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Photo: Yuris Norido / CubaSi

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—The 27th International Book Fair will be dedicated to your work. How did you take that news?

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"When I look at all that, I consider that I have done something, I would have wished to do more; once and several times I said that I would need a loam of one life, another more, to be able to do what I want, with the same dedication, as when I climbed stairs in three steps together, as when I travelled long distances daily to reach places".

"I remember that once an old man approached to me, perhaps he arrived in a timely moment of my life and said: "Listen, I know a technique that perhaps you may remember from your childhood; mothers used to preserve the first year's little shoes turned into metal: I own that technique; but I am leaving and I do not have family or anyone to leave it with; I am not coming to give you the secret of my work; I am coming to ask you to give me your shoes, those which you have walked through Havana with".

I handed him the shoes. And when he returned them back to me (they were well kept), I realized that that stage of my life had finished, that I had to begin another.

"Suddenly, children, youngsters began to appear... Even, in a meeting among intellectuals, Fidel told me: "There's a boy here, son of a friend of ours, Katiuska Blanco, who has replied to me that he wants to be Eusebio Leal's successor, when I asked him what he wanted to be".

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"Everyone who arrives in Havana says "What a wonder! What a mystery! What city is this?" Even decadent, as Havana is, when you touch it, it revives. Wherever you touch it, except what falls beaten that will always be less than what has been lost in this continent; in the interests of a misinterpreted modernity it was savagely demolished ...

"Havana, for a series of events, has remained in its urbanism and splendor until today. We must touch it with love and prevent its "suburbanization". And above all: we must take care of those who live in it.

"Being a Havanan cannot be a sign of superiority, but to be so (as Alfredo Guevara rightfully said), you need certain refinement, which is born from culture.

"Fidel used to say (and I do not like to quote him very much, I prefer to follow what he taught me instead) that Revolutions were daughters of ideas and culture. Without culture there is no idea, without ideas there is no culture: this is a dialectical and harmonic relationship.

“It is necessary to see what Cuban culture does from this city. It is the 500th anniversary for a ballet, for all Cuban music, for poetry, for legal tradition... But this is also the city of the literacy teachers, the city of the sugar-cane cutters, the city of the glorious and unyielding militia, the city of students, the city of workers, where political movements sprung up...

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