offered to help coordinate this effort. The Cubans then provided short training courses focusing on artillery, designed to help the FSLN's southern offensive, with three groups departing Cuba after this. However, only about half of the Uruguayans who trained eventually went. 'The selection did not depend on us but on the Cuban officials', Mazzeo explained, and the FSLN triumphed far quicker than expected. And he admits that those left in Cuba felt 'frustrated'.[167] Returning home from training rather than Nicaragua, Luis Cubas's wife admonished him. 'What are you doing here?!' she exclaimed. It was a 'big disappointment' not to have gone, he remembered.[168] As exiles in Cuba, Uruguayans had been closely following the news in Nicaragua and Central America and were eager to contribute to revolutionary insurgencies, particularly after hearing that other internationalists, such as the former Panamanian health minister, Hugo Spadafora, had arrived to fight with the FSLN in 1978.[169] After the dismantling of the *colonias* and dispersal of exiles around the island, the prospect of going to Nicaragua had also reunited ex-Tupamaros as well members of the PCU, giving them a renewed sense of political identity on the island.[170]

As the Cold War progressed from the 1970s into the 1980s, those taking part in internationalist ventures in Central America formed a new generation of revolutionaries, succeeding their parents' 1960s' generation. Either in their late teens or early twenties when forced into exile, or, as was increasingly the case, part of a younger generation that had become radicalized during adolescence by the 1980s, they sought a means of participating in active resistance as they entered adulthood. This was Fedora Lagos's story, whose older brother was one of two Chileans to die fighting in the Sandinistas' final offensive in 1979. Arriving in Havana shortly after his death in her late teens, she did everything possible, even defying her parents' wishes at significant personal and emotional cost, to follow in her brother's footsteps. It was to fulfil his revolutionary mission, cut short in battle, that she undertook five-years of intensive training in military communications at the Instituto Técnico Militar José Martí and then served in Nicaragua and El Salvador in the latter half of the 1980s. When I asked her what refuge in revolutionary Cuba meant to her, she did not hesitate, explaining that it had completely changed her life and shaped her political identity as an internationalist and a revolutionary. But she would never have asked for military training or gone to Cuba had it not been for her brother's death and example, or the late Cold War revolutionary struggles to which internationalists could contribute.[171]

Conclusion

This article has provided a survey of the different types of refuge Cuba provided and the complex mix of experiences that exiles encountered on the island during the 1970s and 1980s. Cuba's reception of Chileans and Uruguayans fleeing dictatorships and seeking a means of participating in resistance was, to them, a very particular example of Cold

[167]Mazzeo interview.
[168]Cubas interview.
[169]Mazeo interview.
[170]Wilkins interview.
[171]Author's interview with Fedora Lagos, Havana, Cuba, 14 November 2022.

War refugeedom. Cold War ideological battles and violence explain their exile in the first place and the choices available to them. Cuba as a pivotal centre of refuge meant that left-wing losses were not final endpoints to previous revolutionary ventures or markers of definitive defeat. On the contrary, from 1973 onward, Cuba offered exiles the opportunity to both retain and develop their revolutionary identities. This included building institutions, embracing revolutionary citizenship in everyday life on the island, and participating in internationalist missions or evolving strategies of resistance to the dictatorship, with opportunities varying depending on the exiles' affiliations and party memberships. For a younger generation, either growing up in Cuba as adolescents or arriving as young militants to receive training in the 1980s, Cuba also represented a *formative* experience in the construction of revolutionary identities and praxis. It served as a route to direct resistance against the dictatorships their parents had fled and/or to becoming internationalists that espoused a revolutionary idea of regional belonging.

The lens exiles offer us also reveals the significant strategic shifts that took place in Cuba's approach to supporting revolutionary resistance abroad. The integration of Tupamaro militants into everyday life on the island after the *colonias* experiment ended is a case in point: the real-life consequence of a policy shift that entailed having to suddenly deal with the physical presence on the island of around 450 people who had arrived prior to that shift. Even if, for those who stayed – and other exiles from Chile who came to accept exile would be a longer experience than first thought – what it meant to live a revolutionary life changed from aspiring to partake in armed insurgencies to weekend voluntary work, few, if any, renounced their past political militancy. To the contrary, as is evident by their caution in sharing stories and their desire to do justice to the solidarity Cuba offered, many retain a loyalty to the island, left-wing politics and hope for global revolutionary change. Even so, in many cases, they profess such ideals in rather vague ways as opposed to adhering to strict party militancy. To this day, many also remain grateful for the professional training and expertise that refuge in revolutionary Cuba provided them and that allowed them to transition into the workforce when they returned to the Southern Cone. More so than military training, in fact, this refuge, based on providing education and opportunities, is what many recalled as having proved most enduring and valuable in post-dictatorial Chile and Uruguay.[172]

On the whole, in fact, the refuge Cuba provided empowered left-wing militants, offering them choices and opportunities to work, study, train and organise. Rather than simply being victims of Cold War violence – although many undoubtedly suffered the painful human costs of it – a study of Southern Cone exiles in Cuba also shows that they were also agents in an ongoing struggle to determine the future of their own countries, not to mention those further afield in Central America and Africa. Crucially, those who participated in resistance to dictatorships or campaigned for solidarity – as well as those who travelled to Angola, Nicaragua, El Salvador or Colombia via Cuba – all played roles in the intense transnational and interwoven Cold War struggles of the 1980s. This phase of the conflict was the product of the centrifugal tendencies of previous phases, involving those forcibly displaced in one location and embedding them into an interwoven global battleground. Cuba had a pivotal role in this story, primarily in

[172]Cultelli, Randall, Lincolao, Serrantes and Luzardo interviews.

offering training and logistical support, but it was not the only one, nor a mastermind of the various groups it worked with. As the history of exiles on the island shows, the island's revolutionary government largely responded to different exiled political factions and requests rather than imposing a centralised will and strategy on them all. Historicizing the intersection between refugeedom and the Cold War in this way is imperative if we are to fully understand the fluid and multidimensional nature of the conflict in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The story of exiles in Cuba also provides a lens through which to understand the everyday dimensions of the global Cold War on the island itself. For the majority of those exiled in Cuba, contributing to 'the Revolution' on the island was also a conscious political choice. To help build socialism through the formal labour force or voluntary work at the weekends was to further a broader ideological project that they believed would have a positive bearing on the Cold War's future. To embrace study and training in Cuba provided was also seen as proof – then and now – of the validity of the island's revolutionary programme, with commitment to education as one of the core tenants of socialist development. In the context a far longer-lived exile than the short stays the majority had expected, refuge evolved into finding a place within the island's revolutionary society. In interview after interview, in turn, Chileans and Uruguayans recounted 'solidarity, solidarity and permanent solidarity'. As Enrique San Martín reflected, 'it was our second homeland and we will never forget it'.[173] When asked what Cuba represented to him, Ariel Ulloa, a former revolutionary student in Concepción, a member of the Central Committee of Socialist Party during Allende's government and a local politician in Chile from the 1990s onwards, explained: it was 'the most beautiful experience that I have had in my life: Cuban solidarity is something that I've never [encountered again] ... family [solidarity], [solidarity] from the people that lived on the block, from my work: solidarity and affection were very important'.[174] In Isolina Lincolao's words: 'Cubans are very supportive and generous. Very generous. They are very tolerant, I regard it as incredible tolerance ... the warmth they have ... I never felt discrimination ... things were not easy for them. Nothing. For me the most significant thing [about exile in Cuba] ... especially now that I live in Chile ... and see how Chileans treat immigrants ... is how the Cuban people treated us'.[175]

Lincolao was not alone in noting the stark contrast between Cuba and life after returning to the Southern Cone. For many who grew up on the island, the difference between the openness of Cuban society and the 'individualism' (a pejorative idea instilled from kindergarten in Cuba) in post-dictatorial Chile and Uruguay was difficult.[176] To Andrea Polanco, who had arrived in Cuba as a baby, Chilean society was not only different but backward; it lacked the 'social and communitarian consciousness' she had learnt in Cuba.[177] Exiles in Chile and Uruguay returning from Cuba also struggled economically, arriving with very limited UNHCR financial assistance and little else, unlike many of the exiles arriving from Europe or other parts of Latin America. Many

[173] San Martín correspondence.

[174] Ulloa interview.

[175] Lincolao interview.

[176] Cecilia Millán interview; author's correspondence with Vivia Elena, 23 June 2021. See also, "Luis T" as quoted in Loreto Rebolledo, *Memorias del desarraigo: testimonios de exilio y retorno de hombres y mujeres de Chile* (Santiago, Chile: Catalonia, 2006), 150.

[177] Polanco interview.

fought to find a place to live, to support families and school their children on their wages, even where they were able to use their professional qualifications gained in Cuba to find work. Health, education and housing, all provided by the Cuban state suddenly evaporated.[178]

It is this contrast with contemporary politics and society that helps explain why memories of Cuba for those who lived there in the 1970s and 1980s were often infused with nostalgia despite the hardships of exile amidst dictatorial repression. The tendency interviewees had to self-censor what they told me cannot therefore merely be ascribed to enduring security concerns or party discipline but also to a fear of betraying their own sense of belonging and identity as revolutionary militants in Cuba during these years. In recounting what they had believed and the ways they had once thought history would evolve – through proletarian training, armed resistance, study and voluntary work – many worried their stories seemed crazy in retrospect. Silence had provided protection, not only from pain of exile and bereavement, but also from probing their past convictions and selfhoods. The way the Cold War ended in the Southern Cone, comprising post-dictatorial impunity for those responsible for repression and a renunciation of armed struggle, meant that the world changed irrevocably into a place where many struggled to find a home. In this context, memories of refuge in revolutionary Cuba were often cast as the antithesis of the present: a long-ago memory fading from view in need of cocooning, and a seemingly separate life from those lived out since.

This also explains why former exiles were often vague and dismissive when asked about how their political lives and identities were affected by Cuba. Many professed continuities but the reality was that when they returned to the Southern Cone the political landscape had been profoundly altered by the dictatorships, not to mention the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, in a way that left very little space – if any – for those who believed in 'the Revolution' either as an everyday form of life or a formal political project. It was at this point and in response to the divisions and crises within their own parties that those who had lived in Cuba recall that their political identities shifted, rather than in Cuba itself. Some adapted to new political configurations, joining the new reformed Socialist Party in Chile, for example, which allied with the Christian Democrats to forge the Concertación coalition to manage stability rather than challenge the dictatorship's legacy and promote social change in post-dictatorial Chile. Some left their parties or distanced themselves from formal politics and contributed to local solidarity ventures. The Rossettis, for example, began working with migrant communities in Uruguay and further afield, using their own experience of refuge in Cuba and the training they had received as psychologists on the island to support those experiencing displacement throughout Latin America.[179] Where political parties persisted, most obviously in the case of the PCCh, those involved in resistance to the dictatorship now adapted to a reformulation of their party's identity amidst the new democratic conjuncture in Chile. However, the crisis within the party was profound. As César Quiroz, one of those who returned to Chile in 1990, via a peripatetic exile shaped by the Party's

[178] See Cultelli, Guyer and Llorca interviews.
[179] Rossetti interview.

new military preparation that took him principally to Bulgaria, Cuba and Nicaragua over the course of fifteen years, recalled, the end of the Soviet bloc felt like 'a tragedy: all our referents fell … something that we said was irreversible fell, socialism was irreversible, that was the thesis that existed. And all of a sudden you wake you up and there's no more socialism. So, that was a debacle, a lot of people left the party, they left, many, many left'. Returning to a post-dictatorial Chile was also very hard in this respect. As Quiroz remembered, 'it was a Chile that I didn't know. It was another Chile, not the Chile that I had left as an adolescent'.[180]

Indeed, as well as a lens through which to study different left-wing political configurations in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, the history of Southern Cone exiles in Cuba thus serves to illustrate the human implications of a multisided and fractured Cold War conflict and the messy ways in which it finished. The cost of the Cold War cannot only be understood by counting those who died or charting structural changes at an economic level or in national military arsenals. Its significance must also be measured by exploring the lives of those forced to deal long-term with forced displacement, to reimagine their previous revolutionary convictions and identities, their priorities and strategies, as they adapted to the circumstances they found themselves in. The history of Southern Cone exiles who sought refuge in revolution and how it is remembered in turn has implications for how we understand Cuba and the Left in Latin America as well as the ideological, geopolitical and human, community level contours of the late Cold War.

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[180]Quiroz interviews.