

## **GRAU, MARÍA LEOPOLDINA “POLA”(1915–2000)**

Credited with bringing thousands of Cuban children to live in the U.S. in the project called Operation Pedro Pan following Castro's takeover of the island, Grau was a formidable political figure in many respects. An indomitable human rights activist, Grau came from a politically active family whose uncle was president of Cuba in 1933 and in 1944 when she served as his First Lady. Grau's life was filled with intrigue and exile, a fate that brought her to Miami on more than one occasion. Both her first and second husbands, Roberto Lago Pereda, and José Aguero were involved in political conspiracies to overthrow the government. Grau immersed herself in anti-Batista activities, sheltering dissidents, and supporting underground plots. Exiled to Miami for these actions, Grau returned to Cuba when Castro took power. She supported the new government until they began to nationalize industries and private land holdings. Clandestine collaboration with the CIA resulted in Grau's incarceration for fourteen years, after which she became a political exile in the U.S., embraced American citizenship, and devoted the remainder of her life to working with the Cuban community in exile.