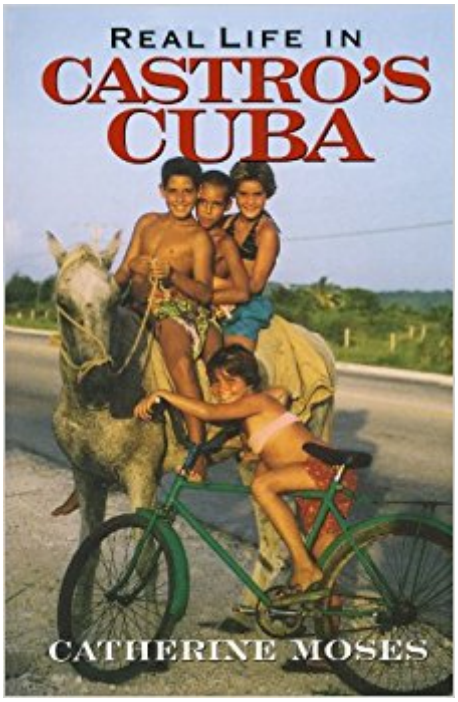
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Real Life In Castro's Cuba (Latin American Silhouettes)



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Synopsis

This new book provides a first-hand, grassroots look at life in Cuba, including very vivid descriptions of its people and places. Real Life in Castro’s Cuba illuminates the human face of Cuba, which over the years has largely been hidden in the shadow of Fidel Castro. Real Life in Castro’s Cuba is written by Catherine Moses, who lived and worked in Cuba as a press secretary and spokesperson for the United States from 1995 to 1996. This compelling, compassionate portrait contains personal observations about the Cubans’ struggles, triumphs, hopes, and daily compromises to survive. The Cuban population lives with a deteriorating infrastructure, forcing many hardships on the people, including a scarcity of food, fuel, clothing, medicines, and other basic needs. The author’s detailed cultural account of Cuba introduces the reader to everyday Cubans from party officials to dissidents to everyone in between. It shows how Cuba’s socialist system works and gives reasons why Fidel Castro is still in power. Real Life in Castro’s Cuba also describes the significant role of religion and spirituality in the life of Cubans. Although Moses expresses regret over the state of U.S.-Cuban relations, the purpose of the book is not to choose up sides. Instead, the book is designed simply to introduce readers to real life in Cuba. The book’s unique approach allows an intimate picture of life in a faded Marxist regime. As the author writes, "Cuba is a curious mixture of Spanish Caribbean, socialist ideals gone awry, memories of what was, and a desperate need to survive." This fascinating new book will appeal to all readers who are interested in getting a closer look at what life is like in Cuba today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An excellent, detailed account of daily life in the deteriorating communist country. (Publishers Weekly)Especially timely in light of the Elian Gonzales affair, a former U.S. spokesperson in Havana conveys her impression of the strong spirit of Cuban citizens given the contradictory realities of the Revolution. (Reference & Research Book News)We readers are the beneficiaries of Moses's deep understanding of the Cuban people and the political, economic, and social transformation they are carrying out against the will of their government. (Richard A. Nuccio)Catherine Moses clearly put her two years as 'Our Woman in Havana' to good use, developing a solid understanding of Cuba's faded dreams of a socialist utopia and gathering wonderfully human anecdotes about daily life. (Juan O. Tamayo)A heartfelt account of the daunting trials that confront the Cuban people, written with passion and affection. (Ann Louise Bardach)An unusually insightful, and brutally candid book. Moses offers a rare behind-the-scenes look at a turning point in the history of Cuba. Her intellectual honesty, her engaging humor, and her deep love for Cuba and the Cubans ooze from every page. It is a bittersweet account that captures graphically the haunting surrealism of the Cuban existence. (Franklin W. Knight)Beautifully written, evocative and lyrical at the same time that it is chock full of information and local texture. (Stanley Fish)

Catherine Moses is assistant professor of government and sociology at Georgia College and State University.

Catherine Moses has written a very readable synopsis of her experiences in Cuba and her impressions of Cuban life based on the people she met. The chapter divisons on health care, migrations, news and information, education, etc. are helpfully organized. I found the chapters on religions and the Cuban spirit particularly interesting.Having lived in East Berlin before the wall came down, it was easy for me to note parallels between the totalitarian societies. No where does she claim to be an expert, and I know I certainly wasn't. So I would have liked to have read more about her own personal experiences, seeing Cuba through her eyes, as it were. Of course that would have been subjective, incomplete, and unscientific, but ever so fascinating in the glimpses and questions raised.I'm looking forward to her next book!

I was mis guided by the date shown in the header for this book showing July, 2013. The book may

have some good information and stories but it is completely outdated.

Dry and poorly organized, this book is little more than a series of disjointed ramblings loosely divided into chapters. Ms. Moses apparently wrote down her remembrances as they randomly popped into her head, but she never went back and edited them to put them into any semblance of order. Back and forth she goes, in one sentence telling how the Cubans are oppressed, in the next telling how they are resourceful and able to make do with the very little they have, how they see no hope, then that they see the light at the end of the tunnel. What she relates is so generalized that one could easily substitute the name of any oppressed group of people for "Cuba" and be telling their story with equal (in)articulation.Especially irritating is the fact that she mentions numerous individuals, and whether a revered patriot or her kindly next-door neighbor, she describes each in terms as mundane and pointless as skin tone and intelligence level, attributes some blasÃƒÂ© word or phrase to him or her meant to be clever or all-knowing, then rarely mentions that person again. Worse, her final statement about that person is often something to the effect of, "I'm not sure whatever became of him."Referring again to the book's generalities, most readers will already know that the Cubans are an oppressed people; that they live in a police state that (like every police state) follows their every move and metes out punishment to those who do not toe the line; that they (like all oppressed peoples) are conflicted by a love for their homeland and the idea of chucking it all for another place and a better existence. Again, in my estimation these are commonsensical, everyday notions. It is not necessary to have lived in Cuba to understand them. And although there has to be a wealth of knowledge available from someone who has lived there, it is to be found in some other book. This one does nothing to impart the Cubans' unique plight, and after reading it, the reader will know little more about Cuba than he or she probably already does.

Written by Catherine Moses, who served for two years at the United States Interest Section in Havana in the mid-nineties, this book provides a close and realistic first-hand look at life in Cuba, including detailed descriptions of everyday life of average people during that period. Just under 200 pages, it's short, sweet, and to the point. It contains personal observations about the Cubans' daily struggle to survive, and portrays the hardships on the people, including a scarcity of food, clothing, medicines, and other basic needs. From the start of the book, Moses discusses the cult of personality toward the Castro brothers and the fear for the police state responsible for the harshest and most oppressive justice system in the Americas. The total control of the state over the economy is discussed and the employment of over-regulated underpaid professionals, prostitution, and the

start up of the small paladar restaurants are covered. Moses shows the failure of Cuba's political-economic system and discusses reasons why the Castro brothers are still in power. The author's warm hearted powers of observation and her compassionate concern for Cubans on a human level are admirable. As a matter of fact, this book by Moses is recommended in my own book about Memories from the Land of the Intolerant Tyrant (available from Blue Note Books) as one of the best describing life in Cuba.

All those whose interest in Cuba has been caught by the plight of little Elian Gonzales would do well to read Catherine Moses' evenhanded and compassionate take on Cuba. Ms. Moses, a diplomat assigned to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana for 20 months, writes with the painterly eye of a fiction writer yet also with the precision of a scholar, which she is. With no exploitative interests in Cuba, hers is a unique position from which to view this society. Her book is rich in details about the daily life and work of the people, the history of the revolution and the American relationship to Cuba in recent years. Those who need a refresher course on the Migration Accords or the Fifth Party Pelenum can learn the details here. What is most powerful about the book however, is not its delineation of politics and policy, but its deep appreciation of the spiritual vibrancy and love of life of the Cuban people. If you are interested in Cuba, I can't think of a better place to start.

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