

**Alberto Gonzalez Rivero's recently published autobiography *Born to Translate Cuba*** contains in its title, ironically, one of the more important conditions of our time — that Cuba needs to be translated for the rest of us. As Alberto references in his introduction, “the real Cuba remains a somewhat ominous mystery to most Americans.” And translate he does! He parallels the story of his 50-year life with the 5 decades since the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution, each chapter presenting in 10-year bursts both his life experiences and the growing years of the great Cuban social experiment. The first chapter *Cuba: a brief history* reads like a fast-paced adventure story, which is of course true.

The history of Cuba is related in a matter-of-fact manner, as perhaps only an insider can do. The highs and lows that seem so remarkable to us as students/observers of this unique nation, are facts of life for Alberto. Of the early years, he says: “The changes did not immediately trickle down to our family during the first ten years of my life. We remained dirt poor. I am, however, a product of this decade. And during the next years, I was to become the beneficiary of the revolution's innovative policies many times over.”

Alberto's Christian journey is very much a part of his story and gives the lie to one of the most pervasive myths about Cuba today. Our U.S. fear of godless communism has generally triumphed over clear-eyed observation of the Cuban reality: that there is no contradiction between the social and spiritual goals of liberation theology and the social and humanist goals of the Cuban State. Believers walk arm-in-arm with party militants, mutually engaged in the “battle of ideas” being waged between Cuban socialism and neoliberal capitalism.

As a true lover of the English language, Alberto's words are carefully chosen, even poetic. He describes the anecdotes of his life in a painstakingly honest way, without self-delusion, revealing his fears and weaknesses alongside his humanity, good instincts, and dreams come true. Two steps forward, one step back — a metaphor for the Revolution. And... Alberto is an accomplished storyteller. His humor, often offbeat, fills each tale. Because I have known him for 20 years, I can easily picture his twinkling eyes and impish grin. The book is a delight to read.

Alberto looks upon the trajectory of his own life with joy, astonishment, gratitude and forgiveness, and at his beloved Cuba with pride, tenderness and faith in the

future. We who are not Cubans are fortunate to have this wonderful history to read and enjoy. We are brought many steps closer to real understanding.

Judy Robbins