

The Meeting of Revolutionary Roads: Chilean-Cuban Interactions, 1959–1970

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Abstract Fidel Castro's endorsement of Salvador Allende's revolutionary program in August 1970 was determined by global transformations and changing priorities within both Chile and Cuba. Since 1968, favorable prospects for the Left encouraged Havana to abandon its radicalism premised on the inevitability of armed struggle. Prior to 1970 Chile gradually promoted rapprochement with the socialist world and lessened Cuba's hemispheric isolation, imposed by the Organization of American States. It is within this framework that the meeting between Cuba's and Chile's revolutions has to be understood. Allende, knowing that Castro's support would push the radical Left to side with Popular Unity in the 1970 elections, sent a delegation to convince the Cubans that socialism could be achieved by peaceful means. These events and strategic discussions within Chile and Cuba reveal how the history of the Left needs to be placed in a broad context defined by the complex unfolding of domestic, hemispheric, and international transformations shaping Latin America in the 1960s.

“Yes, categorically, in this specific moment, in Chile, I believe it is possible to reach socialism through . . . an electoral victory. . . . The battle is carried out within an institutional framework, and that is why, I repeat: in this specific case, in 1970 Chile, socialism can be reached by an electoral victory.”¹

This statement—pronounced by Fidel Castro on August 1, 1970, nearly a month before the Chilean presidential election that Salvador Allende would win—constituted a milestone in Cuban foreign policy regarding Latin America. This declaration had a considerable impact in Chile. It could be seen as illustrative of Havana's new international flexibility. Given his previous radicalism, Castro's optimism regarding Allende's path to socialism was stunning. Ever since the early 1960s, when Ernesto “Che” Guevara elaborated in *Guerrilla Warfare* a theory that deemed violent upheaval necessary for an effective revolution, the Cuban leaders had insisted on armed struggle as fundamental for social transformation. During most of the 1960s, while the Communist parties faithful to Moscow advocated for gradualism and alliances with a broader range

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1. *El Siglo* (Santiago), 5 Aug. 1970, p. 5.

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of political actors, Havana's confidence in a democratic road to socialism tended to wane. In view of this, Cuba's decision to endorse the institutional project of Popular Unity (UP) announced a major reassessment of Havana's position in world politics.² Castro's intervention in the midst of the presidential campaign profoundly affected public opinion, particularly among a significant sector of the Chilean Left. Cuba's public validation of a socialist project carried out by democratic means initiated an unexpected encounter between two revolutionary roads, dramatically interrupted by Augusto Pinochet's coup d'état in 1973. It heralded the beginning of a collaboration between Chile and Cuba, dramatically interrupted by Augusto Pinochet's coup d'état in 1973.

This partial and somewhat controversial ideological convergence has to be understood as a result of wider hemispheric transformations within the inter-American system, the progression of the Cold War, and specific developments in Chile and Cuba. As I will demonstrate, both Latin American countries forged international policy within a complex frame determined by multilateral dynamics experienced on a local and global scale. Domestic evolutions and international constraints fused in a way that cannot be grasped as solely the result of US-USSR tensions and international strategies. This article aims to provide a decentered vision of the Cold War, using Cuba and Chile to show that, beyond the clash of superpowers, the twentieth century was also powerfully shaped by South-South crossings and connections.

A long-term perspective that highlights the earlier history informing each country's approach to the hemispheric system can offer a clearer view of the Chilean-Cuban relationships that eventually led to the reestablishment of diplomatic ties under Allende. I argue that it is essential to identify changes that took place during the 1960s to fully understand the nature of Cuba's commitment to the UP as well as the manifold factors that set the tone for the convergence of these two revolutionary roads. We will see that Castroite ideology has been rather unstable, evolving along with hemispheric and global conditions. Cuba's connections with Chile until 1973 exemplify how national political systems can be transformed as a result of international interactions. Following this logic, this article presents Castro's changed attitude toward the electoral revolutionary path, embodied by Allende, in a wider context. The tempering of Cuba's radical international position, epitomized by Castro's backing of the UP, is difficult to understand without considering various Latin American and global transformations that occurred throughout the 1960s.

2. The coalition headed by Salvador Allende was made up of left-wing organizations—the Chilean Socialist Party (PSCh), the Chilean Communist Party (PCCh), the Popular Unitary Action Movement (MAPU), the Independent Popular Action (API), and the more moderate Radical Party (PR).

Allende's immediate decision upon assuming office to restore diplomatic links with Cuba, making Chile the first South American country to do so, would have been much more controversial without the earlier initiatives carried out by the Christian Democratic administration headed by Eduardo Frei (1964–70). The three-year honeymoon in Cuban-Chilean relations should also be seen as a predictable outcome of a larger transformation. As the first part of this article shows, the 1959 Cuban Revolution was not immediately condemned by Chilean authorities. Committed to the principle of respecting other countries' sovereignty, the conservative president Jorge Alessandri (1958–64) only reluctantly agreed to call back the Chilean ambassador in Havana, under pressure from a hostile inter-American system. Following the 1964 presidential election, the Christian Democratic government was willing to contemplate reconciliation with the island, which would contribute to breaking Cuba's hemispheric isolation. It is within this frame of gradual rapprochement that Allende, after receiving the Cubans' endorsement of his presidential campaign, definitively ended Havana's seclusion within the inter-American system.

Elements linked to both the revolutionary prospects in Latin America and the nature of the Cuban-Soviet alliance contributed to lessening Cuba's commitment to armed struggle and to shaping Havana's new international stance. I will show this by assessing the extent to which Castro's acceptance of the Chilean road to socialism contrasted with his earlier determination to export revolution through violence. The last part of this article emphasizes the discussions leading to Cuba's acknowledgment that, in Chile, revolution could be achieved without a bloody fight. Castro's 1970 statement on the matter, with which I opened this article, was preceded by discussions with a UP delegation, sent by Allende himself, that tried to persuade Castro and his advisers that the soon-to-be Chilean president had a real chance to erect a socialist society through electoral means. Allende and Castro were perfectly aware of the gap separating each other's revolutionary strategy, but they both proved willing to forge an entente for the sake of Latin American revolution.

This analysis is possible thanks to access to new sources such as the reports housed in the archives of both the Chilean and the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations, based in Santiago and Havana, respectively. These new sources supplement contemporary newspaper and magazine coverage, along with valuable oral testimonies. Many of the personalities who played a key role in strengthening relations between Chile and Cuba were still alive when I wrote this article and were eager to share their memories. This new array of sources allows for a long-term perspective on what made possible an embrace between Allende's project and the Cuban approach to revolution at the dawn of the 1970s, when a new revolutionary government came to power in Chile.

The “Cuban Question” in Chilean Foreign Policy before 1970

In January 1959, when Castro’s revolutionaries entered Havana, Fulgencio Batista’s fall was broadly received in Chile as positive. To most observers, the Cuban Revolution’s success seemed a necessary transformation that would increase social justice and democracy. At that time Castro had not used the word *Communism*, and there were few portents of the future alliance with the Soviet Union. Manuel Urrutia, a lawyer committed to the Western sphere, was appointed president after Batista’s departure.³ Castro traveled to the United States in April 1959 and advocated for closer commercial relations. The pro-Moscow Popular Socialist Party was not represented in the new administration, and most revolutionaries, including Castro, repeatedly denied any sympathy for the Eastern world.⁴

In this confused context, it should not be surprising that even some conservative newspapers in Chile, including *El Mercurio* and *El Diario Ilustrado*, regarded the events as a justifiable reaction against “tyranny.”⁵ The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) went further by welcoming the Cuban Revolution. An early letter signed by Patricio Aylwin, president of the PDC, stated that the members of his party had “followed with great interest and admiration the courageous fight that [Castro] headed for the Cubans’ liberation.” Aylwin placed the revolutionary triumph amid wider developments aimed at “liberating all the people of America” and concluded with an invitation to Castro to visit Chile.⁶ The *comandante* was not able to leave the country, but he sent his

3. According to President Urrutia, “certainly, the United States and Cuba respond to the same democratic, republican, and liberal ideology. . . . On the one hand, our Western culture . . . on the other hand, the one [the Soviet Union’s] that kidnaps the sovereignty and the individual consciousness of people through persecution and death.” “Discurso del ciudadano presidente doctor Manuel Urrutia,” 3 Mar. 1959, Archivo Nacional de la República de Cuba, Havana, fondo Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, leg. 9, p. 159.

4. As Castro complained in May 1959, “some people slander us by saying that the government is infiltrated by communists.” “Extractos del discurso pronunciado por el Primer Ministro de Cuba,” Dec. 1961, Archivo Histórico del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de Chile, Santiago (hereafter cited as AHMAEC), fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 1 (1961).

5. Fernando Huerta, “Chile,” 124. This 1982 article raised the “cuestion cubana” that I refer to in this section’s title. While this piece is remarkable, especially given the limited access to sources and ideological biases at the time, I aim to update Fernando Huerta’s earlier approach through a new set of testimonies and archival materials.

6. Patricio Aylwin and Alberto Jerez to Fidel Castro, Santiago, Jan. 1959, Repositorio Digital Archivo Patricio Aylwin Azócar, accessed 22 Feb. 2018, <http://www.archivopatricioaylwin.cl/handle/123456789/3896>.

brother Raúl to Santiago, where José Musalem, a Christian Democrat who had recently stayed in Havana, hosted the Cuban delegation in August 1959.⁷ It is interesting to note that for a committed revolutionary such as Carlos Lechuga, the new Cuban government's first ambassador to Santiago, the PDC was, among Chilean political parties, "the closest to the Cuban Revolution from an ideological point of view."⁸

In these early years of the revolution, political parties played a major role in bolstering Cuba-Chile relations. In the absence of an official commitment to expanding relations with a revolutionary government that was increasingly adopting a leftist turn, Chilean nonstate actors stepped into the breach. Both the PSCh and PCCh hailed Castro's anti-imperialist stance and rapidly became key mediators between Chile and the island. Salvador Allende was among the first foreign activists to visit Cuba after Batista's fall, meeting Guevara and Castro, the latter with whom he cultivated a long-standing friendship. Allende visited Havana almost annually until his death in 1973.⁹ Many Socialists, such as Joel Marambio and Ricardo Núñez, became strong advocates of the Cuban Revolution. During the second half of the 1960s, when the PSCh tended to radicalize its revolutionary discourse, some party members even received secret military training on the island.¹⁰

Encouraged by Castro's determination to build an alliance with the Soviet Union, some Chilean Communists settled in Cuba to work in public institutions such as the National Institute for Agrarian Reform, the University of Santiago de Cuba, and the Ministry of Economics.¹¹ Other nongovernmental organizations emerged to offset the lack of regular connections between the two states. Headed by the writer Matilde Ladrón de Guevara, the Chilean-Cuban Cultural Institute (ICCC) was established in Santiago to "promote

7. Musalem, *Mi vida entre líneas*, 93–94; José Musalem and Clemencia Sarquis, interview by author, Santiago, 16 Oct. 2017. The Belgian politician Raymond Scheyven noted during a trip to Chile that, after the revolutionary triumph in Cuba, the PDC adopted a more leftist discourse. The visitor was impressed by the Christian Democrats' passionate speech and particularly by their constant attacks against "imperialism." Scheyven, *De Punta del Este*, 11–13.

8. Jefe de la Sección C to jefe del departamento, Havana, 11 Nov. 1959, Archivo Central del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba, Havana (hereafter cited as AMINREX), fondo Chile, cajuela 1959.

9. Over the revolution's first three years, Allende visited Havana on five occasions. Amorós, *Allende*, 176, 443.

10. Fernández Abara, Góngora Escobedo, and Arancibia Clavel, *Ricardo Núñez*, 86.

11. Emilio Edwards Bello to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Havana, 17 Dec. 1959, AHMAEC, fondo Histórico, carpeta Cuba 1959, no. 5292A.

cultural propaganda.”¹² Reflecting the initially widespread acceptance of the revolution, the institute’s members were not all left-inclined propagandists: Ana Eugenia Ugalde and Rudecindo Ortega, for instance, were both members of the centrist PR.¹³

But this consensus would not last forever. Facing American hostility, Cuban authorities shifted policy and embarked on a more radical path. As Cuba’s first contacts with Moscow were established, the US administration imposed strict trade restrictions and, in 1960, refused to process Soviet oil at US-owned refineries on the island. The Cuba–United States rupture was soon followed by a hemispheric reassessment of inter-American relations. A number of Latin American countries in the Organization of American States (OAS) paved the way for Cuba’s diplomatic isolation. In 1962 the OAS decided to exclude Cuba from its regular meetings. Two years later, during the OAS’s Ninth Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Americas, assembled in Washington, DC, a resolution was approved to break official and commercial relations with Havana, despite opposition from Chile, Mexico, Bolivia, and Uruguay.¹⁴

In Chile, President Alessandri reluctantly followed the resolution. But Santiago did not hide its uneasiness. As the minister of foreign affairs, Julio Philippi, pointed out in August 1964, the OAS resolution was “compulsory for my government according to Article 20” of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, despite Chile having voted against the resolution.¹⁵ Alessandri was obviously dissatisfied with the direction of the Cuban Revolution, but he publicly protested inflicting such a harsh blow to Havana, noting how the Chilean government had opposed “with a large supply of arguments” the cutting of relations with Cuba, which Santiago considered “inconvenient and wrong.” However, he lamented, “we were defeated,” and “the strict observance of treaties and the respect of the agreements democratically adopted by the required majority have always been vital principles of Chile’s international policy.”¹⁶

In this context, leftist political parties and pro-Cuban nonstate institutions in Chile stepped up their efforts to disseminate a positive view of the

12. The ICCC already had four regional sections by 1961, in Temuco, Arica, Concepción, and Valparaíso. “Memoria anual del Instituto Chileno Cubano de Cultura, 1961,” Santiago, n.d., AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1961.

13. Ladrón de Guevara, *Adiós al cañaveral*, 13, 180.

14. This regular conference was established in 1947 by the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, also known as the Rio Treaty.

15. Julio Philippi to Chilean embassy in Havana, Santiago, 11 Aug. 1964, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 10 (1964).

16. Jorge Alessandri, quoted in Fernando Huerta, “Chile,” 190–91.

Cuban revolutionary model. Due to “selfishness” and “virtually nonexistent activity,” the ICCC underwent a shakeup, with Ladrón de Guevara expelled and replaced by the poet Ángel Cruchaga Santa María, who restructured the organization around notorious leftists such as Allende, Pablo Neruda, and Clodomiro Almeyda.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the Cuban Revolution provided a powerful imaginary for Chilean leftists, many of whom started to perceive the island as the political horizon that real revolutionaries should strive for. This held for left-wing Christian Democrats, Communists, and Socialists, the last of whom often resorted to increasingly aggressive rhetoric that echoed Castro’s insurrectionary strategy for revolution. Dropping his previous commitment to electoral tactics, the Socialist senator Alejandro Chelén denounced in 1960 “the opium of a nonexistent civic superiority” and asserted that the people “are tired of elections that only add oxygen to a parasitic democracy.” Chelén concluded that only by embracing Castro’s model of “revolutionary action” would Chilean revolutionaries “find the route heading toward a definitive liberation” and the “total transformation of the system that subjugates us.”¹⁸ For some Socialists, their fellow party member Allende no longer seemed an adequate presidential candidate. According to Alejandro Philippi, who traveled to Cuba shortly after Allende’s defeat in the 1964 presidential election, the latter had “fulfilled his role in history” and was losing his “political punch,” “no longer cut out for leading and guiding the masses in the armed struggle.”¹⁹

The dissemination of a heroic, legendary depiction of recent Cuban events was reinforced by effective tourist diplomacy. A Santiago-based Cuban diplomat suggested this in order to “persuade” people belonging to “other circles” besides “Socialists and Communists that the Cuban Revolution is positive.”²⁰ As a result, Havana spent considerable resources to host and convert potential fellow travelers. One of them was the Christian Democrat Patricio Hurtado, who visited Cuba in 1962 despite his initial criticism; he returned to Chile with a laudatory impression. Hurtado not only uncritically reproduced the mythologies of the Cuban saga (such as the myth of the twelve survivors after the *Granma* landing) but also publicly praised the endeavors to build a “New Man”

17. Instituto Chileno-Cubano de Cultura to Lázaro Vigoa, Santiago, 2 Feb. 1961, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1961.

18. Chelén, *La Revolución Cubana*, 30–38.

19. Alberto Velasco and Manuel Sánchez, *Política Regional 1–América*, Havana, 23 Nov. 1964, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1964. Philippi is presented in this document as Allende’s personal secretary.

20. Edgardo Arnal to Miguel Ángel Duque Estrada, Santiago, 10 Apr. 1960, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1960.

and provided a Christian vindication for Castro's radical measures.²¹ Hurtado's pilgrimages to Havana did not stop, and he displayed an increasingly enthusiastic stance toward the Cuban model. After a controversy between Frei and Castro that was triggered during his 1966 trip to Havana, Hurtado sided with Castro and left the PDC to campaign for a "broad revolutionary front" that would eventually lead to the "people's seizure of power," which "would surely not occur by peaceful means."²²

Among the factors favoring the dissemination of idealized references to the Cuban Revolution, the proliferation of bilateral friendship societies such as the ICCC was significant, as they entered into the popular imaginary and contributed to Chileans assimilating the revolutionary narrative propagated by Cuban authorities. One such organization, the Movement of Solidarity and Defense of the Cuban Revolution, sent in 1964 a petition to the newly elected president Frei reminding him of the Christian Democrats' favorable inclination toward Cuba in the past and claiming that American "aggression" had instigated Alessandri to break relations with Cuba.²³ Indeed, by doing so Alessandri imposed a heavy burden on Frei's government. Elected on a reformist agenda, the so-called "revolution in liberty," Frei, along with his minister of foreign affairs, Gabriel Valdés, sought to lead his country in an international opening. Along with a reformist social and economic policy—including an agrarian reform, the partial nationalization of the copper industry, and an innovative project called *Promoción Popular*—Frei immediately established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and five other socialist countries.

The need to maintain the country's traditionally close relationship with the White House ultimately deterred Chilean authorities from taking any step that

21. "Conferencia del diputado Demócrata Cristiano Sr. Patricio Hurtado," Santiago, 25 July 1962, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1962. The revolutionary narrative has always preferred to retain the number of 12 survivors, which is inaccurate but echoes the Christian tradition, still very strongly engraved in people's identities during the revolution's first years.

22. "Patricio Hurtado. Chile," Havana, 3 Feb. 1968, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1968.

23. *Movimiento de Solidaridad y Defensa de la Revolución Cubana* to Eduardo Frei, Santiago, 9 Nov. 1964, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 10 (1964). The Movement of Solidarity and Defense of the Cuban Revolution was established in mid-1960. Headed by the union leader Clotario Blest, it aimed at disseminating the "conquests of the revolution." Clotario Blest and Ernesto Miranda to Juan José Díaz del Real, Santiago, 4 Oct. 1960, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1960. This initiative was soon reinforced by regional efforts, such as the constitution in Temuco of the Solidarity Commando with the Cuban Republic. Jorge Flores and Vicente Aguayo to Juan José Díaz del Real, Temuco, 23 July 1960, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1960.

would allow for Cuba's regional reintegration. However, as Valdés acknowledged in 1965, Cuba was also on the government's agenda. He hinted at the possibility of "cooperating actively for the reintegration of this state in the American family . . . whatever the socioeconomic regime prevailing there." Furthermore, Valdés announced that "Chile's government w[ould] not be absent from the negotiations meant to reestablish American unity"; addressing US hostility, he asserted that "we are highly concerned by the fact that a country belonging culturally and geographically to the Latin community of our hemisphere has been marginalized from the normal life of interstate relations."²⁴ The Cubans saw this as a potentially favorable omen. Inquiring into the Christian Democratic administration, the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs found it "conspicuously different from the majority of the other governments in the continent that are repeating the well-known American imperialist slogans." Somewhat unique to the region, the Chilean government was the "creator of social measures aimed at benefiting popular sectors." Because of their openly critical stance toward the OAS and their recognition of Cuba "as a socialist country," the Chilean authorities offered a hopeful prospect for Havana's hemispheric integration. The ministry report concluded that Cuban leaders should adopt a "cautious" and "wait-and-see" attitude, as the "content of Chile's pronouncements constitutes objective confirmation of the rightness of Cuba's position regarding Latin America."²⁵

The atmosphere in the mid-1960s was, nonetheless, unlikely to favor such hopes. The Tricontinental Conference held in Havana in January 1966—attended by leftist delegates from Asia, Africa, and Latin America—and especially the First Conference of the Latin American Organization of Solidarity (in 1967), the high point of Castro's radical views on Latin American revolution, reinforced the gap between the OAS's position and Cuba's efforts to export revolution across the continent. Moreover, the Soviets' willingness to forge links with other Latin American countries created strains with the Cubans, who were horrified by Moscow's efforts to gain recognition from these bourgeois states.²⁶ The period from 1966 to 1968 saw increasing divergence between Havana and Moscow. Additionally, two main factors contributed to an almost irreconcilable rift within the Latin American Left: strategic differences regarding the right formula to prompt a real revolution (armed struggle

24. Gabriel Valdés, "La política internacional chilena," *Política y Espíritu* (Santiago), Jan.–Feb. 1965, pp. 28–29.

25. *Política Regional 1—América*, "Chile: Manifestación sobre Cuba de la Democracia Cristiana," Havana, 11 Jan. 1965, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1965.

26. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 217–20.

in the countryside, mass mobilization, electoral participation, or enlarged political alliances), and the Soviet Union's sympathetic approach to Frei and other administrations in the region.²⁷ Castro increasingly perceived the revolution in liberty as a threat to the popularity of his own radical revolutionary path. The comandante violently attacked Frei in 1966 as a "coward who abuses power," a "liar," and a "vulgar politician," in a message directed to both Chilean and Soviet authorities.²⁸ Tensions intensified when Moscow signed three commercial agreements with Santiago in 1967. Under these circumstances, Valdés's hope to develop further ties with Cuba seemed, for the moment, unrealistic. Rather, from 1966 to 1968, as Cuba insisted with renewed zeal on the need to overthrow the established regimes in Latin America, the regional governments' united front against Havana tended to strengthen.

But this apparent unanimity suffered a major blow in February 1970, when Chile's Christian Democratic administration publicly announced the reestablishment of commercial exchanges with Cuba. This move was made possible by a new international framework. Having witnessed a series of disheartening setbacks for insurgent guerrilla movements across Latin America, the Cubans were forced to consider different methods for advancing social justice (a point that I will discuss further). Cuba's new flexibility encouraged the Christian Democrats to consider a gradual opening up to the island. Seeking to diversify partners in order to benefit from new potential international markets and thereby reduce Chile's dependence on American assistance, Valdés sent in 1968 Belisario Velasco, operations manager of the Empresa de Comercio Agrícola, as Chile's first official delegate to China and, immediately thereafter, Havana, with the mission of discussing commercial exchange with both of these socialist states.

Velasco managed to arrange an ambitious deal with the Chinese, who agreed to sell 1,000 tons of tea to Santiago. Velasco's stay in Havana also proved

27. One of the strongest defenders of a peaceful road to socialism within the Latin American Left was the PCCh, which led to overt controversy with the Cubans. Communist poet Pablo Neruda's trip to the United States in 1966 provided a good pretext for Cuba to respond to the PCCh's electoral strategy while highlighting Havana's insurrectionist views. A group of Cuban intellectuals published an "open letter" denouncing Neruda's conciliatory attitude toward American "imperialism." The letter also laid out a deeper concern regarding the PCCh's general political line: "For us . . . the road to a real liberation from wars (cold or hot) must come through national liberation struggles, through guerrillas, and not through an impossible conciliation." "Una carta a Neruda," *Punto Final* (Santiago), second half of Aug. 1966, p. 20. The letter was written at the request of President Osvaldo Dorticós, who personally contacted the Cuban artists. See Otero, *Llover sobre mojado*, 199; Antón Arrufat, interview by author, Havana, 26 Feb. 2018.

28. Fidel Castro, "Frei y la máscara del reformismo," *Cuba* (Havana), Apr. 1966, p. 16.

fruitful. After spending almost ten days with Castro traveling throughout the island, Velasco laid the foundation for an agricultural agreement that was eventually signed in February 1970.²⁹ The establishment of economic ties with Cuba, a risky decision likely to damage Chile's historic alliance with the White House, must be regarded as undeniable evidence of Frei's diplomatic flexibility.

Additionally, the decision enshrined in the 1970 accord to send a considerable amount of agricultural products (garlic, beans, and onions) to Cuba represented the first step toward hemispheric normalization, prompting Havana's gradual reintegration into the inter-American scene. We cannot fully understand Allende's determination to reestablish diplomatic links with Havana without considering these earlier efforts of the Christian Democrats. Despite strong resistance within Chilean society and abroad, Frei's administration became the first Latin American government to offer the Cubans an entry point back into the regional matrix.³⁰ But this rapprochement could not have been achieved without a clear transformation of Cuba's hemispheric policy, noticeable since the second half of 1968.

Cuba: From Armed Struggle to Multiple Paths toward Revolution

As a result of the guerrillas' tragic failures all over Latin America, epitomized by Che Guevara's death in Bolivia in 1967, Cuban leaders realized that they needed to shift their international policy, henceforth emphasizing state-to-state relationships instead of clandestine subversion.³¹ As the former advocate of the violent road for Latin America's revolutions, Régis Debray, pointed out in 1974, "The physical disappearance of Che, brutal, precipitous, incredible, was like a cold shower. . . . It is more than a symbol; his death represents a real shift in the struggle. In 1967, the rural guerrilla's curve turned downward, ineluctably."³² Moreover, Guevara was one of the most obstinate critical voices within the Cuban leadership against the Soviets' international priorities. Therefore, the

29. Belisario Velasco, interview by author, Santiago, 20 Sept. 2016; Valdés, *Sueños y memorias*, 180–85.

30. The conservative newspaper *El Mercurio* accused La Moneda of fostering a "reconciliation movement unilaterally generated, with which earlier affronts are forgiven." The Colombian minister of foreign affairs condemned Chile's decision to deal with Havana, while the US ambassador worriedly called President Frei to obtain further explanations after his commercial agreement. *El Mercurio* (Santiago), 21 Feb. 1970, p. 3; Valdés, *Sueños y memorias*, 185.

31. Harmer, "Two, Three, Many Revolutions?," 82–86.

32. Debray, *La critique des armes*, 245.

end of his involvement in Bolivia—strongly objected to by the Kremlin—contributed to improving Cuba–Soviet Union relations.³³ For the Cubans, this reassessment of strategies was also due to the guerrillas' inability to master rural warfare techniques. As Castro put it in a secret meeting in 1970, although “concrete aid” was delivered to revolutionary movements, combatants “were not capable of assimilating all the assistance that we could give.”³⁴

Compounding the rural guerrillas' disasters, Moscow's patience regarding Havana's radicalism was about to run out. Alexei Kosygin traveled to the island to deliver a “virtual ultimatum”: “cease and desist from trying to foment revolution in Latin America or suffer the consequences.”³⁵ Economic pressures soon followed. A report from the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs alarmingly noted that the commercial deal offered by Moscow for 1968–69 involved a “freezing” of Soviet oil delivery to the island; the ministry concluded that this “unacceptable and impossible” plan “openly conspires against the economic development of the country.”³⁶ Threatened by the Soviets, the Cuban leadership had no option but to abandon its previous defiance. A first step in that direction was taken in August 1968, when Castro unexpectedly supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. After this, the Soviets fully restored commercial exchange with Havana, while Cuba's administration embarked on an internal transformation inspired by the Soviet model. The *guerrillero* ethos was gradually replaced by a more institutionalized political structure based on the prominent position of the Cuban Communist Party, created in 1965.

The recognition of the Soviet Union's leading position within the Communist movement pushed the Cubans to drop their belligerency and to present noninsurrectional revolutionary methods in a better light, particularly in Latin America, where significant changes had been apparent since 1968. As Castro later asserted, through “different paths, methods, and strategies” the “Latin American revolutionary movements” had made progress toward “the seizure of power.”³⁷

33. Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World*, 99–101.

34. “Entrevista de nuestro Primer Ministro Comandante Fidel Castro con representantes de la prensa y la televisión de Chile,” Havana, 1970, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1974.

35. Blight and Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days*, 125.

36. “Memorandum de la delegación gubernamental de la República de Cuba para la concertación de un convenio comercial a mediano plazo con la URSS,” Havana, 25 Jan. 1968, AMINREX, fondo URSS, cajuela 1968–1969.

37. Juan Enrique Vega to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Havana, 13 Aug. 1971, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 12 (1971).

The first step toward a new position regarding revolutionary prospects in Latin America came with Juan Velasco Alvarado's seizure of power in Peru in 1968. Although General Velasco Alvarado was by no means a Communist, he was engaged in a general transformation of Peruvian domestic and foreign policy, including nationalization and agrarian reform, and deployed a radical anti-imperialist discourse. Long before the arrival of the first Cuban ambassador to Lima, the Castro brothers eagerly observed the rapid radicalization of the military government. In 1969, the *líder máximo* openly declared that Velasco Alvarado's administration had a "revolutionary character."³⁸ Jorge Edwards—appointed by Allende, after winning the presidency, as the *chargé d'affaires* to Havana and tasked with opening the Chilean embassy there—witnessed first-hand Castro's enthusiasm for Velasco Alvarado, a "man of the left, driven by honorable and patriotic purposes."³⁹ To understand this acceptance, we should not forget that the Cuban Revolution itself had not been carried out in the name of a particular ideology before 1961. Referring to Peru in 1971, Castro stressed that Velasco Alvarado's lack of a firm ideological orientation might be explained by the fact that "revolutionary processes are not born on the first day with an absolute definition."⁴⁰ Moreover, as pointed out by a former Chilean diplomat who had regular contacts with the Cubans, the strategy of Velasco Alvarado, a strongman controlling the armed forces and thus less likely to be overthrown, seemed to correspond to the Cubans' idea of how the initial stage of revolutionary transformation should proceed.⁴¹ After visiting Chile in 1971, Castro stopped in Lima, where he stressed that "if I were a Peruvian revolutionary . . . I would try to encourage this process."⁴² In July 1972, the newly appointed Peruvian ambassador in Havana, Joaquín Heredia, offered an unusually passionate message, calling Castro a "bright beacon illuminating, guiding, providing faith and hope to the oppressed people of the world."⁴³ Tellingly, the Cuban ambassador appointed to Lima was a very prominent figure: Antonio Núñez Jiménez, one of Castro's closest collaborators at the beginning of the

38. Fidel Castro, "Discurso de Fidel en el C. Guiteras," *Política Internacional* (Havana), 14 July 1969, pp. 250–52.

39. Jorge Edwards to Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales, Departamento América, Havana, 10 Dec. 1970, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 11 (1970).

40. Vega to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Havana, 13 Aug. 1971, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 12 (1971).

41. Francisco Fernández, interview by author, Santiago, 16 Nov. 2016.

42. Castro, *Cuba-Chile*, 543.

43. Juan Enrique Vega to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Havana, 24 July 1972, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 16 (1972).

revolutionary process. Another powerful signal came in December 1972, when a Peruvian military delegation reached Havana in order to assess the quality of arms and equipment imported from the Soviet Union.⁴⁴

After having scorned any sort of alternative path to social justice during most of the 1960s, Havana began to accept different revolutionary experiences, rooted in each country's own political evolution. Raúl Roa, Cuban minister of foreign affairs, acknowledged in 1972 that "three types of revolutionary processes" were being successfully carried out at the time: the Cuban, Chilean, and Peruvian paths.⁴⁵ Cuba also regarded other Latin American progressive leaders with enthusiasm. Bolivia's General Alfredo Ovando embarked on a reformist agenda that led to the nationalization of US-owned companies. Ovando's efforts were continued by another military leader, Juan José Torres, whose overthrow in 1971 constituted a significant blow for the Cubans.⁴⁶ Commenting on a speech in which Castro invoked "a wave of revolutionary radicalization . . . shaking the continent," the Cuban journalist Carlos Núñez observed how "we can see now in Bolivia a revolutionary, convulsed, and radicalized people." "Imperialists are worried," Castro continued, and "we will not do any favors to the imperialists."⁴⁷

The case of Omar Torrijos, the Panamanian military leader who took power through a coup d'état in 1968, is interesting. Like Velasco Alvarado, Torrijos was a member of the armed forces who forcibly held on to power and preached an intensely nationalistic discourse. His effort to take over the Panama Canal, owned by the United States since the beginning of the twentieth century, was seen as proof of his anti-imperialist leanings. Castro backed "the government guided by General Torrijos" and deemed the Panamanian people "one of the most rebellious in Latin America."⁴⁸

The Cubans were now also willing to support progressive politicians who gained power by democratic means. The Ecuadorian leader José María Velasco Ibarra, elected president in 1968 for the fifth time, followed a reformist

44. Gonzalo Rojas to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Havana, 18 Dec. 1972, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 16 (1972). Peru eventually bought sophisticated Soviet weapons, including tanks, becoming the only South American country to import Soviet warfare matériel. Berrios and Blasier, "Peru and the Soviet Union."

45. Juan Enrique Vega to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Havana, 10 July 1972, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 16 (1972).

46. Harner, "Two, Three, Many Revolutions?," 75–77.

47. Carlos Núñez, "Cuba: La línea de siempre," *Cuba Internacional* (Havana), July 1971, p. 6.

48. Juan Enrique Vega to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Havana, 7 Jan. 1972, AHMAEC, fondo Países, carpeta Cuba 16 (1972).

and rather authoritarian political line. Instead of being regarded as a traditional figure embodying the long-standing supremacy of a decadent oligarchy, Velasco Ibarra was praised by the Cubans for his social and nationalistic concerns. After his trip to Chile in 1971, Castro stopped in Guayaquil and met the Ecuadorian leader. At a press conference, Castro celebrated Quito's new international approach. He particularly appreciated the government's vote in favor of "the entry of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations," which represented "one of the greatest defeats of imperialism in the diplomatic field."⁴⁹

The Uruguayan presidential election, held in November 1971, had also raised Cuban hopes. Aiming to replicate the UP's success in Chile, the Broad Front, a coalition of many different leftist parties, was well positioned to attain power. The comandante observed with optimism this "electoral battle," seeing in the Broad Front "an emergent possibility" likely to confirm the appropriateness of Allende's democratic path.⁵⁰

Before the UP's arrival to power in Chile, Cuba's openness resulted in rapprochement with the Chilean Christian Democrats. Gabriel Valdés's independent stance on foreign policy was judged a brave step that challenged US hemispheric hegemony.⁵¹ As already noted, Frei's readiness to reestablish commercial ties with Havana helped to temper Cuban hostility. Castro acknowledged that Frei's Chile had to be distinguished from other reactionary countries. The Cubans recognized in mid-1970 that Santiago's approval of exporting agrarian products to Havana represented "one of those concrete events confirming the existence of a new situation in Latin America."⁵² Highlighting the change in the international atmosphere from 1964 to the late 1960s, spurred by the progressive awakening to Washington's supremacy amid the Vietnam War, Castro observed how "Chile is not the same as the dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina, or Uruguay."⁵³ This somewhat prudent statement was accompanied by a more discreet but revealing gesture in favor of the Christian Democrats.

49. Castro, *Cuba-Chile*, 559.

50. Castro, 273. Castro acknowledged this during a meeting in Concepción, Chile, in November 1971.

51. Valdés was behind the so-called Viña del Mar Consensus of 1969, a declaration from representatives of 21 Latin American countries presented by Valdés to Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. Valdés stressed the "excessive profits" obtained by the United States in its commercial relationships with Latin America and accused Secretary of State Kissinger of being an "imperialist." Valdés, *Sueños y memorias*, 196. See also Henríquez and van Klaveren, "Chile empieza."

52. *Cuba Internacional* (Havana), July 1970, p. 18.

53. *El Siglo* (Santiago), 5 Aug. 1970, p. 3.

When Beatriz Allende, daughter of Salvador, came back from Havana a few days after her father's election, she brought a message from Castro suggesting that Valdés should remain in his position as minister of foreign affairs under the new government.⁵⁴ Previously, Castro had acknowledged that Valdés “has expressed several times—in the United Nations, in different international organizations—a position that clearly differed from classic positions regarding Cuba held by all other ministries of foreign affairs.”⁵⁵

With Cuba seeing an opportunity to benefit by reemerging on the hemispheric scene, Havana deliberately defined a more flexible approach. As criticisms regarding Cuba's explicit allegiance to the Soviet Union—a move frowned on by several observers sympathetic to the Cuban experience but reluctant to accept the Soviet model—intensified, Cuba started to present itself as a potential partner to many Latin American governments. A number of Latin American leaders contributed to this turn from 1968 to 1973, including former rivals to Castro such as Frei. Allende's arrival to power, as we will now see, opened the most promising path toward dismantling the US-sponsored continental blockade of Cuba. But as I have attempted to emphasize, Castro's support for Allende's revolution and the post-1970 Cuban-Chilean political alliance has to be understood within this wider international context.

Cuba's Support of the Chilean Road to Socialism

The UP's success in the September 4, 1970, elections was good news for Cuban officials. It represented an opportunity to gain a stable position within the inter-American scene, as Allende immediately decreed the exchange of ambassadors with Cuba, in spite of Castro's own warning about the consequences of such an abrupt opening.⁵⁶ Through Cuba's embassy in Santiago—its first embassy in South America since 1964—officials were able to establish secret contacts and increase ties to neighboring countries. With tacit support from Argentina and Peru, a number of Cuban delegates crossed the Andes to initiate negotiations

54. “Conversación del embajador,” 413. This favorable opinion regarding Valdés was confirmed by two Chilean delegates who traveled to Havana and met Castro before the presidential election of 1970. Camilo Salvo, interview by author, Santiago, 5 Sept. 2016; Alfredo Jadresic and Patricia Samsing, interview by author, Santiago, 11 Oct. 2017.

55. “Entrevista de nuestro Primer Ministro Comandante Fidel Castro,” Havana, 1970, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1974.

56. “Conversación del embajador,” 412–13.

with these two countries, which eventually resulted in economic and diplomatic relationships. Additionally, some Chilean entrepreneurs were willing to open a channel enabling Havana's representatives to purchase products from the outside world.⁵⁷ According to Francisco Fernández, a Chilean diplomat based in Havana from 1971, the Cuban revolutionary Emilio Aragonés reached Argentina after visiting Chile in order to assess Buenos Aires's willingness to formalize relations with Cuba.⁵⁸ These secret talks bore fruit in 1973, when the Cuban embassy in Buenos Aires was opened, with Aragonés at its head. With these favorable developments, Castro and the Cuban leadership were willing to abandon revolutionary interventionism for a more conventional diplomacy. During a three-week sojourn to Chile in November–December 1971, Castro met with three Latin American presidents (Allende, Velasco Alvarado of Peru, and Velasco Ibarra of Ecuador)—three more than he had been able to meet in the previous ten years. In this new international scenario, Havana managed to establish relations with Peru, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago in 1972, Argentina in 1973, Panama and Venezuela in 1974, and Colombia in 1975.⁵⁹ Allende's bold decision to restore official links with Cuba in 1970 decisively spurred Havana to launch a fruitful diplomatic offensive.

This seems to have been an urgent tactical decision, given how Cuba's international prestige and economic autonomy had started to wane. The widely contested "Padilla affair," which was perceived by many international leftists as an indication that Havana had adopted Soviet cultural policy, tainted the country's image as the island of freedom and led a number of intellectuals to withdraw support for the Cuban Revolution.⁶⁰ Padilla's fate announced the beginning of what Ambrosio Fornet later called the "quinquenio gris" (and what others preferred to label a *decenio negro*), justifiably engendering the impression that Cuba was becoming more repressive. Mario Vargas Llosa, Juan Goytisolo, and others famously rallied several writers previously linked to Havana, such as Julio Cortázar, Italo Calvino, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Paul

57. Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 134.

58. Fernández, interview by author.

59. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe*, 225–26.

60. Heberto Padilla was first condemned by the Cuban state in 1968 for his purportedly counterrevolutionary collection of poems *Fuera del juego*; the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba deemed him the sort of artist that "our enemies . . . need to feed their Trojan horse at a time when imperialism puts into practice a policy of frontal armed aggression against Cuba." Padilla, *Fuera del juego*, 13. As censorship intensified, Padilla experienced constant harassment by the authorities. He was eventually jailed in 1971 and forced to give a statement of self-criticism, triggering an international controversy.

Sartre, and Susan Sontag, behind an open letter published in *Le Monde* expressing concern over the emergence of “sectarian tendencies” within Castro’s government.⁶¹ Shortly before this, the failure of the 1970 *zafra*, an attempt to produce a record ten million tons of sugar, confirmed Cuba’s unescapable economic dependency and hastened Havana’s quest for new international markets. According to Aurelio Alonso, what failed with the *zafra* was “the idea of entrenching an autonomous Socialist project.”⁶²

Explicit support for the UP’s institutional political road was intended to counter Cuba’s growing reputation as authoritarian by evincing respect for democracy and extant institutions. Castro knew that, under these adverse circumstances, a posture more respectful of existing hemispheric institutions was critical if he wanted to regain international respectability. “We are ready to follow a politics of juridical principles and norms with countries that are not lackeys, not unconditional instruments of the American aggression against Cuba,” Castro stated in 1970.⁶³

Castro publicly validated Allende’s project in an August 1, 1970, statement, amid the Chilean presidential election campaign. This move proved fruitful indeed. After Castro’s acceptance of the Chilean road to socialism, the PDC’s vice president, Ricardo Valenzuela, declared that he was pleased by Cuba’s awareness that socialism could be established “through popular votes.”⁶⁴ Members of the centrist PR, like its president, Carlos Morales, found in Castro’s words a reason to be reassured: “Castro’s declarations were very positive because they clarified the differences between the Cuban and the Chilean systems.”⁶⁵

But the benefits of this new moment of Cuban-Chilean relations were not one-sided. While Allende’s administration proved helpful for Cuba’s continental policy, Castro’s endorsement of the Chilean road to socialism had positive effects in the tense Chilean presidential campaign. By declaring for the first time since 1959 that in a Latin American country “socialism can be reached by an electoral victory,” Castro contributed to quenching doubts within the Chilean radical Left, particularly among members of the Revolutionary Left

61. Fornet, *El 71*, 124–25; *La Tercera* (Santiago), 11 Dec. 2016. I thank one of the article’s external reviewers for stressing the connection between the Padilla affair and Cuba’s international reconfiguration.

62. Fornet, *El 71*, 32.

63. “Entrevista de nuestro Primer Ministro Comandante Fidel Castro,” Havana, 1970, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1974.

64. *Las Noticias de Última Hora* (Santiago), 13 Aug. 1970, p. 16.

65. *La Estrella* (Valparaíso), 4 Aug. 1970, p. 1.

Movement (MIR) and some Socialist activists reluctant to believe in a revolution based on the bourgeois order.⁶⁶ The strategic divergences between Cuba and the Soviet Union in the 1960s were locally reproduced within the intense debates among the Chilean Left. While the PCCh strongly supported the Soviet strategy of peaceful coexistence and sponsored an institutional path to revolution, a majority within the PSCh adopted a belligerent approach modeled on the Cuban example.⁶⁷ Thus Allende's constitutional democratic project did not seem to be shared by those within his own party: the PSCh's twenty-second congress in 1967, by declaring "revolutionary violence . . . inevitable and legitimate," dealt Allende a major political defeat and heralded both further radicalization and growing reservations about elections.⁶⁸ While visiting Cuba in 1969, the Socialist Tito Palestro, mayor of a Santiago municipality, admitted that he and his constituents "support armed struggle and, moreover, think that elections should be permanently abandoned." He both praised the MIR's radical strategic line and stressed his profound disagreements with the PCCh.⁶⁹ As the historian Luis Corvalán Márquez characterized the PCCh and PSCh of the 1960s, they embodied "two hardly assimilable projects forced to follow the same road."⁷⁰ The MIR, a movement that had disclaimed the electoral route and established links with Havana, was unwilling to join the "electoral game"; as Miguel Enríquez, general secretary of the MIR, put it in 1969, "No election, armed struggle the only path."⁷¹ Given such contentious debate, in which Castro's stance would likely exert significant influence, Cuba's approval of Allende's candidacy was crucial to providing more ideological coherence to the UP.⁷²

Castro's support was not a *fait accompli*. In fact, Cubans were at first quite skeptical about the UP's chances to cement a socialist project via existing political institutions. It is enough to read Régis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?* (1967), a handbook containing Havana's official doctrine, in which the French philosopher condemned "the naive idealism inspiring those devoted to the electoral opium, for whom socialism will come on the day when one half plus

66. *El Siglo* (Santiago), 5 Aug. 1970, p. 5.

67. See, for example, the articles in Corvalán, *Nuestra vía revolucionaria*.

68. Haslam, *Nixon Administration*, 25.

69. Manuel Roldán to Carlos Neira, Havana, 27 Nov. 1969, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1969.

70. Corvalán Márquez, *Del anticapitalismo al neoliberalismo*, 57.

71. Miguel Enríquez, quoted in Palieraki, "Histoire critique," 689.

72. I thank one of the external reviewers of this article's first version for suggesting this compelling idea.

one of the electorate vote for it.”⁷³ Cuban revolutionary theory since 1960, when Guevara wrote the widely disseminated manual *Guerrilla Warfare*, was anchored in the inevitability of armed insurrection for consolidating the final victory. While Cuban theorists insisted on the need for a violent transformation, the Chilean road to socialism was founded on alliances built before and after democratic elections. In Allende’s view, the subsequent construction of a Marxist society had to be sustained by a planned economy and a gradual process of people’s empowerment without transgressing the state’s constitutional frame, personal liberties, or political pluralism.⁷⁴

Aware of the political implications of Castro’s support, Allende sent to Havana a delegation at the end of July 1970, nearly one month before the election. Made up of a Communist deputy (Luis Guastavino), a Socialist activist (Ricardo Núñez), a member of the moderate PR (Camilo Salvo), a cluster of journalists (Carlos Jorquera, Fernando Rivas, and Leonardo Cáceres), and two cameramen sent to record Castro’s message (Miguel Littin and Emilio Navarro), the delegation aimed to persuade the Cubans that Allende’s path was viable given Chile’s historical and political conditions.⁷⁵ I have had the opportunity to interview five Chilean delegates who took part in these discussions, which, along with press articles and the Cubans’ typewritten version of the meeting with Castro on August 1, allow me to reconstruct part of the delegation’s program.⁷⁶

After the 17th anniversary of the July 26, 1953, attack on the Moncada Barracks, the politicians of the delegation (Guastavino, Núñez, and Salvo) were hosted by two members of the Cuban Communist Party: Jesús Montané, the minister of communications, and Manuel Piñeiro, who was in charge of the Latin American division within the General Intelligence Directorate.

73. Debray, *Révolution*, 173. For insight into the close relationship between Debray and Castro, see Karol, *Les guérilleros au pouvoir*, 37.

74. Riquelme Segovia, *Rojo atardecer*, 81.

75. A group of intellectuals from Chilean universities—including the historian Hernán Ramírez Necochea and the young professor Ricardo Lagos, who later would become president of Chile—also visited Cuba in mid-July and met Castro, who referred to Chile as a “particular case” benefiting from “serious” and “democratic” institutions. Castro also stressed the honesty and “exceptionally progressive” character of the Chilean bourgeoisie. Velasco Letelier, *Visión de Cuba*, 18. More information can be found in Jadresic, *Historia de Chile*.

76. The members of the official delegation that I interviewed are Luis Guastavino, Camilo Salvo, Miguel Littin, and Leonardo Cáceres. I also interviewed the priest Juan Ochagavía, who landed in Havana in July 1970 and eventually joined the meeting at the University of Havana.

According to Salvo, both Cuban officials honestly believed in Allende's revolutionary pedigree but shared a pessimistic electoral prognosis: in the face of imperialism, the UP had little chance of succeeding. But according to the hosts, this adverse situation could be changed. Reflecting Havana's tempered approach, Montané and Piñeiro concluded that to counter the international and domestic hostility, the leftist coalition should have built a wider alliance, including the PDC.⁷⁷

Later on, during a private meeting with the Castro brothers held in a room of the Havana Libre Hotel, Guastavino attempted to convince the authorities that in present-day Chile a socialist project could be realized within democratic structures. Shortly before leaving for Cuba, Guastavino was informed that he had been selected to convey Allende's personal message to the Cuban leaders. It should not be surprising that a Communist activist was given the responsibility of defending the revolutionary character of the Chilean democratic way. As I have noted, Allende's political view proved closer to the Communists' strategy than to that of his own party, the PSCh. The PCCh had traditionally stressed the need to establish political alliances and to gradually strengthen people's awareness within the democratic framework.⁷⁸ Guastavino succeeded in offering the Cubans an optimistic perspective on Chile. To reinforce his claims, he quoted Vladimir Lenin's "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, in which the Bolshevik provides an opening to nonviolent revolution.⁷⁹ Castro was cautious because "this was a sensitive matter related to highly internalized questions," but he eventually proved to be "very receptive" and willing to collaborate.⁸⁰

The proof came on August 1, during a larger meeting at the University of Havana in which Castro expounded on his views regarding Latin American development for eight hours.⁸¹ The Chilean delegation was joined by the Chilean Jesuit priest Juan Ochagavía. Ochagavía today thinks that his presence

77. Camilo Salvo, interview by author, Santiago, 5 Sept. 2016. See also *El Siglo* (Santiago), 2 Aug. 1970, p. 3.

78. A great deal of literature has been written on this topic. In particular, I strongly recommend Pinto Vallejos, "Hacer la revolución."

79. This book was likely to appeal to the Chilean Communists, given Lenin's denial that only "illegal methods" are revolutionary, his appeal to unite forces through parliamentary participation, and his insistence that each country has to determine its "specific path" to revolution. Lenin, *La maladie infantile*, 93–94.

80. Luis Guastavino, interview by author, Viña del Mar, 4 Feb. 2013; Luis Guastavino, interview by author, Viña del Mar, 30 Aug. 2016.

81. Fernando Rivas, "Fidel Castro contesta a *El Mercurio*," *Puro Chile* (Santiago), 4 Aug. 1970, p. 24.

in Havana was part of a subtle strategy aimed at broadening Allende's legitimacy within Chilean society: "It was obviously a sort of manipulation." "There was a lot of lobbying for the Allende candidacy," Ochagavía recalls, one part of which consisted of "creating an image that Cuba was an open country."⁸² By attending the meeting in the University of Havana, the Jesuit helped convey a more widely acceptable image of the Cuban Revolution. Not surprisingly, the leftist press repeatedly emphasized his presence.⁸³

Everything appeared to be meticulously designed to generate a strong impression. During the University of Havana gathering, while Miguel Littin and Channel 13's Emilio Navarro were filming for the Chilean media—Littin with a camera owned by the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry—Castro made his startling declaration: "In 1970 Chile, socialism can be reached by an electoral victory."⁸⁴ This was exactly what Allende was seeking, and his friend Castro was perfectly aware of the statement's significance. During the meeting, the Cuban leader ironically stated, "You know what is convenient for you. I can more or less imagine that you agree on the benefits of this meeting." Later during the event, he added, "it was our duty to make these assertions."⁸⁵

It is worth noting that Castro's message also had a series of subtle comments on hemispheric politics. The Cubans avoided mechanistically transposing Chile's conditions to other Latin American countries. While recognizing that "armed struggle is not a dogma," Castro nonetheless insisted that "Chile's situation cannot be compared with any other Latin American country." What made Chile so exceptional was its "institutional background" and "electoral tradition." The líder máximo subsequently pointed out a critical factor in favor of Allende carrying out his revolution: the global balance of power. On the one hand, the forces of "imperialism," overwhelmed by their involvement in the Vietnam War, were no longer able to "directly intervene as [they] did in Cuba."

82. Juan Ochagavía, interview by author, Santiago, 16 Sept. 2016.

83. See, for example, *El Siglo* (Santiago), 9 Aug. 1970, p. 2; *Las Noticias de Última Hora* (Santiago), 4 Aug. 1970, p. 2. Ochagavía published his own impressions about Cuba in a rather positive article. *Mensaje* (Santiago), no. 192, 1970, pp. 417–28.

84. *El Siglo* (Santiago), 5 Aug. 1970, p. 5. The details about the filming come from Miguel Littin, interview by author, Santiago–Rancagua, 4 Nov. 2016.

85. This meeting was also deemed relevant for Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Due to the "importance of the declarations" and the fact that they constituted the first interview granted after Castro's Moncada Barracks anniversary speech, the ministry requested a typewritten version of the conversation, containing 103 pages. "Entrevista de nuestro Primer Ministro Comandante Fidel Castro," Havana, 1970, AMINREX, fondo Chile, cajuela 1974.

On the other hand, recent transformations, particularly in Velasco Alvarado's Peru, served as an additional barrier against foreign aggression: "Chilean people know now that Peru could not be used by imperialism."⁸⁶

Castro's support did not go unnoticed in the Chilean political scene. As Ricardo Núñez stated, it had an enormous impact on the attitude of the "radical Left."⁸⁷ Castro's statement introduced a new and unexpected factor that forced long-standing followers of the Cuban Revolution to reconsider their previous concerns about the UP. The journalist Leonardo Cáceres offers a good example of this. Deeply reluctant to back Allende, whom he considered "an old politician from another time," Cáceres acknowledged his concerns to Castro. "You are profoundly wrong," Castro replied, before claiming that Allende was a real revolutionary. "That was so powerful for me, so convincing," Cáceres recalled, that "I came back and voted for Allende."⁸⁸ As expected, the Communist press reproduced confident declarations made by various political personalities, while the MIR adopted a more tolerant attitude toward the approaching elections.⁸⁹ In August 1970, the MIR's general secretary, Miguel Enríquez, allowed his fellow party members to vote for the UP.⁹⁰ In an subtle acceptance of Allende's strategy, *Punto Final*, a magazine led by a MIR militant, released an issue eloquently entitled "Los votos + el fusil" (Votes + rifles).⁹¹ In Guastavino's words, as a consequence of the Cuban embrace of Allende's project "se cerraba el bloque UP tras Salvador Allende."⁹²

The public impact of Castro's comments was strengthened through media dissemination. Newspapers linked to left-wing organizations, such as *El Siglo*, *Las Noticias de Última Hora*, and *Clarín*, published enthusiastic articles summarizing Castro and highlighting the growing convergence of the leftist forces. Some of the Chilean delegation who had met with the Cuban leaders, such as

86. *Las Noticias de Última Hora* (Santiago), 7 Aug. 1970, p. 15.

87. Fernández Abara, Góngora Escobedo, and Arancibia Clavel, *Ricardo Núñez*, 107.

88. Leonardo Cáceres, interview by author, Santiago, 2 Dec. 2016.

89. On August 5, 1970, the Communist newspaper *El Siglo* published an article entitled "Remezón político por sus declaraciones para Chile" and added a reassuring commentary by a Socialist activist. *El Siglo* (Santiago), 5 Aug. 1970, p. 1. The historian Eugenia Palieraki attributes the MIR's changed attitude toward Allende's candidacy to, among other factors, Cuba's position. Palieraki, "Histoire critique," 758.

90. Haslam, *Nixon Administration*, 53.

91. *Punto Final* (Santiago), 1 Sept. 1970.

92. Guastavino, interview. It is hard to translate this expression. A literary translation would be "the UP circle was closed around Salvador Allende," meaning that the UP joined sides with Allende.

Guastavino, gave public press conferences and media interviews.⁹³ Television seems to have played a major role too. The images recorded by Littin and the journalists of Channel 13, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile's television channel, were widely disseminated. Channel 9 broadcast at least twice a selection of the University of Havana interview with Castro, in which the audience could see the Cuban leader replying to the questions posed by the famous journalist Carlos Jorquera. Having received "countless letters and phone calls" asking for a rebroadcast, Channel 13 did so.⁹⁴

Taking into account the powerful influence that Castro's support likely exerted on both the radical and moderate Left—such as PR members willing to accept Allende's project but critical of revolutionary violence—it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Cuba's position contributed to Allende's narrow victory with 36.61 percent of the vote (against right-wing candidate Jorge Alessandri's 35.27 percent) in September 1970.

Epilogue

The Cuban political line on Chile could fluctuate, in response to continuing assessment of the situation. Castro's three-week visit to Chile in 1971 was supposed to reassert Havana's confidence in the Chilean revolution. Castro insisted on the need of "taking advantage of each possibility" and rejected "dogmatic" positions. These public interventions were continually supplemented with laudatory words concerning the Soviet Union's "indisputable internationalist spirit."⁹⁵ This indicates that Castro's 1971 stay in Chile was aimed at confirming both the Cuban-Soviet normalization and his eagerness for a new path toward social transformation. Nonetheless, a couple of setbacks overturned Castro's optimism. Uruguay's leftist Broad Front coalition suffered a clear defeat in a presidential election held during Castro's 1971 Chilean visit, pushing the Cuban leader to state that only the "armed path" would now lead to victory in that country.⁹⁶ Chilean opposition used the media to harshly attack the visiting leader, which led the latter to criticize "these bourgeois capitalistic liberties." A massive March of the Empty Pots took place two days before Castro's departure, unveiling the "fury of the reactionaries" and ultimately triggering a belligerent conclusion from the Cuban leader: "When I see to what degree the reactionaries are trying to morally disarm the people . . . in the

93. *La Estrella* (Valparaíso), 10 Aug. 1970, p. 28; *El Siglo* (Santiago), 18 Aug. 1970, p. 18.

94. *Las Noticias de Última Hora* (Santiago), 11 Aug. 1970, pp. 5, 13 (quote).

95. Castro, *Cuba-Chile*, 507–8.

96. Fernando Huerta, *Chile y el mundo*, 240.

bottom of my heart there is a conclusion: I will return to Cuba more revolutionary than when I came . . . I will return to Cuba more extremist than when I came."⁹⁷

The Cubans were able to see firsthand the obstacles that a "democratic revolution" must face and harbored renewed concerns regarding the effectiveness of participating in democratic elections. But it did not alter either Cuba's diplomatic offensive or its accelerated rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Allende's fall became the final proof, after a string of setbacks, that, for now, Latin America was not yet ripe for revolution. Havana increasingly turned to Africa, where thousands of soldiers fought in wars of national liberation. Cuba found in the African continent fertile ground for the potential emergence of a radical political project.⁹⁸

Cuba's validation (and later rebuff) of the uncompleted Chilean road to socialism was a novelty, exemplifying the reshaping of Havana's international priorities. This change of tone should be seen not as mere pragmatic adaptation but within the frame of a wider evolution of the local context under pressure from the "inter-state system" and global developments.⁹⁹ The reciprocal influences between Chile and Cuba during Allende's rise and fall exemplify how a sociopolitical system such as the Cuban Revolution evolves through contacts and interactions, thereby emphasizing the importance of the larger context in understanding local transformations.¹⁰⁰ This article shows how the revision of ideological schemes that seemed inflexible during part of the 1960s made Cuban revolutionary doctrine much more malleable than we would expect in light of prior radicalism. At the end of the turbulent Latin American 1960s, when leftist experiments started to reshape a political landscape previously hostile to leftism, Cuba decisively reemerged on the hemispheric scene. The encounter between the Cuban Revolution and the Chilean road to socialism in 1970 was not just a response to the contemporary conjuncture but also the fruit of a long-term evolution rooted in previous developments and molded by a complex set of factors.¹⁰¹

The local and the global are always intertwined. This is particularly true when analyzing the uneven evolution of the global Left during the Cold War.

97. Castro, *Cuba-Chile*, 474, 483.

98. See the groundbreaking Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*. See also Harmer, "Two, Three, Many Revolutions?," 85.

99. Vanhaute, *World History*, 10–14, 155–57.

100. Crossley, *What Is Global History?*, 9, defines systems as "the narrative of interacting structures changing each other at the same time."

101. I thank one of the reviewers for this suggestion.

Cuba's transnational influence in Latin America has been insistently highlighted by a number of scholars, but less has been said about Havana's continuous adjustment to external fluctuations. Castro's opening to Allende's revolution, at first glance incompatible with Cuban revolutionary theory, was anchored in the need for constant political reassessment, an inevitable part of the "global Cold War."¹⁰² By avoiding the traditional depiction of the Cold War as a binary fight between communism and capitalism, I aim to provide a more complex picture in which South-South influences played a major role in shaping the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁰³ The new Cold War history offers a compelling multidimensional perspective that, for Latin America, has resulted in a reexamination of Cuba's position in world politics.¹⁰⁴ Havana can no longer be regarded as a mere appendix of Moscow; instead, it was a crucial actor and powerful model for Latin American revolutionaries. The constant struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union was at times overshadowed by cross-continental influences, elevating Cuba as a key (perhaps the most significant) point of reference for understanding the Latin American Cold War and the global Left.

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102. Westad, *La Guerre Froide globale*.

103. Saull, "El lugar del sur global."

104. On the new Cold War history in Latin America, see Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 256; Spenser, "Caribbean Crisis"; Grandin, *Last Colonial Massacre*; Zolov, "Introduction"; Harmer and Riquelme Segovia, *Chile y la Guerra Fría global*.

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