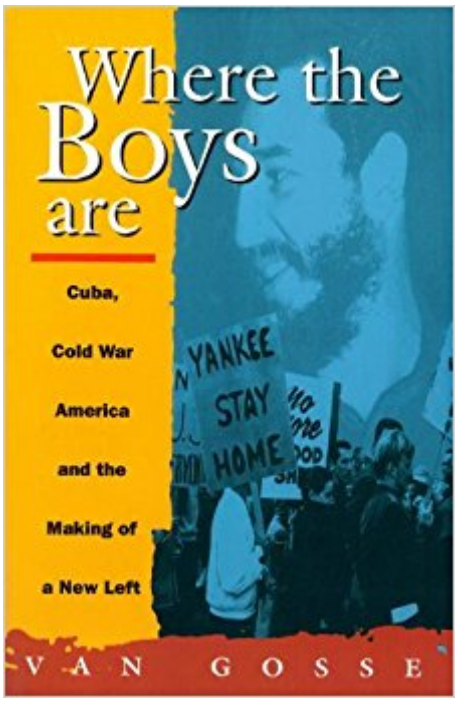
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Where The Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War And The Making Of A New Left (Haymarket Series)



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Synopsis

The ignominious failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 marked the culmination of a curious episode at the height of the Cold War. At the end of the fifties, restless and rebellious youth, avant-garde North American intellectuals, old leftists, and even older liberals found inspiration in the images and achievements of Fidel CastroÃ¢â ¬â„¢s revolutionary guerrillas. Fidelismo swept across the US, as young North Americans sought to join the 26th of July Movement in the Sierra Maestra.Drawing equally on cultural and political materials, from James Dean and Desi Arnaz to C. Wright Mills and Studies on the Left, Gosse explains how the peculiar conjuncture of 1950s America produced the first great Third World solidarity movement, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which became a locus for the New Left emerging from the ashes of KennedyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s New Frontier.Where the Boys Are captures the strange essence of that much-abused decade, the 1950s, at once demonstrating the perfidy of Cold War American liberal opinion towards Cuba and its revolution while explaining why Fidel and his compaÃƒÂ eros made such appealing idols for the young, the restless, and the politically adventurous.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“This is a surprising history, full of unexpected turns, that persuasively revises the standard account of the New Left. Where the Boys Are is a major contribution to understanding where we have been and where we may be headed.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Marilyn B. YoungÃ¢â ¬Å“This lucidly

written, carefully researched book revises our understanding of the movements that shaped the sixties.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Barbara EpsteinÃ¢â ¬Å“Van Gosse has written a superb book about the impact of Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution upon American politics in the Cold War era. It is certain to stir up lively historical debate.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •David M. Oshinsky

Van Gosse teaches modern US, African American, and Cold War history at Franklin & Marshall College and is a longtime member of the Radical History Review Editorial Collective. He is the author of Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left; Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History; The Movements of the New Left, 1950Ã¢â ¬â œ1975: A Brief History with Documents; and editor, with Richard Moser, of The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America.Ã Â He has served as director of the Center for Democracy in the Americas and as organizing director of Peace Action, and has received fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Ms Gosse has written a fine book on how America's post WW 2 liberal generation reacted to the Cuban Revolution. She balances examples of on-the-ground gringoes fighting for Cuba's freedom with the stay-at-homers who romanticized Castro as a latter day George Washington huddling in the Sierra Madre with his tropical "Valley Forgers." She also connects the Revolution dot with the emerging US Civil Rights dot, without making any hard cause-effect assertions. She discusses the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in depth and how it spread around the country attempting to even the slate with respect to one sided anti-Castro media coverage, then not as obsequious as now to government pressure but still leaning to the right. She does not spare JFK, either, and shows just how dedicated he was to overthrowing Castro from the beginning of his presidential race, even making Nixon look a dove. The book rightly ends with the Bay of Pigs, the invasion that forever united US in imperial design and hypocrisy with the Soviet Union. One of the legacies of the liberal's attachment to the Revolution was the establishment of activist groups, especially on college campuses, that blossomed in the soon-to-come Vietnam War protests of the late 60s. Recommended for Cold War history buffs or left wing political wonks.

While well written, Van Goose's book leaves a lot to be questioned. The points he draws are great when it comes to youth in America between the years 1955 - 1961, but what he seems to ignore is what happens after the Cuban Missile Crisis. While this book was interesting and kept my attention,

I am not sure I would recommend this book to another scholar unless they were solely interested in Latin American affairs and if they were looking into a microhistory.

The Cuban Revolution was a galvanizing force for the American Left before Vietnam; and had Kennedy's Bay of Pigs operation been "successful" we'd instead be living down a "Cuba Syndrome." Author Van Gosse describes the pull of guerrilla romanticism from Yanquis who joined the rebels in the Sierra, or sought to make a Sierra at home (Lee Harvey Oswald); to campus radicals looking for gods that hadn't failed; to civil rights militants who saw in Fidel and Che's success a mirror image of their own hopes for Third World revolution in the deltas and ghettos of the USA.In short, the Cuban Revolution was pretty much what its North American beholders wished and saw it to be (good or bad). The hippie look of the 1960s was consciously modeled on the barbudos of the Sierra - of outflowing hair and beards while cutting all social ties to respectable society, for an existential life of struggle. For a brief moment Castro was the Liberal "Superman", in Norman Mailer's term, who was to regenerate society through personal heroism by defying dried-up old reactionaries like Richard Nixon. Alas, real-world politics don't often heed artists and romantics. The Missiles of October put an end to such lyricism and its audience.Which raises another point on Fidel himself, and his road of revolution. Castro in his Sierra days and shortly thereafter sounded, in his rhetoric, exactly like an early SNCC or SDS idealist, challenging the system while still espousing its core values. Yet continuing struggle and polarization would burn these last bridges. Just as murders in Mississippi hardened civil rights activists into Black Power fist-raisers; or Vietnam escalation turned student protest into yippie riot, and shootings at Kent State; so did the US rejection of bearded guerrillas in power lead to Leninism and nuclear warheads in Cuba. In this respect Castro "saved Communism" from the post-Stalin era of failed gods and Hungarian uprisings. Just as he inspired the New Left, it too worked out its destiny through him, surviving as the 1960s' last raised fist.

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