

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE CARTOONED REVOLUTION:  
IMAGES AND THE REVOLUTIONARY  
CITIZEN IN CUBA, 1959-1963

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“The Cartooned Revolution: Imagery and Political Culture in Cuba, 1959-1963” traces the relationship between cartooning and citizenship in the early phases of the Cuban Revolution. Through a broad analysis of cartoons and advertisements produced in the Havana press between January 1959 and December 1963, this study analyzes the interplay of state-regulated visual communication that fueled cultural transformation and defined a new revolutionary citizenry. A close reading of an “imagined narrative,” drawn by the new revolutionary press and consumed by Havana readers, I argue, casts a new light on the fundamental changes in political culture and society that took place in Cuba following January 1, 1959.

My choice to analyze cartoons, advertisements as well as the institutions and personalities responsible for their production, draws upon the powerful interplay of revolutionary vision, reform, politics, and ideology within the imagined narrative. The institutional and functional conversion of these forms of revolutionary imagery into official propaganda occurred as a result of a deconstruction of the pre-revolutionary press and an institutional takeover and re-

staffing of newspaper offices and printing presses; the deregulation of the cartooning profession; and the reorganization of pre-revolutionary advertising enterprises into a government-controlled, central clearinghouse.

Initially, images portrayed the young Castro state as champion of reform within a longer tradition of Cuban liberalism. But in short time, the resistance of holdovers from the deposed Batista political class in combination with the souring of relations with the United States, engendered an emergent revolutionary visual culture. The early forms of its new visuality were exemplified in images cultivating the bearded rebel. As it matured, especially in visual communication associated with the Literacy Campaign of 1961 and the Socialist Emulation Campaign of 1962-63, the rebel image stood alongside a cast of stock characters representative of the new political regime. If, on the one hand, revolutionary imagery projected a dangerous political landscape filled with subversive plots and looming “enemies of the people,” it also gave visual clues to the new forms of political belonging. Cartoons and advertisements communicated vital policies and campaigns in which Cubans with varying levels of commitment to the Revolution might be projected into an imagined, yet official revolutionary narrative. As Cubans increased their level of integration into revolutionary society, they began to redefine themselves into a more ideologically sophisticated citizenry both inside and outside of the image world.



THE CARTOONED REVOLUTION:  
IMAGES AND THE REVOLUTIONARY CITIZEN IN CUBA,  
1959-1963

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
2009

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## Dedication

To Adigio, Bidopia, Chago, Fornés, Horacio,  
Ñico, Nuez, Rosen, Pecruz, Virgilio, and all the revolutionary  
artists who gave this study its flavor and focus

and for Mari Paz, my mother and greatest friend  
with much love and admiration

## Acknowledgements

I, along with this dissertation, flourished and persevered with the constant encouragement, guidance, and support of others. Without its many cheerleaders, sources of inspiration and information, even elements of distraction and heartache, my will to see it through and the study's uniqueness, insights, and flavor, may not have come to light.

At the University of Maryland, College Park, the astute questions, gentle nudges toward a strong focus in thesis, and unyielding faith shown by my academic advisor, Daryle Williams, proved absolutely vital to this project and my growth as a scholar. My eternal thanks for sticking with me, Daryle. To my dissertation committee, Mary Kay Vaughan, David Sartorius, Michael David-Fox, and Eyda Merediz, a note of gratitude for your insightful suggestions towards the continuing evolution of this study. I specifically need to thank Eyda for her meticulous editing of my Spanish accent marks. I owe you one "big time." To Barbara Weinstein and Stephan Palmié, who, though no longer with the University, left an indelible mark on my educational growth.

To my professors at Florida State University, Darrell Levi, Rodney Anderson, and Jonathan Grant, this project in many ways culminates the work we did together in the mid-1990s and still carries your spirit.

The support of cartoonists, media personalities, and scholars in Cuba provided this study with a richness of information and insight beyond measure.

To Guillermo Cabrera Álvarez of the Instituto Internacional de Periodismo José Martí, a deep note of gratitude for your determination to bend the rules, to host my stay in Cuba, and most importantly, in “alerting the media” and securing my access to the central personalities and cartoonists of this study. Again, my apologies for breaking the shower, sitting in the kitchen and distracting “El Chino” while he cooked, and holding impromptu parties on the patio with the staff and *guardia*. A special note of thanks must go out to Pepé, Rolando, Jorge, and the other members of the Instituto staff for taking me to the beach, market, and around the city streets of Havana. You made my first trip back to Cuba a special memory and made me truly feel at home. To Paquita Armas Fonseca, Arístides Esteban Hernández Guerrero (Ares), Juan Ayus, Ernesto Vera, Mirta Muñoz, who met me at a moment’s notice and provided sharp insights into cloudy areas of this study, my many thanks for your time and interest. To Gustavo Rodríguez (Garrincha), my initial contact into the cartoonist world, a sincere thank you for tolerating my incessant badgering and facilitating my contact with the Instituto: many thanks “XXX!” The core and success of this visit remains the interviews conducted with René de la Nuez, Antonio Mariño Souto, Adigio Benítez, Dalia García Barbán, Rafael Fornés, and Virgilio Martínez Gaínza. My gratitude for the invaluable information, time, and openness they gave to me can never be measured. They, in many ways, *made* this study possible. I only hope it proves to be a worthy testament to their art, insights, and enthusiasm. I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Fornés and Virgilio not long after my trip. I will never forget the thrill of perusing copies of *El Pitirre* with Fornés and

watching him fondly relate his love of the art. I met with Virgilio on several occasions in *Granma* where I was welcomed warmly by the staff. Our affinity toward each other was immediate, set by our love for Superman comics and old movies. He is greatly missed.

I would also like thank John Lent, not only for giving me the opportunity to publish my first article in his *International Journal of Comic Art*, but for placing me in contact with this “witty world” and providing an outsider’s inside point of view. Thanks to Antoni Kapcia, who in a moment of research crisis, suggested alternatives and gave me you’re-on-the-right-track encouragement. To special thank you to Jorge Domínguez, who buoyed my determination with a letter complimenting my study after my presentation at the Cuban Research Institute Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies in Miami, Fla. in March 1999.

Finally, to my family and friends, “my people,” who without your unwavering support and belief in me—from the occasional ‘when are you going to finish?’ and ‘I pray every night to the Virgin Mary’ (thanks Grandma)—would have earned me a one-way ticket to Looneyville. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for showing me love and bolstering my confidence during moments of emotional distress, leisure, and gut-wrenching laughter. To ALPHA (Alex, Laura, Philip, Henry, and Andrew), you guys are the best! To my California cousins, Anthony, Mary, and Olympia Pujol, who made the trip out to Las Vegas to watch me present a paper at LASA 2004, thank you for your support and love! To Valerie and Daniel Abasolo, all my love and thanks for your pep talks! A

special thanks to Juan Carlos Santamarina, who graciously offered his help and support and whose research trip to Cuba happened to coincide with mine, enriching my stay with a bit of familiarity and fun. To my godparents, “Los Cuquis,” a big hug and much love to you both for your years of support. To my GALA friends and family in Washington, DC (Hugo and Rebecca Medrano, Abel López, Kira Streeter, Alessandra D’Ovidio, Laura Quiroga, Lorena Sabogal, Osbel Peña, Anamer Castrello, and Harold Acosta), a special thank you. A note of appreciation to Hugo, Abel, and Harold, whose thrill for the theatrical led them to the College Park campus on the day of my defense. To my oldest and dearest friends, Paul McDonald, Jack Moore Scott III, Melissa Thorpe, Eric Callman, and Ted Weber, thanks guys. Lastly, to my cats Sadie, Katlin, and Floyd who carefully sat on every paper, book, and photocopy in my arsenal, but provided a constant source of companionship and love. I also need to make a quick bid to the good folks at Jolly Rancher, thank you for sweetening my taste buds during those hours when I was “burning the midnight oil.”

To my mother, Mari Paz, to whom I dedicate this dissertation. Thanks mom, you’ve *always* been my greatest source of support, inspiration, and encouragement. I love you dearly.

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## Abbreviations

AAC	Asociación de Anunciantes Cubanos (Association of Advertisers of Cuba)
AJR	Asociación de Jóvenes Rebeldes (Association of Rebel Youth)
ANAP	Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (National Association of Small Farmers )
AP	Associated Press
BRAC	Buró de Represión de Actividades Comunistas (Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities)
CDR	Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution)
COP	Consolidado de Publicidad (Consolidated Publicity)
COR	Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria (Commission of Revolutionary Orientation)
CTC	Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba (Confederation of Cuban Workers)
CNC	Consejo Nacional de Cultura (National Council of Culture)
DR	Directorio Revolucionario (Revolutionary Directorate)
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (Revolutionary Armed Forces)
FMC	Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women)
ICAIC	Instituto Cubano de Arte y Industria Cinemátográficos (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry)

INAV	Instituto Nacional de Ahorros y Viviendas (National Institute of Housing and Savings)
INIT	Instituto Nacional de la Industria Turística (National Institute of the Tourist Industry)
INRA	Instituto Nacional de la Reforma Agraria (National Institute of Agrarian Reform)
JUNDA	Junta Nacional para la Distribución de los Abastecimientos (National Committee for the Distribution of Provisions)
M267	Movimiento 26 de Julio (26 of July Movement)
MRR	Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Rescue Movement)
MRP	Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (Revolutionary Movement of the People)
ORI	Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (Integrated Revolutionary Organizations)
OTV	Organización de Trabajo Voluntario (Organization for Volunteer Labor)
PSP	Partido Popular Socialista (Popular Socialist Party)
SIM	Servicio de Inteligencia Militar (Military Intelligence Service)
SIP	Inter-American Press Society
UPR	Unión de Pioneros Rebeldes (Union of Rebel Pioneers)
UJC	Unión de Jóvenes Comunista (Union of Communist Youth)
UNEAC	Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba)
UPEC	Unión de Periodistas de Cuba (Union of Journalists of Cuba)

## Introduction

### Cartooning the Cuban *pueblo*, 1903 and 1963



Figure 1 Ricardo de la Torriente, "Liborio," *La Política Cómica*, 1906.



LA RECONSTRUCCION  
Por PECRUZ  
—¡Compañero, vamos a enseñarle al mundo de lo que es capaz un pueblo cuando se decide a meter el hombro!...

Figure 2 Pecruz, "The Reconstruction," *Bohemia*, October 18, 1963, 53.

"The Cartooned Revolution: Images and the Revolutionary Citizen in Cuba, 1959-1963" traces the relationship between imagery and citizenship in the early phases of the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Through a broad analysis of cartoons and advertisements produced in the Havana press between January 1959 and December 1963, this study discusses the interplay of state-regulated visual communications within the print media and the reading public that ultimately shaped a process of socialization and defined a new citizenry and national identity. Read together, cartoons and advertisements brought to life an

historically-based, idealized narrative of Cuba's early revolutionary phase that contextualized multiple constructions of the new Cuban citizen.

The powerful effects of post-1959 revolutionary imagery require contextualization within Havana media culture and consumer society in the years before the guerrillas left the Sierra Maestra and headed into the capital. Home to approximately one and a half million residents on the eve of the Revolution, the Havana accounted for not only the highest concentration of government and service activity, who made up a significant part of the national professional classes, but also half of Cuba's industrial output. Acting as a commercial hub and point of entry for eighty percent of imports—from bulk staples, fuels, and industrial machinery to the latest fashions, gadgetry, and trends— it stands to reason that by 1959, Havana boasted the highest per capita ownership of Cadillac automobiles, three quarters of Cuba's medium-wave radio stations, and nearly four hundred thousand televisions sets.<sup>1</sup> United States capital played a very large role in this media-rich consumer economy. American investments and tourism shaped Havana's landscape, stimulating the construction of high-rise buildings,

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<sup>1</sup>Statistics on the number of radios and audiences reached vary and conservative estimates are cited in the text above. According to Antoni Kapcia, by 1956 radio across Cuba reached some “six million people, with two thirds of Havana's 77, 271 vehicles having radios.” Cuba was one of the first four countries in Latin America to debut television with regular programming and broadcasting in color by 1958. It had an estimated one hundred and sixty radio stations of varying wavelengths, transmitting to well over one million radios. Antoni Kapcia, *Havana, the Making of Cuban Culture* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2005), 91 and 103; John Lent, *Mass Communications in the Caribbean* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 122; and Louis Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 332-33.

apartments, supermarkets, and luxury department and retail stores. Tourism boomed throughout the 1950s with nearly two hundred thousand visitors arriving in 1951 and over three hundred and fifty thousand in 1957; ninety percent were from the United States.<sup>2</sup>

On the eve of the Revolution, argues John Lent, Havana boasted one of “the most competitive [media] markets in the world, with twenty-one dailies of more than one million total circulation, thirty-two commercial standard radio stations, and five television stations.”<sup>3</sup> The mass media market had its roots in 1922, when the Cuban Telephone Company’s Radio PWX began broadcasting and radio sales began to climb quickly, but was built upon a print media and penny press that dated back to the liberal reforms of the colonial period. By the 1950s, stations like La Voz del Aire (The Voice of the Air) and CMQ’s La Palabra (The Word)—all privately owned—brought the news, *radio novelas* (radio dramas), and music to listeners with Havana-based CMC working as a national network. Radio sales across Cuba had increased from 85,000 in 1925 to 1.5 million by 1952.<sup>4</sup> Television sales grew from 25,000 sets imported in 1951 to

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<sup>2</sup>The collapse of tourism after the Revolution hit wage earners particularly hard as visits fell from approximately 180,000 in 1959 to 4,000 by 1961. Kapcia, 66-89. The 1953 census recorded the populations of Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, and Santa Clara, the next three largest Cuban cities after Havana, at 163,237, 110,338, and 77,398 inhabitants respectively. Rolando E. Bonachea, and Nelson P. Valdés, *Cuba in Revolution* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 347-48.

<sup>3</sup>Lent, 120.

<sup>4</sup>By 1933, a total of sixty-two stations functioned throughout Cuba, concentrated in the provinces of Las Villas, Camagüey, and Santiago de Cuba, ranking Cuba fourth for the country with the most radio stations after the US (625),

400,000 by 1959. Even by conservative estimates, with thirty percent of sets sold on the black market, Cuba ranked ninth in world for number of televisions owned. In the 1950s, four major broadcast networks dominated national programming with Havana's CMQ-TV operating stations in Matanzas, Santa Clara, Camagüey, Holguín, and Santiago de Cuba. A Havana market survey taken in 1951 reported a viewing audience of up to eight people per set as a result of a growing trend in neighbors gatherings to watch television shows together.<sup>5</sup>

Habaneros also fell in love with the automobile. By the early 1920s, more than one hundred and fifty different makes of car could be seen crisscrossing the streets of Havana and by 1955, this number grew to one hundred and twenty-five thousand. In 1951, the completion of Vía Blanca, an all-weather superhighway, connected Havana, Matanzas, and Varadero.<sup>6</sup> These various outlets and degrees of connectivity certainly attributed to the sense of ubiquity of the Cuban Revolution and facilitated the largess of the rebel image and phenomenon, especially that of Fidel Castro. Even before their victory, Castro and his rebels took advantage of this rich media environment to promote their struggle.<sup>7</sup> In February 1958, Ernesto "Che" Guevara began transmitting from the depths of the

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Canada (77), and the Soviet Union (68). Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 331.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 333–34.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 338–40.

<sup>7</sup>In October 1953, immediately after his imprisonment on the Isla de Pinos, after the attack on the Moncada Barracks in July, the press not only interviewed Castro, but he spoke on national radio. Claudia Lightfoot, *Havana: A Cultural and Literary Companion* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2002), 48.



Sierra Maestra on Radio Rebelde as a way to circumvent Batista's system of censorship that isolated radio listeners from news of rebel activities. During the insurgency, notes John Spicer Nichols, "each night, a growing number of Cubans would tune in to the station and hear a barrage of reports of guerrilla victories, manifestos, patriotic poems, and music. Castro frequently polished his oratorical skills over the air, and by the time the revolutionaries took control of the government, he had refined his ability to the point that many analysts considered him the world's greatest political speaker of the era."<sup>8</sup> After the rebels' triumphant entry into Havana, Castro's image and voice could be heard daily on radios and televisions in homes, shops, cafés, and office buildings throughout Havana and broadly, Cuba. From this media rich environment, the Cuban Revolution became both a national and international media and market event.

Predominantly, the strength of circulation and professional talents of the revolutionary press stemmed from Cuba's pre-revolutionary newspaper and magazine industry and culture, a topic discussed in detail in the first chapter. The Cuban newspaper tradition and its readership proved more robust than its literary counterpart. Cuba's book industry remained underdeveloped through the 1950s, largely relegated to a dependence on small presses that printed based on the number of pre-paid subscriptions, or credit granted to authors. Short stories and poetry fared better than novels. The pre-revolutionary literary intelligentsia, based mainly in Havana and Las Villas, grouped into circles like the Grupo

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<sup>8</sup>Lent, 125.

Minorista (1923-1928) and Origenes (1944-1955) and found outlet in magazines and journals including *Social*, *Revista de Avance*, and *Bohemia*. Writers and novelist turned to other professions like journalism and script-writing for *radio novelas*.<sup>9</sup> With the establishment of a national printing press in March 1959, the Imprenta Nacional, book publishing expanded, along with readership after the Literacy Campaign in 1961, focusing on educational initiatives and creating literature for a broader and new readership.<sup>10</sup> Post-Revolution newspaper circulation proved equally capable, if not stronger, than its previous era. Revolutionary imagery did not miss a minute of production as the previously underground revolutionary press emerged and dispersed itself into abandoned office space and presses. Fidel Castro quickly expropriated certain newspapers allied with the previous dictatorship and his media allies filled in this institutional and artistic vacuum. Newspapers and magazines either belonging to, or favored by the new regime expanded their circulation in proportions previously unmatched in large part due to the appropriation of new print capacities. Immediately following the victory, the popular magazine *Bohemia* published a two hundred page special with a one million copy printing. By the end of its first year, *Revolución*, the official newspaper of the 26 of July Movement, reached a

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<sup>9</sup>Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba: A Social History of Print Culture, 1830s-1990s* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1997), 56.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 101 and Lourdes Casal, "Literature and Society," in *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, ed. Carmelo Mesa-Lago (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1971), 447, 452 and 454.

daily circulation of two hundred and fifty thousand copies.<sup>11</sup> By comparison, before their closure in May 1960, the circulation of the oldest conservative newspaper, *Diario de la Marina*, reached forty thousand. The most popular liberal newspaper, *Prensa Libre*, registered a daily run of ninety-eight thousand.<sup>12</sup> Without this solid institutional media basis and public reach, in addition to the high frequency of publication and thematic variety of revolutionary imagery, this project's insistence that cartoons and advertisements merit value as data worthy of analysis would be difficult to assert. With a richness of visual material, I present a comprehensive sampling of imagery published in Havana's core, revolutionary newspapers and magazines from 1959 to 1963: *Revolución* (Revolution, Fidel Castro's 26 of July Movement daily, 1959-1965); *Noticias de Hoy* (Today's News, Popular Socialist Party daily, 1938-1965); *Bohemia* (Bohemia, a weekly popular bi-monthly magazine, 1911-present); and *Verde Olivo* (Olive Green, Revolutionary Armed Forces weekly magazine, 1959-1990).

The value of cartoons and advertisements as mediums of state communication and revolutionary socialization inhere in their ability to transmit

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<sup>11</sup>In 1965, *Revolución* and *Noticias de Hoy* merged to form the official Communist party newspaper, *Granma* and boasted printing of over seven hundred thousand copies. Juan Marrero, *Dos siglos de periodismo en Cuba: momentos hechos y rostros* (Havana: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, 1999), 76 and 105.

<sup>12</sup>*Europa Yearbook*, v2 (London: Europa Publications, 1960), 428. *Noticias de Hoy* circulation statistics recorded at 27,300 for 1960. Newsprint consumption per capita consumption number (in thousand metric tons) peaked during the first years of the study and dropped in 1963 as a result of pulp shortages due to the U.S. embargo: 1950-1954, 22.9; 1960, 41.4; 1961, 38.5; 1962, 33.9; and 1963, 16.8. United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook* (New York: United Nations, 1964), 704.

messages quickly and simply to a reading public short on time, or with variable levels of literacy. Cartoons, as a culturally-favored popular art, and commercial advertisements, as a staple of media imagery prevalent in a consumer-based society like Cuba, represented strong image traditions the Revolutionary Government could count on as mass transmitters of state directives. Cuba's comic art tradition gravitated more toward a visual emphasis on messaging than a textual one, largely due to a long history of censorship and repression. The majority of the cartoons appearing in this study are single-framed and this facilitated an immediacy in their messaging versus a strip, or a cartooned sequence of panels. Cartoonists, specifically revolutionary, designed their pieces for an audience of varying levels of literacy and competency. A 1953 literacy census taken in Havana recorded illiteracy, mainly among poor working class neighborhoods, at 11.6% and an average rural illiteracy rate at 41.7%, with some areas registering up to 80% (Sierra Maestra, Sierra Cristal, and Escambray).<sup>13</sup> Havana's high literacy rate, by comparison with other parts of the island, allows me to assume a high levels of readership and image exposure. Unlike other types of art that could be leisurely consumed without affect, revolutionary imagery carried both political and official weight and its reading reflected a civic act. Cartoons published in *Revolución*, for instance, represented an official art by virtue of its political affiliation to Castro's revolutionary organization, the 26 of

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<sup>13</sup>Ministerio de Educación, *Informe del Ministerio de Educación, lucha contra el analfabetismo y tarea de la sociedad y los estudiantes* (Havana: La Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, 1961), 13 and 16.

July Movement. The state's consideration of cartoons as a valuable medium of communication with the public could also be evidenced by the creation of an exclusively revolutionary cartoon magazine *Palante y Palante* in 1961 and the lifting of restriction on professionalism. An explosion of cartooning took place with the Revolution. Cartoonists unwavering focus on the revolutionary program and promoting new forms of belonging reflected an active engagement on their part toward building a new revolutionary society.

Scholars of the Cuban Revolution have distinguished the course of its history through a series of phases that delimit what can be viewed as points of departure from a previous stage of its life. This study adheres to an historiography that views the phases of the revolution in Cuba as part of an historical process that dated back to a frustrated nationalist program and aspirations stemming from the wars against Spain, but whose course was largely determined after 1959.<sup>14</sup> Castro's triumph in January 1959 marked what many hoped would be a new beginning, one that promised social justice, true democracy, and self-sustained, economic growth. It closed the chapter on a failed state, one suffering from a crisis of political legitimacy, social demoralization, uneven modernization, economic stagnation, sugar-dominated development, and

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<sup>14</sup>Remarkably, most studies on the Cuban Revolution agree on the periods of its phasing, or cycles. Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Louis Pérez, *Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Sheldon Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); and Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968).

compromised sovereignty. In *Revolutions in World History* (2004), Michael Richards posited three criteria through which a revolution could be assessed as “success” or a “failure.” A revolution should “provide for individual liberty;” permit a “flexible and open political system that can deal with economic, social, and cultural changes;” and strive to “generate improvement in the well-being of those it affects.”<sup>15</sup> Given Richard’s categories, over its life course, the Cuban Revolution has struggled, if not outright failed to overcome an unrelenting economic dependency, to secure even limited political participation and liberty for its citizens, and to evolve beyond an unyielding ideological position.

The Revolution can be roughly divided into six phases: 1959-1960; 1961-1963; 1964-1972; 1972-1986; 1986-1990; 1990 and beyond. The years of this study, framed in the first two phases and considered the most fluid in terms of strategy and ideology, reflect the Revolution’s ability to adapt to sudden change and crisis over time and have served as an ideological reservoir for its policy reversals. The first two years of the Revolution encompassed a period of rectification; of building legitimacy and faith in the Revolutionary Government and its leaders, particularly Fidel; of emphasizing import substitution, agricultural diversification and land reform, social justice and the distribution of services; of ideological fluidity based on a resurgence of nationalism and growing anti-imperialism. The nationalization of industries and subsequent rupture of

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<sup>15</sup>Michael Richards, *Revolutions in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

diplomatic relations with the United States and the invasion of Cuban exiles, combined to launch the Revolution into a new phase, characterized by a state of siege and a fervent anti-imperialism that culminated with Castro's proclamation of Marxist-Leninist state in April 1961. The second phase from 1961-1963 saw the a rise of mass organizations, a stronger impulse toward rapid industrialization with Soviet assistance, economic centralization and planning, a growing bureaucracy, an emphasis on popular mobilization and national projects, and a deeper concentration on political indoctrination. By 1963, an economic decline caused by disruptions in industrial production, poor planning, and poor harvests led to what became known as the "Great Debate" between Che Guevara and Carlos Rafael Rodríguez in 1964. Simply put, Guevara argued an emphasis on moral incentives toward building socialism versus Rodríguez's insistence on adopting the Soviet model of material incentives and heavier planning. A compromise was reached and the period of 1964-1972 focused on building a highly motivated, hard working "New Cuban Man," enforcing moral incentives, closing the gap between socialism and communism by repudiating wage differentials and bonuses, reaching full collectivization, and the elimination of market mechanisms. State investments, economic efforts, and Cuba's destiny returned to an emphasis on sugar production. The failure to achieve the output goal of the infamous Ten-Million Ton Sugar Harvest in 1970 proved to be a watershed moment for the Revolution. Demoralized and introspective, Castro publically admitted failure and announced a new reversal. By 1972, Cuba turned full speed toward implementing a Soviet model based on material incentives by

re-introducing wage differentials, bonuses, and overtime pay, reorganizing ministries into smaller units for better centralized planning, joining the Comecon in 1972, drafting a new constitution in 1976, and politically decentralizing through the Organs of Popular Power. Consumer goods, planning techniques, and Cubans' purchasing power did improve during this phase, but by the mid-1980s, rampant corruption, exaggerated profits and shady reporting, a growing black market, a decline in trade earnings and a rise in deficit with the Soviets led to a reconsideration of revolutionary roots.

In 1986, a determination to "rectify" problems coincided with changes in the Soviet Union, specifically Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist programs of *perestroika* and *glasnost* of the 1980s. This short phase marked a resurgence of Cuba's commitment to socialism through salary readjustments, higher labor productivity, a revival of microbrigades and volunteer projects, and a re-emphasis on the link between the party and the masses. The dismantling of the Soviet Union, beginning in 1990, had disastrous effects on the Cuban economy. Without Soviet aid, credits, trade, and protection, the economic, political, and social vulnerabilities of the Revolution flared like never before. The incompatibility of central state power and market reforms, reflective of a struggle between ideology and pragmatism, coupled with the international situation, precipitated a new crisis. During the "Special Period in Peacetime" (1990-present),<sup>16</sup> a severe

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<sup>16</sup>Some scholars argue whether or not the effects of the Special Period have ended since the economy has never recovered to its pre-1989 indicators. See Cynthia Benzing, "Cuba: Is the 'Special Period' Really Over?" *International Advances in Economic Research* 11 (2005): 69-82.



economic downturn marked by food, energy, and material shortages, particularly from 1991-1996, forced the regime to allow direct foreign investment, even ownership in some cases, self-employment in certain services and professions, the legalization of the dollar, the dismantling of state farms into cooperatives, the reopening of farmers markets, and a decentralization of managerial decisions in state enterprises. However, state regulations of investments and profiteering, even criticisms from Castro regarding the degree of relish Cubans took toward market-style transactions, precipitated another policy reversal towards a revival of socialist values after 2003. Access to lines of foreign credit for primary materials and basic necessities remained vulnerable as trade deficits spiraled out of control to the point of defaulting on existing loans and fluctuations in Castro's position toward foreign investment. Tourism and remittances from Cuban families living abroad have surpassed foreign earnings, representing a major shift from an export economy once dominated by sugar and nickel. The broader story of the Revolution reveals a search for a balance between its revolutionary ideals and its inability to become economically viable beyond its roots in monoculture. Some scholars believe that surges in ideological purity reflect the state's need to control and protect its resources and its authority while other see ideology (*cubania*) as the Revolution's glue, or an intrinsic part of Cuban political history.<sup>17</sup> This

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<sup>17</sup>See Susan Eva Eckstein, *Back from the Future* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba, Island of Dreams* (New York: Berg, 2000).

dissertation offers an unique view to its revolutionary roots and its historical basis for legitimacy.

This period of 1959 to 1963 encapsulates the most acute process of ideological, socio-political, economic, and cultural transformation in the history of the Revolution; a process that transformed Republican-era cartoons and commercial advertisements into their revolutionary forms. It encompassed a broad historical scope, from Cuba's colonial transition to an American-based satellite, consumed by a capitalist-inspired, tourist-fueled market culture that boasted modernity and civilization into a self-proclaimed beacon of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism that served as an example of Latin American defiance to imperialist interests in under three years. Harnessing the institutional and productive power of a rich pre-revolutionary media, the new Revolutionary Government, through its media-loyalists, restructured and reoriented newspapers and magazine outlets to serve a revolutionary purpose. During the first two years (1959-1960), institutional and aesthetic changes transformed both cartoons and advertisements into pieces of revolutionary-oriented communication. At the moment of victory in January 1959, Cuba boasted a rich history of comic art. New alliances with the Revolution and its leaders formed and soon forced cartoonists to tailor their aesthetics and themes to meet the needs of socializing and guiding their readers through an unfolding imagined, revolutionary narrative. The cartoon, previously known for its adeptness at circumventing censors and its biting, socio-political criticism, modified its function to explain, champion, and educate the reading public to revolutionary changes and politics. Similarly, the

power of the American and Cuban commercial advertisement appropriated a revolutionary tone and style to selling its products. At first, commercial advertisers designed a more revolutionary piece, that is, American and Cuban advertising companies added revolutionary rhetoric and slogans into their selling pitches. The revolutionary process, however, generated the final transformation of the commercial advertisement at the moment the Revolutionary Government nationalized the American and Cuban advertising industry by the end of 1960. It erected two parallel organizations, the Consolidated Publicity and the exclusively, state-run Intercommunications, to effectively create a revolutionary advertisement. At the end of these two years, all newspapers and magazines, their editorial and artistic staffs, and their imagery worked to promote, support, and defend the Revolution. Through a visual and rhetorical analysis of revolutionary imagery—what I collectively refer to as cartoons and advertisements, this study reveals the incremental socialization of the Havana reading public to a normative, visual presentation of their incorporation into an imagined narrative, during the remaining years of this study (1961-1963).

Revolutionary politics shaped the social function and language of revolutionary imagery to suit state needs to the extent that it acted more like a medium of propaganda than a form of politicized art. In considering the meaning of propaganda, scholars have struggled to set definitive limits. The discussion, however, largely surrounds method, content, intention, and approach. In their book *Propaganda and Persuasion* (2006), Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell's simple definition of propaganda, tailored to communication studies, suits this

period of revolutionary imagery's still nascent form: "propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."<sup>18</sup> In considering a Cuban approach to propaganda and indoctrination, Castro reproached the idea of building an elite cadre of formal agitators as Lenin suggested, and considered that from a citizen's own participation in mass organizations, the Revolution gained its cadres, its mass support, and its strength.<sup>19</sup> In a speech focusing on Marxism-Leninism and its application to a Cuban setting in December 1961, Castro stated that "it is not a matter of indoctrination, we should drop that term. Because the word 'indoctrinate' implies instilling something in someone, filling someone's head

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<sup>18</sup>Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006), 8. A universal definition of propaganda common among literature focusing on Soviet society would best include certain important characteristics: (1) a form of mass message that distills the complexities of an ideology into a simplistic formulae; (2) a suggestive narrative based on the "manipulation of symbols and psychology of the individual"; (3) an interplay of "half-myths and half-reality" with an "aggressive missionary spirit" that draws "sharp lines between good and evil"; (4) a force acceptance of "delays in fulfillment of promises"; and (5) an ultimate goal to create a "new Soviet man." See Anthony R. Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 2001), 9 and 50; Leonard Dobb, *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1935), 387; Martin Ebon, *The Soviet Propaganda Machine* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1987), 6-9 and 337; and Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965), 77.

<sup>19</sup>Peter Kenez argues that Bolshevik propaganda stems from Leninist principles and their revision of Marx, which ultimately insisted that a disciplined body of vanguard cadres must lead the working class in the process of class struggle through indoctrination and build their revolutionary consciousness. Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 6-7.

with something. It isn't a matter of indoctrinating or instilling the people with something, but of teaching people to analyze, teaching them to think."<sup>20</sup>

Revolutionary cartoons and advertisements featured a more inclusive, educative dialogue between the reader and artist. They did not match the ferocity of ideological language and iconography common to other contexts of socialist propaganda. Instead, they tailored their approach to molding a new Cuban revolutionary culture and identity based on a nationalist, anti-imperialistic rhetoric tied to historical conditions and familiar symbols with little importation. The ideological world that imagery constructed in order to shape the new revolutionary citizen remained steeped in nationalist dreams that could largely be distilled into a few priorities (e.g., land reform, eradication of political corruption, literacy, social justice, and political sovereignty).<sup>21</sup> Cartoonists and advertisers wove nationalism into their art, offering explanations, relating official needs, announcing public successes, molding a social, revolutionary consciousness, and rehabilitating dissenters. Thus, instead of asking whether or not indoctrination

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<sup>20</sup>He continued to say, "He who believes that he's going to be indoctrinated will not find anyone interested in giving him a "shock treatment" or a hole in the head of anything of the sort. Besides, there are people who, because of their nature, their temperament, can never be revolutionaries." Fidel Castro, "Fidel Castro Speaks on Marxism-Leninism," (New York: Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 1961), 76-77.

<sup>21</sup>In their November 1956 program, the 26 of July Movement officially declared, "We are resuming the unfinished Cuban revolution. That is why we preach the same 'necessary war' of José Martí for the same reasons he proclaimed it; against the regressive ills of the colony, against the sword that shelters tyrants, against corrupt and rapacious politicians, against the merchants of our national economy." Bonachea and Valdés, 114-116.

existed, it is important to consider how cartoonists and the graphic artists articulated the visuality of revolutionary politics.

During this period, state-directed institutional changes transformed these two types of uniquely constructed, mass-oriented traditions in visual culture into provocative artifacts of visual propaganda. Since visual propaganda appears in a variety of forms (e.g., posters, films, photographs, and murals), I will refer to this post-revolutionary era of cartoons and advertisements as “revolutionary cartoons” and “revolutionary advertisements.” The institutional conversion of the cartoon and advertisement into forms with a propagandistic edge occurred through a dismantling of the pre-revolutionary press and a physical takeover and re-staffing newsrooms and printing presses; the deregulation and politicalization of the cartooning profession; and the reorganization and orientation of the pre-revolutionary advertising industry towards state-run production and needs. A more ideologically and politically homogenous communications media emerged and with it, a cohesive revolutionary visuality and harmonious, textual messaging. By May 1961, all visual productive forces, that is, institutions, editors and their artists, determined the circulation, content, context, and the politics of representation of revolutionary imagery. The question at hand is largely how revolutionary politics affected the artistic and institutional dimension of revolutionary imagery. In 1963, César Escalante, director of the Commission of Revolutionary Orientation (Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria, COR), the organization in charge of coordinating the ideological and propagandistic

elements of Cuban mass media, considered the role of the press, visual propaganda, radio, and film as:

the struggle to promote and develop new ideas on labor, production, social property, collectivism, revolutionary and patriotic traditions, solidarity with other struggles of liberation, and defense of the Socialist camp, with originality, freshness, agility, life, and creative spirit while using all the amusing, attractive, and beautiful forms that can give force and conviction to the ideas of the new society, to educate and persuade, to form the higher consciousness that is needed.<sup>22</sup>

Cartoons ceased to solely function as moments of pure entertainment, *costumbrismo* art, and points of socio-political criticism. For many revolutionary cartoonists, the creation of their images constituted a personal revolutionary act, in other words, their form of participating in the Revolution. Commercial advertisements turned into revolutionary advertisements after the COR insisted on transforming the aesthetic and commercial remnants of a consumer, brand-based advertising industry into what Escalante termed *propaganda revolucionaria*. Despite the fact that revolutionary advertisements were not privately-owned and functioned within a non-consumer based economy, their production relied on the same techniques and graphic artistry of American-trained advertisers, and they in essence, I argue, continued to sell the Revolution, its programs, its promises, and its real or imagined emotions. Revolutionary imagery divulged only what the state wanted Cubans to concentrate on as citizens, and to an extent, as “consumers” of the Revolution. It was a nascent revolutionary imagery that at

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<sup>22</sup>César Escalante, “Lo fundamental en la propaganda revolucionaria,” *Cuba Socialista* 3, no. 25 (September 1963), 28.

first assumed a non-revolutionary audience. Both forms turned their attention to promoting stock images and slogans suggesting a “revolution in action” and mobilizing citizens into a frenzy of reforms. They immediately set a new stage, introduced a new set of characters juxtaposed with old stereotypes, refreshed patriotic symbols, revived nationalist ideology, and addressed economic and social problems disrupting national projects toward progress. It is important to note that despite the Revolution’s adherence to a Marxist-Leninist doctrine in 1961, iconography associated with this ideology remains largely underdeveloped during this period with only initial steps toward building a visual discourse of vanguardism and New Cuban Man present. Nevertheless, in communicating vital policies and campaigns, revolutionary cartoonists and advertisers contributed to the discursive formation of a new revolutionary identity while actively and incrementally acclimatizing their audiences to a deepening civic commitment.

Revolutionary imagery increasingly engaged the reading public into a visual and rhetorical dialogue, carried out within an unrelenting barrage of campaigns, promises, warnings, and advice that mirrored, to a varying extent, at any given time, the reader’s real-world experience. This concept of a *seeing* relationship between revolutionary imagery and its reader was based on the interplay of the imagined narrative and the real world. In her study, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: a Visual Economy of the Andean World* (1997), Deborah Poole defined the “image world” as the “relationship between referral and exchange among images themselves and the social and discursive relations connecting



image makers and consumers.”<sup>23</sup> This image world, that is, the Revolution as it unfolded within revolutionary imagery (what I term the imagined narrative), the shared understanding of its meanings, and its real-world circulation (i.e., the production, purchase, and reading of newspapers and magazines), contributed to the existence of what Benedict Anderson referred to as an “imagined community.” Anderson suggests the nation is imagined because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>24</sup> These images, along with their icons and symbols, constructed for the reader a view of the Revolution that suggested varying levels of the public’s real-world integration and enthusiasm for the revolutionary program. The imagined narrative that cartoonists and advertisers constructed contributed to Cuba’s revolutionary, imagined community. This study largely concerns itself with analyzing the imagined narrative within the idealized world created by revolutionary imagery. This imagined narrative itself, built through a series of creative scenarios, was inspired by material and historical events, where the past, present, and future collided and became problematic. Patriotism played a strong mobilizing role within the imagined narrative. As diplomatic relations with the United States soured and economic challenges mounted, promises of a

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<sup>23</sup>Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>24</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

progressive future framed as the unfulfilled hopes of the past, circulated and provided present policies with an indisputable, inherent logic. As Victoria Bonnell suggested, “the trick was to create the illusion of an imaginary future in the visual terms of the present.”<sup>25</sup> In the end, the visual representations inside this imagined narrative incrementally mirrored the realities of revolutionary society as it matured. It provided the reading public with a medium through which it could “see” its own official representation undergoing a revolutionary experience. Its reading offers an interpretive value for understanding the politics shaping the production of this state-sanctioned, image world.

The visual link between revolutionary politics and outside events to the imagined narrative remains undeniable and essential to its value as official art. The material revolutionary experience fueled the content, context, icons, symbols, and terms of its own visual presentation within the imagined narrative. Cartoonists and advertisers actively promoted its idealized vision. Yet, their visual elaborations, in turn, mirrored, disputed, criticized, and in a sense, reconfigured the outside world. While the historical narrative and its condition supports our understanding of the imagined narrative, it is not the focus of this study. The object of analysis is the interplay between historical events, revolutionary politics, and their visual elaborations within the imagined narrative and how these three elements combined to form a visual representation of the revolutionary citizen. Revolutionary advertisements transmitted messages from

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<sup>25</sup>Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 38.

ministries and mass organizations that helped to form the institutional structure of the Revolution. Unlike other types of art exclusive to museums, homes, or special viewing, revolutionary imagery appeared in official newspapers and popular magazines like *Revolución*; that is, it owed its authorship to state-sanctioned media outlets. This official bias, or alignment on the one hand, provided new job opportunities for revolutionary cartoonists and graphic artists, while on the other, constricted the thematic, rhetorical, and visual representations within the imagined narrative and its social function (and even perhaps reception) by relegating it to a propagandistic role. Initially, revolutionary imagery portrayed the young Castro state as a champion of reform within a longer tradition of Cuban liberalism. But in short time, the resistance of holdovers from the deposed Batista political class in combination with the souring of relations with the United States, engendered an emergent revolutionary visuality. On the whole, revolutionary imagery sought to transform behaviors and traditions by propagating ideological codes consistent with, at first, the historico-political symbolism associated with the heroics of the guerrilla struggle and later, with the growing socio-economic and political needs and interests of the Revolution. As the radicalization of revolutionary politics intensified, the connection between the visual representations of the imagined narrative and the Revolution strengthened and the political value of imagery as a transmitter of state communication manifested itself without camouflage. Similarly, as Cubans deepened their commitment to the Revolution through their integration into revolutionary society, their representation within the imagined narrative adjusted accordingly

and re-projected itself as a more ideologically-sophisticated, revolutionary identity. Within this idealized presentation of the Revolution, citizens happily complied with their new duties, filled with a growing revolutionary spirit.

The visual construction of the new revolutionary identity and citizen as he, or she, happily and enthusiastically worked, sacrificed, participated, shared, and defended the Revolution within the imagined narrative, consumes the focus of this study. Initially, nationalism, later joined by a fervent anti-imperialism—after the Revolution Government’s commitment to Marxism-Leninism—structured visual discourse, functioning as a mobilizing force and basis for revolutionary commitment. The rupture in U.S. and Cuban relations after the nationalization of American industry and the imposition of a trade embargo at the end of 1960, precipitated a caustic and dangerous atmosphere, both inside and outside the imagined narrative, marked by economic shortages, acts of violence, and socio-cultural dislocation. It is within this chaotic context that a resurgence of a Cuban nationalism, charged with a biting anti-imperialist edge, played through certain visual themes and acutely acted as an ideological, discursive reservoir for the construction of a new Cuban identity. Revolutionary imagery, mobilizing citizens into recycling primary materials, participating in mass literacy projects, maintaining vigilance, and joining volunteer labor brigades, encouraged them to “Throw away? Nothing!” “Join the Final Battle against Illiteracy,” “Go to the Harvest,” or “Be on Alert,” suggesting these action ultimately led to a free and prosperous Cuba. Cartoonists and advertisers linked actions, hopes, desires, and disappointments to a storyline forwarding the Revolution, to thwarting an

American imperialist plot, or fulfilling an unfinished, national goal. Antoni Kapcia characterized Cuba at the time of the Revolution as “an ‘island of dreams’ mixing illusions with teleological visions and creating ‘real’ plans on the basis of long postponed but still believed dreams of utopia.”<sup>26</sup> I will argue that this period of revolutionary imagery transformed a pre-revolutionary version of Cuban identity, represented visually as the symbolic *pueblo*—a cartooned, nationalist construction of the Cuban people, generated and nurtured first by Ricardo de la Torriente’s beloved series *Liborio*, to a new revolutionary identity, based on a defiant and bold version of the 26 of July Movement *rebelde*. Torriente’s *Liborio*, a victimized figure beaten into dependent submission by his imperialist Northern neighbor inevitably did not evoke the strength, defiance, and heroism needed to survive in the revolutionary imagined setting. Instead, Santiago Armada’s *Julito 26*, the bearded rebel, fresh from the Sierra Maestra struggle, along with a host of other stock characters, ushered and guided the *pueblo* on its journey to becoming a finely-tuned, active, alert, and morally irreproachable mass of dedicated revolutionaries. This new rebel identity and its corresponding symbols emerged as protagonist to a visual script that narrated a second, “real” process of Cuban independence wherein nationalist dreams came true through the imagined/real revolutionary act.

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<sup>26</sup>Kapcia, *Cuba*, 24. The idea of “unfinished,” “frustrated,” or “thwarted” revolution is not new to Cuban scholarship. See Louis Pérez’s essay for an elaboration of sources on this thesis: “History, Historiography, and Cuban Studies: Thirty Years Later” in *Cuban Studies Since the Revolution*, ed. Damián Fernández (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), 61.

Sources on visual culture inform this study's approach as a way of reading and seeing Cuban revolutionary imagery. Borrowing from semiotics and the mechanics of image analysis provides a general method to micro-analyze an image. Charles Sanders Pierce, Roland Barthes, and Ferdinand de Saussure established a way of thinking about signs and their meanings, that is, an image, text, or object (signifier) and what it represents (signified) in a given historical, social, and cultural context. Their terminology and definitions carry such fine distinctions and nuances that compromise and simplification is needed in terms of this study.<sup>27</sup> I will use Pierce's categorization of an iconic sign as a sign that resembles its object, which are typical to comic art, but sometimes these iconic signs act as symbolic signs. Symbolic signs carry another meaning, signification, or represent something else that is determined by a group.<sup>28</sup> Given these parameters then, an icon like the beard has symbolic signification within the revolutionary imagined narrative as the rebel. In short, not all signs in cartoons are symbols, some are just icons that represent what they resemble. I will also consider Stuart Hall's blending of semiotics and discourse theory, in what he defined as a discursive approach. According to Hall, it concerned "not only how languages and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up

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<sup>27</sup>Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29-30.

<sup>28</sup>John A. Walker and Sarah Chaplin, *Visual Culture: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 138-39.

or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied.”<sup>29</sup> How did visual representations (icons, symbols, characters, and setting) and their texts discursively construct the new revolutionary citizen within the imagined narrative? How were icons/symbols/text used to elaborate its identity, its power, and its behavior in this idealized view of the Revolution?

Literature on the methodological use of comic art as a analytical tool supports my argument of its value in isolating the ideological references (codes), symbols, and actions that informed the new revolutionary identity. Comic art scholars and enthusiasts argue the medium’s ability to simplify reality and construct a storyline naturally draws the reader and protagonist together on a number of levels (e.g., emotional, representational, and associative). Comic strips, to a certain extent, resemble the social exchange between, for example, TV shows, or book series and their audiences, where their devotees follow each installment and emotionally attach personal meaning and associations to the imagined casts of characters, central hero, and their adventures. The idea that comic art can build a relationship with the viewer attributes to it a certain cultural and social power that reverberates beyond the strip itself. This visual, social, and emotional attachment allows the viewer to *see* himself, or herself as a part of this imagined narrative. Scott McCloud called comics “an empty shell that we inhabit

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<sup>29</sup>Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Open University, 1997) 6.

that enables us to travel in another realm.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, cartoons, by virtue of their sequence and storytelling, inherently generate a sense of familiarity and affinity between protagonists and readers, acclimatizing the latter to a new imagined world perception. I would like to suggest that power, specifically what Michel Foucault referred to as “vehicles of power,” or “something which circulates . . . never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth . . . [but] employed and exercised through a net-like organization,” acts within the imagined narrative through a set of symbols and characters that define the parameters of revolutionary identity, its behavior, and its actions. Foucault continued, “Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. It is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals.”<sup>31</sup> Given his thesis, I intend to isolate the “vehicles of power” within revolutionary imagery. It is within this construction of a revolutionary identity that certain iconic signs like the rifle, the beard, the beret, the factory, and the machete assume symbolic power (symbolic signs). These symbolic signs circulate within threads of imagery concentrating on production, volunteer labor, defense, literacy, or Socialist emulation and are wielded by certain new characters such as Julito 26, the revolutionary worker,

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<sup>30</sup>Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 36.

<sup>31</sup>Michel Foucault, *Knowledge and Power: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Gordon Colin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.



militia, volunteer, or member of a mass organization. For example, iconic signs like the beard, rifle, and beret act as symbols for the rebel image/identity, much like the icon of a factory grew to symbolize Cuba, progress, production, and anti-imperialism within the thread of Socialist Emulation, or the *gusano* (worm) eventually represented “enemies of the people” and Miami-based counter-revolutionaries within threads of CDR imagery, or cartoons on defense and vigilance. In short, each thread of imagery carries certain symbols that hold power and significance, and ultimately attach meaning and discourse to the process of constructing identities within the imagined narrative. As Ian Gordon suggested, the comic strip “recreates characters with every frame, in a never ending construction of identity.”<sup>32</sup> While many of the cartoons featured in this study are single-framed, with few exception, and stem from a number of sources, I read and present them together as a continuous strip.

A survey of interdisciplinary studies using visual culture as a method of analysis narrows the placement of this study and the characterization of its imagery within the broader scope of the field. Studies featuring visual representations in sites of colonial, or post-colonial ‘zones of contact,’ that center on the constructions of status, difference, race, gender, or power have limited dialogue within this study. These contexts of production and re-production of images where empire intersect prove fruitful in an understanding of the domination of western technologies; how colonizers shaped identities by

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<sup>32</sup>Ian Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 10.

“othering” and the impact, in turn on subaltern self-image; how the subaltern can problematize colonial constructs; create competing visions of citizenship; and basically, emphasize the point that visual constructions are not uni-directional and can actualize what María del Carmen Suescun Pozas called a “doing and undoing of empire.” Nancy Rose Hunt’s essay in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (2002) on Tintin comics and their circulation in the colonial and post colonial Congo; the Belgium comic construction of Congolese stereotypes; and the appropriation of the comic book mechanics by Congolese artists after independence draws interesting parallels to the fore on the impact of American comic industry in Cuba during the Republic.<sup>33</sup> Yet, this visual story does not concern multiple centers and tensions of image production, either from a colonizers, or a colonized point of view. This is not the art of the subaltern, or a visual, hegemonic negotiation of race, gender, or identity. While western conventions and constructions shaped Cuban revolutionary imagery (American comics and advertising) in terms of mechanics and imagination, parallel traditions existed well before the invasion of the American visual industry and Cuban comic artists specifically, created their own visual articulations and channels of circulation. The political circumstances informing the production of

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<sup>33</sup>María del Carmen Suescun Pozas, “From Reading to Seeing: Doing and Undoing Imperialism in the Visual Arts” in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 551. Nancy Rose Hunt, “Tintin and the Interruptions of Congolese Comics,” in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Paul S. Landau and Deborah Kaspin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

imagery examined in this study greatly reduce its parallels to other studies.

Marcus Wood's book, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (2000) provides an analysis of how advertisements informed anti-slavery propaganda through the use of certain symbols, in this case, objects of torture, or narratives centering on runaway slaves. He emphasizes the social importance and impact of symbols at the "compositional hook," the point of narrative where "trauma" occurs (the object of torture and human body meet).<sup>34</sup> Inspired in this way by Wood's idea of a "compositional hook," I argue that within certain threads of imagery, particularly CDR imagery, mobilizing forces and symbols collide to present an acute picture of the revolutionary citizen. Anne Rubenstein's *Bad Language, Naked Ladies and Other Threats to the Nation, A Political history of Comic Books in Mexico* (1998) elaborates the interplay of Mexican comic book artists, critics, censors, the state, and consumers in the construction of liberal ideologies within the storyline of the *historieta* and broadly, outside national culture. Rubenstein's story illuminates the power of transmitting certain values and hierarchies, particularly gender, kinship, and class in this case, within the medium of the comic book.

One could argue that given the entertainment value and structure of the *historietas* certainly drew in audiences more than the politically-based, sometimes dry cartoons presented in this study, but Rubenstein's work does inform on the politics of the adult comic industry as part of a national space for discourse.

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<sup>34</sup>Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), 231.

Again though, this draws up the point that Cuban revolutionary cartoons held a distinct politico-social value and their reading meant more than casual enjoyment. Revolutionary cartoonists, by virtue of their professional alliance and artistic submission to the Cuban state, figure even more significantly as historical actors. Perhaps the examples of comic books like Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* or Art Spiegelman's *Maus* can point to the interpretive value of fictional narratives toward a deeper understanding of historical and social micro-histories beyond the comic's reputation as a medium of art geared toward children. In other words, what can comic art teach us? Joseph Witek's *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar* (1989) seeks to explore the different historical lessons in didactic comics and their political and social expression. One of the interesting points of examining the comic narratives of *Maus*, or *American Splendor* is the gravity, or seriousness of the subject matter and how this is articulated by a medium that draws a fine line between grimness and comedy. Cuban revolutionary cartoonists did not lose their humorous edge; they could generate a chuckle out of violent settings, of shop-floor politics, or of cadre abuses in revolutionary power. This points to the role of the artist as both a satirical cartoonist and a revolutionary. Santiago Armada (Chago) narrated a rebel's life from the depths of the struggle as a Sierra Maestra insurrectionist, and later became artistic editor for *Revolución* during this period. Similarly, René de la Nuez, a member of a local 26 of July Movement cell and creator of the seminal anti-Batista series *El Loquito*, used his post-revolutionary experiences as a member of the militia, or volunteer laborer to chronicle exploits and criticize anti-

revolutionary behaviors. The works of David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America 1910-1990* (2002) and Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (1997) for example, provide insight into historical contexts featuring artists, art production, and their role in elaborating revolutionary ideologies, specifically the Mexican muralists, Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco, or Soviet poster artists Alexandr Apsit, Viktor Deni, and Gustav Klutssis of the 1920s and 1930s. One may consider here an armed Diego Rivera as he painted murals mixing Mexican historical visions with a Marxist twist. Bonnell's work also points to the use of image traditions in state-building and how, in the Soviet case, poster artists employed certain elements of symbol and color common to religious iconography and visual culture during the Tsarist period, in order to facilitate a *seeing* transition to a new type of state art. The politics of Cuban cartoonists played an integral role in their artistic expression and its parameters of control, their choice of subject matter, and their self-image as revolutionary artists. What is at the center of what is *seen* is an idealized construction of revolutionary life by revolutionaries for the Revolution.

Cuban sources on the history of the Cuban newspapers, cartoons, graphic art, and publicity proved vital to the understanding of the relationship between the state and mass media, artistic biographies, production, and characters central to shaping the overall history of Cuban comic and graphic art and its social power. John Lent's work on mass communications and cartooning in the Caribbean represents one of the few voices outside what otherwise can be characterized as a narrative on newspapers and comics constructed with an ideological, or polemic

eye.<sup>35</sup> Despite the fact that Cuban sources are tied to an ideological yardstick, they do present a raw history and cultural significance of characters surrounding a Cuban national tradition in cartooning. Mirta Muñoz's work on publicity, *La publicidad en Cuba: mito y realidad* (2003) and Jorge R. Bermúdez *La imagen constante: proceso historico* (2000) were essential to my understanding of the fall of the for-profit, American and Cuban advertising industry and the rise of revolutionary institutions of visual propaganda. Adelaida de Juan's *Caricatura de la república* (1982) and *Hacerce el Bobo de Abela* (1978), in addition to Evora Tamayo, Juan Blas Rodríguez, and Oscar Hurtado's *Más de cien años de humor político* (1984) provided a broader historical narrative of the Cuban cartoon archetypes, symbolic codes, and artistic biographies. Andres Angula y Peréz's *La Prensa en Cuba: proceso historico* (1955) and Juan Marrero's *Dos siglos de periodismo en Cuba: momentos, hechos, y rostros* (1999) furnished a general overview of Conservative, Liberal, and leftist newspapers and journals over time and their relationship with the state; a central theme in studies on Cuban newspapers in mass media. Works by revolutionary cartoonists themselves like

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<sup>35</sup>Few sources generated outside of Cuba on Cuban mass media exist and focus on a range of issues, particularly concerning the late 1960s to 1980s when a more mature, less fluid state-owned institutional structure and channels of control existed; the political censoring of the press before the Revolution; or the immediate collapse of the pre-revolutionary print media focusing on the battle surrounding the *coletilla*. See John Spicer Nichols, *Cuban Mass Media: Organization, Control and Functions* (Columbia: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1982); William Ratliff, *The Selling of Fidel Castro: The Media and the Cuban Revolution* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987); James Carty, *Cuban Communications* (Bethany: Bethany College, 1978); and Carlos Ripoll, *La prensa en Cuba, 1952-1960* (Miami: Diario de las Americas, 1984).

René de la Nuez *Cuba XXV* (1984) and *El humor nuestro de cada día* (1976), as well as *25 años de humor en Palante* (1986), added a collection of biographical entries of revolutionary cartoonists, their styles, and their viewpoints to this study.

The oral interviews conducted in Cuba with cartoonists, journalists, and other mass media personalities active during this period, constitute an invaluable source material to this study. In August 2005, I met with cartoonists René de la Nuez, Adigio Benítez, Antonio Mariño Souto, Rafael Fornés, and Virgilio Martínez Gaínza to gain a richer understanding into their professional lives before and after the Revolution, the dynamics of the community and its role and challenges within the broader mass media landscape, and their perspective on the impact of their art in revolutionary society at large. Some, particularly Nuez, were seasoned interviewees and provided stock answers in areas of biographical history and character development. However, many seemed unprepared for the type of reflections that a historian might ask in characterizing the internal workings and the politics of belonging to the cartooning community, the role of cartooning as an art and medium of transmitting ideas within the Revolution, and their duality as revolutionaries and as cartoonists. Despite the difficulties in accurately reconstructing a chronological collection of events—no doubt reflective of false or incomplete memories, long-held personal grievances, ideological biases, and a general self-awareness that naturally accompanies the interview process—each cartoonists came to manifest an eagerness to tell his story. Through my interview with Dalia García Barbán, the widow of Santiago Armada (Chago), I gained insight into his life as an artist and cartoonist. Mirta

Muñiz's clarification of an otherwise sparsely documented transition of the pre-revolutionary world of advertisements into the revolutionary era proved of inestimable value, particularly since she played an integral role within this very process. Ernesto Vera and Juan Ayus explained the general orientation of the Cuban press before the revolution, professional issues, and the fall of the non-aligned press. Their information and general narratives helped me corroborate issues and elicit details not well examined in secondary sources, in addition to a better understanding of the revolutionary perspective and principles concerning the press, its history, and its goals. Most importantly, they revealed how their artistic passions and their politics merged to fuel their purpose as revolutionary artists and their ability to articulate themes and to construct a visual world that fused and set in motion the real and imagined Revolution.

Literature focusing on Cuban political culture gives an interpretive value to the various symbolic devices, rhetorical arguments, and ideological codes circulating through certain themes within the imagined revolutionary narrative. Adding a study of Cuban imagery ties the act of *seeing* to an otherwise textual analysis of Cuban political culture at a critical juncture in the revolutionary process: its beginning. Classic studies on political culture engage and direct their resources to primarily examine official speeches and their relation to historic events, or on Cuban receptivity to new values through forms of discontent and participation elaborated in social and cultural histories. Although the political, ideological, and institutional dimensions of cultural formation remain important, this study suggests a visual approach provides a new avenue through which we



can gain a more holistic understanding of the methods employed to shape the public's consumption of the Revolution. Part of this approach resides in the interpretive value of revolutionary imagery as a source material that carries with it a natural tendency to reach and attract mass, public attention and succinctly disseminate its meaning. While a number of seminal studies have added to our understanding of Castroist political culture, beginning with Richard Fagen's *Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (1969), more and more they concern themselves with the mechanics of revolutionary language, symbols, and cultural themes and the broader transmission belts of official ideology (e.g., literature, programs, and rituals) that feed a more colorful and rich contextual analysis. Fagen's work remains invaluable since it evolved the basic foundation for studies on Cuban political culture, providing scholars with an institutional and programmatic view of an unfolding Castroism, focusing on mass organizations. He argued that the active participation of citizens in these institutions and programs eroded pre-revolutionary values like selfishness, greed, laziness and constructed new ones more in tune with revolutionary life. Studies that continued to isolate and examine revolutionary values corroborate the rhetorical and associative symbols of revolutionary imagery. Lillian Eleanor Cabrera's dissertation, "Character Models of the Cuban Revolutionary Regime" (1981); C. Fred Judson's *Cuba and the Revolutionary Myth: The Political Education* (1984); Tzvi Medin's *Cuba: The Shaping of Revolutionary Consciousness* (1990); Julie Marie Bunck's *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba* (1994); and Antoni Kapcia's *Cuba, Island of Dreams* (2000), all distilled a

number of revolutionary symbols and lexicon from cultural instead of institutional sources like cinema, fiction, poetry, major newspapers and vanguard magazines, adding a new historiographic and methodological shift from policymaking studies to the “political culture” of cultural production and consumption. These works attempted to examine the methods of indoctrination and political objectives transmitted through the revolutionary message and explore its “new conceptual, axiological, emotional, and lexical world.” Medin’s idea of “ravelization,” a term he uses to describe the incremental manipulation of language connotations that eventually take on a Manichean duality, informs my analysis of a creeping ideological sophistication and evolution in visual rhetoric taking place during this period.<sup>36</sup> An increase in anti-imperialist language and nationalist appeals, for example, contextually coincided with the injection of new stereotypes tailored to a Manichean fashion (*gusanos*, or enemies of the people). Antoni Kapcia and C. Fred Judson’s elaborated myths and symbols in Cuban political culture and the grand narratives used to develop them. Taking into consideration Eric Hobsbawm’s essay “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914” on invented traditions and their official, political formation, along with Judson and Kapcia’s decoding of myths, in no uncertain terms, revolutionary imagery used moments of national struggle, both Cuba’s War for Independence and Castro’s struggle in the Sierra Maestra, to historically and culturally legitimize, unify, mobilize, and sustain revolutionary programs and define a new

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<sup>36</sup>Tzvi Medin, *Cuba: The Shaping of Revolutionary Consciousness* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1990), 58 and 167.

identity. Kapcia contends that “Cuba’s political culture heavily depends on codes. To come to grips with what a code means in a given society, it is necessary to identify what the code is reacting to and the values that it is extolling as the desired components of a future society. On the basis of these codes, an ideology is formed.”<sup>37</sup> This study visually confirms the significance of these ideological codes and their reflective dreams as elaborated and manipulated by cartoonists and advertisers in accordance with the Revolutionary Government’s vision. What Antoni Kapcia identified as *Cubania* codes appeared after the rebel victory (agrarianism, collectivism, moralism, activism, statism, and revolutionism), emerged more powerfully, and acted as a means of socialization.

The following chapters trace the institutional structure, culture of image production, and visual constructions before and after the Revolution with an eye toward understanding the politics of representation surrounding the Cuban revolutionary citizen. Chapter One provides an overview of print and visual culture in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, focusing on the degree of government regulation and repression as well as the domination of American advertising and comics. Censorship, nationalism, and foreign influences played strongly in the evolution of the pre-1959 press and prefigured several key developments of the revolutionary period. It specifically follows the rise of the *pueblo* representation in three key figures: *Liborio*, *El Bobo*, and *El Loquito* and how through the use of symbolic codes designed to curb censorship, cartoonists created a parallel comic

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<sup>37</sup>Kapcia, *Cuba*, 14.

tradition. Chapter Two discusses the breakdown of the pre-revolutionary press and the subsequent consolidation and reconstruction of the revolutionary press and its visual characteristics. Simultaneously, it illustrates the rise of the institutions of print and visual communications that came to be staffed and oriented to support, defend, and promote the Revolution. It seeks to illuminate the role and intention of cartoonists, their degree of creative control over image production, and their social and professional integration into the larger framework of the Castroist media. It also examines the institutions and artists involved in image production and the ideological parameters set by the state to orient their creative process. In the third chapter, I focus on the articulation of the official image of the rebel and his visual transformation toward a universal model for the new Cuban citizen during the Revolution's first two years. The development of the rebel's image includes an examination of the ascendance of the rebel within hierarchies of the imagined narrative and the subsequent shaping of his image by ascribing civic values, aesthetics, disposition, and politics. Cartoonists used his image as a normative force, designed to emotionally affect, orient, and educate readers while simultaneously providing them with a visual representation of their ideal inclusion into this imagined revolutionary narrative. Chapter Four uncovers the dynamics and priorities facing the revolutionary citizen in a more sophisticated revolutionary imagined narrative after January 1961 to 1963. Ideologically-charged and constructed to address an increasingly integrated revolutionary citizen, revolutionary advertisements and cartoons during this period actively solicited readers to participate in campaigns and volunteer labor

coordinated by mass organizations. They designed these pieces, now infused with a rebel-inspired, military aesthetic and authoritative tone, to mold attitudes and stir enthusiasm toward revolutionary work while simultaneously revealing to citizens (through their actions within the imagined narrative) the degree of integration and ideological maturity officially expected of them at this juncture in the revolutionary process. Chapter Five focuses on concepts of recruitment, mobilization, and construction of imagery on the Literacy Campaign of 1961 and the politics of representation concerning the Cuban worker and his socialization toward the Socialist Emulation project of 1962-63. These two case studies feature a message in motion, in tune with changes in the revolutionary process, and its malleability in meeting propagandistic needs. Both suggest the visual mechanics of campaign-building during this period. It concludes with a picture and re-examination of the 1963 *pueblo*, inspired by its rebel roots, yet transformed into an active, creative, vital force of labor, defense, and support for the Revolution and its future.

“The Cartooned Revolution” examines the revolutionary phase of a Cuban visual tradition, its role in state building, and the visibility of citizenship during a period of the Revolution marked by rapid, intense changes. The Cuban state still draws from the ideology and political culture formed during these years, giving these images current resonance. This dissertation serves as a point of reference for studies seeking a deeper understanding of the role of mass media, art, and revolution; of visual traditions, their politics, and their power; and of socio-political and ideological tensions within art and revolution at large. An

examination into the work of exile cartoonists like Manuel Roseñada in *Zig-Zag Libre* and Antonio Prohias in the comic magazine *Mad*, or pieces in dialogue with the ones featured in this study created by non-aligned cartoonists would provide a more holistic view of Cuba's cartooning community and generate a broader assessment of the multiple voices and viewpoints informing the discourse within imagery circulating at this time. I do construct an interplay of images concerning the development of the rebel identity between *Revolución* and the conservative newspaper *Diario de la Marina* in the third chapter, however, the visual interplay between the aligned and non-aligned press remains untouched. An explosion of comics outside the newspaper format, particularly in specialty comic magazines that included *Palante y Palante* (1961-present) and those of other organizations [e.g., *Rebelde 6* (official police organ), *Proa y Puerto* (Department of the Navy), *Con la Guardia en Alto* (CDR), *Pionero* (Youth magazine)], should be explored for their less formal articulations of the Revolution. A more detailed assessment of Cuban archival sources surrounding the institutional transformation of commercial advertisements into their revolutionary form would also allow for a better understanding of the workings of state propaganda organizations like Intercommunications and Consolidated Publicity. Lastly, a comparative analysis of how revolutions shaped the visual language and meaning at their inception, in building and maintaining revolutionary states, relative to the Cuban condition, would be useful for future studies on state-produced imagery.

## Chapter 1: Print and Visual Culture in Cuba Prior to the Revolution of 1959

Before the Revolution of 1959, four central processes shaped the history of print and visual culture in Cuba: 1) the persistence of an authoritarian state; 2) the experience of revolutionary struggle; 3) a political nationalism framed against the undue influence of U.S. interests; 4) and episodic attempts to create an editorial style and reader market outside the shadow of American media. This chapter examines these four interrelated processes within a chronological framework that spans from the liberalization of the press during the colonial period to the consolidation of an underground media network under the Batista dictatorship (1952-1958). This “pre-history,” I argue, framed and united cartooning in the post-1959 period.

The relationship between the Cuban state and the print media was historically tenuous, often devolving into outright hostility during periods of political instability. Direct censorship of journalists and cartoonists and even the barefaced destruction of editorial offices and printing equipment alternated with more subtle tactics of co-optation of editorial staff through gifts and bribes. Notwithstanding the ethics, or professional compromises made by newspaper editors and their preference for American comics, Cuban cartoonists developed their own professional networks, style, and tone. Their work offset the cultural discourse of American comics and challenged Cuba’s political and economic dependency on its northern neighbor through biting commentary and criticism.

Through beloved characters representing the national spirit, Cuban cartoonists created a parallel comic tradition that cultivated a strong and exclusively Cuban dialogue with their readers. This relationship survived intense periods of censorship, which reached new heights under Fulgencio Batista. In the years leading up to the Revolution, the outright repression of intractable elements of the Cuban press spawned the growth of an underground media system that would later become the core of the revolutionary press.

Changes in Spanish colonial rule coupled with a growing nationalism, influenced the expansion and composite of the press in nineteenth-century Cuba. Before the Spanish Cortes approved press freedoms included in the Constitution of 1812, control over the printing and distribution of information delayed the appearance of a competing, or alternate voice. A royal decree in 1774 established the monopoly of the Printing Press of the Captaincy General in Havana, effectively forbidding the existence of other printing presses.<sup>38</sup> The Captaincy General communicated all ordinances and news through its first newspaper, *Gazeta de la Habana*, founded in 1782, and later the first magazine, *Papel Periódico de la Habana* (1790). Every article, editorial, even theater bill had to

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<sup>38</sup>Andres Angulo y Perez, *La prensa en Cuba: proceso historico*, (Havana; Editorial O'Reilly 357, 1955), 3 and Antonio López Prieto, *Parnaso cubano, colección de poesías selectas de autores cubanos, I* (Havana: Editorial Miguel de Villa, 1881), xxxv. Spanish press laws established in 1584 did not permit an independent press, but only an officially sanctioned press that would be in charge of circulating news, mercantile information, and political edicts. Lent, *Mass Communications*, 115. The appearance of Cuba's first printing press in 1720 coincided with the debut of its first two educational institutions, the Seminary of San Carlos (1722) and the University of San Geronimo (1728). Smorkaloff, 7.



be approved by the censor. The *Gazeta* packed political, commercial, agricultural, scientific, and government information into four pages while the *Papel Periódico* circulated the ideas of Cuban elites and the Economic Society of the Friends of the Country (1792), in particular those of Francisco de Arango y Parreño (1765-1837), a planter and lawyer who supported the modernization of the sugar industry, land reform, investments in infrastructure, and free trade, especially in slaves.<sup>39</sup> The freedoms of press granted under the Constitution of 1812 precipitated an expansion of the Creole press and in certain cases, most notably *El Habanero* (1824), *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (1831), and *El Siglo* (1864), the seeds of a nationalist ideology.<sup>40</sup> In 1823, Father Félix Varela (1788-1853), one of the most brilliant professors of philosophy, science, music, politics, and theology from the Seminary of San Carlos (1722) and a Cuban representative to the Spanish Cortes (1821-1823), fled the Crown's persecution after the fall of the constitutional government in Spain (1823) and made his way to Philadelphia where he published a newspaper, *El Habanero*. Circulated clandestinely in Cuba, *El Habanero* articulated independence from the Spanish Cortes without the

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<sup>39</sup>Pérez, *Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution*, 66-67; Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Happiness*, update ed (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 72-73 and 79-82; and Marrero, 19.

<sup>40</sup>At the first general assembly of the press in 1812, members swore to “defend justice and truth against despotism and tyranny . . . and enjoy the right to think and communicate our thoughts to others through the free press.” During this period (1810-1840), the first newspapers appeared in Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Bayamo, Trinidad, Camagüey, and Cienfuegos. In 1866, Domitila García de Coronado, the first woman to launch a newspaper, debut her magazine *El Céfitro* in Camagüey. Marrero, 18-19 and 27.

intervention of other foreign powers, the abolition of slavery, and encouraged unity among nationalist elements. His ideas, and those of the Economic Society, continued to be championed by Antonio Saco (1797-1879) in *Revista Bimestre Cubana*. Saco emphasized his beliefs in the power of education in self-government and of white immigration. Antoni Kapcia described him as a foreshadow of Cuban positivism.<sup>41</sup> While some elites sought reforms at varying degrees, Havana's longest running and most conservative, pro-Spanish newspaper, *Diario de la Marina* (1832) tailored its content and articles to its core subscribers: administration officials, professionals, and commercial and industrial elites.<sup>42</sup> Its owners installed mechanized printing, focused on subscriptions sales, and advertised for local businesses and professionals at a higher rate than any other newspaper during this period. In the 1840s and 1850s, calls for annexation to the United States as a means to escape Spanish rule and prolong slavery evolved into reformism. *El Siglo*, the official newspaper of the Reformist party (1865), served as a written forum to debate civil and military reforms, property rights, the suppression of the slave trade, and the reform of the tariff system.<sup>43</sup> Hopes surrounding the reformist agenda died when the liberal government of Spanish Prime Minister Leopoldo collapsed in 1866 and a new era of

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<sup>41</sup>Kapcia, *Cuba*, 42.

<sup>42</sup>Other important pro-Spanish newspapers circulating during this time that formed the bulk of the mainstream press included *El Noticioso y Lucero de la Habana* (1832), *La Prensa* (1839), and *La Prensa de la Habana* (1843).

<sup>43</sup>Perez, *Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution*, 112.

conservative politics took hold leaving reformists weak and with few options. In 1868, sugar planter Carlos Manuel de Céspedes called for an open rebellion against Spain in a dramatic moment, the *Grito de Yara*. A new era of revolutionary newspapers followed and proved essential to the cause.

The development of a Cuban nationalism and evolving reformist agendas of the first half of the eighteenth century inspired the birth of the Cuban political cartoon, yet its role as an active and unique weapon against Spanish rule flourished much later. Before Céspedes' call to arms in 1868, Spanish artists dominated the field of illustration and cartooning, attacking creole aspirations for reform, or independence through a series of weeklies, *La Charanga* (1857-1859), *El Moro Muza* (1859-1875), and *Juan Palomo* (1869-1874). Some creole cartoons tied to satirical commentary appeared in constitutional newspapers like *El Esquife* (1813-1814) and *El Esquife Arranchador* (1820-1821), but remained centered on editorial subjects and did not fan the flames of the separatist cause.<sup>44</sup> As nationalist ideology congealed, novelist Cirilo Villaverde secretly circulated the first public anti-Spanish cartoon at the Tacón Theater in 1848. Although its author remains anonymous, the cartoon titled "The Milk Cow and Her Milkers" featured then Governor Leopoldo O'Donnell (1844-1848) being substituted by his

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<sup>44</sup>Peninsular caricaturists satirized creoles through symbolic representations, building pictures criticizing dreams of slave emancipation, or self-government. Symbols like a diabolical black woman (Haitian revolution) wielding a dagger and torch (fire, destruction, and treason) were designed to strike fear among the Cuban planter class. Javier Negrín, "El Pitirre, Humor Revolucionario," *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios sobre la Historieta* 3, no.12 (2003): 198 and Evora Tamayo, *La caricatura editorial* (Habana: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, 1988), 8 and 12.

replacement, Federico Roncali (1848-1850), behind a cow (signifying Cuba) in a milking line ahead of a group of minor peninsular bureaucrats awaiting their turn.<sup>45</sup> Despite these few instances, a Cuba comic tradition did not develop until the wars fought for Cuban independence from Spanish rule (1868-1878 and 1895-1898) generated the creation of the insurgent press and its comic supplements.

War ushered in a new era of separatist newspapers tailored to maintaining a viable resistance movement and its politics. Newspapers like *El Boletín de la Guerra* (1873-1877), *El Mambí* (1869-1871), *La Estrella Solitaria* (1869-1906), and *La Discusión* (1889-1930) fed the ideological purpose and vitality of the movement. Many founders, editors, and contributors like José Martí, or José Miró y Argenter of *El Liberal* (1893) not only generated the political theses and ideological arguments for independence, but also became directly involved in the insurgency itself. They solicited financial and military support, elaborates solutions, articulates grievances, transmitted information, and sustained interest for the war. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes himself edited *El Cubano Libre* (1868-1871) as the official voice of the Ten Years War (1868-1878), reporting news and orders from the front, even dedicating space to poetry and literature.<sup>46</sup> In 1892, Cuba's most famous patriot José Martí published *Patria* (1892-1898) and later its comic supplement *Cacarajícara* (1896) from New York. It not only served as the

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<sup>45</sup>John Lent, "Cuba's Comic Art Tradition," *Latin American Perspectives* 14 (1995): 225; Tamayo, 13; and Negrín, 197.

<sup>46</sup>Within this poetry section appeared two verses of the Cuban national anthem, *La Bayamesa*. Marrero, 30 and 35.

official newspaper for the Cuban Revolutionary Party, but as a vehicle from which Martí elaborated his political, social, and economic positions. He insisted *Patria* was “born at the hour of danger to watch over liberty, to contribute to the invincibility of its forces for union, and to prevent the enemy from winning from our disorder. . . . [*Patria*] is a soldier.”<sup>47</sup> *Patria* like the newspaper *La Discusión*, serials that grew out of separatist politics and history, reflected more than just mere propaganda tools. They were among the first examples of an exclusively Cuban press born to focus and serve Cuban nationalist needs. The Cuban political cartoon also flourished within and alongside these periodicals which either housed, or dedicated newspaper supplements to comic art.

Cuba’s wars for independence provided the background to a surge in the appearance of the Cuban cartoon. Creole newspapers with comic sections [e.g., *El Album* (1891-1892), *Gil Blas* (1890-1891), and *Cuba y America* (1897-1898)], or supplements centering entirely on comic art like *La Caricatura* (1887-1900), appeared and utilized cartoons to champion the insurgents’ cause. With the arrival in Havana of Valeriano Weyler (1838-1930) in 1896, nicknamed “the Butcher” by William Randolph Hearst, a more intense wave of anti-Spanish cartoons surfaced among the pages of *Cacarajícara* (1897), the comic supplement to José Martí’s newspaper, *Patria*. Weyler’s October 1896 ban on the insurgent, or anti-Spanish press in Cuba (a ban that included political cartoons), elevated the

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<sup>47</sup>Martí had published articles in a number of separatist newspapers since 1869 such as *El Diablo Cojuelo* and *Patria Libre*. Ibid., 41 and 42. Enrique José Varona, a follower of Father Felix Varela, took over *Patria* upon Martí’s death at the battle of Dos Ríos on 19 May 1895 until 1897.

importance of an existing U.S.-based Cuban press as a reliable voice of protest against the colonial regime. *Cacarajicara* cartoonists heavily criticized Weyler's policies designed to cut off insurgent supply lines by relocating Cuban peasants and sympathizers into concentration camps. Among the pages of this pivotal magazine, the work of Ricardo de la Torriente (1869-1934), a young Cuban cartoonist, published the first anti-Spanish piece featuring "Uncle Sam."<sup>48</sup> Torriente, contributing to a number of outlets (*El Album*, *Gil Blas*, and *Cuba y America*) before receiving patronage at *Cacarajicara*, later played an important role in establishing a new Cuban comic tradition and the *pueblo's* first visual incarnation, one that would run parallel to and in conflict with the American cartoon strips preferred by many Cuban newspapers in the 1910s and beyond. The increasing popularity of political cartoons suggested their effectiveness as a tool for wartime propaganda and criticism. Though Cuba's fight for independence would end with the Treaty of Paris (1898), a new Republic wrought out of a series of American-led military interventions, nation-building projects, economic investments, and incursions into Cuban politics through the infamous Platt Amendment, ushered in a new line of satire championed by an unassuming, yet pivotal protagonist, *Liborio*.

After the dust settled and Cubans embarked on building their new Republic, the political cartoon experienced its own type of readjustment, and in doing so, it achieved a turning point in its function and identity as a piece of

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<sup>48</sup>Negrín, 199.

Cuban art. The pent-up frustrations of patriots, betrayed by the U.S. intervention into Cuba's present and future,<sup>49</sup> continued to flow through the pen of pro-independence cartoonists like Torriente and Jesús Castellanos (1878-1912). Under the administration of General Leonard Wood (1899-1902), cartoonists began to test the delicacy of the Cuban-American relationship. New symbols reflecting this relationship implied control, power, entrapment, and impotence. For example, an eagle, or an octopus, in addition to Uncle Sam, signified the power of the United States and its reach, while chains, locks, money bags, and a bitter pill acted as symbols for a weak, exploited, and bound Cuba. In creating these symbols, a new visual discourse of anti-imperialism and nationalism spread within the Cuban comic tradition. On April 5, 1901, *La Discusión* published a cartoon by Castellanos titled "The Cuban Suffering," a recreation of Jesus' crucifixion with the Cuban pueblo crucified in the position of Jesus, flanked by American President William McKinley and Leonard Wood as the two thieves. Castellanos drew Senator Orville Platt as a Roman soldier charged with wiping the brow of the pueblo with a rag labeled, Platt. Wood reacted swiftly by incarcerating both Castellanos and his editor Manuel Maria Coronado and closed

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<sup>49</sup>In 1903, the Permanent Treaty containing amendments proposed by Connecticut Senator, Orville Platt, effectively strangled Cuban congressional power and authorized the use of U.S. military intervention to maintain political, social, and economic stability. The U.S. occupation of Cuba (1899-1902 and 1906-1909) coincided with an intense phase of American-led reconstruction efforts to restore a war-ravaged Cuba through public works projects and infrastructure development.



**Figure 1.1** Ricardo de la Torriente, *Liborio*, 1906.

*La Discusión* the next day.<sup>50</sup> Though both Coronado and Castellanos were released days later, their incarceration illuminated the parameters within which Cuban cartoonists could operate under the new Republic. Torriente, through his popular character Liborio, struck the right balance between criticism and caution. He elaborated Liborio's story every week in his own satirical magazine *La Política*

*Cómica* (1905-1931). Based on a farmer named

Fremín who worked in his father's sugar mill, the Ingenio Guerrero, Liborio symbolized the victimized Cuban *pueblo*'s noble, yet broken heart.<sup>51</sup> Liborio assumed the role of national critic, yet in a passive-aggressive style set within conservative politics. He suffered through corrupt elections, American economic domination, and social upheavals led by workers, women, and Afro-Cubans

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<sup>50</sup>Spanish cartoonist Victor Patricio de Landaluze is credited with being the first to depict the Cuban people, collectively known as the "pueblo," through the symbol of the *guajiro*, or peasant. Castellanos attempted his own pueblo symbol that in the end resembled an unarmed insurgent. Juan David, "Cuando la caricatura fue por primera vez cubana: una pelea de la caricatura contra la enmienda Platt," *Bohemia*, September 19, 1975, 11-12.

<sup>51</sup>In 1900, he published a rendition of Liborio in *La Discusión*, calling him "El Pueblo," a name he would later change to Liborio upon the insistence of a friend. Torriente ran for a congressional seat as a member of the Liberal Party and used Liborio as a campaign mascot. On January 20, 1920, after publishing a scathing cartoon, he was beaten by his opponents at his ranch, "El Sitio de Liborio." "Liborio," *Bienales de Humor*, 2003, <<http://cip.cu/wecip/eventos/bienaleshumor.html>> (26 February 2004).



(Figure 1.1).<sup>52</sup> He would be the tragic casualty of American intervention, shown pulling carts full of sugar, only to receive a pittance in compensation, symbolized by a small bag of money. He became resigned to Cuba's future, yet not without complaint. Torriente effectively emphasized Liborio's emotional state by enlarging the size of his head (a visual device popularized by American-born, Havana raised artist Juan Jorge Peoli) to contrast with the rest of his body, a technique that helped project an aura of defeat, sadness, and suffering of the Cuban *pueblo*. He became the first to use a satirical device Cubans termed *choteo*, or a subtle humor used to poke fun at the weakness and ineffectiveness of authority thus bringing the Cuban to an equal level of power.<sup>53</sup> Torriente successfully reoriented the Cuban cartoon from its function as a piece of wartime propaganda to a popular, nationalist image chronicling Cuban life and woes. Liborio's happenings provided a visual and contextual setting for an unfolding anti-imperialist argument that highlighted the political, economic, and social problems facing the new Republic. His appearance within the broader post-colonial, imagined narrative represents the first in a series of symbolic constructions of a Cuban national identity. The intensity and pervasiveness of American domination influenced and fueled a new line of nationalism within the Cuban cartoon, one that would run parallel to and compete against the American comic strip.

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<sup>52</sup>Negrín, 199.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 200.

The Republican era ushered in a new period of newspaper expansion both in number and assortment, yet not without obstacles. Rotogravure printing, lithography, and later offset printing, photography, foreign cable news sources, telephones, railroads, and aviation all changed the speed, size, and content of newspapers. Current events, advertising, journalism, and reporting took center stage while letters and opinion articles receded. Newspapers appeared and disappeared at a faster rate and their content grew from four to over sixteen pages in length.<sup>54</sup> *El Mundo* (1901-1968) became the first to feature the eight-column front page, a society section, and colored lettering.<sup>55</sup> Havana printing presses modernized after the War of Independence and challenged the viability of not only the over twenty small presses functioning around the capital city itself, but presses in provincial capitals as well. The growth of Havana's newspapers and printing industry facilitated the publication and spread of U.S. comic strips and advertising. Yet for all this dynamism, with few exceptions (*Diario de la Marina* and *El Mundo*), Cuba's newspapers from the outset of its independence to the end of Fulgencio Batista rule (1958) and the dawn of the Castro era, led an ephemeral existence at best.

A precarious, yet mutually beneficial relationship between the state and the press emerged during Cuba's Republican period that favored partisan journalism over ethical reporting at the risk of censorship, even violent

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<sup>54</sup>Marrero, 47.

<sup>55</sup>William Luis, *Culture and Customs of Cuba* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 61.

persecution. Republican presidents willingly paid a price for favorable press. President José Miguel Gómez (1909-1913) initiated a system of subsidies and rewards designed to support and obscure the details of corrupt government contracts in the press and at the very least, neutralize criticisms of his own political and ethical weakness. This manner of relationship continued and intensified under Presidents Mario García Menocal (1913-1921) and Alfredo Zayas (1921-1925) with the distribution of *colectorias* rights, or proceeds from the sale of tickets for the national lottery. In response to President Zayas' purchase of the Santa Clara convent, a property located on a piece of prime real estate in Havana, an editorial in *La Lucha* read, "we have not been given money to defend it [the purchase]. Everyone knows that when . . . lances are broken in favor of this, or that transaction it is because money has been given, or else that the newspaper, or newspapermen have not been considered in the division."<sup>56</sup> For most administrations, distributing sinecures and outright bribes as a whole proved sustainable, however, oppression and censorship did occur. Reacting to harsh criticism by *La Nación* writer Manuel Márquez Sterling, Menocal ordered the immediate closure of the newspaper. During the darker period of Gerardo Machado's rule (1928-1932), the censorship and imprisonment of newsmen like Pablo de la Torriente Brau and Rubén Martínez Villena, even the murder of

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<sup>56</sup>The privilege of awarding *colectorias*, or the right to sell lottery tickets and keep the profit, fell under the Department of Treasury and was originally designed as a form of pension for the widows and families of soldiers who perished in the war of independence. Banned during the two periods of U.S. occupation and resurrected in 1909, politicians and the press received the bulk of *colectorias*. Thomas, 505-06, 512-13 and Marrero, 57.

others like *El Día*'s director Armando André, Julio Antonio Mella of *Juventud* and *Alma Mater*, and Abelardo Pacheco of *La Voz del Pueblo*, marked the extreme lengths of government repression.<sup>57</sup> Overall, Machado deepened and routinized the system of subsidies as a government tactic for dealing with the press. While fear certainly played a role in a newspaper's decision to compromise its journalistic integrity, poor economic conditions and fluctuations in subscriptions also created favorable conditions for co-optation.<sup>58</sup> Clamor for the creation of a National College of Journalism (1942) grew from a debate between journalists who argued that subsidies ensured the press' stability and those who decried it as a stain on journalistic integrity.<sup>59</sup> In the end, subsidies sustained newspapers and certain members of their staffs through financial hardships. For the Cuban cartoon, government censorship and competition from American comic strips presented it with professional and stylistic challenges. By

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<sup>57</sup>Thomas, 590 and Marrero, 48.

<sup>58</sup>Lent, "Cuban Mass Media, 1723-1973," 118. Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948-1952) owned shares of *El Mundo* (1901) which he later sold to Fulgencio Batista. Thomas, 1137.

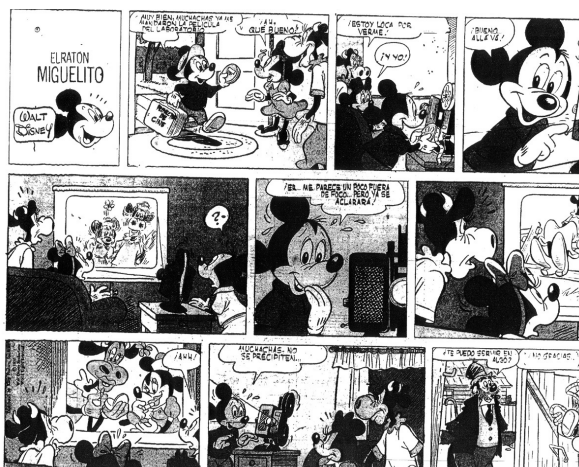
<sup>59</sup>Some politicians hoping to advance their social status paid journalists covering high-society parties and events to include them in their articles. *Diario de la Marina* journalists Enrique Fontanilla and Luis de Posada reportedly received handsome compensation for their ethical turpitude. *New York Times*' Ruby Hart Phillips commented, "One mention of a name by him [Fontanilla] was sufficient to put a person into Cuban society. Grateful Habaneros rewarded him with thousands of dollars." Michael B. Salwen, "The Dark Side of Cuban Journalism: Press Freedom and Corruption before Castro" in Richard Cole ed., *Communication in Latin America: Journalism, Mass Media, and Society* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 147 and 151.

circumventing obstacles and creating its own path to survival, the Cuban cartoon carved its own niche and persevered to create independent outlets.

With the establishment of the Republic, American comics flooded Cuban newspapers, exposing their readers to a new “way of life,” infusing among many and specifically among future revolutionary cartoonists, an appreciation for the genre while effectively suppressing competition for space. In the 1920s and 1930s, American syndicates like King Features, owned by William Randolph Hearst, and the United Features Syndicate, translated major United States comic strips for redistribution in low-priced Cuban newspapers. For example, United Features distributed Vincent Hamlin’s *Alley Oop* as *Trucutú*, Rudolph Dirk’s *Katzenjammer Kids* became *El Capitán y Los Pilluelos*, and Bud Fisher’s *Mutt & Jeff* was *Benitín y Eneas*. Popular strips like *Yellow Kid* by Richard Pelton Outcault, *The Spirit* by William Eisner, *Donald Duck* by Walt Disney, *Flash Gordon* by Alex Raymond, *Tarzan* by Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Popeye* by Elzie Segar, and of course, *Superman* by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster found their way into Cuban newspapers *Diario de la Marina*, *El Mundo*, *Información*, and *El País* (Figure 1.2).<sup>60</sup> While it seems likely that the type of American comics pouring into Cuba contained powerful qualities of cultural indoctrination, John Tomlinson argues in his work *Cultural Imperialism* that their effectiveness and impact

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<sup>60</sup>Other strips featured in the comic supplement of the same issue included *Tío Remus*, *Elmer*, *Roy Rogers*, *Rey de los Vaqueros*, *El Pato Donald*, and *Pedro Harapos*.



**Figure 1.2** *Diario de la Marina*, January 6, 1957, comic supplement.

cannot be not properly measured.<sup>61</sup>

The influx of American comics exposed Cubans to a window into “new way of life,” yet they also generated interest toward a more autochthonous expression. By 1959, reportedly more than four hundred different character strips

inundated the Cuban market, potentially spreading American values, but certainly stirring young minds, among them a new generation of Cuban cartoonists. *Mella* cartoonist Virgilio Martínez (1931-2008) credited American cartoon syndicates with the amount of cartoonists in Cuba: “This multitude of comics stimulated the imagination of a lot of kids. Those kids later became illustrators. At the time of the Revolution, a vacuum was created because these newspapers [and comics] left. The Cuban did not develop the profession of cartooning then [before the Revolution], because he couldn’t compete with those prices that they’d pay

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<sup>61</sup>John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 42; Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, trans. David Kunzle (New York: International General Editions, 1975), 98; and Jorge Oliver, “La historieta revolucionaria: un tema polémico,” *Propaganda* 9, no. 33 (1981): 42. In the 1950s, other U.S. comic creators like DC Comics and Marvel Comics sent print plates to Mexican print houses like Editorial Novaro to translate and distribute their work. Cecilio Avilés, *Historietas: reflexiones y proyecciones* (Habana: Editorial Pablo de la Torre, 1989), 44

Americans.”<sup>62</sup> Syndicates sold their strips to newspapers at such a low price that paying Cubans to produce ones that would represent local values and daily life, did not seem financially wise by comparison.<sup>63</sup> Cartoonist Antonio “Ñico” Mariño (b. 1935-) recalled, “American comic strips were massively imported and basically all of us saw them, bought them, followed them, and framed them; we couldn’t do cartoons from here. For us Cubans, if we did a comic strip for a newspaper, the newspaper would have to pay at least twenty five pesos for a comic that Cubans were not used to seeing, in contrast to the American comic that could cost a paper ten, or twenty cents to publish.”<sup>64</sup> Despite this challenge, American comics did not dampen the creativity and drive of the Cuban tradition. Some newspapers like *Información* and *El País* held space for comic enthusiasts, yet their black and white productions drew less attraction alongside the finer quality, colored strips found in American samples. Ñico himself began his cartooning career by submitting patriotic cartoons of the founding fathers José Martí and Antonio Maceo for the enthusiasts section of the *El País* graphic

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<sup>62</sup>While Martínez recognized other Cuban cartoonists with influencing his work, he admitted to being an avid Superman and Donald Duck fan who followed American strips feverishly. He credited the newspaper *Alerta* with having the best American comic supplement, featuring strips like *Spirit*, *Lady Luck*, and *Mystic*. He also noted that even *Noticias de Hoy* supplement for kids, *Hoy Infantil*, carried Superman comics. Virgilio Martínez, interview by author, tape recording, Havana, Cuba, 18 August 2005.

<sup>63</sup>Francisco Blanco Avila, “Comics and Ideological Manipulation,” *Granma Weekly Review*, 5 August 1984, 8 and Paquita Armas, *La vida en cuadritos* (Habana: Combinado Poligrafico, Osvaldo Sanchez, 1993), X.

<sup>64</sup>Antonio Mariño (Ñico), interview by author, tape recording, Havana, Cuba, 18 August 2005.

supplement *El País Grafico*. *El País* editors continued accepting his entries until they decided to hire him as a permanent freelancer on a pay by-the-piece basis.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, it remains clear that the domination of American comics forced Cuban cartoonists to compete for publication space and popularity among the reading public. Despite these disadvantages, Cuban cartooning boasted a rich tradition and flourished with the help of professional and social networks. Its role as a medium of national expression perfectly counterbalanced the diffusion of American cultural and ideological influence.

Prior to the Revolution, Cuban cartoonists formed networks based on shared educational, political, or social experiences that shaped their professional opportunities and institutionalized their art as a respectable and significant medium. A disproportionate number of Cuban cartoonists graduated from the prestigious art school founded by the Spanish in 1818, the Royal Academy of San Alejandro. Ricardo de la Torriente (Torriente), Eduardo Abela (Abela), Adigio Benítez (Adigio/Damían), Horacio Rodríguez Suriá (Horacio/Suriá), Rafael Blanco (Blanco), and Rosendo Gutiérrez (Rosen), all shared a San Alejandro background, providing them with the educational foundation and professional accreditation necessary to seek formal employment as painters, illustrators, and cartoonists. In his book *Cuban Art and National Identity*, Juan Martínez insisted the occupation of artist became a profession with the establishment of San

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid. Níco did study toward a career in advertising at the Central College of Havana which later landed him a job at the magazine *Bohemia* in 1953.



Alejandro.<sup>66</sup> San Alejandro alumni maintained a strong social and professional network that facilitated their acceptance into national salons and exhibitions, opportunities for publication, and employment at major newspapers, magazines, and publicity agencies.<sup>67</sup> Some graduates did not follow a direct path to cartooning and their education permitted their employment within a broad range of artistic professions. Despite his success as a painter, Eduardo Abela (1889-1965) turned to cartooning for steady pay and created one of Cuba's most beloved characters *El Bobo*.<sup>68</sup> Rosendo Gutiérrez (b. 1935-), who specialized in coloring and drawing at San Alejandro, became an industrial designer, advertising illustrator, and later a cartoonist for satirical text in the comic magazine *Zig-Zag*.<sup>69</sup> Comic art exhibitions constituted another avenue for cartoonists to gain

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<sup>66</sup>The school would be heavily criticized by a group of 1920s painters known collectively as the "vanguard painters" (Eduardo Abela, Wifredo Lam, Víctor Manuel García, Amelia Peláez). Tied to the magazine, *Revista de Avance*, they ushered Cuban painting into a new avant-garde era highly influenced by French modernism, seeking to explore national identity, emotion, consciousness through Cuban tradition and symbols. Juan A. Martínez, *Cuban Art and National Identity: The Vanguard Painters, 1927-1950* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 2-4. In 1936, searching for an alternative methods of teaching to San Alejandro, Eduardo Abela created the Free School of Plastic Arts (Free School) which openly taught avant-garde ideas, offered free tuition and materials, and maintained an open studio to artists, including San Alejandro students. Luis Camnitzer, *New Art of Cuba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 155.

<sup>67</sup>Armas, XI.

<sup>68</sup>Martínez, 28 and 151.

<sup>69</sup>Rosen would go onto work for the revolutionary comic magazine, *Palante y Palante* and would be a regular cartoonist for the Revolutionary Armed Forces magazine created by Che Guevara, *Verde Olivo*. *25 años de humor en Palante* (Habana: Editorial Abril de la UJC, 1986), 239.

notoriety and to create contacts within their professional community, as well as outside patrons and sponsors. A core group of exhibitors and organizers for the Association of Painters and Sculptures' First Salon of Comic Artists, held in Havana in 1921, included Eduardo Abela, Rafael Blanco (1885-1955), and Enrique Caravia (1905-1992), all students of San Alejandro. In 1949, Abela founded the Association of Caricaturists of Cuba, an organization that arranged exhibitions, conferred awards, and published its own periodical by 1951. Some cartoonists developed their own creative outlets by simply starting their own magazines like Conrado Massaguer's *Social* (1916-1933) and Ricardo de la Torriente's *La Política Cómica*.<sup>70</sup> In addition to Juan David (1911-1981), Enrique Caravia, and Eduardo Abela, *Social* gave space to a number of cartoonists and caricaturists like future *Noticias de Hoy* artists, Horacio Rodríguez Suriá (1901-1975) and José Hernández Cárdenas (1904-1957). Cartoonists like Juan David, René de la Nuez, and Adigio Benítez obtained professional experience as a result of their political and social activities.<sup>71</sup> In 1931, Juan David joined a group of

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<sup>70</sup>Born in Cárdenas, Massaguer's family moved to Mérida, Yucatán for some years and later back to Havana. Upon moving back to Havana in 1908, he began publishing baseball cartoons for *El Mundo* with the help of friend and journalist, Víctor Muñoz. Massaguer founded two advertising agencies (Mercurio and Anuncios Kesevén), the Instituto de Artes Gráficas (which housed *Social*), introduced the first photo-lithographic machine in Cuba, and was one of the illustrators credited with organizing the First Salon of Cartoonists in 1921. Maria Helena Capote, "The Penetrating glance of Conrado W. Massaguer" *Granma Weekly Review*, 11 June 1989, 6.

<sup>71</sup>Cartoonist Virgilio Martínez can also be included in this group. Martínez worked as an assistant illustrator for advertisements under Fernando Cabeza Perdomo, his mentor and teacher. Cabeza oversaw the publication of *A Barrer*, the magazine for the Ortodoxo party. In 1950, he gave Martínez the opportunity to

young radicals in his hometown of Cienfuegos called El Grupo Ariel and became one of the main illustrators in their magazine *Segur*. David's work in *Segur* also found its way into the *Revista de Avance* (1927-1930), a magazine tied to Havana intellectuals and artists like Conrado Massaguer and Rafael Blanco who called themselves, El Grupo Minorista. Massaguer extended David the opportunity of submitting a caricature of the Catalan actress Margarita Xirgu for his magazine *Social*. With the support and contacts of fellow cartoonists like Massaguer and Blanco, David earned work in a number of publications (*El Mundo*, *Isla*, and *Patria*) and finally a permanent position at *Información*.<sup>72</sup> Union of Socialist Youth member Adigio Benítez (b.1924-) published work in his hometown socialist newspaper *La Voz del Pueblo* and won the attention of Havana youth leaders. Taking note of the his talent, in 1946 the Union's president Flavo Bravo approached Benítez to work at its magazine *Mella* and upon graduating in painting at San Alejandro, he accepted a position as a cartoonist for the socialist

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publish his first political cartoon featuring its leader Eduardo Chibás. Martínez joined the Communist Youth and by 1954, formed part of the editing and design team with cartoon scriptwriter Marcos Behmaras and Francisco García Valls in its magazine *Mella* during the serial's clandestine period (1953-1958). Together with Behmaras, Martínez drew illustrations for the popular anti-Batista strip, *Pucho y sus perrerías*, (Pucho and his Happenings) under the pseudonym, Laura. Virgilio Martínez, interview with author, tape recording, 18 August 2005 and Mirta Muñiz, *Magazine Mella, una publicación clandestina de la juventud cubana, 1944-1958* (Habana: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, 1997), 10.

<sup>72</sup>Eduardo David, *Juan David: Abrazado a sí mismo* (Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1999), 43, 57, and 66.

party newspaper, *Noticias de Hoy* in 1949.<sup>73</sup> One of Cuba's most prolific and well-known cartoonists, René de la Nuez (b. 1937-), began his career in his hometown of San Antonio de los Baños, outside Havana, drawing covers for the magazine *El Vocero*, a periodical published by a 26 of July Movement student group, the Association of Ariguanabo Students. His work on *Vocero* and further contacts within the 26 of July Movement led to an interview and permanent position on the staff at *Zig-Zag* where Nuez would develop one of Cuba's most beloved comic heroes. Cuban cartoons and comics, though not as plentiful, circulated, and visually attractive as their U.S. counterparts, existed, persevered, and served a more civic and *Cuban* purpose.<sup>74</sup> Cuban cartoonists carved their own social and professional niche, created characters that captured national attention, and channeled the pulse of popular frustration with local politics and economic problems. The story of advertising in Cuba nearly mirrors that of its comics. The creative vision and cultural impact of American advertising struck Cubans as effectively and deeply as its comics, however, it also existed alongside

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<sup>73</sup>Luis Andrade, "Adigio Benítez," *Revolución y Cultura* 40 (December 1975): 20. In 1946, Adigio began working with *Mella* from his hometown, Santiago de las Vegas, where he already had been publishing his work in the local socialist newspaper, *La Voz del Pueblo*. Adigio Benítez, interview by author, tape recording, Havana, Cuba, 18 August 2005.

<sup>74</sup>Heriberto Porter Vilá's "El Curioso Cubano," (The Curious Cuban, 1927) and Rafael Fornés' "José Dolores" (1936) also reached popularity among readers. In 1952, *Noticias de Hoy*'s Sunday supplement, *Hoy Infantil*, played host to popular strips by Horacio Rodríguez Suriá, "La vida de Julio Antonio Mella," (The Life of Julio Antonio Mella) and "Pelusa y Pimienta" (Fuzz and Pepper) and Adigio Benítez, "Espartaco" (Spartacus). Caridad Blanco de la Cruz, "Cuadros," *Revista Latinoamericana de estudios sobre la historieta* 1 (April 2001): 33.



Figure 1.3 *Diario de la Marina*, January 22, 1957.

an already established Cuban tradition.

Though a Cuban strain of advertising existed before the U.S. occupation of 1899, American consumerism and its style of product promotion quickly spread and inextricably infused itself with relative ease. As early as 1898, American advertiser George Benson solicited contracts from U.S. manufacturers, established an agency in Havana, and worked with newspapers in

Havana, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, and Santiago de Cuba. Billboards and advertising campaigns exploded all over Havana. An American observer Franklin Matthews noted, “Everywhere . . . there were brilliant lithographs advertising various brands of American beer. It was a wonder that some enterprising agent had not plastered the sides of the Morro Castle with these signs. One would think, from the number of them in town, that we were simply a nation of beer guzzlers.”<sup>75</sup> Advertisements encouraged a new consumer culture based on American products that would render Cubans as civilized, modernized, and sanitized through their purchase and use (Figure 1.3). English phrases and

<sup>75</sup>More advertising companies followed with West Indies Advertising Company, Advertising Company of Cuba, W.B. Fair, and W.B. Elliott Company (specializing in billboards). Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 132 and 360.

words crept into the Cuban vernacular: American department store Woolworth (*el Ten Cén*); Corn Flakes (*Flakes con leche*); tissue (*Kleenex*); and razor blade (*la Gillette*). In 1954, Samuel Feijóo noted, “So many names, brands, advertisements, and billboards . . . announce that Havana is losing its national (*criollo*) color and character. The *tiendas* are called *stores*, the *mercados* are *markets* . . . . The residents of Havana now say *porch*, *living*, *hall*, *grocery* for their equivalent in Spanish.”<sup>76</sup> American news agencies like the United Press International, King Features, Tribune Service, in addition to advertising firms like McCann-Erickson, Grant Advertising, A.B. Ayers, and J. Walter Thompson, filled Cuban newspapers with imagery featuring “the American way.” American beauty products, bath soaps, foods, household appliances, clothing, movies, sports, recreational activities, as well as advice columns on dieting, etiquette, and even child rearing, flooded their pages, accounting for half the space. Cuban advertising proved nearly identical to its American mentor, in both training, marketing, research, and approach, yet with stylized differences. McCann-Erickson trained its Cuban employees “The McCann way,” with New York-based seminars designed to keep their people’s design-knowledge fresh. McCann-Erickson’s “man in Havana” J. Bruce Swigert, characterized his account as “creative for Revlon, being high-fashion and sophisticated, relied on N.Y. models, who were all international types. We would adapt the copy to Spanish in Havana, but relied on N.Y. graphics. The appeal to Cuban ‘high’ that was our

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 377. Pérez discusses the penetration and circulation of the English language in a variety of settings and dimensions. See pages 150-52 and 368-77.



**Figure 1.4** *Diario de la Marina*, January 22, 1957.

market was the same as to the New York or London ‘high.’” In his book *On Becoming Cuban* (1999), Louis Pérez argues advertising acted as an “agency of socialization” by manipulating individual wants and needs, imposing another reality based on norms Cubans were told identified with the modern, the civilized, and the beautiful (Figure 1.4).<sup>77</sup> Only through selling the

North American way of life, both materially and psychologically, could this culture of consumption be sustained.

While American companies would play a large role in shaping the look, tone, and style of newspaper and magazine advertisements after the establishment of the Republic, Cuba already had its own history of advertising and graphic development. In the 1840s, Cuban businesses and professionals advertised in newspapers like the *Gazeta de la Habana* and *Papel Periódico de la Habana*, in theaters (Tacón, Albisu, Irijona, and Payret), or simply by hanging a product from a pole on the doors of a business. Theft, better visibility and circulation, and the deterioration of products led to advertising their graphic representation either as a painting, or in a silhouette form on paper. In the 1860s, theaters provided the perfect environment for advertising. Before the curtain rose, affluent audiences would be treated to jingles about products from local businesses like

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 307-08 and 394.

Montevideo's meats, the Guillot funeral home, or Susini cigarettes. The Cuban cigar industry also influenced the development of graphic technology and the arts through its label and box decor. Chromolithography provided a new vibrancy to cigar labels and box designs, adding a new breath of life to an exclusively Cuban graphic language of palm trees, natives, pastoral scenes, women and cherubs, the national flag and shield, as well as of colonial Spanish life.<sup>78</sup> Newspapers designed the majority of advertisements in house and favored visual components over text. In 1935, Cuban businesses and industrialists banded together in the Association of Advertisers of Cuba (Asociación de Anunciantes Cubanos, AAC), an organization modeled after the U.S. Audit Bureau of Circulations (1914), to create a list of preferential client newspapers based on circulation numbers and a target audience with a strong consumer mind-set. Since newspapers earned revenue from subscriptions and advertising, gaining contracts from the AAC became quite valuable.<sup>79</sup> A number of artistic styles influenced graphic illustrators, but the aesthetics of Art Nouveau resonated most of all.<sup>80</sup> In the

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<sup>78</sup>The two most important lithographic print shops in Havana, The Lithography of the Economic Society of Friends of the Country (founded 1938) and The Spanish Lithography of the Brothers Costa (f. 1939), specialized in naturalist books, landscapes, and fashions. Tobacconist Luis Susini introduced the first chromolithography machine in 1861. Jorge Bermúdez, *La imagen constante: el cuartel cubano del siglo XX* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2000), 11, 13, and 14.

<sup>79</sup>Evelio Tellería Toca, *Diccionario Periodístico* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1986), 23.

<sup>80</sup>Other styles include Japanese wood prints, Russian artists like El Lissitzky and Alexandr Rodchenko, French impressionist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Dadaism. Bermúdez, 19-23 *passim*.



1920s and 1930s, caricaturist, illustrator, and artistic designer Conrado Massaguer ushered in a new era of graphic aesthetic to Cuban advertisements using silk screen and offset printing, the first of its kind in Latin America in his magazine *Social* (1916). *Social*'s articles and sections included architecture, high fashion, music, opera, ballet, film, sports and leisure. Massaguer infused its covers with his own style of caricature and illustration, influenced by Japanese wood prints and the poster art of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, or at times with Art Nouveau elegance and a sense of modernity. Advertisements centered mainly on luxury cars, women's clothing, shoes, home appliances, furniture, food and beverages, and cigarettes. They either contained text and decoration, or an illustrated representation and text in either halftones, or color. Many *Social* illustrators were painters.<sup>81</sup> Like cartoonists, advertisers would also maintain this duality, or link to the world of painting. In his book, *La imagen constante* (2000), Jorge Bermúdez argues that in the area of advertising, Cubans excelled in the production and quality of their graphic art in contrast to the United States due in part to their proclivity to painting. The 1940s ushered in the next wave of aesthetic influence on Cuban graphics, a mixture of what amounted to *Social*'s style and a carnival artistry. Vicki Gold Levi and Steven Heller labeled it a

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<sup>81</sup>In 1924, Massaguer lived in New York for a brief stint, returning later in 1931, but during this period in the U.S., he began contributing to American magazines like *Life*, *New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, *Town and Country*. *Social* illustrators included painters Rafael Ángel Surí, Jaime Valls, José Manuel Acosta, Mario Carreño, Antonio Aguilar, and López Méndez. María Luisa Lobo Montalvo, Zoila Lapique Becali, Narciso G. Menocal, Edward Shaw, "The Years of Social," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 22 (1996): 109, 113 and 116.

“cocktail style.” Inspired by Madison Avenue’s drink and jazz culture, it constituted “a method for framing advertisements promoting liquor and other high life products,” in combination with representations of Latin music, vibrant colors and playful patterns, and a tropical beach atmosphere commonly found in what evolved into tourist advertising.<sup>82</sup> In the 1950s, Cuban advertising reached its golden age, inspired by the *Styling* industrial design popularized by Raymond Loewy and infused with imagery evoking the kitsch of tourism, the chic modernity of American products, and the seductive rhythms of the rumba and mambo. Though the majority of graphic designers received on-the-job training and experience, a clamoring for a formal education in publicity, advertising, and design grew as competition between advertisers intensified. Article 70 under Law 2065 of the 1940 Constitution required professional licenses, or aptitude certificates not given by an institution like the University of Havana. A push for accreditation led to the founding of the Professional School of Publicity at the University of Havana. Courses began on February 24, 1954 featuring technical drawing, model sketching, illustration, and commercial art.<sup>83</sup> The establishment of a degree specializing in advertising reflected not only an existing Cuban field,

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<sup>82</sup>Vicki Gold Levi and Steven Heller, *Cuba Style: Graphics from the Golden Age* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 9 and 11-13.

<sup>83</sup>Private schools existed (Garcés, Martín Estudio, Lily del Barrio), yet Cubans employed with American companies received training in the United States. Bermúdez, *La imagen constante*, 39 and Mirta Muñiz, *La publicidad en Cuba: mito y realidad* (Havana: Ediciones Logos, 2003), 42.

but also the official emphasis placed on its importance and development despite blossoming under an American shadow.

Cuban media artists, both cartoonists and advertisers, survived and thrived prior to the Revolution despite forced compromises and threats from repressive governments, as well as the popularity of the American brand and comic super hero. By the 1950s, a tradition, or what can be defined as Cuban cartooning had emerged and can be distinguished by four main characteristics.<sup>84</sup> First, the majority of Cuban cartoons were single-framed, political, or *costumbrista* pieces. Examples like the anti-Spanish cartoons published during the wars of independence and *Liborio*, which centered on political domestic, or international subjects contained within one frame, constitute political cartoons. *Costumbrismo*, a representation of daily life and customs, owed its popularity to the work of Spanish illustrator Victor Patricio de Landaluze (1830-1899), an anti-creole cartoonist published in Spanish newspapers *Don Juníper*, *La Charanga*, and *El Moro Muza*. Captured within his book, *Tipos y costumbres de la isla de Cuba* (1881), Landaluze offered Cubans a rare, satirical and stereotypical look at themselves engaged in daily activities. He immortalized carriage drivers, cane cutters, the *mulata*, farmers, Abakuá priests (*ñañigos*), Spaniards (*gallegos*), and street scenes.<sup>85</sup> Cigar boxes featuring idyllic scenes of Cuban life in the

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<sup>84</sup>These points reflect a summary of themes described in Javier Negrín's "El Pitorre, Humor Revolucionario," 204-05 and Evora Tamayo's *La caricatura editorial*, 11-12.

<sup>85</sup>Miguel Itturia, *Espanoles en la cultura cubana* (Editorial Renacimiento, 2004), 55-56 and Negrín, 204-05.

countryside also added to the reservoir of symbols associated with *costumbrista* imagery. *Costumbrista* cartoonists typically satirized stereotypes in a familiar, everyday setting on universal topics like love, class difference, or money. The use of abstract lines and minimal text constituted another defining characteristic of Cuban cartooning. Javier Negrín identifies Rafael Blanco as the first “modern cartoonist” who made the transition from the style popularized by Juan Jorge Peoli (a disproportionate head and body) to pieces attempting to capture the psychology of the visual message in as few strokes as possible.<sup>86</sup> The last two distinctive traits of Cuban cartooning owe their derivation to censorship and repression from Republican administrations beginning with the American military intervention under the governorship of General Leonard Wood. Torriente’s *Liborio* introduced the *choteo* to the Cuban genre, a satirical device used to equalize power relations between the hero (Liborio/Cuban *pueblo*) and the “establishment” (the Cuban state, the United States, politicians, sugar barons). By forcing Liborio to play dumb, Torriente showcased and ridiculed Cuba’s political corruption, social inequities, and economic abuses. As an offshoot to the *choteo*, the symbolic code introduced by Eduardo Abela’s *El Bobo* and perfected by René de la Nuez’s *El Loquito*, evolved as a means to circumvent government-imposed censors and to criticize the state and national problems through double-speak. The symbols and meanings developed by Abela and Nuez formed a comic language reinforced by the Cuban vernacular itself. This secretive dialogue not

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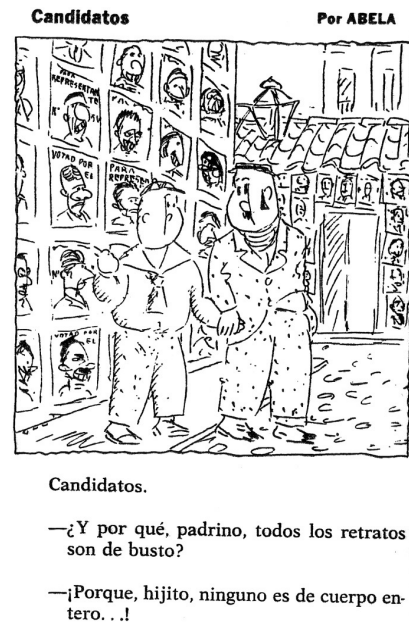
<sup>86</sup>Negrín, 202.

only built a visual relationship between the cartoonist and his audience, adding to the popularity of *El Bobo* and *El Loquito*, but also created something strictly *Cuban*.

The repressive second term of Cuban President Gerardo Machado (1928-1933) generated another watershed moment in Cuban cartooning with Eduardo Abela's *El Bobo*. Machado's threats and acts of violence against members of the press intensified as social and economic instability

increased, but perhaps ironically, the infiltration of government censors within the newspaper shop floor itself caused a greater upheaval in the cartoon world.<sup>87</sup>

Painter and San Alejandro graduate Eduardo Abela created *El Bobo* primarily as a steady source of income, but his character soon took on a much more significant role as the next visual representative and champion of the Cuban *pueblo* (Figure 1.5). Published regularly in *La Semana* (1926-1931), *El Bobo* initially fit into the style of *costumbrista*, yet as Machado's repression peaked, Abela's themes turned more political. In a 1949 interview, Abela recalled, "When things in Cuba became how they became [Machado], I drew El Bobo to play a civic, social,



**Figure 1.5** *Diario de la Marina*, October 22, 1932.

<sup>87</sup>Gerardo Machado began his presidency as a reformist in 1924, yet his second term confronted economic challenges and social upheaval. In reaction to mounting chaos, he suspended constitutional guarantees and imposed "an old political law of public order," which included interrupting the publication of over fifteen newspapers, arresting editors, and imposing in-house censors. Pérez, *Cuba, Between Reform and Revolution*, 256.

revolutionary, patriotic function, or however you'd like to call it.”<sup>88</sup> El Bobo like Liborio soon championed a nationalist-inspired integrity and popular interests in the fight against tyrannical politics and corruption. Under the watchful eye of the censor, El Bobo's communication relied heavily on symbols and colloquial reference to critique his surroundings, effectively establishing a new language through a set of visual codes. The connection between image and text intensified as each relied on the other in a game of double entendres. As a result, Abela's cartoon captions did not relay direct meanings to his readers as Torriente and others had done in the past. Abela scripted brief conversation between El Bobo and his sidekicks, The Professor and The Nephew, inserting phrases that if isolated, related to a specific social, or political context. Particular words had new symbolic allusions: ball (rumor); trumpet (foolishness); *guayaba* (trick); record player (repeated government promises); hoe (a problem becomes complex); and candle (revolution).<sup>89</sup> El Bobo occasionally wore a scarf symbolizing censorship, a prop which should have drawn the attention of the

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<sup>88</sup>Abela's first rendering of El Bobo appeared in an advertisement commissioned by Florsheim shoes and published in his hometown magazine *El Zorro Viejo* of San Antonio de los Baños in 1925. San Antonio judge José Méndez provided the inspiration, though Abela revealed that by design, El Bobo's head was the “posterior of a woman's body.” During the late 1920s, Abela lived among a small community of Cuban artists in an area of Paris called Montparnasse and sent his pieces to *La Semana* by mail. Upon returning to Cuba in 1929, his series turned more political. Abela also published El Bobo in *Diario de la Marina* (1930) and *Información* (1931). Adelaida de Juan, *Hacerce El Bobo de Abela* (Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978), 2-3, 6-7, and 12-13.

<sup>89</sup>Adelaida de Juan, *Caricatura de la república* (Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1982), 113-15.

censor considering Cuba's tropical climate. A visit to the eye doctor signified El Bobo's ability to "see clearly," or the phrase "putting bells on a cat" suggested the confrontation of something difficult.<sup>90</sup> By 1934, *El Bobo* ceased to exist along with Machado. Abela's use of symbolism and popular references to elaborate a nationalist discourse set within a detailed backdrop of Havana gave his series a hint of *costumbrismo* mixed with political satire. On October 12, 1952, Fulgencio Batista staged his *second* coup d'état (the first in 1933 called the Sergeants Revolt ironically ousted Machado) and launched another period of press censorship and repression. René de la Nuez's series *El Loquito* (The Nut) continued the methods and objective of Abela's *El Bobo*, yet with a new flair for outwitting the in-house censor and an unmatched simplicity for conveying meaning.

René de la Nuez's *El Loquito* like Abela's *El Bobo* introduced visual codes, assumed a combative position as the *pueblo*'s representative hero against repression and corruption, and owed his creation to a dictatorship. Both characters blamed a mental abnormality for their brazen lampooning of political and economic conditions. *El Loquito*, however, was not entirely like his predecessor. Published in the most popular cartoon magazine prior to the revolution, *Zig-Zag* (1938-1960), Nuez's series reported the battles in the Sierra Maestra for an urban audience through a new code, style, and format. On February 2, 1957, *Zig-Zag* introduced its new character with a disclaimer: "This is

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<sup>90</sup>Évora Tamayo, Juan Blas Rodríguez, and Oscar Hurtado, *Más de cien años de humor político* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1984), 59; Negrín, 203; and De Juan, *Caricatura*, 130 and 134.



**Figure 1.6** René de la Nuez, *Zig-Zag*, May 11, 1957.

not about a crazy Cuban, a bit distracted, a bit sour, another bit calculating and very shameless, that makes insanity a path to bothering others. No, Sirs, this is a nut, one hundred percent honorable, sincere, and capable of hitting himself with a hammer on his big toe” (Figure 1.6).<sup>91</sup>

Drawn in three intersecting triangles (his newspaper hat representing the press) and armed with an insane look in his eye, Loquito constantly referenced the existence of Fidel and his Sierra movement, inciting enthusiasm and faith in the guerrillas and keeping Cubans abreast of battles and other successes.<sup>92</sup> In January 1957, Batista imposed an in-house censor known as “Benítez,” a military officer from the Ministry of Communications, to literally cut out any sections of articles, or cartoons overtly criticizing either Batista himself, or his policies. Benítez monitored several newspapers, visiting *Zig-Zag* in particular once a week dressed in civilian

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<sup>91</sup>De Juan, *Caricatura*, 238. Nuez joked, “When I drew Loquito and presented it to him [José Manuel Roseñada, *Zig-Zag* artistic director], he saw the possibilities of Loquito saying anything and he allowed me to say all the horrors I wanted to say. He never censored me.” René de la Nuez, interview.

<sup>92</sup>Nuez used his San Antonio de los Baños connections with the 26 of July Movement to gain information from the chief of the “Havana Camp” on battles. Ahmel Echevarría, “La caricatura, un testimonio de la epoca,” *Jiribilla*, 2002, <[http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2002/n65\\_agosto/1554\\_65.html](http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2002/n65_agosto/1554_65.html)> (26 February 2004).



clothes.<sup>93</sup> Though at times *El Loquito* did not escape Benítez's editing, Nuez grew to rely on caption-less imagery filled with visual codes that evolved in response to revolutionary events. After all, El Loquito did not speak, he expressed his thoughts through gesture alone. At times, El Loquito wore a beard (rebel), mocked *chivatos* (police informants illustrated wearing a low-brimmed hat and having large ears), listened to Pirate Radio (Radio Rebelde from the Sierra Maestra), or waited for the bus on Line 30 whose route led to a Havana neighborhood called La Sierra. Benítez, however, caught onto Nuez's code. In response, Nuez used Roman numerals, or combinations of the number thirty (e.g., 15x2, 60/2, or XXV+V). When rumors swirled that Fidel Castro had died during the army ambush of the *Granma* landing in early December 1956 at Alegría de Pío, *New York Times* columnist Herbert Matthews arrived in the Sierra Maestra two months later and interviewed a very-much-alive Fidel Castro. In honor of this symbolic guerrilla victory, El Loquito's hat changed to match that of the *NYT* front page.<sup>94</sup> Nuez jokingly recalled, "You had to be crazy to do the things revolutionaries did at that moment that the youth did at that time, and Loquito formed part of that world. So that was the image of Loquito. Now people ask

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<sup>93</sup>According to Nuez, the Ministry armed Benítez with a series of guidelines specifying the type of material fit for censorship. Axel Li, "Entrevista con René de la Nuez, otras coordenadas del Loquito," *La Jiribilla* VI, Agosto 2007: 13. Cartoonist Felo Díaz, creator of the magazine *Actualidad Criolla* (1958) commented, "we'd take the proofs to Benítez and then we'd quickly alter his edits and publish the magazine. They closed us down after the sixth number." Tamayo, *Más de cien años de humor político*, 113.

<sup>94</sup>The newspaper would morph; sometimes Loquito sported Chinese print. René de la Nuez, interview.

why I don't do *El Loquito*. The conditions simply do not exist.”<sup>95</sup> *El Bobo* and *El Loquito* emerged out of politically charged environments and represented a feistier *pueblo* than Torriente's *Liborio*. Yet, all three *pueblo* incarnations hid behind codes, allegory, and emanated a certain strength through passivity, or weakness, attributing their “craziness,” or “stupidity” to a mental deficiency. Nuez mused, “El Bobo served during one dictatorship and El Loquito served another. But, notice that in El Bobo, you find no Liborio. The representation of the pueblo *is* El Bobo, someone who has to play dumb, not be dumb.” Each gravitated toward a new type of humor, one that required cleverness and creativity on the part of the reader, as well as the artist, and as a result, brought the two closer together. Some key revolutionary cartoonist and their art took on an activist, political, and nationalist role in Cuban society before the Revolution. *Mella* cartoonist Virgilio Martínez observed, “In each historical moment there has been caricaturists that have expressed vanguard thinking. Abela attacked Machado. Horacio [Suria] artistically battled fascism, and Adigio [Benítez] and Nuez combated the tyranny of Batista.”<sup>96</sup> Ironically, oppression engendered ingenuity between image and text, forcing the visual to shape meaning. Words, if necessary, functioned to obscure and deflect the visual. Censorship injected life, purpose, politics, and uniqueness into the Cuban cartoon.

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. and Virgilio Martínez, interview.

Fulgencio Batista's unbridled press intervention through subsidies, censorship, and at times, violent repression nurtured the growth of a clandestine press. Since his coup d'état in March 1952, Batista established a Ministry of Propaganda, later named the Ministry of Information, to stamp out whatever he deemed "inflammatory material." He expanded and intensified the existing system of subsidies established by previous Republican presidents through outright bribery, paid government advertising, and sinecures (*botellas*). He allocated the proceeds from two national lotteries to the press association and ordered the presence of in-house censors (as noted in the case of *El Loquito*), leading savvy journalists and artists to either circumvent them through code, or voice their criticisms through clandestine publications. His violation of Cuban press freedoms, however questionable, reached unprecedented heights leading directly to the birth of over thirty revolutionary, underground newspapers.<sup>97</sup> After Fidel Castro and his group attacked the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, Batista banned the Popular Socialist Party newspaper *Noticias de Hoy* (1938) and their youth magazine *Mella* (1944), sending their staffs underground—a move that directly inspired *Mella* script writer Marcos Behmaras and cartoonist Virgilio Martínez to create the comic strip *Pucho y sus perrerías* (Pucho and His Happenings).<sup>98</sup> *El Acusador*, the 26 of July Movement's first newspaper with

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<sup>97</sup>Ernesto Vera and Elio E. Constantín, *El periodismo y la lucha ideológica* (Havana: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, 2003), 15.

<sup>98</sup>Batista banned *Mella* in January 1953, but it began printing again clandestinely in 1954 with Virgilio signing *Pucho* under the pseudonym Laura. *Carta Semanal* appeared in place of *Noticias de Hoy* as the PSP clandestine

Fidel Castro writing under the pseudonym Alejandro, appeared almost by luck in August 1952 since its distributors Abel Santamaría, Melba Hernández, and Elda Pérez were surprised and detained by a Military Intelligence Service (Servicio de Inteligencia Militar, SIM) officer upon their arrival at the printer.<sup>99</sup> A number of 26 of July Movement pamphlets and newspapers circulated from prior to the moment of the *Granma* landing, carrying Fidel Castro and his invasion force in December 1956, until their entrance into Havana: *Aldabonazo* (June 1956); *Boletín Informativo* (December 1956); *Sierra Maestra* (November 1958) and *Sucro* (August 1958). Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s *Cubano Libre* (June 1957), the name chosen in honor of José Martí’s revolutionary newspaper, and Carlos Franqui’s *Revolución* (January 1957) became the most popular. Using the technology Multilith machines (a version of lithograph), Castro’s 26 of July Movement distributed *Sierra Maestra* in Oriente, as well as *Vanguardia Obrera*, and *Revolución* in the streets and work centers of Havana.<sup>100</sup> Other clandestine

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newspaper until its reappearance in January 1959. Unión de Periodistas de Cuba (UPEC), *Apuntes de la prensa clandestina y guerrillera del período 1952-1958* (Havana: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, 2003), 50-54 and 57. Press censorship on all newspapers established on July 28, 1953 lasted until October 29, 1953. A period of “self censorship” would begin from September 1953 to May 1955 until January 1957 when Batista enforced another period of formal censorship in response to Fidel Castro and the *Granma* landing in December 1956. Kelsey Vidaillet, “Violations of Freedom of the Press in Cuba: 1952-1969” (paper presented at the XVI annual meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Miami, Fl., August 2006), 287-90.

<sup>99</sup>UPEC, *Apuntes de la prensa clandestina*, 98 and 104.

<sup>100</sup>Some master printers who became members of the 26 of July Movement placed their machinery at its disposal and published propaganda. Francisco Lopez Álvarez, Carlos Calvo Alonso, and Armando Fernández Zubizarreta, *Los graficos en*

papers were printed in the homes of sympathizers, or offices employed as fronts. The underground printing process required money, printers willing to risk arrest, or worse, savvy distribution contacts and volunteers, and automobiles to transport newly-printed batches. Printing shops faithful to the 26 of July Movement created pamphlets, flyers, bulletins, and bond notes with Fidel Castro's signature valued at different amounts. Batista's anti-communist watchdog and military police organizations responsible for crackdowns on subversive activity, the SIM and the Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities (Buró de Represión de Actividades Comunistas, BRAC), maintained an eye on suspicious print shops and conducted raids regularly. This forced many clandestine presses to maintain an element of mobility, as well as forge strong ties between the underground press and the professional printing network. *Revolución's* printing operations suffered fires, raids, and exposure due to improper disposal of materials and noise emanating from the press itself. When discovered, the police arrested staff and seized, or destroyed machinery.<sup>101</sup> The men and women who comprised the underground, revolutionary press (e.g., Carlos Franqui, Ernesto Guevara, Ernesto Vera, Faustino Pérez, Julio Cesar Martínez, Armando Hart, "Bebo" Hidalgo,

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*el movimiento obrero cubano 1865-1961* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1991), 288, 297, and 300.

<sup>101</sup>During periods of political and social unrest and revolution, graphic printers and artists donated their skills, time, and materials to promote rebel causes. Instances of print workshops participating in subversive acts, or allying with revolutionaries date back to the first presidential administration of Tomás Estrada Palma in 1902. *Ibid.*, 292 and 301; Bermúdez, 42; and UPEC, *Apuntes de la prensa clandestina*, 21-25 and 41.

Haydée Santamaría, and Jesús Montané), would later become the directors and editors within the Castro press. This clandestine press countered the propaganda published by Batista's Ministry of Propaganda and newspapers sympathetic, or financially dependent on government subsidies like *Diario de la Marina*, *Havana Post*, *Información*, *Avance*, *El Mundo*, and *El País*. Its main concern was to inform Cubans on the real state of the country and the guerrilla war raging in the Sierra Maestra.<sup>102</sup> *Diario de la Marina*, *El Mundo*, and *Información* earned spots among the Batista era's most notorious subsidy-run newspapers; a fame which led to their immediate troubles at the outset of Castro's Revolution. Before his exile in 1955 and during his time in the Sierra (December 1956-January 1959), Castro published articles and gave interviews only to newspapers with untainted reputations, in other words, those showing no evidence of receiving subsidies, or other favors from the Batista regime.<sup>103</sup> His insistence upon remaining true to

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<sup>102</sup>Vera, *El periodismo*, 65, Ernesto Vera, "Mass Media in Cuba" *Democratic Journalist* (November 1979): 13 and C. Fred Judson, *Cuba and the Revolutionary Myth: The Political Education of the Cuban Rebel Army, 1953-1963* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 180.

<sup>103</sup>By 1959, only six out of fifty-eight newspapers refused subsidies either through direct payment, or advertising. During its final years, the Batista government paid twenty thousand pesos in newspaper subsidies and over twenty thousand to individual journalists each month. He imposed a temporary closure in August 1952 and July 1955 of the newspaper, *La Calle* (a newspaper with direct ties to Castro), broader censorship in April and June 1956, and permanently after January 1957 until January 25, 1958. He also confiscated twenty-five thousand copies of *Bohemia* featuring a Castro interview in January 1958. Lent, "Cuban Mass Media, 1723-1973," 120-21. In his article, Ted Morgan cited Batista as paying approximately four hundred and fifty thousand dollars each month, with *Diario de la Marina* writer, Francisco Ichaso as one of the primary recipients. Ted Morgan, "The Press in Cuba: Where *Granma* is the Life of the Party," *Columbia Journalism Review* 13 (March/April 1975): 15.

Martí's ideals and maintaining political purity in an atmosphere teeming with corruption elevated his press to a commanding ethical position vis-à-vis those co-opted and compromised through their dealings with Batista. In short, it added to his argument for the closure and censorship of conservative and liberal newspapers after 1959.

Cuban nationalism, revolutionary struggle, government repression and censorship, and the obstacles presented by a cultural and professional predisposition toward American comics and advertising enriched the depth and breadth of Cuban visual and its print culture. While some newspapers and their cartoonists accepted the fate of the Republic and of their journalistic and editorial limitations, others continued to channel the patriotic sentiments and nationalist ideology articulated during the independence wars and used their talents to give life and preserve space for something exclusively Cuban. Cartoonists like Torriente, Abela, and Nuez championed Cuban interests in the spirit of José Martí's vision and through their *Liborio*, *El Bobo*, and *El Loquito* articulated a fluid and evolving visual, social, and cultural representation of the *pueblo's* frustrations, pleasures, and hopes. In a Republic culturally favoring the American way of life, *lo Cubano* carved out its own traditions. Multiple forms of government censorship also contributed to the rise of a clandestine press that voiced a more radical and revolutionary Cuban viewpoint, to the artistic creativity of cartoonists like Abela and Nuez and cartooning at large, and to the establishment of an alternative standard of ethics and professional integrity in the press. Repressive measures meant to protect Cuban elites political, economic,

and social domination and their relationship to the United States, precipitated a propagandistic and aggressive nationalist edge, to varying degrees, on newspapers and their humor. The significance of choice in response to censorship would prove essential to the longevity of a newspaper after January 1959. The next chapter will discuss the transition and transformation of the pre-revolutionary press into a new revolutionary world. Revolutionary Cuba, or more specifically, Castro's Cuba forever impacted the ideological, professional, and cultural role, aim, format, and aesthetic of the newspaper and its imagery. Perhaps ironically, Castro achieved the control and support over Cuban print and visual culture that Batista and his predecessors never fully realized.



## Chapter 2: The Rise of the Revolutionary Press and its Visual Message

After January 1959, Fidel Castro and his band of liberators incrementally undertook a series of politically-measured and doggedly-determined steps to dismantle the existing commercial, operational, and political infrastructure of the Cuban press. Their chief goal was a reconstruction of the national print media via institutions favorable to an emergent vision of revolutionary change. Politically and ethically compromised by their financial ties, or apathy during the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista (1953-1958), conservative and liberal newspapers like *Diario de la Marina* and *Prensa Libre* clashed with a previously underground, radical press loyal to Castro and his 26 of July Movement. The staffs and political orientation of clandestine periodicals like *Revolución* and *Noticias de Hoy* appeared after 1959 with the full backing and grace of the Revolution and continued their role as champions and defenders of its policies and path. This chapter explores the functionality and institutional construction of a post-revolutionary press oriented by the leaders of the new Revolutionary Government and actualized by the various personalities, artistic talents, and enthusiasm that fueled the clandestine experience. Through the voices of revolutionary cartoonists like René de la Nuez, Antonio “Ñico” Mariño Souto, Adigio Benítez, Rafael Fornés, and Virgilio Martínez Gáinza, it seeks to impart the emotional and artistic impact of the revolutionary politics on Cuban cartooning from a medium of social and political criticism to one strictly devoted

to a supportive, cultural role in the eyes of this collective. The Revolution transformed the art form's aesthetic, symbols, and style dramatically, while simultaneously sacrificing its humor for the sake of a higher purpose: itself. Cuban and American advertising also suffered censure at the hand of revolutionary change and emerged molded to a new purpose and aesthetic; one similarly dry and dedicated to the revolutionary message in the form of the revolutionary advertisement. In the end, members of the revolutionary press shared the same goal, duty, and spirit: to protect, defend, and advance the Revolution.

Fidel Castro's Revolution ushered in a period of political, social, and economic rectification that immediately affected the livelihood and political vulnerability of the Cuban press. On January 30, 1959, *Revolución* (the official new organ of the 26 of July Movement) published the list of editors and journalists who had received bribes and other bonuses from the previous administration in return for favorable press coverage. This list was allegedly discovered on a pad in Batista's office in the Presidential Palace.<sup>104</sup> Under the Law for the Recovery of Stolen Property, Castro outright expropriated five Havana newspapers entirely subsidized by Batista: *Tiempo en Cuba*, *Ataja*,

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<sup>104</sup>*Diario de la Marina* staffers received ministry positions in customs, agriculture, communication, education, and public works among others. Other bribe recipients included *El Mundo*, *Información*, *Alerta*, *Diario Nacional*, *El Cristol*, *Excelsior*, *El País*, *Avance*, and even the graphic magazine, *Zig-Zag*. Marrero, 88. Hugh Thomas noted that *Revolución* "relished" in publishing accounts of Batista era corruption more so than other newspapers whose financial connections with the previous administration ran deep. Thomas, 1069.

*Mañana*, *Pueblo*, and *Alerta*. *Revolución* and *Noticias de Hoy* expanded their offices and printing capabilities into their abandoned facilities. The financial loss of subsidies, in addition to the social and professional stigma now associated with this practice, left journalists, editors, and their newspapers vulnerable to political attacks and potential expropriation. Ironically perhaps, the practice of a government-subsidized press inevitably would continue under revolutionary rule. As the Revolution gained momentum, this initial raid on the non-aligned press (the conservative and increasingly, the liberal press as well) expanded and strangled its ability conduct business. For those newspapers that could weather the end government subsidies and a reduction in advertisement revenue, survival proved precarious. Those who could not sustain themselves on subscriptions alone closed their doors.

A whirlwind of revolutionary reform and an increasingly-charged political atmosphere provided the backdrop for what seemed like an inevitable clash between conservative and liberal newspapers and the Revolutionary Government and its supporting press. As previously noted, after Castro's arrival in Havana in early January, journalists, editors, and some newspapers with pre-revolutionary political and financial ties to the Batista regime suffered public humiliation, financial loss, or closure. Despite this first shock wave of government intervention, newspapers like *Diario de la Marina* and *Prensa Libre* continued to operate much as before New Year's Day 1959. In his book *El periodismo y la lucha ideológica* (2003) Ernesto Vera (b.1929-), an editor and distributor of *Revolución* during the guerrilla period and a key figure in the revolutionary press

after 1959, recalled that the four main tasks of the revolutionary press during its first years were to “encourage, explain, and accelerate” revolutionary changes; to adjust itself [the press] “simultaneously according to the transformations directed by revolutionary forces assuming power”; to act as an unwavering supporter of revolutionary reforms against criticisms from the “anti-patriotic, reactionary, and diversionary campaigns of the bourgeois press” that struggled to preserve its pre-revolutionary influence; and to offset these criticisms as they grew more and more “counter-revolutionary” in reaction to a deepening revolutionary process.<sup>105</sup>

In short, revolutionary politics defined the duty of the revolutionary press in its now official capacity and its role proved similar to its purpose during its clandestine period: to support, report, explain, and defend the Revolution. It is this definition of the political and ideological role of the revolutionary press that gave it a propagandistic quality. A clash between the media types seemed inevitable and it evolved quickly. Conservative and liberal newspapers voiced advice, objections, caution, or outrage in response to each measure taken during the first six months (e.g., the execution of over five hundred Batista loyalists, drastic reductions in rents and telephone rates, the forced sale of vacant lots, the suspension of elections, and the unveiling of the Agrarian Reform program).<sup>106</sup>

Castro frequently accused these papers of spreading fear, lies, and mistrust, insisting their information and disposition stemmed from their dependence on

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<sup>105</sup>Vera, *El periodismo*, 20.

<sup>106</sup>Thomas Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, revised ed. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishing, 2001), 26 and Marrero, 82-84.

foreign news sources. He felt that Latin Americans had been subjected to “controlled and prefabricated opinions” at the hands of the Associated Press (AP) and the Inter-American Press Society (SIP).<sup>107</sup> To assure Cubans remained informed of international events without being subjected to inflammatory viewpoints and misinformation, the Revolutionary Government created Prensa Latina in June 1959, a press association designed as an alternative news source to the AP and SIP syndicates. In a speech that same month at the Plaza Castello in Rio de Janeiro, Castro made his position clear and said, “to those that have not written on behalf of the people that has suffered greatly, the only right in the hour of exemplary justice is the right to be silent.”<sup>108</sup> Incrementally, the Revolutionary Government lost its tolerance for the non-aligned press’ choice of topic, demeanor, and political and ideological loyalties. At the end of the year, the Revolutionary Government pressured the National College of Journalism to establish a new code of ethics, which not surprisingly included principles steeped in revolutionary rhetoric and context. The code expelled any student, or alumni who had been a part of the SIM, or the BRAC; condemned by revolutionary tribunal; acted as a censor under Batista; accepted sinecures, financial compensation, or gifts in return for political support; publically supported the counter-revolution; and appeared among those listed in the investigations

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<sup>107</sup>Ana Nuñez, *Pensamiento revolucionario y medios de difusión masiva* (Havana: Editoria Política, 1983), 39.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 38. Taken from Fidel Castro, “Discurso pronunciado en la Plaza Castello en Río de Janeiro,” *El desarrollo económico de la América Latina* (Havana: Comisión de Propaganda de la Dirección de Cultura del Ejército Rebelde, 1959), 52.

conducted by the Department of Recovery of Stolen Property.<sup>109</sup> In imposing a set of rules on the National College, the Revolutionary Government stripped a number of current and potential members of the press of their professional credentials on the basis of ethics and politics, as well as effectively setting the politics and standard for a new kind of revolutionary journalist. The continuing rhetorical, even physical persecution of the non-aligned press intensified accusations and reactions on both sides.<sup>110</sup>

Revolutionary cartoonists from *Revolución* and the socialist newspaper *Noticias de Hoy* launched an attack on the “reactionary, or counter-revolutionary” press and effectively cemented a visual catalogue of its transgressions in the minds of their readers. Through their imagery, they reinforced perceptions of a patriotically and financially-compromised press and deepened its connection, however accurate, with the enemy camp. The imagined narrative of newspapers like *Diario de la Marina*, *Información*, *Avance*, *El País*, *Prensa Libre*, and *Excelsior* became riddled with symbolic associations to betrayal, conspiracy, and bribery. At the helm of this group of conspirators lay the United States (represented by Uncle Sam) and its corresponding, or allied magazines and news agencies *Time*, *Life*, the AP, and the SIP (Figure 2.1). Cartoonists hurled

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<sup>109</sup> Among those expelled from the College of Journalism and Association of Reporters were Miguel Ángel Quevedo (*Bohemia*), Francisco Ichaso (*La Marina*), Jorge Mañach (*La Marina/Bohemia*), Sergio and Ulises Carbó (*Prensa Libre*), and José Ignacio Rivero (*La Marina*). Marrero, 93.

<sup>110</sup> Throughout 1959, overzealous officials regularly harassed anti-communist columnists and even arrested some like *El Mundo*’s Juan Luis Martín Salwen, “The Dark Side of Cuban Journalism,” 143.



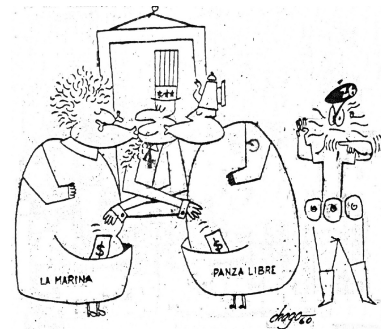
**Figure 2.1** Bidopia,  
*Revolución*, August 3,  
1959.

accusations like “reactionary” and “anti-communist” against the non-aligned press and furnished their readers’ imaginations with a background setting, context, and maneuvers that left little doubt to its underhanded, conspiratorial dealings (Figure 2.2 and 2.3). *Prensa Libre* and *Diario de la Marina* were singled out due in

part to their popularity and their contributors’ willingness to voice their opposition and challenge their surroundings.<sup>111</sup>

These two examples project the two main charges weighed against the non-aligned press: first, that these newspapers accepted bribes from the United States and secondly, that they feigned the

patriotic emotion that fueled the progressive



**Figure 2.2** Chago, *Revolución*,  
April 13, 1960.

edge of the Revolution. *Noticias de Hoy* cartoonist Adigio Benítez’s message in figure 2.4 argued that newspapers like the conservative *Diario de la Marina* could never change and would always be on the side the oppressor. Represented through the symbol of a young Spanish girl, he relates *Diario de la Marina*’s political loyalty through Cuban history: allying with General



**Figure 2.3** Adigio,  
*Noticias de Hoy*, March  
17, 1959.

<sup>111</sup>By the time it closed its doors, *Prensa Libre* had a circulation of over 120,000 units. Thomas, 1280.



Figure 2.4 Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, August 28, 1959.

Weyler, the Spanish governor responsible for setting up concentration camps during the War of Independence, in her youth, toasting the death of Antonio Maceo and José Martí, supporting Hitler and Franco, receiving bribe money from Batista, and finally, uniting with the U.S. and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic against the Castro's Revolution. In short, *Diario de la Marina* could not be trusted; it was a turncoat that would always ally against Cuban national interests. Figure 2.5 speaks directly to the position and view of the Revolutionary Government in regard to its most hated critics. Titled "The 'Freedom of the



Figure 2.5 Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, October 6, 1959.

Press' They Want," Adigio features Castro (Revolution) gagged and bound to a chair (immobile) while *Diario de la Marina* (as the old Spanish lady), the United States (as the capitalist) and the SIP (as the bureaucrat) shout "Down with the Agrarian Reform," "Down with Revolutions," and "Death to the Popular and Revolutionary Press." With this cartoon, Benítez visualized the suppression of the Cuban Revolution by conservative elites, backed by their press and



imperialist, capitalist allies. This caustic atmosphere, reflected in the imagined narrative, laden with emotion and political animosity, soon escalated toward a permanent suppression of the non-aligned press and the establishment of a mass media apparatus solely in the hands of the Revolutionary Government. The revolutionary press, at the behest and encouragement of its government, continued to explain, defend, charge, and ultimately triumph over its compromised, weakened, and inevitably obsolete counterpart.

Eventually and perhaps ironically, the issue of free press precipitated the rapid demise of the non-aligned press. The publicized fight between the competing presses, that is, the conservative/liberal versus revolutionary, reached its peak. As previously noted, in November 1959, the National College of Journalism had established a set of ethical codes essentially expelling members of the press with political and financial ties to Batista. On January 4, 1960, at the insistence of Castro and in accordance with the Union of Graphic Artists headed by Dagoberto Ponce, the National College ratified the use of a postscript, or disclaimer (*coletilla*) to be placed at the end of newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, cartoons, and any section that staffers, or printers found offensive to their revolutionary politics, or as simply untrue about the Revolution. To ensure its enforcement, Ponce led a Free Press Committee that *physically* intervened in any disputes that arose. The newspaper *Información* printed the first *coletilla* on January 16, spurring other newspapers like *Avance* to declare solidarity with its

owners.<sup>112</sup> Two days later, *Avance* editor Jorge Zayas wrote an editorial criticizing the forced printing of a *coletilla*, a stunt he argued reflected little more than a response by “disgruntled employees and should be ignored.” Castro criticized Zayas in a speech on January 20 claiming, “Freedom of the press is not what he [Zayas] thinks it is. Freedom of the press is not freedom to sell oneself to the highest bidder as he has done with his newspaper. For this reason, what the journalistic class needs is a total revamping . . . to purify itself . . .”<sup>113</sup> Zayas left the country and *Avance* employees took control over its presses. In the same month, *Noticias de Hoy* and *Revolución* featured articles “unmasking” the lies and underhandedness of *Diario de la Marina* and *Prensa Libre*, in addition to statements from workers at the newspapers *El País* and *El Excelsior*, supporting the decisions of the National College.<sup>114</sup> *El País* shutdown after its editor Guillermo Martínez Márquez refused to print a *coletilla*.<sup>115</sup> On May 11, revolutionary printers and workers at *Diario de la Marina* called in Ponce and his

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<sup>112</sup>Lopez Álvarez, 313.

<sup>113</sup>The *coletilla* read, “This information being published through the legitimate use of the right of free press existent in Cuba, and in keeping with this right, journalists and graphic workers of this work center also express that this content does not conform to the truth, nor the most elementary, journalistic ethic.” Salwen, “The Dark Side of Cuban Journalism,” 145.

<sup>114</sup>Lopez Álvarez, 316-18.

<sup>115</sup>Guillermo Martínez Márquez appeared on television twice in an attempt to defend himself against Castro’s accusations. After its closure, *El País*’ presses became part of the Imprenta Nacional. Efrén Córdova, *Castro and the Cuban Labor Movement, Statecraft and Soviet in a Revolutionary Period, 1959-1961* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 234.

committee to stop the printing of an article calling for free elections and signed by the majority of the newspaper's more conservative-leaning employees. Powerless to stop the intervention and subsequent takeover, its owner José Ignacio Rivero, popularly known as "Pepinillo," took refuge in the Embassy of Peru and left the country and his newspaper behind. The next day, students at the University of Havana symbolically buried *Diario de la Marina* and burned Pepinillo in effigy. *Prensa Libre* columnist Luis Aguilar León wrote, "It's painful to watch the burial of the freedom of thought in a cultural center. What was buried tonight on the hill was not a said newspaper. Freedom of thought and freedom of speech were symbolically buried." In another *Prensa Libre* article, journalist Aguilar León predicted that "the same slogan will be repeated in both written and spoken press. There will not be voices of dissent, nor possibility of criticism, nor public rebuttals. This control will facilitate indoctrination and the collective fear will occupy the rest." During the next few days, *Prensa Libre* continued to protest the closure of *Diario de la Marina* and this criticism ensured its own fate. *Revolución* responded by charging *Prensa Libre* with paranoia: "No one accosts *Prensa Libre*. No one's going after *Prensa Libre*. The destiny of *Prensa Libre* will depend on itself."<sup>116</sup> The case of *Prensa Libre* exposed a politically-led, institutional strangulation of the non-aligned press more than any other newspaper, because it like *Bohemia*, refused subsidies from Batista and did not

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<sup>116</sup>On July 21, 1960, *Bohemia*'s editorship passed into the hands of revolutionary, Enrique Delahoz. Carlos Ripoll, *La Prensa en Cuba, 1952-1960* (Miami: Diario de la Americas, 1984) 30 and 31.

carry the same degree of stigma as *Diario de la Marina*. On May 16, 1960, *Prensa Libre* owner Sergio Carbó lost the battle to maintain control over his employees who in the end, traded their loyalty for security.<sup>117</sup> He and his sub-directors, Humberto Medrano and Ulises Carbó (Sergio's brother), fled to the Embassy of Panama. At the closing of *Prensa Libre*, Castro stated, "Today workers have the presses, the newspapers, radio and television stations, news agencies, magazines; they have in their hands the destiny of our Republic and the arms to defend themselves from exploiters. They can now denounce imperialism."<sup>118</sup> At this point, it is fitting to recall Lenin's characterization of the Soviet newspaper: "The newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organizer."<sup>119</sup> In December 1960, *Información* would be the last non-aligned newspaper to close its doors. The presses of *Información*, *El País*, *Diario Nacional*, and *Excelsior* passed into the hands of the Imprenta Nacional. On June 21, 1960, *Revolución* occupied the offices of *Prensa Libre* in the Plaza of the Revolution and *Noticias de Hoy* appropriated those of *Diario de la Marina*. The era of the revolutionary press began on the backs of the capital and labor its predecessor left behind.

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<sup>117</sup>On May 15, 1960, over eighty percent of *Prensa Libre* workers signed a letter in support of the newspaper, but the next day found themselves pressured by the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) to retract their statement. Thomas, 1280.

<sup>118</sup>Unión de Periodistas de Cuba, *La prensa: arma ideológica, ponencias de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba, UPEC, a eventos nacionales e internacionales* (Havana: Imprenta Frederico Engels, 1974), 29.

<sup>119</sup>Kenez, 26.

Once the dust had settled, *Revolución*, *Noticias de Hoy*, *Bohemia*, *Verde Olivo*, and *La Tarde* (formerly *La Calle*), composed the core of the new revolutionary press, which largely grew out of a clandestine, revolutionary experience that provided a militant edge in its devotion to the Revolution. No other history could have been possible. With the exception of the reopening of a revolutionary version of *El Mundo*, no other pre-revolutionary non-aligned newspaper, or magazine survived the rise and consolidation of the revolutionary press.<sup>120</sup> On January 2, 1959, *Revolución* debuted its first legal printing in Havana as the official 26 of July Movement newspaper under the direction of its Sierra-editor Carlos Franqui. It set the tone, focus, pace, and politics of the Revolution for other revolutionary newspapers and magazines to follow. In an interview with *Bohemia* in February 1959, Franqui declared, “Journalism needs to maintain an orientation of constructive criticism. Our position is clear: we won this Revolution speaking the truth. *Revolución* is a newspaper in the service of the people.”<sup>121</sup> Following this interview, in an unprecedented occurrence, *Revolución* printed one hundred thousand copies in March. *Noticias de Hoy* (May 1938)

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<sup>120</sup>While Castro sought to destroy his enemies in the press with one hand, he built new institutions like Prensa Latina, Casa de las Américas, and Imprenta Nacional with the other. Casa de las Américas, founded in April 1959, became Cuba’s leading cultural publishing house, focusing on art, music, and literature, as well as the promotion of exchange between Cuba and the outside world. Operated with abandoned press machines and by displaced printers, the Imprenta Nacional (March 1959) became the center of book publishing, proving especially valuable during the Literacy Campaign of 1961.

<sup>121</sup>Tony Delahoz, “Revolución es un periódico al servicio del pueblo,” *Bohemia*, 8 February 1959, 100.

reappeared after remaining underground since 1953 and like other revolutionary newspapers, benefitted from abandoned offices and press rooms.<sup>122</sup> Despite some anti-communist sentiments from people surrounding Carlos Franqui and negative editorials penned by his assistant editor-in-chief Euclides Vásquez Candelas, *Noticias de Hoy* remained a staunch ally and supporter of the Revolution and its reforms.<sup>123</sup> In 1963, revolutionary leaders like Osvaldo Dorticós, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara praised *Noticias de Hoy* on its twenty-fifth anniversary, attributing to it and the party a special legacy that moderates in the 26 of July Movement would not have supported in 1959: “[*Hoy*] sowed the path of our history with the ideological seeds of our Revolution, educated the masses, oriented workers and peasants, and with clear conscience fought for workers.”<sup>124</sup> In 1965, *Noticias de Hoy* and *Revolución* merged workspace and staff, and the new official Communist newspaper, *Granma*, was born. Che Guevara created the weekly *Verde Olivo* on the heels of the victory against Batista as a magazine for the political education and revolutionary orientation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. C. Fred Judson characterized the weekly as:

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<sup>122</sup>*Noticias de Hoy* represented the latest installment of Socialist newspapers [La Aurora (1865); *El Productor*, *Justicia*, and *Bandera Roja*]. Its articles and editorials maintained a formal Marxist-Leninist line, rallied against the United States, promoted international peace, and championed working class concerns.

<sup>123</sup>Andrés Suárez, *Cuba: Castroism to Communism, 1959-1966* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 108.

<sup>124</sup>Speech by Osvaldo Dorticós. “La historia de ‘Hoy’ resume la de nuestra clase trabajadora,” *Noticias de Hoy*, 19 May 1963, 13.

reflecting the outstanding elements of the revolutionary process such as the struggle against counter-revolution and defections, the increasingly virulent conflict with imperialism, and the rapid development of Marxism as the official ideology; *Verde Olivo* was also designed to mark the cultural progress of the Rebel Army members, publicize the popular achievements of the Revolution, and continue the general education of the revolutionary soldier.<sup>125</sup>

*Bohemia* (1908) remains Cuba's most popular and longest running cultural and social magazine. A true supporter of Castro's forces in the Sierra, it remained defiant and critical of Batista, refused to accept subsidies, and published exclusives like the interview conducted by *New York Times* columnist Herbert Matthews with Fidel Castro in February 1957; a piece that debunked rumors of Castro's demise after the *Granma* landing. After undergoing a ten month ban, on January 11, 1959, *Bohemia* published the first of a three part, two hundred page special edition and achieved a record printing of one million copies. In a goodwill note to *Bohemia*, Castro wrote, "To the magazine *Bohemia*, my first greeting after victory, because it was our firmest supporter. I hope you help us in peace as you did during these long years of struggle, because our hardest and most difficult task begins now."<sup>126</sup> Each of these newspapers and magazines boasted a revolutionary background either as a clandestine serial, a periodical born after January 1959, or as in the case of *Bohemia*, a magazine that daringly published highlights of the Revolution's most important moments. As the

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<sup>125</sup>By some accounts, *Verde Olivo* began in spurts in early 1959. Judson notes a reorganization in March 1960, while revolutionary authors, most notably Ernesto Vera, one of the Havana founders of *Revolución*, cites its beginnings in April 1960. Judson, 242.

<sup>126</sup>Marrero, 76.

Revolution evolved into a more collective endeavor, magazines catering to specific sectors appeared with the rise of mass organizations, most notably the Committees for Defense of the Revolution (Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, CDR) *Con la Guardia en Alto* (October 1961) and the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, FMC) *Mujeres* (November 1961). The establishment of a purely revolutionary press facilitated and deepened the orientation and socialization of Cubans into a new era. This same process of consolidation would be repeated, albeit not exactly, in the nationalization of Cuba's advertising industry.

As political and economic conditions for consumer-style advertising deteriorated, revolutionary institutions quickly created institutional space for a new type of revolutionary advertisement to flourish. The dismantling of the advertising industry in Cuba coincided with the nationalization of American industry at large. At the time of the Revolution, thirty advertising agencies were based in Havana alone.<sup>127</sup> From September 1960 onward, the Ministry of Labor and the Industrialization section of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de la Reforma Agraria, INRA), "intervened" (a government takeover at the request of workers) and outright nationalized advertising agencies, with Siboney, a subsidiary of Gravi, as its first victim. Siboney owners and other Cuban advertising executives, fled to the United States, specifically to New York,

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<sup>127</sup>McCann Erickson, Guastella, Siboney, Mercado Survey y Publicidad, Soria y Ruiz Publicidad, Crusellas y Sabatés (Colgate, Palmolive, and Peets and Proctor and Gamble, respectively).





**Figure 2.6** Pepsi-Cola, “Serenely We Wait,” *Revolución*, November 14, 1960, 4.

and opened new agencies geared toward the Latin American market.<sup>128</sup> Nationalizations, however,

left many graphic designers and technical personnel unemployed and open to any existing opportunities. Under Mirta Muñoz (b.1930-), an intervention official and former McCann-Erickson employee, a new agency called the Consolidated Publicity (Consolidado de Publicidad, COP) was

formed, employing displaced personnel and operating as an office of the Industrialization

Department of the INRA. Advertisements typical of the COP blended the persuasive and emotional visual elements common in commercial advertising with a more social, or politically-oriented message. In short, they resembled American advertisements with revolutionary slogans (Figure 2.6). In January 1961, the Ministry for the Recovery of Stolen Property created a strictly government-run agency, staffed with Siboney and the Publicity Agency OTPLA personnel, simply called Intercommunications (1961-1967). Run by Gloria Pérez

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<sup>128</sup>Luis Daz Albertini headed the Spanish Advertising and Marketing Services (SAMS), founded in 1962 in New York City. Other Cuban startups included Conill Advertising and Castor Advertising in the late 1960s and 1970s. Armed with American training and know-how, many of these Cuban advertising executives understood the marketing of brand-culture for a Latin American audience and drew from their Havana-based contacts and networks to facilitate their entry into the U.S. advertising industry. Arlene Dávila, “The Latin Side of Madison Avenue: Marketing and the Language that Makes Us “Hispanics,” in *Mambo Montage: the Latinization of New York*, eds. Agustín Laó-Montes and Arlene M. Dávila (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 413.

(b.1922-), previously a freelance advertiser for *Bohemia*, *Diario de la Marina*, Grant Advertising, and OTPLA, it designed visual propaganda and advertising spots for state radio and television, the Ministries of Public Health, Agriculture, Education, and even the INRA. To oversee the revolutionary message and “ensure the progressive conversion of communication graphics for social persuasion toward the assimilation to Marxist-Leninist ideas,” César Escalante, the Secretary



**Figure 2.7** Ministerio de Salud Pública, *Revolución*, March 10, 1960, 13.

General of the Havana Provincial Committee of the PSP, became the director of the Commission of Revolutionary Orientation (Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria, COR). Pérez’s close working relationship with COR ensured Intercommunications’ design and message remained harmonious and fitting with Escalante’s ideological direction.<sup>129</sup> The dry and informative nature of its messages reflected the differences between the old conceptions of advertising prevalent in the COP. Unlike COP, Intercommunications expected their employees to be in tune with revolutionary politics. Certain designers like René Mederos established model formats and lines of design that earmarked some campaigns, in this case the Ministry of Public Health, with a particular artistic

<sup>129</sup>Bermúdez, 86-107 passim.

style (Figure 2.7).<sup>130</sup> Without the technical and professional foundation of the pre-revolutionary advertising industry, however, post-revolutionary propaganda in all its forms (print, radio, and television) would have suffered in quality, effectiveness, and even aesthetic. Not all aspects of this industry transferred easily into its new, revolutionary institutional setting.

Selling the Revolution to the tune of American-style commercialism conflicted with the economic realities facing the Revolution and the type of function and approach its new leaders found effective. The decline of American imports resulting from the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba (October 1960) led to a rise in consumer and material shortages that drove Cubans into a recycling frenzy, rendering the need for advertisements irrelevant and politically embarrassing. The Cuban business owners that weathered the economic downturn feared a decrease in commercial-style advertising and increase in space for a more revolutionary version would hurt sales and further destabilize their investments.<sup>131</sup> On February 22, 1961, in a bold move, Che Guevara decided to suspend radio, television, and newspaper advertisements for twenty-four hours. In a speech three days later, Castro argued:

There are a great number of advertisements which are no longer important. We should dedicate our energies to disseminate the achievements of the Revolution among the people. . . . If we save on many types of advertisement that are not necessary, we will be able to save paper and give a lighter newspaper to the people, so

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>131</sup> Muñiz, 47.

that, in spite of all our work, we'll have a chance to read it. Few ads, varied, entertaining, informative contents in all newspapers.<sup>132</sup>

On March 27, 1961, radio, television, and newspaper advertising in Cuba, in its pre-revolutionary form, disappeared upon Guevara's orders. In this same month, discord broke out between the COP members and the COR director César Escalante over the inability of advertising and socialism to ideologically and aesthetically co-exist. Politics and sectarianism, capitalism versus socialism, lay at the heart of this argument. Basically, Escalante sought to purge the COP of its capitalist elements.<sup>133</sup> The COP dissolved on May 31, 1961, with members either leaving the country, finding new design jobs, or joining Intercommunications.<sup>134</sup> In a September 1961 speech at the Workers' Palace of the CTC, Escalante articulated this debate, stating the differences between propaganda and advertising:

[Advertising] is an inheritance of the past social regime. When we think of an advertisement, we think of merchandise . . . as a result, when we use the term advertisement, we distort the character and naturalness of revolutionary propaganda . . . revolutionary propaganda has a proposed, concrete objective, and above all, at its end it pushes an idea to the conscience of the masses so that the people make that revolutionary idea their own.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Fidel Castro, "The Press has the Great Task of Orienting the People, March 25, 1961" (Havana: Editorial en Marcha, 1961), 31 and 33.

<sup>133</sup>Muñiz, 47 and Bermúdez, 89-90.

<sup>134</sup>During this period, the Professional School of Publicity at the University of Havana closed its doors. Muñiz, 48.

<sup>135</sup>Bermúdez, 90.

Escalante immediately selected a group of the most revolutionary, experienced, and anti-commercial, aesthetic-conscious graphic designers from the COP and Intercommunications to create a core of specialists, directed by the COR, simply called the Technical Team. Jorge Bermúdez describes the Team as “anti-aesthetic by definition,” designed as a means of easing the transition of COP members selected on the basis of their unconditional commitment to the Revolution and “their ability to divest themselves of their artistic cloth in so far as graphic design methods for the construction of new visual messages.” They met with Escalante periodically to discuss and approve design concepts. The formats developed under the Technical Team served as templates for future COR and Intercommunications’ projects.<sup>136</sup> With COR through its Technical Team and Intercommunications in total control over advertisements, a drier, more orthodox version appeared, designed to inform, orient, socialize, and rally Cubans into reform projects in harmony with revolutionary principles. In the year prior to the creation of the Technical Team and the complete state control over the creative process of revolutionary advertising, the comic art profession endured a transformation and appropriation mirroring the fate of both newspapers and advertisements.

As Cuba’s first cartoon magazine devoted entirely to the genre and independent of any newspaper, *Zig-Zag* (1938-1960) served as a space of artistic and professional convergence for the pre-revolutionary comic art community.

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 92 and 103.

Catering to a reading audience characterized by an interest in comic art, *Zig-Zag* featured the work of many of the most talented cartoonists and satirical journalists of its day. Owned by media mogul Angel Cambó, Sr. and directed by cartoonist José Manuel Roseñada, *Zig-Zag* brought together artists from different professional backgrounds, newspapers, generations, as well as diverse political and stylistic affinities.<sup>137</sup> An ideological big tent of sorts, the magazine was nonetheless anti-Batista in its staffing, editorial lines, and artwork.<sup>138</sup> Featured collaborators Antonio Prohías (*El Mundo*), Silvio Fontanillas (*Prensa Libre*), and José Manuel Roseñada (*Diario de la Marina*) tended towards the center-right of the political spectrum while an up-and-coming, radical, artistically edgier and younger generation in support of the 26 of July Movement and its Revolution, made its entry with René de la Nuez (Nuez), Antonio Mariño Souto (Ñico), José Cruz Montaña (Pecruz), and Rosendo Gutiérrez (Rosen).

With the exception of Ñico, who also worked for *El País* and *Bohemia*, *Zig-Zag* constituted the primary employment for many artists, especially the newcomers. The experience for the post-revolutionary generation of cartoonists, specifically Nuez and Ñico, proved formative to their early professional careers

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<sup>137</sup>*Zig-Zag* staff and cartoonists also included Castor and Silvio Vispo, Jesús de Armas, José Luis Posada, Luis Wilson, José Hernández Cárdenas (Hercar), Eduardo Muñoz Bachs, Antonio Rubio, and Humberto Valdés Díaz. In addition to *Zig-Zag*, Cambó owned the newspaper, *El Mundo* and Radio Nacional. Generally twenty-four pages in length, its design remained monotonous, rarely straying from this basic format. Throughout its mid-section, cartoons appeared in black and white, but its front and back covers sprang to life in color. Negrín, 205 and Tamayo, *La caricatura editorial*, 20.

<sup>138</sup>Negrín, 210.

both artistically and in terms of camaraderie. Nuez remembered, “I learned a lot from those cartoonists. The biggest influence on me in that moment was Jesús de Armas. He educated me in a more aesthetic cartoon that always said something . . . not only to laugh at, or make a joke, but that was philosophic and ideologic.”<sup>139</sup> For Níco, the *Zig-Zag* atmosphere was positive and informal, yet Roseñada remained the stable core need to offset the group. He characterized his fellow cartoonists as a group of pranksters:

We played tricks on each other. One day we dressed up Prohías as a female Spanish dancer and took him to the docks and had the workers place him in a container to be delivered to the newspaper [*Zig Zag*]. When they arrived, they told Castro Vispo that they had a package from Spain to be delivered to Roseñada. We played Spanish music to set the mood, opened the container, and out popped Prohías, dancing toward Roseñada.<sup>140</sup>

In the end, *Zig-Zag* very much remained the domain of Roseñada, who maintained rights to the last word in the magazine’s output. According to Níco, all the cartoonists would meet one day a week, voice ideas, and decide artwork for the front cover and theme: “we’d come up with an idea and someone would say, ‘Níco, draw two people in front of the capital.’ Sometimes you’d have an idea and someone else would draw your idea. It would be what the director [Roseñada] wanted, he’d choose the setting.”<sup>141</sup> Despite their backgrounds and generational differences, these cartoonists came together as the comic force

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<sup>139</sup>René de la Nuez, interview.

<sup>140</sup>Antonio Mariño (Níco), interview.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*

against Batista through Nuez's *Loquito* series. The Revolution, however, acted as the outside force that generate enough pressure to break the *Zig-Zag* collective along its pre-revolutionary generational and political fissures.

The revolutionary victory in the Sierra Maestra did not ensure the freedoms of press cartoonists hoped for during Batista. Satirizing Castro and his *rebeldes* (rebels) proved tricky and with the publication of one unflattering cartoon, the destiny of Cuba's comic art profession steered toward a process of consolidation and control. In February 1959, *Zig-Zag* published a cartoon by Antonio Rubio showing Fidel Castro revisiting the Sierra Maestra with a group of rebels and political opportunists. Castro criticized the cartoon in a speech to employees of the petroleum conglomerate Shell. In an immediate response, *Zig-Zag* staffers printed a retraction. After clarifying the content of the cartoon and the significance of the *bombín* (political opportunist), *Zig-Zag* directors explained, "we wanted to call attention to the fact that these noxious types want to appear like true revolutionaries, like men of great honor and capacity, without being true revolutionaries."<sup>142</sup> This statement would soon echo the revolutionary press' accusations against newspapers like *Diario de la Marina* and their efforts to support publically the Revolution while subtly seeking to destroy it. On the other hand, this exchange also pointed to the fact that Castro's insistence on the

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<sup>142</sup>During this same period (January-April 1959), revolutionary cartoonist Santiago Armada (Chago) created a character for *Revolución* based on the *bombín*, or *Manengue* (opportunist) without issue. The only difference between his work and *Zig-Zag*'s piece was his negative treatment toward his opportunist and the absence of Castro's persona. Chago successfully created a representation of Castro through a generalization of the guerrilla. Negrín, 209.



purity and infallibility of revolutionary politics challenged critics and led them into instituting an informal, automatic state of self-censorship. Níco remembered, “Fidel got mad. Some idea took place, Antonio Rubio designed it, but the idea was from the collective. It was the cover. People started leaving the magazine.”<sup>143</sup> The closure of *Zig-Zag* and the rupture between the personalities within it took place along pre-existing political and generational fault lines. *Zig-Zag*’s more conservative and centrist staff members underestimated the mandate of revolutionary politics and slowly came to realize that the old themes and style of criticism through the use of *choteo* and code did not reverberate as smoothly after the Revolution.<sup>144</sup> Nuez succinctly examined the problem: “*Zig-Zag* did not see the change after the Revolution. They didn’t think it was a real Revolution. They thought it was just a change of power. That was the first error these cartoonists made. They started to attack the Revolutionary Government like they always attacked the Cuban governments.” He considered Roseñada “a man of his time” and insisted that his departure from *Zig-Zag* took place amicably:

He [Roseñada] picked me as one of his favorite cartoonists. I am clarifying this because I’m not one of those who complains that Roseñada left. On 1 May 1959, workers marched with rifles and I

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<sup>143</sup> Antonio Mariño, interview.

<sup>144</sup> The fate of the *choteo* may be more determined in official sources than in other areas of comic art, not only during, but after this period. It is interesting to note that Nuez, in considering the *choteo* in 2005, posed this dilemma: “The *choteo* is in crisis with the Cuban. The Cuban is a *choteador*. I think there is a picaresque part of the Cuban that is richer than the *choteo*. An era that Jorge Mañach interpreted well, *choteo* was the mentality of the Cuban to survive to the point of inconsideration for the other. I don’t think it’s valid. During the Revolution, the *choteo* dies. It is not a thinking type of caricature. People just didn’t need it.” René de la Nuez, interview.

drew Loquito marching with his rifle. *Zig-Zag* wanted to take it out. It was the first time I felt censorship under the Revolutionary Government. That is when I left *Zig-Zag* and went to *Revolución*. Later, he [Roseñada] wanted me to go with him to *Zig-Zag Libre* [1960-1983] and I said no, that I was a revolutionary and I was staying in Cuba. And there was no moment of adversity.<sup>145</sup>

In May 1960, *Zig-Zag* closed its doors and its former staff found themselves having to declare a more engaged relationship to the Revolution. The camps fell largely along generational lines, with the older generation choosing exile while the newcomers adopted a position of alliance toward the Revolution. José Roseñada, Antonio Rubio, Silvio Fontanillo, Niko Lursen, and Antonio Prohías left the country, while René de la Nuez, Jesús de Armas, José Luis Posada, Antonio Mariño Souto (Ñico), Luis Wilson (Wilson), José Hernández Cárdenas (Hercar), Eduardo Muñoz Bachs (Bachs), José Cruz Montaña (Pecruz), Humberto Valdés Díaz (Valdés Díaz), and Rosendo Gutiérrez (Rosen) remained and dominated the revolutionary press, specifically *Bohemia*, *Revolución*, and *Verde Olivo*, with their illustrations. For some, exile proved their only option as in the case of Antonio Prohías who left for Miami after Cubans at a mass rally called for his execution.

While *Zig-Zag* self destructed within its new political surroundings, the rise of a parallel, revolutionary comic art movement occurred that inevitably

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid. Other cartoonists like Évora Tamayo, Juan Blas Rodríguez, and Oscar Hurtado made it clear that Roseñada's abandonment of the Revolution was a mistake. In the preface of their book, *Más de cien años de humor político*, they wrote, "We would like to express that the cartoonists Roseñada, Arroyito, Vergara, Antonio, Silvio, Prohías, Luaces, and Niko are considered traitors to the country for leaving Cuba and finding themselves in the service of North American imperialism."

provided space for artists like Nuez and Níco, and as a result, led to the state control of cartooning and a redefinition of its social and cultural role. On January 17, 1960, with the support of *Revolución*'s editor Carlos Franqui, Rafael Fornés, a comic strip artist for *Avance* and *Información*, solicited the newspaper *La Calle* for a graphic supplement that would essentially act as the revolutionary version of *Zig-Zag*. *El Pitirre* (1960-1961) emerged featuring a new cartoon, free of design restrictions and limits on the criticism of the Revolution's enemies.<sup>146</sup> In contrast to *Revolución* which had to maintain pace with revolutionary politics and curb the radicalism of cartoonists like Nuez and Santiago Armada (Chago), *El Pitirre* allowed for submissions with a sharper ideological edge on subjects like religion and the United States.<sup>147</sup> In the end, however, *El Pitirre*'s miscellaneous and abstract thread of subjects remained unfocused and in essence, ineffective for advocating revolutionary politics.<sup>148</sup> On October 16, 1961, *Palante y Palante* appeared as the official comic magazine for revolutionary cartoonists to channel their attacks on the United States, criticize problems within the Revolution

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<sup>146</sup>In a tabloid format, the weekly supplement measured 29x37.5cm and was sixteen pages in length. Color pages remained restricted to the front and back covers with the internal section in black and white. Instead of featuring one cartoon on the cover, *El Pitirre* would display several, as well as change the form and location of its logo to maintain its cutting edge. Negrín, 220 and 223.

<sup>147</sup>René de la Nuez, interview.

<sup>148</sup>In an interview with Ernesto García, Fornés noted that he was not sure why *El Pitirre* had been closed in 1961, but thought it maybe for the same reason that Santiago Armada (Chago)'s character Salomón was denied publication. The magazine did not focus enough on the revolutionary process and lent itself to more artistic pursuits. Ernesto García, "De José Dolores a Sabino" June 1996, <<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Agora/5169/page2.html>> (13 September 2005).

(absenteeism, laziness, bureaucracy, irresponsibility, etc.), and celebrate triumphs toward the development of socialism.<sup>149</sup> To *Mella* cartoonist Virgilio Martínez, *Palante y Palante* “reflected the unity of all cartoonists, caricaturists, and editors and acted as a shelter for the publication of all of our [revolutionary] graphic artists.”<sup>150</sup> The mission of *Palante y Palante* fell in line with that of revolutionary newspapers and advertisement: to promote, support, and defend the Revolution. A month after its first publication, in a speech to César Escalante’s COR, Fidel Castro himself spoke directly about *Palante y Palante*:

There was a vacuum, for example, in the satiric, or comic art press. In the old days, the newspaper *Zig-Zag* had a lot of circulation, proof that our *pueblo* is a very humorous *pueblo*; this vacuum has been filled with the weekly *Palante y Palante*, whose circulation has been increased in an extraordinary manner and is destined to perform an important role and is very useful in the task of revolutionary orientation and education, in a way that hurts the counterrevolution.”<sup>151</sup>

In retrospect, Nuez admitted that the push for *Palante y Palante* was strictly an official charge devoid of artistic pursuits: “It was a state decision. A national weekly would be created independent from any newspaper. *Palante* began with a more propagandistic intention [of the Revolution] than the concepts we had toward *El Pitirre*, an organ of cartoonists. *Palante* was more allied with the Party

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<sup>149</sup>An exclusive sample of revolutionary cartoonists illustrated for *Palante*, e.g., Chago, Nuez, Pecruz, Wilson, Níco, Fresquito Fresquet, Rosen, Pitín, Adigio, Blanco, Suriá, and Tejedor, with Venezuelan journalist Gabriel Bracho Montiel as director and Níco as artistic director. Tamayo, *La caricatura editorial*, 24.

<sup>150</sup>Virgilio Martínez, interview.

<sup>151</sup>Tamayo, *La caricatura editorial*, 24.

[ORI] line and directed by sections of the Party.”<sup>152</sup> If revolutionary cartoonists lamented the fall of *Pitirre*, none voiced their disappointment. With the establishment of *Palante y Palante*, as was the case with Intercommunication’s Technical Team, official revolutionary cartooning was born.

A number of newspaper editors, cartoonists, and publicists of the revolutionary press benefitted from their experiences prior to the Revolution and used this background to advance within the new media structure. Some played a strong role in the Sierra Maestra struggle through its clandestine press, or as part of its urban support staff. Within the revolutionary newspaper community, a number of editors claimed a strong insurrectionist or loyalist background like Carlos Franqui (b.1921-), Ernesto Vera (b.1929-), Enrique de la Osa (1909-1997), and Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1928-1967). Franqui, editor of *Revolución* in the Sierra Maestra and then in Havana after 1959, continued this position until 1963 when, disillusioned by the path of Revolution, left Cuba. Ernesto Vera, an editor and distributor of clandestine *Revolución* and the 26 of July Movement pamphlet dedicated to workers, *Vanguardia Obrera*, took charge of editorial work for *La Calle*, later *La Tarde* (1960-1965), and *Granma* (1965-1966). Enrique de la Osa served as Castro’s *Bohemia* contact during the Sierra Maestra struggle and after the self-imposed exile of its editor Miguel Ángel Quevedo in 1960, de la Osa assumed direction of *Bohemia* and later *Revolución* (1963-1965) after Franqui’s departure. Che Guevara’s media pursuits from the Sierra Maestra remain

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<sup>152</sup>René de la Nuez, interview.

legendary. Guevara created *El Cubano Libre* and with the help of Carlos Franqui, he established and conducted the radio broadcasts of Radio Rebelde. In addition to his administrative responsibilities after the Revolution as Commander at La Cabaña, head of the military tribunals condemning Batista loyalists, Director of the Industrialization department of the INRA, and the President of the National Bank of Cuba, he published frequently and advised on the editorial board of the Revolutionary Armed Forces magazine, *Verde Olivo*, and later as Minister of Industries, directed the magazine *Nuestra Industria* (1962). Within the world of revolutionary publicity, Mirta Muñoz worked for American advertising agencies like Colgate-Palmolive Peet (Sabatés, S.A.) and McCann-Erickson while participating in editing and advising for the clandestine *Juventud Socialista* comic supplement *Mella*. After the Revolution, she quickly immersed herself in revolutionary work, acting as an intervention official for the Industrialization department of the INRA (under Guevara), as head of the COP until its dismantling by COR director César Escalante, and as the director of the COR Technical Team for the Literacy Campaign in the Zapata swamp area in 1960. While René de la Nuez certainly added his support for the Revolution from his desk at *Zig-Zag* with *El Loquito*, few revolutionary cartoonists could claim a deep insurrectional experience. In 1957, from within the Sierra Maestra, a cartoonist-turned-guerrilla Santiago Armada (1937-1995), known within the cartoon world as Chago, began publishing his strips *Julito 26* and *Juan Casquito* in Guevara's *El Cubano Libre*. Chago was a special figure among his revolutionary peers who considered him as *the* cartoonist of their generation. René de la Nuez recalled,

[Nuez] I met him when he came from the Sierra with Dalia. Chago for me was an extraordinary friend. He is one of the unforgettable people you meet in life for his modesty and simplicity. He didn't care for fame and glory. He was a rebel and revolutionary; he was the eternal rebel. He was a taciturn man, very quiet, you didn't know the enormous volcano of passion within him. And that is demonstrated in his drawings. Influences on him were slim since he was so advanced.<sup>153</sup>

Chago continued to work with Franqui after the Revolution as the artistic editor of *Revolución*, responsible for designing the placement of text, photos, and cartoons. Virgilio Martínez (1931-2008), the creator of the comic strip *Pucho y sus perrerías* published during *Mella's* clandestine period (1953-1958), continued his duties after the Revolution as its artistic director and cartoonist, the designer for the Union of Communist Youth (Unión de Jóvenes Comunista, UJC) emblem in 1962, and as a chief cartoonist for *Juventud Rebelde* and *Granma* until his death. These key individuals held strong emotional and ideological ties to the Revolution and its leaders. As a result of their pre-revolutionary experiences, they proved essential to the formation of the revolutionary press from its staffing to its political and ideological homogeneity.

The revolutionary caliber of personalities in the press assured an ideological cohesion for the first two years as the Revolution settled, but in June 1961, a rupture occurred that definitively set a framework for artistic freedom and forever defined the goals of cultural pursuits. Artists and writers gathered on three separate occasions (June 16, 23, and 30) at the National Library to discuss the current state of artistic creativity and cultural activity. At the helm of this

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<sup>153</sup>René de la Nuez, interview.

debate stood the fate of the superfluous nature of works focused on intellectual, or lofty pursuits. Guillermo Cabrera Infante, director of *Revolución*'s cultural magazine *Lunes de Revolución*, came under fire as he fought the censorship of a documentary film about Havana after dark directed by his brother, Sabá Cabrera Infante, called *PM*. Cabrera Infante's protest sparked this meeting and Castro's closing remarks. In his book *Mea Cuba* (1994), Cabrera Infante recalled his thinking at the time of *Lunes de Revolución*'s support of the film: "After all, we were the offspring of *Revolución*, the newspaper of the Revolution, the voice of the people. We were omnipotent – sort of."<sup>154</sup> On their last meeting, Fidel Castro delivered a speech referred to later as "Words to the Intellectuals," which contained the famous maxim, "Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing." He argued that the Revolution should come before everything else, including artistic pursuits and anyone who found themselves concerned with content was not a true revolutionary.<sup>155</sup> Castro concluded his argument, "The Revolution has one right: the right to exist, to evolve, to succeed

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<sup>154</sup>A mutual dislike between the staff at *Revolución*, especially Carlos Franqui and Cabrera Infante, and who they referred to as the "bureaucrats, a bunch of ignoramus with artistically reactionary ideas and no taste at all" at the Cuban Institute of Arts and Cinematography (Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficas, ICAIC) headed by Alfredo Guevara, brewed and led to the fight over *PM*. Cabrera notes that the ICAIC group saw them in return as "decadent, bourgeois, avant-gardists." *Lunes de Revolución* had a circulation of over two hundred thousand due to its ties to *Revolución*. It ceased publication in November 1961. Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Mea Cuba*, translated by Kenneth Hall (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994), 64 and 66-67.

<sup>155</sup>Fidel Castro, *Palabras a los intelectuales* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional de Cuba, 1961), 9 and 11.



and who could doubt the rights of a *pueblo* that has said ‘*Patria o Muerte*?’”<sup>156</sup>

The very existence of the Revolution did not stand for debate, only criticisms against elements that sought to distort, reverse, and condemn it were permitted. The Revolution became freedom in a box. In his work *Havana, the Making of Cuban Culture* (2005), Antoni Kapcia noted that “apart from moments of crisis or of exaggerated internal tensions, exclusion and a ‘hard line’ have tended to be applied only to those publically going beyond those ‘doors’ and those parameters.”<sup>157</sup> The responsibility of overseeing the orientation, stimulation, and development of cultural pursuits fell upon the National Council of Culture (Consejo Nacional de Cultura, CNC, 1960-1967).<sup>158</sup> Other institutions quickly appeared to assure ideological clarity and artistic goals. In August 1961, the Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba (Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, UNEAC) was established under President (and poet) Nicolás Guillén, which included a comic art section with Chago and Nuez as members of its national committee. In July 1963, the Union of Journalists of Cuba (Unión de Periodistas de Cuba, UPEC) formed and immediately set its main goals: “to propagate revolutionary tasks, critically identify the errors and deficiencies that cause setbacks, to confront problems without immediate solutions objectively, and to

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>157</sup>Kapcia, *Havana*, 134.

<sup>158</sup>The CNC proposed regulations for institutions like the Imprenta Nacional and the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore (Intituto de Etnología y Folklore). It also allotted revenue for the acquisition of materials, imported books, and funded creative projects in the country. Castro, *Palabras*, 15.

permanently combat imperialist propaganda and aggression.”<sup>159</sup> In short, UPEC like other organizations sought to promote and defend the Revolution while improving the quality and structural obstacles of the profession. The end of Castro’s speech to the Cuban artistic and intellectual community emphasized the fundamental orientation for every artist: “The Revolution wants artists to place their greatest efforts in favor of the *pueblo*. [It] wants you to put your complete interests and efforts on revolutionary tasks. And we think that this is a just request of the Revolution.”<sup>160</sup> With these words, the Revolution became the center, the main focus of every true revolutionary writer and artist like never before.

Despite their differences in assessing the effect their art had on revolutionary society, cartoonists agreed on a broader scale that their profession sought to promote the Revolution. The social and cultural function of revolutionary cartoons transformed from being a vehicle of attack and commentary (*Liborio*, *El Bobo*, and *El Loquito*) to one of defense and education. *Palante y Palante* owed its existence to the wishes of the Revolutionary Government, specifically Castro himself and its political alliance to the Revolution in general. It provided a freer atmosphere for revolutionary cartoonists in terms of subject choice, aesthetic, and presentation, *as long as they*

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<sup>159</sup>Vera, *El periodismo*, 105. Ernesto Vera became President of UPEC in 1966, a position he filled for twenty years. Journalists from the National College of Journalism integrated into the new institution. Marrero, 104.

<sup>160</sup>Castro, *Palabras*, 20.

maintained a general respect for the existence and process of the Revolution itself. Cartoonists favorable to the Revolution found little to criticize. Níco explained artistic freedoms within the setting of *Palante y Palante*:

was one of the greatest things the Revolution did for us [cartoonists], because it changed the rhythm of work as cartoonists forever. We could think freely, before it was a collective decision and now, you could express your own thoughts always with the goal of ‘within the Revolution, everything and against the Revolution, nothing.’ The government did not tell us what to do, you lived the Revolution. And living the Revolution, we drew cartoons, we’d insert what happened, but never criticizing Fidel, or the Revolution, because we were part of the Revolution, it was like criticizing ourselves. We formed part of this government and we defended our own criteria. How am I going to criticize my government when I am in support of what is happening? What we do is criticize what is bad within the Revolution.<sup>161</sup>

Nuez, like Níco, supported revolutionary measures and believed in taking a more active role instead of serving as a mere mouthpiece for the Revolutionary Government:

I cannot be a propagandist of the Revolution. I have to be a defender [of it], because I *believe* in the Revolution. If not, you become a salaried worker to create scenery. When you are a revolutionary artist, you are consciously a revolutionary that defends the Revolution. That is why you do criticism. That’s why “Negativo, compañero” exists. I’m not a publicist of the Revolution [emphasis added].<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> According to Níco, Bracho was called in because the cartoonists as a group did not have enough skill to manage the project. Antonio Mariño (Níco), interview.

<sup>162</sup> In 1961, Nuez began “Negativo, compañero,” a series heavily featured in Chapter Four. It focused on criticizing absenteeism, laziness, theft, and other revolutionary misdeeds that became a problem as scarcity and the effects of state-ownership took hold.

Nuez's words illustrate his condemnation of what Castro pointed to in his speech to the intellectuals as a neutral artist, one who does not show a counter-revolutionary nature, but simply does not *feel* revolutionary. His belief in the Revolution, its process and its goals, allied by a grounded faith and trust, reflected the broader attitude and disposition of the type of revolutionary citizen the Revolutionary Government entrusted him to shape and guide through his art. Castro considered this position precarious and troubled.<sup>163</sup> Whether in *Palante y Palante*, or other newspapers and magazines, the task of each cartoonist remained to explain the Revolution, to stimulate support for the Revolution, and to promote the Revolution.

The need for more educational, or propagandistic cartoons trumped any possibility for a flourish of artistic, or experimental cartoons among official sanctioned pages. Concentrating on the Revolution through their art defined revolutionary cartoonists and assured their continued access and employment in mass publications. In certain cases though, artistic expression trumped revolutionary priorities. An intellectual cartooning style gained precedence among *El Pitirre* artists; a tendency that cost this publication its continuance. Aside from "liberating illustrators from the tutelage of editors," Jorge Negrín pointed out that the relationship between image and text and the influence of Saul Steinberg, a comic artist for the *New Yorker* magazine, on *El Pitirre* cartoonists,

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<sup>163</sup>Castro, *Palabras*, 9-10.



Figure 2.8 *Revolución*, May 8, 1962, 14.

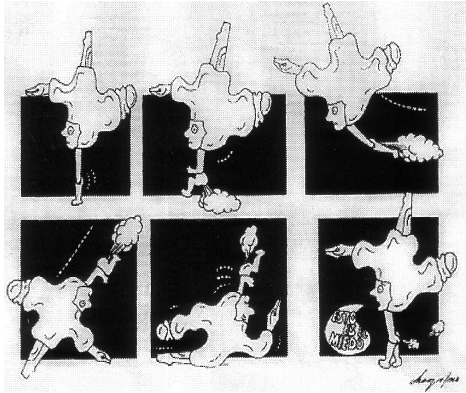
signified a true stylistic and intellectual transformation.<sup>164</sup> Steinberg became famous for his illustrations with few, or no words, a humor based more on impressions, suggestion, and multiple readings. According to Nuez, Steinberg's influenced molded a new type of approach to humor in revolutionary comic art: "The cartoonist stops being

someone who is cutesy and becomes an intellectual, someone who thinks with his head."<sup>165</sup> Fornés' *Sabino* and Chago's *Salomón* represented the Steinberg strain of intellectual and philosophic humor that did not enhance revolutionary politics, or push an agenda. For a brief period in 1962, *Salomón* and *Sabino* shared space in a section with Nuez's *Pacifloro y Guerrita* and Vidal's *Nené* (Figure 2.8).

*Pacifloro y Guerrita* concentrated on labor, vigilance, and revolutionary themes while *Salomón* explored introspective issues of existence, *Nené* focused on love, and *Sabino* examined everything. Chago, calling this type of humor the "humor gnosis," characterized *Salomón* as "the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. A determined man, an individual who, at the same time, is all men, collectively.

<sup>164</sup>Negrín noted that a piece by *Zig-Zag* cartoonist Humberto Valdés Díaz appeared in the first issue of *El Pitirre*, "featuring a graphic and conceptual style reminiscent of the style found in Roseñada's magazine . . . predominant in verbal joke and conventional graphic." This would be the first and only piece by Valdés Díaz to appear in *El Pitirre*. Negrín, 218 and 222.

<sup>165</sup>René de la Nuez, interview.



**Figure 2.9** Chago, *Salomón: Esto es el miedo*, 1968.

With him, I wanted to create a character as vast, complex, and contradictory as man himself. He's fundamentally a search for the ideal space-time and language for comic as an art"<sup>166</sup> He tried to break with the classic aesthetic of the cartoon, its framework, its sequence, its

movement, and its humor. While Chago cultivated a more intellectual, or thinking audience, the majority of his pieces during this period (1959-1963) centered on revolutionary themes. Sticking to the revolutionary script proved vital for characters like *Salomón* who lost his place among the pages of *Granma* in the late 1960s for being too existential.<sup>167</sup> Most Cuban cartoonists considered Chago and his *Salomón* ahead of its time. Níco said of his friend, "He had tremendous development as a cartoonist; one of the most modern comic artists

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<sup>166</sup>Caridad Blanco de la Cruz, "Always the Other One: Salomón" *International Journal of Comic Art* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 185.

<sup>167</sup>Dalia García Barbán explained that in the mid 1960s an editorial decision had been made by the staff at *Granma*. Directors found *Salomón* too existential and not political enough for the official paper. She felt Chago's attention to certain themes like death, sex, eroticism, machismo, existence, and love challenged the role of cartoons in revolutionary society and insisted that one needed a certain amount of culture, or intellectualism to fully enjoy his pieces. In the end, Dalia said Chago was not well comprehended and his ability to exhibit his work in the late 1960s suffered, something which left him very bitter. Ironically, Chago was the artistic designer for *Revolución* and subsequently, *Granma*, until his death in 1995. Official barriers frustrated his ability to elevate revolutionary art early on despite a renewed interest in his work in the 1990s. Dalia García Barbán, interview.

that we've had and he demonstrated it through *Salomón* and his paintings.”<sup>168</sup>

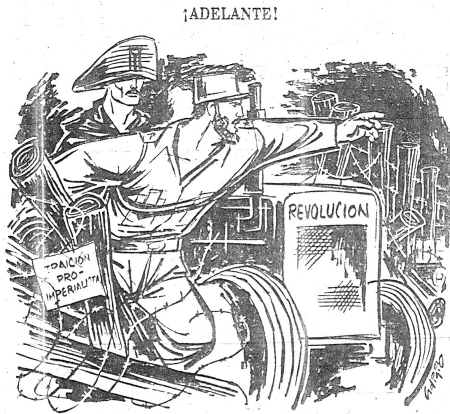
Rafael Fornés and Chago had a special relationship: “For me, the most important [cartoonist] has been Chago. He is the most profound. Many times we drew together, he with his Salomón and I with Sabino. And, we identified with one another.”<sup>169</sup> This lack of interest in furthering a revolutionary program would come at a price. Even before Castro articulated the parameters for revolutionary artistic principles in his speech, “Words to the Intellectuals,” an assault on cartooning, devoid of a revolutionary message, or agenda was taking place. *El Pitirre* and then the fate of *Lunes de Revolución* and the film *PM*, provided the clearest example of this onslaught. While intellectual, metaphysical, and existential humor may have been a preferred, or passing expression for some, it did not become a true thread of revolutionary cartooning. Those who did experiment with this style gained the respect of their peers, but not much more.

Maintaining a propagandistic edge to their cartoons and promoting an ideological line came naturally to socialist cartoonists Adigio Benítez, Horacio Rodríguez Suría, and Virgilio Martínez. They designed their cartoons to transmit ideas quickly and succinctly and to push the most radical political, social, and

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<sup>168</sup>Antonio Mariño (Ñico), interview.

<sup>169</sup>Fornés created “Don Sabino,” a character that would challenge readers like Chago’s Salomón. In 1956, he introduced it to his editors at *Información* who reportedly responded, “Fornés, you want to say something to the readers of *Información*? Don’t say anything. The readers of *Información* are idiots.” He would later publish Don Sabino in *Revolución*. Rafael Fornés, interview. Dalia García Barbán commented that to Chago, “Fornés was like a father. They had a beautiful understanding that lasted until Chago died.” Dalia García Barbán, interview.



**Figure 2.10** Adigio, “Adelante,” *Noticias de Hoy*, July 19, 1959.

economic agenda present before the Revolution. Horacio Rodríguez Suría (1901-1975) established *Noticias de Hoy*’s aesthetic line featuring the Soviet style, larger-than-life format for its political cartoons, a line followed by his apprentice Adigio Benítez in the early 1950s (Figure 2.10). Influenced primarily by the work of

American socialist cartoonists, William Gropper (1897) and Fred Ellis (1885-1965), as well as Soviet cartoonist, Viktor Deni (1893-1946),<sup>170</sup> Suría and Benítez viewed cartooning as direct, purposeful, and beyond question unlike Fornés, or Chago. Adigio believed cartoons worked to “divulge ideas, principles, slogans, and actions of the Revolution. The goal is to make the points with more simplicity, quickness, and summary.”<sup>171</sup> This no nonsense attitude toward cartooning fit in perfectly with the desire of officials, yet their art remained rigid and stylistically caged. Adigio commented that his designs after the Revolution,

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<sup>170</sup>Adigio Benítez, interview. Deni, a cartoonist for *Pravda* in the 1920s and 1930s, popularized the larger-than-life imagery of the worker in the 1920s. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 142-43. Soviet photomontage poster artists like Gustav Klutis (1895-1938), Valentina Kulagina (1902-1920) and Victor Koretsky (1909-1998) expanded this form in the 1930s under Josef Stalin (1879-1953). Stephen Eskilson, *Graphic Design, A New History* (Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 210.

<sup>171</sup>Adigio continued to say, “When I was studying in San Alejandro, working for magazine *Mella*, I saw it as a necessity of the revolutionary artist to use this medium of communication and expression to take ideas to the pueblo. That is why political cartooning is necessary.” Adigio Benítez, interview.



even symbols, with the exception of adding the beard to signify the rebel, did not change.<sup>172</sup> *Mella* cartoonist Virgilio Martínez similarly considered the value of his art as “an effective method of communicating concepts that can occupy a vanguard function that is more inclusive than simply bringing entertainment. It can educate, transmit the ideology of the vanguard, announce dangers, publicize urgent tasks, and make one think like a revolutionary.”<sup>173</sup> In short, for Socialist cartoonists, their art amounted to a propagandistic means of communication.

*Costumbrismo*, like the intellectual humor of *El Pitirre*, suffered a decline as artistic editors favored its political counterpart as a preferred means of transmitting the revolutionary experience. As previously discussed, the Revolution placed a higher premium on political, or editorial cartoons, than on *costumbrista* and intellectual humor. As a result, to a large extent, revolutionary cartoons lost their comic edge. Political and socio-economic themes began to trump cartoons focusing on love, everyday problems, or social tension as revolutionary life matured. As one of the few surviving pre-revolutionary, comic art traditions, the cartoon page, or the “funnies section” filled with *costumbrista* cartoons, became an ideal space for more Revolution-driven cartoons to invade.

This gradual transition toward a more political, or ideological cartoon page

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<sup>172</sup>Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>Virgilio Martínez, interview. Revolutionary comic script writer, Évora Tamayo wrote of the editorial cartoon: “The editorial caricature is a positive arm in communicating the truths of socialism.” Tamayo was editor in 1961 of the communist youth newspaper, *Juventud Rebelde*, and collaborated with *Bohemia* and *Lunes de Revolución*. Tamayo, *La caricatura editorial*, 29.



ARGUMENTANDO.  
—¡Por favor, Domitila! ¡Acuérdate que Fidel dijo, pico, pala, machete y fusil... ¡Suelta la escoba, que ésa no es un arma revolucionaria! SILVIO.

**Figure 2.11** Silvio,  
*Bohemia*, June 12, 1960,  
126.

undercut the lighthearted tone its readers previously enjoyed and expected. *Bohemia* cartoonist Pecruz argued that even general-humor cartoons should challenge the status quo: “*costumbrismo* should be combative.

*Costumbrismo* needs to have an influencing position . . . I

think that comic art should basically be an ideological

measure.”<sup>174</sup> This is evident in the gradual

transformation of the cartoon page into a space strictly devoted to revolutionary

cartoons. At first glance, cartoon pages during 1960 did not

look overtly revolutionary (e.g., showing attacks on Uncle

Sam, the over use of the rebel, or a promotion of volunteer

labor), yet their text proved otherwise (Figure 2.11 and

Figure 2.12). The cartoon pages of *Bohemia*, “Humor and

Revolution” (Humor y Revolución) and “The Week in

Cartoons” (La Semana en Caricaturas), show this transition

effectively. In figure 2.11 titled, “Arguing,” a wife angrily waves a broom at her

husband who apologetically is hiding behind the couch. Without text, the cartoon

suggests a joke about a bullying wife, or a cheating husband. The text, however,

reveals a more revolutionary take on their quarrel: “Please Domitila! Remember

what Fidel said ‘pickaxe, shovel, machete, and rifle. Let go of that broom,

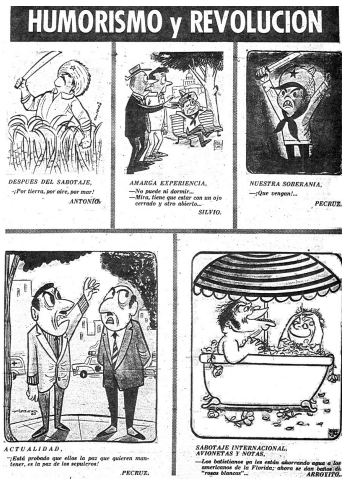
because it is not a revolutionary weapon!” The piece “Practical Industry” centers



INDUSTRIA PRACTICA. SILVIO.  
¡Dice el periódico, que van a fabricar trusas en el país.  
—¿Ves? Ese sí es un bonito negocio: ¡entre menos materia prima, mejor luce el producto!

**Figure 2.12** Silvio,  
*Bohemia*, May 29, 1960,  
126.

<sup>174</sup>25 años de humor en Palante, 210.



**Figure 2.13** *Bohemia*, March 20, 1961, 126.

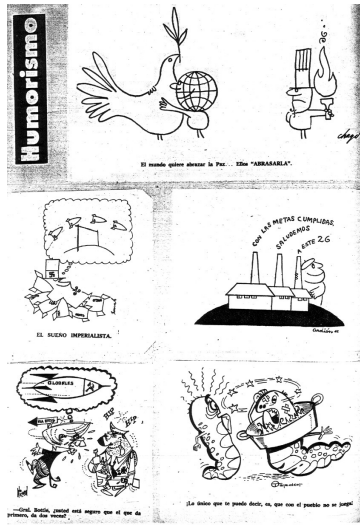
on a couple reading the newspaper. The text reads, “The newspaper says they are going to produce bathing suits in the country.” The man responds, “See? That’s a nice business: less the primary material, the better the product looks!” On the surface this piece jokes about a man’s preference for scantily dressed women, yet it also refers to revolutionary policies on

import substitution and the conservation of basic materials. This overall shift to a revolutionary cartoon became visually apparent toward the end of 1960, a period marked by nationalizations and an American-imposed embargo that turned into a nationalist referendum on capitalism and imperialism (Figure 2.13). Though the name may not suggest it, “The Week in Caricatures” ran a more revolutionary-oriented and anti-American cartoon than those typical of “Humor and

Revolution” (Figure 2.14). Interestingly enough, *Bohemia* printed both humor pages simultaneously. *Verde Olivo*’s humor page, “Humorism” (Humorismo), by virtue of it being the magazine to members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, consistently featured more radical cartoons whose characters freely and brutally attacked revolutionary enemies and assumed a strict attitude on current themes (Figure 2.15). Perhaps the decline of *costumbrismo* took place subtly due to



**Figure 2.14** *Bohemia*, October 16, 1960, 91.



**Figure 2.15** Verde Olivo, July 22, 1962, 43.

editors fearing a negative response from the reading public, or in some instances, the slow politicalization of cartooning after the Revolution.

It remains clear, however, that *costumbrismo* did not lend itself easily to politicalization and by 1963, a more political cartoon replaced it as a preferred style of the transmitting revolutionary message.

The Revolution sparked a new outlook,

lexicon, and of course, new comic protagonists and

symbols. In a tribute to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Palante y Palante*, the prologue essentially argued that its cartoonists “cast aside old topics like the black man, the old man, the *mulata*, the stupid peasant, and the Spaniard, as well as other traditional targets of jokes like the blind man, the deaf, the cripple.”<sup>175</sup> Characters like Liborio proved poorly suited in an environment where a weak rendition of the Cuban *pueblo* could not exist alongside the fearless, bold, and heroic example of the new revolutionary citizen: the rebel. The rebel, or *barbudo* (the bearded one), represented the Rebel Army soldier, the guerrilla, or at times, Fidel Castro himself. Ultimately, this rebel image symbolized the official Revolution personified by the new citizen. Through it, cartoonists transformed the visual self-image of the Cuban *pueblo* from that of a victimized peasant (Liborio) to an armed and active hero (Castro/Revolution). During the beginning months of the

<sup>175</sup> 25 años de humor en *Palante y Palante*, prologue.

Revolution, cartoonists, both revolutionary and non-aligned, featured the iconic sign of the beard as a symbolic reference to insurgency, ideological purity, or political conformity. It became one of the strongest “vehicles of power” within the imagined narrative. Chago’s *Julito 26*, published in the Sierra Maestra newspaper *El Cubano Libre*, became the first regularly featured revolutionary comic strip appearing in *Revolución* after February 1959. Chronicling life in the Sierra, *Julito 26* complained about rebel concerns like the poor and spicy food, the constant lack of hygiene, or the new recruits’ fear of aerial bombers. In *Revolución*, however, he played a vital role in introducing its readers to the rebel ethic, politic, and focus. According to Dalia García Barbán, Chago saw himself in *Julito 26* as a soldier with a critical eye. Cartoonists Níco and Nuez called *Julito 26* the new symbol of the *pueblo*; a revolutionary substitute for Liborio.<sup>176</sup> Through *Julito 26*, Chago resurrected and redesigned an important pre-revolutionary stereotype, the political opportunist popularly called “Manengue.” As *Julito*’s nemesis, January 2nd (the new Manengue) suffered humiliation and defeat at every attempt to ingratiate himself with officials and integrate into revolutionary society. He symbolized the fall of an old politic, of a culture of sinecures and corruption that had no place in the new Cuba. Overall, the bridge to the pre-revolutionary period proved short lived and soon revolutionary symbols emerged and overshadowed references to past associations and troubles. These new revolutionary symbolic signs included the rifle (rebel/strength); the beard

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., interview and Antonio Mariño (Níco), interview. Cartoonist Rosen would also create his own version of *Julito* in *Verde Olivo* called *Olivito*.

(rebel); the palm tree (Cuban-ness); the worm (enemies/Miami anti-Castro groups); the caveman (illiteracy) and the bureaucrat (counter-revolution/inefficiency). Intended for a revolutionary reader, this new, imagined revolutionary narrative soon appeared filled with relevant social meanings, associations, language, behaviors, and context designed to impart an unfolding reality and hopeful future according to an officially-sanctioned, visual script.

As the Revolution progressed, the workload for cartoonists grew, forcing newspapers and magazines to share their talents and time with other publications and in some cases, issue a public plea for new artists. An increase in the demand for cartoons occurred simultaneously with the professional exodus of non-aligned cartoonists. This vacuum in professional cartooning and illustration had a direct impact on the workload and publication of cartoons in general. Nuez described the volume of work during these years as “enormous. We didn’t have hours, we rotated hours. *El Pitirre* worked at night; the process at *Revolución* began by dawn. In order to respond quickly, you had to live at the newspaper, especially at night. We’d be there two, or three days arguing, discussing the format.”<sup>177</sup>

Chago’s work during these years, for example, can be found in *Revolución*, *Verde Olivo*, *Bohemia*, *El Pitirre*, and later *Palante y Palante*. Gustavo Prado Álvarez (Pitín) published in *Revolución*, *Noticias de Hoy*, and *Bohemia* and Adigio Benítez’s pieces could be found in *Noticias de Hoy*, *Mella*, and *Revolución*. During 1959, Horacio Suriá also published a series of cartoons in *Revolución*

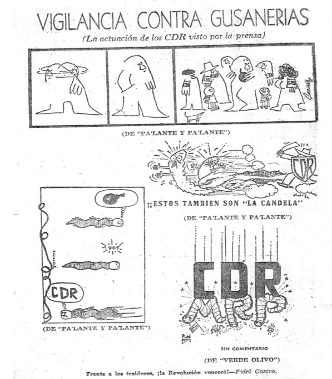
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<sup>177</sup>René de la Nuez, interview.

called “Drawings of the Agrarian Reform.” To help supplement their core cartoonists, some publications printed direct solicitations for new illustrators and cartoonists to meet the increasing demand for visual support to revolutionary plans and policies. In October 1960, *Bohemia* published a call for help:

To illustrators and cartoonists: conscious of the existence in Cuba of unpublished talent that the Revolution is bringing to light, this magazine— a faithful vehicle of the Revolution and of Cuba—communicates to the illustrators and cartoonists of the Republic [pre-revolutionary newspapers] that its pages are open to the efforts and ingenuity of all artists, without the limits of this offer being restricted to the capital, since creative talent has no frontiers. In its new era of ascendancy, *Bohemia* is encouraged in its belief that the unconstrained collaboration of Cuban artists and writers is an intrinsic part of our future.<sup>178</sup>

New names like Plácido Fuentes, Sureda, Enrique, and Cenéndez appeared among the others in *Bohemia*’s cartoon pages. Magazines, or special interest serials that had few in-house cartoonists borrowed artwork printed in other publications, or



**Figure 2.16** CDR, *Con la Guardia en Alto*, December 1, 1961, 4.

<sup>178</sup>*Bohemia*, November 13, 1960, 58. Fornés also encouraged new submissions through direct publicized appeals: “To unpublished cartoonists and humorists of Cuba: in a country where every Cuban considers himself the funniest of person in the neighborhood, we are sure there is a lot of untapped humorist talent. *El Pitirre* wants to open its offices to anyone who has the required courage to write good humor and see if it is published. We promise to give space to interesting pieces that reach our hands. Word of Pitirre. We will pay for any published collaboration.” Yet, Fornés’ interests in new blood reflected a more artistic motivation than need to fill pages. *El Pitirre*, October 16, 1960, 15.



**Figure 2.17** *Revolución*, February 13, 1963, 6.

contracted cartoonists by the piece. Cartoons from *Palante y Palante* and *Noticias de Hoy* could be found in the CDR periodical *Con la guardia en alto* (Figure 2.16). The CDR also commissioned Nuez frequently during these years. Revolutionary mass organizations solicited

cartoonists to create their official logos. Virgilio

Martínez designed the Union of Communist Youth

symbol and Adigio Benítez created the first emblem of

the CDR (Figure 2.17 and Figure 2.18). *Noticias de*

*Hoy* opened its pages to visiting art from other

newspapers like *Palante y Palante*, as well as pieces

published in Soviet newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia* (Figure 2.19). Visiting

artwork helped to add diversity to the host publication, in addition to a more

enhanced revolutionary status if its author's reputation proved worthy. Despite

the crunch, cartoonists and their editors met revolutionary needs however thinly.



**Figure 2.18** *Verde Olivo*, November 2, 1961, 49.

The swiftness with which the pre-revolutionary



**Figure 2.19** *Noticias de Hoy*, February 28, 1962, 2.

visual and print establishment met its fate at the hands of the Revolution speaks to the vital role it would play in this new era. Fulgencio Batista sealed the downfall of “free press” by compromising it politically in the face of an energized public seeking justice after his departure. There remains little doubt that since the beginning of his Revolution, Castro concentrated on creating an



independent press entirely devoted to its success. The clandestine press, specifically its members, their political orientation, and variety of publications, played an instrumental role in smoothing the transition to its institutionalization and consolidation. Pre-revolutionary newspapers and the creative processes informing their visual content (cartoons and advertisements), became obsolete as the rise of parallel, revolutionary-staffed and oriented institutions like Intercommunications, UPEC, and the UNEAC, replaced their role with an alliance and will more favorable to the new politics. The nationalization of American businesses and subsequent deterioration of economic conditions precipitated the end of American and Cuban commercial advertising and the beginning of its revolutionary counterpart. Cuban comic art ceased to solely criticize and amuse, and instead set to task championing, explaining, monitoring, and molding a new imagined narrative of revolutionary Cuba. Armed with a strong belief and dedication to the Revolution, they tailored their artistic proclivities to furthering the revolutionary message, and above all else, in keeping with the new maxim, ‘Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing.’ Their conquest did not occur without casualties. *Costumbrismo*, a long beloved style of comic art, and intellectual cartoons, an artistic line both challenging and fulfilling, had no place within revolutionary cartooning. The purpose of Cuban, now revolutionary imagery within print media assumed a higher calling. Its task resided in building an imagined narrative tailored to orient, explain, and evolve with the unfolding Revolution and to mold its ideal citizen. The following chapters examine its new trajectory.

### Chapter 3: A New Era, Universalizing the Rebel and the Revolution, 1959-1960

The politics and policies of the early Castro state guided the incremental visualization of a sustainable revolutionary identity. Through an examination of revolutionary cartoons and commercial, as well as state-run advertisements produced during the first two years of the Revolution, this chapter traces the transformation of the imagined Cuban *pueblo*, a nativist construction inspired by the *mambí* of pre-revolutionary cartooning, into the *rebelde*, a visual protagonist who embodied the emergent identity of the new regime. With some irony, the image of the rebel came out of the efforts of the Cuban commercial and agro-industrial elites, who threw their early support behind the overthrow of Batista. Revolutionary cartoonists and advertisers then refined the rebel aesthetic, ethic, and activism drawn from the Sierra Maestra experience into a peace-time symbol appropriate for universalization and mass consumption. In constructing the parameters for what constituted a dyad of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary behaviors, cartoonists socialized their readers through a series of instructive imagined scenarios designed to transmit ideological messages and axiological values and shape a new political culture. As the politics of the Revolution radicalized, largely triggered by internal and external events and provocations, an active and progressive imagined, revolutionary narrative unfolded among the pages of revolutionary newspapers and magazines. Widely circulated images increasingly solicited, provoked, and oriented their audience toward participating

in reforms and projects and thus, sought to normalize a culture responsive to revolutionary requests and integration. Particularly after the nationalization of American industries in October 1960, cartoonists and advertisers alike constructed the image of an embattled *pueblo*, fueled by a mixture of patriotism and collective national solidarity, as a mobilizing force designed to incorporate readers into the actual revolutionary experience. Cubans soon viewed an imagined, revolutionary experience closely engaged and reflective of their own. This chapter illustrates the public debut and incremental evolution of an imagery that introduced Havana's reading public to an unfolding Revolution and its new cast of characters during its first two years. Inspired by their political and ideological loyalties, as well as the surrounding euphoria, emotion, chaos, promise, and anxiety associated with the birth of a new state, the Revolution's cadre of cartoonists and advertisers set to task orienting and explaining the revolutionary process and shaping the parameters for a new citizenry.

Cuban elites enthusiastically participated in the ascendancy of the rebel image within newspapers and magazines in the weeks that followed January 1959. In an effort to publicize and immortalize their political allegiance to the new regime, old Spanish commercial houses, national associations, and powerful industry commissioned print ads congratulating Fidel Castro and his rebels on their victory. The advertisements, which appeared in the pages of conservative, liberal, and revolutionary newspapers alike, offered *votos*, or public vows of support. First appearing on the eve of Castro's arrival in Havana to speak at a mass rally in front of the Presidential Palace, the messages repeatedly called the

rebel action a “grand gesture of peace and justice,” that has returned “liberty to man.”<sup>179</sup> Few submissions included illustrations, or photographs of the rebel leaders, but all addressed their notes to “Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz” as the “indisputable leader,” “triumphant leader,” or the “greatest hero” and to the President of the Republic, Dr. Manuel Urrutia Lleó. In an ad published in the *Revolución* (emerging from clandestinity and operating openly for the first time), “A Brotherly Hug,” President Manuel Ramos and Secretary Wilfredo Brito of the National Association of Textile Manufacturers of Cuba declared that the rebels were due a brotherly hug for reinstating “the right to live with dignity, to think freely, to work in peace. To the glorious rebel army and all the heroes on this epic journey . . . our emotional and respectful welcome along with our *votos* for the success of their patriotic gesture in the new labor of peace.”<sup>180</sup> These published *votos* assured *Revolución*’s readers, through the words of their industrial and commercial elites, of a new era of national stability and promise, mixed with a reinvigorated drive for experimentation and change. In another ad published in *Diario de la Marina* titled “Our Eternal Gratitude to the Heroes that Liberated Us,” the owners of the popular clothing store Fin de Siglo, Grabiél, Sisto y Cía. S. A. declared, “The country will always be in your debt. Thanks to your discipline and steadiness, to your elevated concept of honor and sacrifice,

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<sup>179</sup>Solís, Entrialgo y Cía., S.A. “Una nueva era en el año nuevo,” *Diario de la Marina*, January 6, 1959, 14A. This same piece was published in *Revolución*, January 7, 1959, 6.

<sup>180</sup>Asociación Nacional de Fabricantes de Tejidos de Cuba, “Un abrazo de hermanos,” *Revolución*, January 21, 1959, 2.

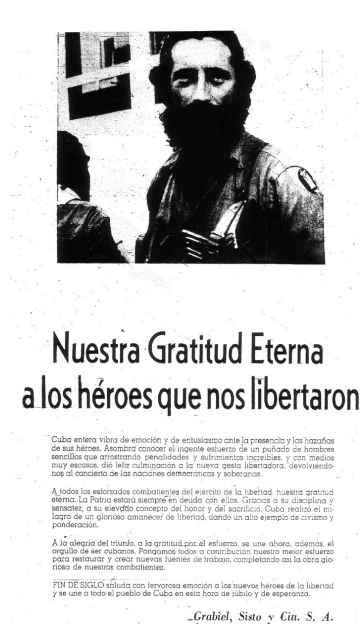


Figure 3.1

Cuba realized the miracle of a glorious dawn of liberty” (Figure 3.1).<sup>181</sup> *Votos* reflected the elites’ attempt at publically appropriating a piece of, or position within the revolutionary victory, at defining and socializing it within the parameters of an historical and patriotic context they assumed (real, or not) to control and deem acceptable. They communicated a desired alliance with the rebels to an audience presumably already in support of the

Revolution by their very act of buying and reading *Revolución*. While the need for commercial and agro-industrial elites to publicize their support of Fidel Castro and his victory against Batista’s armed forces may have reflected their uncertainty regarding his agenda; an anxiety over the intense emotions surrounding his popularity; or simply a sincere show of patriotic pride; these *votos* set the tone, language, perspective, and context for their public approach to Cuba’s new liberators.

Through their publicized messages and advertisements, Havana business and other elites welcomed Castro and his rebels as a new generation of heroes set within a patriotically-charged, historical narrative. A number of these congratulatory statements linked the Sierra Maestra struggle and its coterie of heroes to the existing pantheon of patriots who fought for Cuban independence

<sup>181</sup>Gabriel, Sisto y Cia. S.A., “Nuestra gratitud eterna a los héroes que nos libertaron,” *Diario de la Marina*, January 6, 1959, 5A.



Figure 3.2

against Spain in the 1890s, most notably José Martí and Antonio Maceo. On January 8, the luxury retail store El Encanto welcomed Castro and his rebels, noting the feverish excitement surrounding their arrival and describing them as “the most representative heroes that Cuba has produced since its independence.”<sup>182</sup> In its piece, the Cuban department store La Filosofía greeted Castro and his “valiant and long-suffering rebels,” as men who have “gloriously emulated the immortal gesture of the War of Independence: the Liberating invasion.”<sup>183</sup> Rebel actions assumed a patriotic reverence linked to the independence struggle led by Martí and his *mambises* and to an ideology of dissent determined to complete

unfulfilled nationalist aspirations. The furniture store Orbay y Cerrato S.A. crystalized this connection between Castro’s rebels and Cuban independence patriots in their advertisement, “Lineage of Heroes” (Figure 3.2). It read, “These vibrant men that have returned our liberty and have inspired a sense of spiritual renewal through their struggle are worthy of our most noble traditions and of the

<sup>182</sup>El Encanto, “Nuestra bienvenida a Fidel Castro y a sus esforzados combatientes,” *Revolución*, 8 January 1959, 10.

<sup>183</sup>La Filosofía, “A los nuevos libertadores,” *Revolución*, January 9, 1959, 4. La Filosofía also commissioned this same piece to be published days before in *Diario de la Marina*, January 7, 1959, 11A.

patriotism that made Cuba independent.”<sup>184</sup> The notion that Castro and his rebels had entered into the annals of Cuban history as heroes that helped Cuba reach the end of an era appeared in *Bohemia* cartoonist Antonio’s piece, “Sentence Completed”



**Figure 3.3** Antonio, “Sentence Completed,” *Bohemia*, February 1, 1959, 176.

(Figure 3.3). By associating Castro’s Sierra experience with important moments in Cuban history, or as a logical continuation of a nationalist project, the ascendancy of the rebel both visually and ideologically as a patriotic symbol materialized and inadvertently perhaps neutralized the political effectiveness of any potential challengers. The irony remains that Cuban elites themselves took part constructing a link between the Revolution and a political tradition resembled what Eric Hobsbawm termed an “invented tradition,”<sup>185</sup> by publically assuring the rebel’s honored position outside the image world by shaping it and reinforcing it inside.

Advertisements circulated by Havana elites that visually, historically, and ideologically connected Castro’s group to Independence-era heroes within the pages of *Revolución*, reaffirmed and strengthened the aura of exceptionalness

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<sup>184</sup>Orbay y Cerrato S.A., “Estirpe de heroes,” *Revolución*, January 8, 1959, 3.

<sup>185</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263.

surrounding the new rebel.<sup>186</sup> Long before his victory, Castro was keenly aware of the patriotic resonance an invasion force would carry. In his famous “History Will Absolve Me” 1953 speech, he stated, “We are proud of the history of our country. We were taught to venerate the glorious example of our heroes and our martyrs. Céspedes, Agramonte, Maceo, Gómez, and Martí were the first names engraved in our minds. It seemed that the veneration for the Apostle [Martí] was going to die in his centennial . . . but his dream lives.”<sup>187</sup> Castro understood early on that his movement, its methods, and its goals symbolically emulated Cuba’s independence war heroes. In the fall of 1955, while campaigning for support in the United States, he claimed, “I plan to return, as our independence fighters returned whenever tyranny threw them out of Cuban territory; I shall never return

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<sup>186</sup>José Martí, through his words and actions, inspired others to continue his fight for Cuba’s political and economic sovereignty. His undying struggle to attain social justice for all Cubans through the most honest means, despite enormous sacrifice, became indicators for success in post-independence politics. This perpetual struggle toward an independent Cuba, one frustrated by Plattism and the corruption bred by Republican politicians and their U.S. allies, remained an unfinished project within Cuban revolutionary culture. On the eve of Castro’s Revolution, the Auténtico presidencies of Ramón Grau San Martín (1944-1948) and Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948-1952) along with the Batista dictatorship (1952-1958) would figure as the most corrupt in Cuban politics. The public’s repulsion to government graft reached an alarming height during the years leading up to the Revolution and deteriorated its belief in democratic politics as Cubans began to associate political incumbency with self-promotion and personal enrichment. Louis Pérez noted that “eighty percent of the 1949-50 budget was used to pay the salaries of public officials.” In the end, the generations of the 1930s and 1940s failed to maintain their revolutionary composure, to control the pervasiveness of American imperialism, and to eradicate the culture of greed. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 284.

<sup>187</sup>Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me* (New York: Fair Play for Cuban Communism, 1961), 77-78.



any other way.”<sup>188</sup> In his work *Cuba and the Revolutionary Myth* (1984), C. Fred Judson stresses the importance of the symbolic link forged by Castro’s insurrection to Martí’s generation, noting that in “keeping their word to invade and fight the dictatorship, Castro and the rebel group completed and personally re-lived the revolutionary myths of Cuban history. The generation of ‘68 and ‘95, of Céspedes, Agramonte, Maceo, and Martí were emulated in the very style of the M-26 organization and the invasion.”<sup>189</sup> After the revolutionary victory, Cuban elites propagated this symbolic, patriotic link between the rebel victory and other heroic events in Cuban history more intensely than other sources in the revolutionary press. As stated before, while their motivations for reinforcing the legitimacy of Castro’s movement at this early point in the Revolution could be several (genuine patriotism, anxiety, or the protection of political and economic interests), this thread of advertisements relegated rebel identity to a specific moment in the historical narrative. The anniversary of the *Grito de Baire*, General Antonio Maceo’s public rejection of the Spanish terms proposed to end the Cuban War of Independence and his call to arms on February 24, 1895, provided a sharper occasion for a new resurgence of the generational comparison. Under the title “February 24 and July 26,” the American paint manufacturer Sherwin-Williams stated that “with quite different symbols, but with identical heroism, two generations have made the glorious culmination of decisive sagas in

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<sup>188</sup>Judson, 80.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., 107; see Judson’s discussion on the importance of the “symbolic act” of emulating Martí and others in building of the rebel myth, 74-77.



Figure 3.4

our nationality possible. Liberty, independence, and sovereignty of Cuba, conquests of the generation of ‘95, exemplarily reaffirmed by the men of today” (Figure 3.4).<sup>190</sup> Chase Manhattan Bank also celebrated *Grito de Baire* with an ad that featured a rebel in the foreground and the well-known statue of Maceo on his horse located in the eponymous park in Havana in

the background: “24 of February of 1895 and 24 of February of 1959, two generations with the same ideal . . . Our tribute of admiration and respect to Cuba and its two heroic generations that have conquered the most precious right: liberty!” (Figure 3.5)<sup>191</sup> These ads reflect the disposition of American business interests in Cuba toward the new rebels and the degree of respect these companies had toward their host country. It cannot be read in hindsight, however, without a sense of irony considering the expropriation and expulsion of U.S. interests at the hand of these very “liberators” in October 1960. In another tribute by Fin de

<sup>190</sup>The U.S. Senate’s imposition of the Platt Amendment into the Cuban constitution (1902), effectively compromised Cuban sovereignty and has generally been regarded as a loss in the fight for independence among ordinary, not to mention, fervently patriotic Cubans. Sherwin-Williams Co. de Cuba, “24 de Febrero-26 de Julio, dos generaciones y una misma tradición: libertad,” *Revolución*, February 23, 1959, 7.

<sup>191</sup>Chase Manhattan Bank, “24 de Febrero de 1895, 24 de Febrero de 1959, dos generaciones con un mismo ideal,” *Revolución*, February 25, 1959, 13.

Siglo, its owners echoed the patriotic sentiments and symbolic importance of both generations, yet added that it had “faith and expectations of a bright and promising future like the one dreamed by those liberators [the Generation of 1895] and the ones of today whose effort, selflessness, and sacrifice have made this celebration possible.”<sup>192</sup>

These images did not mention a role for the rebel beyond his tie to the armed struggle, nor did they



Figure 3.5

negotiate terms for his part in Cuba’s political future. Nevertheless, among the pages of *Revolución*, elites bestowed the rebel with a distinct position in contrast to other political competitors, an historical status and part of a political tradition that *truly* qualified him for a spot among Cuban political culture’s most revolutionary.

The popularity of the rebel image can be understood as a genuine reflection of prevailing social sentiment during these early months. In his memoirs, Philip Bonsal recalled that “in those early days, Cubans of all classes, especially the wealthy, had climbed on the Castro bandwagon and were reaching for the steering wheel.”<sup>193</sup> This admiration for the rebel leaders manifested itself within multiple threads of imagery that converged to form a more cohesive and

<sup>192</sup>Grabiell, Sisto y Cía. S.A., February 23, 1959, 15.

<sup>193</sup>Bonsal, 28.

consistent rebel identity. No true visual tradition, or symbolism of the rebel existed before his victory and many Cubans were *seeing* the rebel for the first time. Considering the degree of censorship Batista placed on publications and news about insurrectionist activity the Sierra Maestra, the rebel image, appearing mainly in photographs taken by both Cuban and American news sources, did not undergo an extensive process of elaboration in Cuba before the Revolution.<sup>194</sup> In other words, at this point in time in the imagined narrative, both non-aligned and revolutionary cartoonists and advertisers were free to construct the visuality and rhetoric surrounding the rebel with little to no discursive tension and reference. The increasing anxiety and need among elites to reaffirm their support for the Revolution (evident through their publication of advertisements and *votos*) and an informal, as well as a self-consciousness, or perceived inferiority on the part of some Cubans for not having a revolutionary past, influenced the emergence of political and social tensions within the narrative threads of rebel-based imagery. Iconic signs like the beard, rifle, black beret, and olive green fatigues, not only

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<sup>194</sup>Virgilio Martínez featured the rebel on the cover for the October 1958 edition of the underground *Magazine Mella* and drew his character “Pucho” visiting the Sierra. René de la Nuez in rare instances published an image of Castro in his *El Loquito* series for *Zig-Zag*. Castro specifically asked to be interviewed by a male, foreign journalist and sent Felipe Pazos to Havana to meet with Ruby Hart Phillips, a *New York Times* correspondent who recruited Herbert Matthews for the job. Castro reasoned Batista would suppress the story if it surfaced. On February 17, 1957, a rebel took the first circulated snapshot of Fidel Castro and Herbert Matthews sitting smoking cigars in the Sierra Maestra. The Matthews piece appeared in a series in the *NYT* (February 24-26) and the next day, Batista, in a surprise move, lifted censorship in Cuba and Matthews’ article hit news stands. The photograph gave proof of Castro’s existence and health against rumors of his death. Thomas Patterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 72, and 75-77.

increasingly symbolized the rebel within the imagined narrative, but became the focus of a visual debate between *Diario de la Marina*, *Bohemia*, and *Revolución* cartoonists surrounding the power of the rebel in post-revolutionary society.

Running concomitant to imagery centering on the beard, another thread took hold that pitted insurgent, or a member of the rebel force from the Sierra Maestra, against everyday Cubans, specifically Cuban men. This second thread of imagery evolved into a more persistent and aggressive attitude on the part of the rebel toward suspected political opportunists disguised as revolutionaries. These early discourses within the imagined narrative, surrounding the beard, or the uncontrolled and unsubstantiated appropriation of a rebel identity, provided the perfect forum for the unfolding of a colorful set of scenarios defining the new outsider, the non-revolutionary, the new enemy. The beard became an active vehicle of power as it circulated within different social networks and political actors, causing divisions and areas of belonging within the imagined narrative. At the helm of this effort, *Revolución's* cartoonists magnified the socio-political power of the rebel by portraying him as a righteous and popular force that functioned to protect good-natured, helpless Cubans with no political, or economic ties to the previous government while exposing and ostracizing the undesirables.

The Sierra rebel's exaggerated masculine brawniness, however, proved problematic and required tweaking within the imagined narrative, in order to successfully serve as a model to be appropriated and emulated by everyday Cubans. Cartoonists and advertisers from revolutionary and non-aligned

newspapers and magazines alike circulated the rebel image as a medium to sell, warn, honor, orient, and divide. It soon became a teaching tool, a protector, a social mediator, as well as a symbol of trust and historical continuity. The image of the young, bearded male, however, did not lend itself easily to a universal applicability and this challenged the building of a new revolutionary-oriented, civic behavior based on this archetype. Rebel leaders like Camilo Cienfuegos, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara reflected this new politician's most salient qualities. They became celebrities, the new ideal male, and in some instances, living apostles. Damián Fernández noted that "the relationship between leaders and followers even acquired a gendered and sexual undertone. For his fellow men, Fidel and the *barbudos* [bearded ones] epitomized manliness in a society that valued *machismo*. For women, the revolutionaries incited romantic feelings."<sup>195</sup> The rebel's masculinity, heightened by the accouterments of guerrilla warfare in the Sierra Maestra (i.e., olive green fatigues, the black beret, the beard, and the rifle), may not have lent itself to appropriation by women, children, the elderly, the physically, or mentally impaired. But, the images of strength, paternalism, and masculinity associated with the male rebel had to be made available to the larger population through appeals to heroism, bravery, and sacrifice. In other words, the rebel image had to undergo a process of visual redefinition, one that rendered it accessible for public use. It had to transcend beyond the guerrilla struggle and prove its relevance in a post-victory

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<sup>195</sup>Fernández, 75.



Figure 3.6

environment. In order to free its image from a static past and reference, certain core values and ideological codes like honesty, activism, sacrifice, loyalty, and unity needed to be developed, accentuated, and propagated as qualities to strive for in order to become a model revolutionary citizen.

The inclusion of women alongside adult men

(more so than children, or the elderly) within mass

imagery reflected their incorporation into revolutionary life and the vital role they played as part of collective projects and campaigns like those of CDR and the Literacy Campaign of 1961. Women performed dangerous communications and logistical tasks during the guerrilla phase and unlike the wars for Cuban independence, officials honored certain female insurgents after the victory against Batista with important positions within the Revolutionary Government.<sup>196</sup>

Overall, the Revolution opened professional opportunities for women in fields like education, health care, and administration. Their encouraged entry into new bureaucracies and nationalized businesses, however, challenged social,

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<sup>196</sup>Melba Hernández, girlfriend of the 26 of July Movement martyr Abel Santamaría, became a member of the Cuban Petroleum Institute and later Ambassador to Vietnam; Haydée Santamaría, wife of Minister of Culture Armando Hart Dávalos, became head of the literary house Casa de las Américas; Vilma Espín, wife of Raúl Castro, became President of the Federation of Cuban Women; and Celia Sánchez remained Fidel Castro's personal secretary and life-long partner. It seems their connection to major male revolutionaries and loyalty to the Revolution facilitated their admittance into the leadership pool with less consideration for their skill, merit, or intellect. None appeared among the leaders or heroes featured in the revolutionary imagery surveyed in this study.

professional, and gender barriers to spaces previously dominated by men (Figure 3.6). This piece from late November 1961 informed housekeepers that the Revolution offered other job openings through educational programs. It reinforced the Revolution's stance toward women in declaring, "Our Socialist revolution wants all Cuban women to have equal job opportunities, but education is necessary. Improve



Figure 3.7

yourself so you can have a better job. Study, the Revolution will help you!"<sup>197</sup>

Images attempted to project women actively participating in a variety of revolutionary, and to a great extent, liberating experiences, however, gender norms nurtured during the colonial period including shame, honor, frailty, and chastity appeared as well, despite official attempts to neutralize them. During these early years, the public use of the term comrade (*compañero/compañera*) as a new manner of social address, no doubt imported from Soviet culture, offset the traditional address of *señor/señora* and reflected an allegiance to the Revolution and a revolutionary community. While the Revolution intended to equalize the sexes on one hand, imagery continued to display pre-revolutionary gender codes

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<sup>197</sup>*Bohemia*, November 19, 1961, 74. In 1953, women represented ten percent of the workforce. By 1959, that percentage increased by only seven points. Julie Marie Bunck, *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 91. Thirty percent of the women working in 1953 were domestic servants. Mona Rosenthal, *Inside the Revolution: Everyday Life in Socialist Cuba* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 54.





**Figure 3.8** Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, July 12, 1961, 3.

reflecting motherhood, beauty, and homemaking, yet with a revolutionary twist (Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8). Gender politics in revolutionary imagery during this period remained in a state of flux. Both sexes appeared confident and secure in their revolutionary fervor, despite being presented in the new rebel form. In this June 1961 advertisement, the former Avon company called on female rebels to “put something ‘that’s yours’ in this Revolution. Tomorrow we can feel proud of contributing in the great struggle of our dignified people for their liberty!”<sup>198</sup>

Product advertisers appealed to rebel women to unite with their fellow Cubans and with the Revolution through pre-revolutionary channels they knew reached the female audience; Avon, traditional concepts of beauty, the new woman, and the Revolution could co-exist. Revolutionary imagery thus opened up space for women, facilitating their appropriation of a rebel identity. In the piece by *Noticias de Hoy* cartoonist Adigio, a female rebel armed with a frying pan, forks, spoons, knives, and a book titled “How to Cook without Fat,” happily marched onward under the caption, “Another Way to Defeat Imperialism.” Since its inception in August 1960, the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, FMC) reinforced concepts of motherhood, family, teaching alongside revolutionary ideology geared to cement concepts of sexual equality,

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<sup>198</sup>Empresa Consolidada de Jabonería y Perfumería Unidad #10 (Avon), “Avon llama a la unidad!” *Bohemia*, June 18, 1961, 131.



Figure 3.9

male prejudice, and international solidarity with other feminist movements. Revolutionary imagery merged traditional and new gender politics and created visual space for women to take on a rebel identity. In 1961, fourteen thousand rural women traveled to Havana for six months of study in sewing, cooking, and hygiene practices under the sponsorship of the FMC.<sup>199</sup> Even its emblem during these years evoked motherhood, featuring a woman holding a baby encapsulated in a globe with the Cuban island tucked neatly in the background of the upper left-hand corner (Figure 3.9). Members of the FMC played a vital role in the recruitment for and organization of mass campaigns, yet opportunities for women remained constrained by a culture of machismo known for its sexual objectification of women and homophobia. After considering gender and the perfect revolutionary leader, Mona Rosenthal concluded, “That a Cuban leader should be motherly or soft is unthinkable. Politicians are by definition potent; to be a good politician, one has to have *cojones* [balls].”<sup>200</sup> Despite the mixture of past and present stereotypes and roles surrounding revolutionary women, imagery during this period told a story of their integration, fervor, and organization as rebels.

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<sup>199</sup>Bunck, 95.

<sup>200</sup>Rosenthal, 85.



—Voy a tener que dejar el negocio.  
 —¿Y qué tú vendes?  
 —Navajitas de afeitar . . .

Figure 3.10 Roseñada, “The Latest

Fashion,” *Diario de la Marina*, January 6, 1959, 4A.

Sweeping revolutionary reforms

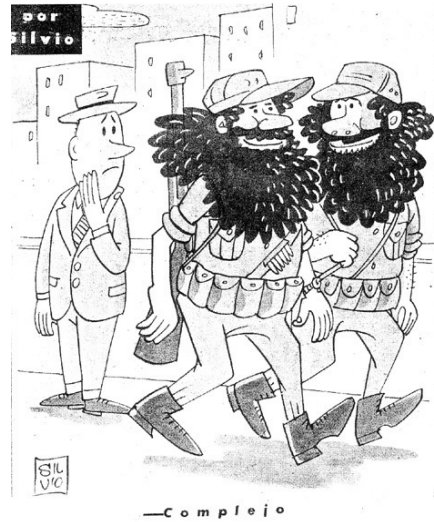
during the first months of 1959 coupled with an increasingly radical politics and the growing power of the rebel put socio-economic elites on the defensive as they became increasingly aware of their impotency in controlling the new agenda.

This mixture of anxiety and apprehension

manifested itself visually with a referendum on the popularity of the rebel through the satirical play on the symbol of the beard. The long-established, ultra-conservative newspaper *Diario de la Marina*’s most prolific cartoonist and the director of *Zig-Zag*, Manuel Roseñada, published a series of cartoons centering on the beard as a referent to the new social exclusivity of Castro’s 26 of July Movement. His first post-victory piece titled “The Latest Fashion” focused on two men casually discussing the economic effects of rebel popularity while revealing the wariness certain sectors felt toward its growing appeal and craze-like phenomenon (Figure 3.10).<sup>201</sup> In this piece, a street vendor selling razor blades (surrounded by a group of rebels) announces to his buyer that he would have to close up shop for lack of business. Certainly,

<sup>201</sup>Roseñada’s New Year’s Day piece titled “The First of January” featured Baby New Year with question marks hovering over head, wearing his 1959 sash, holding a finger up to his lips with one hand and carrying a bag with a large question mark on it in the other. Baby New Year did not need to say aloud what was on many Cuban minds: What would 1959 bring? Roseñada, “Primero de Enero,” *Diario de la Marina*, January 1, 1959, 4.

*Diario de la Marina* cartoonists were not the only ones to play on the culture of the unkempt beard. Silvio, a cartoonist who worked for both the conservative *Diario de la Marina* and the popular, openly pro-revolutionary magazine *Bohemia*, produced his own version of the beard that mirrored the type of anxiety present in Roseñada's cartoon, yet with a lighter twist. In a cartoon page published on January 11, 1959 titled,



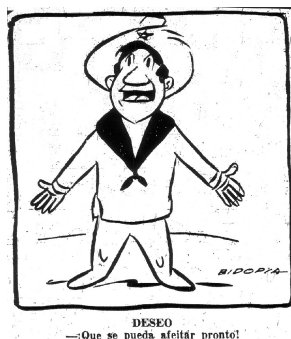
**Figure 3.11** Silvio, “Complex,” *Bohemia*, January 11, 1959, 177.

“Humorism of the Revolution,” Silvio channeled the beard discussion from a commentary tainted with uneasiness to one evoking laughter and playfulness. Simply titled “Complex,” Silvio effectively demonstrated this anxiety with a scene centering on a troubled Cuban standing on the street feeling his face for

stubble as two rebels walked past (Figure 3.11). This piece reflected the growing insecurity within society toward the presence of the rebel, his new social, cultural, patriotic, and political role and how and if, it could be and should be appropriated and perpetuated within a non-combative environment. This next cartoon by Silvio showcased his wit and ability to spin the popularity of the beard toward a less abrasive and lighthearted



**Figure 3.12** Silvio, *Bohemia*, January 25, 1959, 167.



**Figure 3.13** Bidopia, “Desire,” *Revolución*, February 9, 1959, 2.

perspective (Figure 3.12). It allowed for a number of possible reads (e.g., rebel mania really was omnipresent; new rebels were born every day; or perhaps less likely, a testament to the potency of a rebel’s sexuality).

Nevertheless, the message remained the intense presence of the rebel figure. *Revolución* cartoonists, with few exceptions, treated the rebel image with the respect and

care its supporters would naturally attach to it. From their perspective, the rebel symbolized the best the Revolution had to offer Cuban society: honesty, social justice, hope, sacrifice, and action. Arsenio Bidopia, one of *Revolución*’s more conservative cartoonists, consistently produced pieces praising the rebel, however, this sample titled “Wish,” bordered on a criticism and frustration similar to that of Roseñada. It featured a Cuban wearing the traditional peasant straw hat (and not the new beret symbolizing the rebel) with his arms stretched out pleading “[I wish] that we could shave soon!” (Figure 3.13) These next pieces published in August 1959 demonstrate the



**Figure 3.14** Chago, *Revolución*, August 29, 1959, 4.

recurrence of the beard and its continued revolutionary symbolism within revolutionary imagery. Chago tied the beard and the newspaper *Revolución* to the evolving association of the rebel image to morality: “My only privilege is that of moral force” (Figure 3.14). Inspired by the growing frustration in Miami with the



**Figure 3.15** Bidopia, *Revolución*, August 5, 1959, 2.

continued presence of the rebels, this Bidopia piece showed a newspaper clipping with a headline reading, “Mayor of Miami pleads for Cuba to shave!” and a rebel talking on the telephone long distance saying, “I’m sorry mister, but there’s going to be beards here for quite some time” (Figure 3.15) The recurrence of imagery

focusing on the beard proved short as building the

symbolic look of the rebel receded in importance. Displaying scenes of integration, enthusiasm, and participation proved more effective for cartoonists to communicate a deeper alliance to the Revolution than aesthetic symbolism.

The military aesthetic circulating through cartoons and advertisements reflected a post-victory atmosphere of national celebration and the affirmation of an acceptance of the rebel. Some cartoonists, however, questioned the depth of this reverence and whether, or not it bordered on passing fad. Newspapers and magazines, from their tributes and adulation to consumer advertisements, thrust the experience, aesthetic, and figure of the rebel into the forefront of everyday life so quickly and ubiquitously that it found little resistance as it entered into patriotic culture and began to transform

Cuban national identity. They advertised collector edition films and recordings



**Figure 3.16** “The Great Retelling,” *Revolución*, February 11, 1959, 13.



**Figure 3.17** *Revolución*,  
January 20, 1959, 14

recounting action sequences of the Sierra struggle like “The Great Retelling” (Figure 3.16). Around the same time, a vinyl record called “Marching” came out in popular stores; Cubans were urged to buy the “record of liberty and conserve these permanent memories of the luminous days in the triumph of the Revolution.”<sup>202</sup> In late January the rebel appeared on over two million postage stamps; a space reserved for

national, patriotic, or historic figures (Figure 3.17). Rebel paraphernalia filled the streets. In his book *Cuba and the Politics of Passion* (2000), Damián Fernández argues that a new political religion took hold of Cubans as “revolutionary passion, with its myriad accompanying feelings (joy, hate, resentment, hope, fear, adoration), consumed almost everyone. In the euphoria of the moment, *el embullo y la novelería* (the surge of enthusiasm and tendency to partake of novelty), two common features of Cuban political culture, resurfaced.”<sup>203</sup> Bidopia’s piece “Out of Style” illustrated the consumer focus novelty and paraphernalia in the process of “becoming rebel.” At a haberdasher store, the

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<sup>202</sup>*Revolución*, 19 February, 1959, 8.

<sup>203</sup>Fernández also discussed magazine photos of the post-revolutionary street scene, published during the first few weeks after the victory, noting “Nowhere are the emotions of the revolution better captured than in the photographs and newspaper accounts of the time. [*Diario de la Marina, Bohemia, and Life*] portrayed the revolution as a momentous happening, part fiesta, part communion—affection and passion combined.” Damián Fernández, *Cuba and the Politics of Passion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 56.



**Figure 3.18** Bidopia, “Out of Style,”  
*Revolución*, February 3, 1959, 13.

salesman informed a customer trying on a round Derby hat that “this model doesn’t fit anymore nowadays” (Figure 3.18). Indeed, Derby hats were out and the black berets modeled by rebel leaders like Che Guevara were in; Havana had succumb to rebel-mania. U.S. advertising had conditioned Cuban consumers into approaching new fashions and fads enthusiastically and post-

revolutionary advertising culture during this period proved no different.

Magazines and newspaper ads alike displayed Cubans showing off their political partisanship by wearing black berets and olive-green fatigues in honor of their new heroes. The self-proclaimed national drink “Ironbeer” featured a young boy wearing a helmet, armed with a toy rifle and two beers strapped to his chest. With a sure stare, he declared, “I am always well protected with Ironbeer” (Figure 3.19). The rebel look, immortalized with the uniform of the Militia, emerged as a competing national identity encapsulating heroism, struggle, social justice, and Revolution while eroding the one built under Cuba’s capitalist past and its associations with tourism, gambling, prostitution, even sugar.



**Figure 3.19** Ironbeer,  
*Revolución*, February 27, 1959, 8.

The degree of criticism and social anxiety reflected in imagery focusing on the beard seemed weak in comparison with the aggressiveness and



divisiveness occurring within the thread of imagery centering on insurrectionists and new, or non-revolutionaries. Revolutionary power sprang up and saturated society very quickly and within the first month, citizens tried to measure their degree of support, integration, enthusiasm, or wariness, not to mention their opinions, actions, and politics. Not every Cuban could lay claim to a revolutionary past, that is, to participating in the Sierra Maestra insurrection, in an urban revolutionary group, as an economic donor, or as a lookout. Even by conservative estimates, individuals who took part in the Sierra Maestra experience either as part of the 26 of July Movement, or in other guerrilla groups like the Revolutionary Directorate were few, numbering anywhere from three hundred to seven thousand men. This fact effectively left many Cubans classified in the non-insurrectionist category.<sup>204</sup> Considering the numbers, it would be foolish to think that an insurrectionist background could be considered common, yet this debate within the imagined narrative of *Revolución* and *Diario de la Marina* suggests that this type of ostracizing, or discrimination occurred. While a 26 of July Movement armband, or olive-green fatigues functioned as signifiers of an insurrectionist within the imagined narrative, any background proving ones' participation in urban skirmishes against police, or other life-threatening tales related to the struggle against Batista could enhance a non-insurrectionist's status.

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<sup>204</sup>Pérez noted that an estimated 7,000 guerrillas were engaged in various types of operations by the end of 1958. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 293; Thomas doubted American journalists estimates for a 1957 guerrilla force numbering between 1,000 and 2,000 fighters and insisted that Castro had only 300 armed men at his disposal by the end of the year. Thomas, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom*, 973.



**Figure 3.20** “Opportunist Trick,”  
*Revolución*, January 7, 1959, 3.

At the heart of this thread of imagery lay the message that any new revolutionary not clearly aligned with the Revolutionary Government, or unable to substantiate a life before the Revolution free of political, economic, and (or) social ties to Batista and his network of sinecures, remained suspect until he, or she proved themselves innocent. In other words, this thread centered on identifying and isolating

“enemies of the Revolution” and political opportunists, as well as creating a

revolutionary identity.<sup>205</sup> On January 7, 1959, an

unsigned cartoon in *Revolución* titled “Opportunist

Trick” launched this new caustic thread of what began

to take shape as counter-revolutionary imagery

(Figure 3.20). In this piece, a 26 of July Movement

member looked snidely at a Cuban pointing to his hat

saying “Shhh, I’ll trade you my hat for your

armband.” Bidopia added to this thread, fueling the

growing mistrust and exclusion toward others

building within *Revolución*’s imagined narrative with submissions like



**Figure 3.21** Bidopia, “Curiosity,”  
*Revolución*, January 17, 1959, 4.

<sup>205</sup>Cubans publically heard the phrase “enemies of the Revolution” for the first time during Castro’s speech at Camp Columbia on January 8, 1959: “While the people laugh today and are happy, we are preoccupied . . . Who can be ‘the enemies of the Revolution’ . . .” Thomas, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom*, 1034.



Figure 3.22 Roseñada, “Watching TV,” *Diario de la Marina*, “January 8, 1959, 4A.

“Curiosity” and “The Climber.” “Curiosity” centered on an insurrectionist aggressively poking another citizen in the chest, saying “Hey Mister. Where were you before? . . .” (Figure 3.21) In his piece “The Climber,” Bidopia sketched a friendly Cuban leveling with a dumbfounded 26 of July Movement member: “Since I didn’t sacrifice myself

during the war, let me sacrifice myself during the peace . . .” At this point in early January 1959, *Revolución* cartoonists maintained this thread of imagery peaceful despite its caustic edge. From his desk at *Diario de la Marina*, Roseñada struck at the desperation and lengths

ordinary Cubans would go to in order to fit in with their liberators. His cartoon titled “Watching TV” featured a typical 1950s television show announcer asking a new rebel, “And you, how long has it been since you joined the rebels?” The “insurrectionist” (showing only stubble), armed with a small canon and bullet straps, a machine gun, a 26 of July Movement armband and matching hat responded,

“24 hours” (Figure 3.22). If *Revolución* cartoonists argued through their pieces that wearing 26 of July Movement insignias, or black berets did not serve as sufficient proof of one’s revolutionary status, Roseñada’s cartoons countered their



Figure 3.23 Roseñada, “Creole Cleverness,” *Diario de la Marina*, January 11, 1959, 4A.

claims by exposing the absurdity of their position (Figure 3.23). His piece “Creole Cleverness” centered on a Cuban at a counter in search of a disguise. He told the salesman, “Give me this one, the longest one so that they think I was in the Sierra for a long time.” The use of humor in Roseñada’s pieces certainly lightened the atmosphere of what appeared to be a reflection of growing tense relations between rebels and non-aligned Cubans. From a broader perspective, his cartoons criticized the intense degree of pressure that the power of the rebel placed upon Cubans to prove their loyalty to the Revolution. Unfortunately, the pressure to be revolutionary only increased and disappointment lay ahead for citizens like Roseñada who hoped and expected this social tension to cease and harmony to return to Cuban society.

*Revolución* cartoonists developed a thread of imagery condemning political opportunism to compliment their visual attack on non-insurrectionists. This thread would evolve into the first visual definition of the new revolutionary Cuban citizen; a universal model that would to a great extent neutralize the caustic and accusatory language and attitude projected within insurrectionist imagery. It is important to stress that the imagery centering on insurrectionists and the beard circulated alongside this thread on political opportunism. Thus, if we consume these messages at once as readers did during this month of January, the social confusion and mixture of positive and negative consequences suffered under any attempt to appropriate a rebel identity must have been quite overwhelming and frustrating. Cubans accepted the rebel as a patriotic, historic, heroic figure and sought to associate themselves with him through fetishistic

behavior (i.e., paraphernalia and dress). Yet, within the imagined narrative, this very process of “becoming a rebel” left many socially vulnerable, threatened, and insecure. *Revolución* cartoonists sought to clarify and refine their position by using a pre-revolutionary visual symbol, the familiar Cuban stereotype popularly referred to as “Manengue” in order to build their case for what constituted as the new socio-political “other.” During the late 1920s, cartoonists Conrado Massaguer and Eduardo Abela, in criticizing the corrupt politics of President Machado, developed the image of Manengue, or a corrupt political profiteer.<sup>206</sup> Manengues accepted money for jobs that either only existed ‘on the books’ (referred to as a *botella*), lined their pockets with public money from the government’s coffers, or received funds from public work projects. In short, a Manengue was a cheat, swindler, and opportunist who generally lived off politics while showing little concern for ethics and the integrity of public office. Beginning as early as January 10, *Revolución*’s Bidopia and Chago used Manengue as a pivotal figure in a series of cartoons and strips riddled with social,

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<sup>206</sup>Initially, the figure of Manengue referred to a person (usually a man since they alone received sinecures and carried any real political power) who worked for a politician to buy votes during the first Republic elections in 1906. “José Martí,” *Librinsula*, “¿Quién dijo crisis?” Año 1, no. 36, September 10, 2004, (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional, José Martí), 1, and José Sánchez-Boudy, *Diccionario de Cubanismos más usuales*, Tomo VI, (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1992), 120. Since women receive the right to vote in Cuba in 1938, they were generally excluded from politics and associations of corruption. For discussions on the general political, socio-economic and nationalist position of women in Cuban society, see Louis Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 206-210; Pérez, *On Becoming Cuba*, 309-22; and Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999), 175-76.



**Figure 3.24** Bidopia, “Unemployed Manengue,” *Revolución*, January 10, 1959, 9.

civic, and ethical lessons for the new revolutionary citizen.<sup>207</sup> Manengue’s antics and the push against his attempts to ingratiate and integrate himself into this nascent revolutionary society provided readers with visual and culturally-familiar examples of counter-revolutionary behavior. The first series of

Manengue cartoons served as a warning to

*Revolución*’s readers that there would be no place

within post-revolutionary Cuba for this type of social parasite. Bidopia’s piece titled “Unemployed Manengue” featured a Manengue on the verge of a nervous

breakdown, sitting on a bench under a sign that read

“Employment Agency.” Instead of using the word *empleo* (employment), Bidopia chose *colocación*, or

placement, a word often associated with acquiring a *botella*, or political sinecure (Figure 3.24). Chago

followed up Bidopia’s message in his cartoon series *Julito 26*, a strip he developed in the Sierra Maestra newspaper *El Cubano Libre*, with a piece titled

“What Awaits the Manengues.” He cleverly

communicated that in the new revolutionary society,



LO QUE LES ESPERA A LOS MANENGUES

**Figure 3.25** Chago, “What Awaits the Manengues,” *Revolución*, January 20, 1959, 5.

<sup>207</sup>The appearance of Manengue among the work of *Revolución*’s most prolific cartoonists during this early period (Bidopia and Chago) and his absence in *Diario de la Marina* deserves mention.

Manengues would have to jump through hoops held by the Revolutionary Government and its ring-leader, Fidel Castro (Figure 3.25). These pieces assured readers that the Revolution intended to end Batista's culture of privilege and unethical politics and replace it with one based on honesty and substance, defined by a new revolutionary morality. Chago and Bidopia's visual elaboration of the political opportunist Manengue constituted the first counter-revolutionary archetype that would soon multiply in variety and form, invade public and private spaces, and pose an array of threats to daily life and the Revolution within *Revolución's* evolving imagined narrative.

Chago's *Julito 26* comic strip proved essential to *Revolución's* progression of Manengue-inspired imagery. With the streets of Havana in the background, the strip presented a series of imagined scenarios designed to give readers an idea of the types of goals, tools, and trickery common to political opportunists. Through confrontations between its dedicated, revolutionary protagonist Julito 26 (the rebel) and his underhanded, unrelenting nemesis January 2nd (an enemy born with the triumph of the Revolution), *Julito 26* showcased a snapshot of a new Cuban street life where Manengues dressed as revolutionaries, boasted insurrectionist backgrounds, tried to get jobs in new government bureaucracies, and ally with well-intended citizens. In short, the inter-textual discourse drawn from threads of imagery concentrating on the beard, the insurrectionist, and Manengue coalesced into the actions and textual dialogue, and at times violent exchange, between Julito 26 and January 2nd. The first installment introducing Julito 26 versus January 2nd appeared on January 24,

1959, with Julito 26 walking along the streets of Havana enjoying the fruits of liberty, when he suddenly noticed he was being followed.<sup>208</sup> January 2nd continued to stalk Julito 26, even in his dreams, until one day Julito 26 confronted him. January 2nd introduced himself as “the leech” (*sanguijuela*) and proceeded to state his case as a tried-and-true revolutionary: “I did, I said, I purchased bonds, I received beatings, look! look!”<sup>209</sup> Julito 26 remained unimpressed and highly suspicious. This segment communicated the January 2nd’s identity as a social parasite and his attempts to try to assume an insurrectionist background. Continuing under the title “I also sent Quinine” (a reference to Cubans who donated medicines and goods to the Sierra guerrillas), January 2nd, in realizing his claims fell on deaf ears, conceded and switched tactics. He attempted to ingratiate himself with Julito 26, provided explanations for his absence during the revolutionary struggle, and finally tried to convince Julito 26 that he suffered atrocities, along with others, at the hands of Batista’s henchmen: “I admire you! I would have done the same if it wasn’t for having to take care of my dog from Australia. . . . the Republic is in our hands. We can save it together! I remember

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<sup>208</sup>This strip included a footnote that read, “Small and bearded, but great in soul and spirit, this is Julito 26, whose adventures, works, and concerns are and have been those of all who fought for this new *patria* of today and will continue sacrificing everything for it. Created in the Sierra Maestra, he comes to life again for this *pueblo* that he loves and that we all love.” The term *pueblo* literally means people, but in this case more than just as a nativist, or as a political citizen. *Pueblo* in revolutionary imagery assumes an almost patriotic, mystical spirit, one that evokes associations of a “goodness,” or “purity” in the Cuban people. Santiago Armada (Chago), “El Manengue Oportunista,” *Revolución*, January 24, 1959, 8.

<sup>209</sup>Chago, “Yo también mandé quinina,” *Revolución*, January 26, 1959, 16.



**JULITO 26 “Yo también mandé quinina” por Chago Armas**



**Figure 3.26** Chago, “I Also Sent Quinine,” *Revolución*, January 27, 1959, 11.

the Venturas, the Cañizares, etc. Terrible! It has all been a sacrifice” (Figure 3.26). At the end of his monologue, Julito 26 snidely awards January 2nd for his sacrifices by hitting him on the head with a bottle (literally *botella*, signifying sinecure) yelling, “Here! Here’s something for you, Insect!”<sup>210</sup> This installment of Julito 26 echoed ideas found in insurrectionist imagery: the appropriation of rebel dress; the protestations of sacrifices made during the period of insurrection; and the need to produce a laundry list of revolutionary acts when questioned. Through his strip, Chago accused opportunists of maneuvering against the Revolution, of longing for a return to the Republic, and of infiltration with treacherous intentions. Within the *Jultio 26* narrative, January 2nd deceitful tactics knew no bounds, but his plans remained thwarted, thanks to Julito 26 in whose hands, Cubans remained protected and safe. Julito 26 also provided readers with an imagined script of the rebel during peacetime. Though defeated,

<sup>210</sup>Cubans commonly referred to sinecures as a *botella* (bottle). Colonel Esteban Ventura, Batista’s police captain in Havana, and Colonel José Salas Cañizares, the police chief of Santiago de Cuba, were notorious for their violence and torture of members in the urban section of the 26 of July Movement. On July 30, 1957, Cañizares killed Frank País, the head the 26 of July Movement in Santiago de Cuba.

## JULITO 26 “Yo también mandé quinina” por Chago Armas

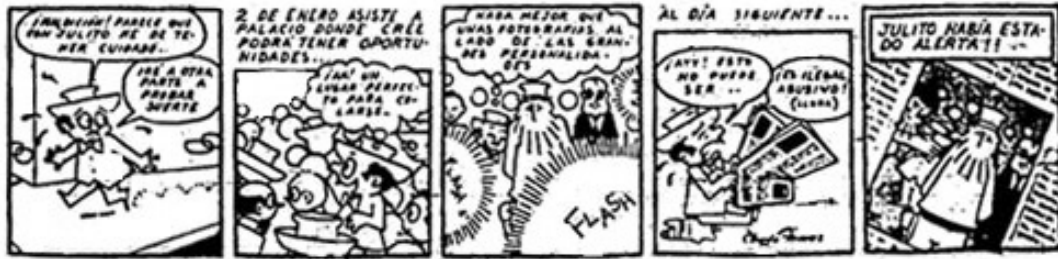


Figure 3.27 Chago, “I Also Sent Quinine,” *Revolución*, January 29, 1959, 2.

January 2nd recovered his edge as he tried to gain entrance into a government office, but once again, Julito 26 foiled his chances through intimidation. In another attempt at aligning himself with revolutionaries, January 2nd attended a mass rally at the Presidential Palace where he intended to network and gain access to high profile revolutionaries. As he stood on the platform next to Castro and posed for his photo, he mused, “There’s nothing better than a few photographs next to big personalities.” In opening up the newspaper the next day, January 2nd cried as he discovered that Julito 26 stepped into the photo and covered his face with his hand (Figure 3.27). Since the *botellas* typically depended on clientage, or political interest, Julito 26 ruined January 2nd’s chance at proving his political ties by obscuring his identity. The last frame read, “Julito was on alert!!” The saga continued as January 2nd dreamed of his *botella*, repeatedly donned 26 of July Movement disguises, and approached “Liberitos” on the street (Figure 3.28).<sup>211</sup> Dressed in a 26 of July Movement hat and waving a

<sup>211</sup>Liberito is a reference to Liborio, the original symbol for the Cuban people created by Ricardo de la Torriente in 1905. For more discussion on Liborio and

### JULITO 26 “Yo también mandé quinina” por Chago Arma



Figure 3.28 Chago, “I Also Sent Quinine,” *Revolución*, February 2, 1959, 19.

flag, January 2nd approached a Liborio as Julito 26 remained hidden, but “on alert.” Upon recognizing January 2nd in disguise, Julito 26 took action by dumping a bucket of water on his head. In the last frame, Chago noted, “January 2nd has been discovered. In the end, all falsehoods fade.”<sup>212</sup> This series centering on Julito 26 and his fight against political opportunism appeared at a critical juncture as the post-revolutionary identity of the rebel was being established by not only *Revolución*, but also conservative newspapers like *Diario de la Marina*, exemplified by Roseñada’s cartoons on the beard. For Roseñada, the rebels exerted social pressure, remained elusive, and represented the unobtainable. For Chago, rebels should “be on alert,” learn to distinguish a true supporter from pretenders, and confront opportunists; Liborio and the Revolution required protection. Chago’s *Julito 26* played a role in defining the revolutionary environment and what *Revolución*, and by extension, officials considered

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Torriente, see Chapter One.

<sup>212</sup>This be the last segment featuring both Jultio 26 and January 2nd. Chago Santiago Armada (Chago), “Yo también mandé quinina,” *Revolución*, February 2, 1959, 19.

dangerous and intolerable. It is within this less-than-rosy version of the rebel that one can measure the parameters of revolutionary power and control over the new political culture, social groups, and multiple meanings of citizenship. *Julito 26* represented the rebel, not his readers. Fans of *Julito 26* viewed a rebel behaving and



**Figure 3.29** Naya y Cía., *Revolución*, January 10, 1959, 6.

reacting to imagined situations as officials intended and in this way, Chago's strip served as a medium of visual indoctrination into the new rules for a new Cuba and its new citizen.

A lighter, more positive and virtuous side of the rebel image ran concurrent to its darker, visual associations like the insurrectionist and the political opportunist. Rebel leaders literally and figuratively changed the face of politics by attributing to it an untarnished reputation in contrast to the greed and corruption of the Republican, especially Batista period: "The *barbudos*, as they became known, did not drink, did not loot, they conducted themselves as if they were saints."<sup>213</sup> The rebel image, constructed in both advertisements and cartoons, evoked youth, discipline, humility, and selflessness. Naya y Cía, the manufacturers of Tornillo brand soap, featured a good-natured, smiling rebel holding a baby under a Cuban flag as the quintessential symbol of cleanliness and

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<sup>213</sup>Thomas, 1033.



**Figure 3.30** Bidopia, “At the Cleaners,”  
*Revolución*, January 21, 1959, 15.

patriotism (Figure 3.29). This piece nicely communicated important positive symbolic associations with progress, Cuba, future, patriotism, happiness, and youth. The text read, “In being Cubans . . . and only as modest and simple Cubans like these heroes that have returned from battle and for no other reason than our joy and that of our people, we happily pay tribute to those that have regained our liberty.” Selflessness, sacrifice, and honesty were rebel values diametrically opposed to those of Republican politicians and their many *botelleros*. In projecting an aura of purity around the rebel image, advertisers and cartoonists effectively narrowed the political and social field within the imagined narrative. Bidopia accentuated the 26 of July Movement’s claim of a clean past in his cartoon, “At the Cleaners” (Figure 3.30). As the attendant handed the rebel his laundered uniform he said, “I congratulate you; these uniforms have no stains.” This cartoon alluded to the political purity of the 26 of July Movement and the fact that its uniform had ‘no stains,’ or dirty past, signified trustworthiness and an increased expectation for real change. The corruption associated with past presidents and ineffectiveness of government in general weighed heavily on the public’s faith in politics and politicians. An emphasis on ethics and morality as part of the rebel image was essential to its success and the history of personal sacrifice and patriotism epitomized by the Sierra experience. This next cartoon titled “Popular

Indoctrination,” intended to solidify the differences between the rebel and Batista’s cronies by emphasizing stark change in terms of past and present (Figure 3.31). It began by warning its readers:

“Cubans, do not forget what we have won.” The “before” frame



**Figure 3.31** “Popular Indoctrination,” *Revolución*, April 15, 1959, 14.

centered on a Batista-era police officer demanding two more cigars as a tribute from a nervous grocer while the “after” frame illustrated a courteous rebel purchasing his goods from a now grateful grocer. The contrast between the two eras lies in the tone of the message: “collect, my friend.” The visual articulation of honesty as a core rebel virtue served to engender trust in Fidel Castro and his Revolutionary Government, as well as reinvigorate the public’s faith in politics.

The overwhelming amount of reforms and measures introduced during the first six months of the Revolution provided the ultimate thread of imagery for the development of action and progress as other core attributes of the rebel image.

These two qualities worked into a message that in essence argued the Revolutionary Government led the vanguard toward a new future. In his invaluable work *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (1995), Louis Pérez stated that in the first nine months of the Revolution, “an estimated 1500 decrees,

laws, and edicts were enacted.”<sup>214</sup> The Urban Reform reduced rents by up to fifty percent depending on wage levels and electricity and telephone rates. To alleviate the housing shortage in Havana, the Revolutionary Government sponsored a variety of construction projects, effectively decreasing unemployment. Afro-Cubans enjoyed access to previously restricted beaches and resorts.<sup>215</sup> Within the imagined narrative, Cubans stood at a spectator’s distance as supportive bystanders of revolutionary changes more so than active participants. Instead, the Revolutionary Government and specifically Fidel Castro, acted as the point of origin, enthusiasm, and executor of reform. The flurry of action and completion of nationalist-inspired projects nourished a radicalism within revolutionary society that in turn, generated a desire for more reform and strengthened the legitimacy of the rebel leadership and their vision for Cuba’s future. Images also directly sought to re-establish the public’s degree of trust and faith in government’s ability to effectively accomplish tasks previously considered utopian, or impossible. At the heart of this new confidence lies the authority and centrality of Castro’s political position, bolstered by his infectious personality, proven heroism, and unshakeable devotion to Cuba’s progress. Castro became an effective visual symbol in promoting an associations of security, action, honesty, and direct effectiveness in exacting revolutionary change. Cartoons published in newspapers *Noticias de Hoy* and *Revolución*

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<sup>214</sup>Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 319.

<sup>215</sup>*Ibid.*, 319-21.



**Figure 3.32** Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, September 27, 1959.

played an important role in introducing and educating Cubans on new reforms, in maintaining support for change through the enthusiasm and faith radiated by their protagonists, and in setting the tone of the revolutionary experience through their imagined scenarios.

### *Noticias de Hoy and Revolución*

cartoonists effectively distilled the complexity of reforms and regulated the manner in which

they were visually elaborated and emotionally consumed by their readers. Most of the pieces inked by Adigio Benítez, Chago, and Bidopia during these initial months of the Revolution focused on framing new laws and policies in an efficient, informative, and stylized manner. The predominance of the visual message over the textual explanation of reforms allowed for a faster transmission of subject matter and a more assured discernment of its meaning given a reader's time, or level of literacy. *Noticias de Hoy* cartoonist Adigio Benítez used the image of Fidel Castro to reinforce the authority of his list (Figure 3.32). This next example featured Castro



**Figure 3.33** Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, February 4, 1959.





Figure 3.34 Chago, “Julito 26,” *Revolución*, May 27, 1959, 13.

and Che Guevara backed by the Cuban people holding up signs naming reforms central to Cuba’s progress (industrialization and Agrarian Reform) and driving out the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, carrying banners reading “Hunger, Ignorance, Illiteracy, and Misery” (Figure 3.33). Under rebel leadership and with popular support, industrialization and the Agrarian Reform constituted an integral part of the fight against these social and economic barriers toward national progress and social justice. While certainly leaning toward the more dramatic, Adigio’s message could be easily deciphered and digested and its ominous atmosphere gave the piece an urgent quality. In general, *Revolución*’s cartoonists approached subjects more optimistically. Chago’s strip *Julito 26* evolved into a space for social, political, and economic commentary; it reflected the pulse of *Revolución*’s imagined Revolution during this first year. In this piece, *Julito 26* walked by two men discussing the ins-and-outs of Agrarian Reform (Figure 3.34). One man asked the other, “And what do you say about the 10 principal points of the Agrarian Reform?” As he passed by he heard the other respond “that they are better point by point!” Chago’s main message was not so much delivering a summary of the Agrarian Reform as projecting the idea of an revolutionary



Figure 3.35 Chago, “Julito 26,” *Revolución*, Mar. 18, 1959, 6.

community full of popular enthusiasm, discussion, and interest in change. His inclusion of the newspaper clipping listing the principal points, a reference to *Revolución*’s reliability for up-to-date news, was not formatted to be read easily, but the visual focus, dialogue, and Julito 26’s happy reaction largely drew the viewer’s attention. Some *Julito 26* samples simplified their message creatively and succinctly. In this example, Julito 26 informed Cubans labeled luxury goods, electric, and telephone taxes from an elevator that he was “going down!” (Figure 3.35) When he reached the bottom floor, he told the figure stamped standard of living he was “going up!” Simple, effective, efficient, yet informative, *Julito 26* articulated its messages for mass consumption, in other words, without code, intricate humor, and intellectual sophistication. In an attempt to increase revenue, the Revolutionary Government decreased the importation of over two hundred luxury goods (televisions, automobiles, cigarettes, etc.) in order to fund projects and recuperate the loss of income resulting from reforms and cuts. *Campo de Revolución*, the Sunday supplement to *Revolución*, featured this piece titled “What are Reserves?” in an attempt to help Cubans understand the decline in

imports on certain luxury goods (Figure 3.36).<sup>216</sup>

This piece illustrated by cartoonist Valdés-Díaz called “El Dinero,” represented the effectiveness in visually communicating the broader points of revolutionary reform (Figure 3.37). It cleverly characterized socio-economic and cultural differences between a malicious, overweight capitalist (the past) and Fidel Castro (the present/Revolution) into Manichean categories of



Figure 3.36

good versus evil. The top half illustrated what the capitalists “taught” Cubans: “to spend money on debauchery, parties, luxury clothing and jewelry, and gambling.” The bottom half highlighted what the Revolution, or Fidel intended to do now: “encourage nutritious foods, tourism, savings, and education.”<sup>217</sup> The text does not play a vital role in the meaning of the cartoon; the essence of the

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<sup>216</sup>The text read, “Cuba produces sugar, alcohol, honey, tobacco and other articles that are sold abroad to obtain dollars, which are the reserves. Reserves allowed us to buy foreign butter, rice, beans, and televisions. These foreign purchases have been more than what we have sold and as a result, we have lost reserves. The consequence has been unemployment, misery, delinquency, gambling, and prostitution and a miserable minority that has exploited the state of things are the beneficiaries. The Revolutionary Government proposes to buy more tractors and machinery so the *pueblo* can work; buy less automobiles, canned goods, air conditioning units, cigars and other luxury goods that come from abroad and can be produced in Cuba. In saving reserves, we can buy more tractors and machinery to employ more laborers without it costing more than what we earn from selling our national products abroad. “Qué son las divisas?” *Campo de Revolución*, no. 2, October 10, 1959, 10.

<sup>217</sup>Valdes Diaz, “El Dinero,” *Campo de Revolución*, October 31, 1959, 4.



Figure 3.37

piece can be gathered from assessing the reaction and disposition of the Cuban toward the capitalist and Fidel Castro. These images encapsulate some of the most important aspects of revolutionary cartoons and their function. Cartoons educated and transmitted the revolutionary message quickly, fitted it with an appropriate emotional tone, and reflected within it the proper response and reception expected from a model citizen.

Imagery focusing on the Agrarian Reform, one of the most controversial and divisive measures introduced by the Revolutionary Government during 1959, not only fueled the visualization of class difference in Cuban society, but provided a context for elevating the role of the rebel and particularly Fidel Castro by reawakening symbolic associations of heroism, vanguardism, and progress. During this year, the development of visual and textual references to patriotism, social justice, sacrifice, and the future in revolutionary imagery became very important. These allusions struck the right positive and nationalist chord around which to build enthusiasm, or simply to evoke guilt from a lack thereof. In the following cartoon “Drawing of the Agrarian Reform,” a typical peasant, working hard under



Figure 3.38 Lewis Cumpelda, *Revolución*, March 31, 1959, 7.



**Figure 3.39** Guerrero, *Revolución*, March 23, 1959, 13.

the sun, faced the harsh realities of the latifundia system (Figure 3.38). Despite the fact that the overseer evicted him, he dreamed of one day owning his own plot. Framed amid much celebration, Fidel Castro and his Agrarian Reform arrived; the farmer's "day had come!!" Along a

similar vein, "The Agrarian Reform" captured the sad and painful life of the Cuban peasant, forced to abandon the fruits of his labor (a lone flower) that he worked so hard to grow with his own sweat and tears (Figure 3.39). As he walked away dejected, his son (naked/poverty) cried out, "Papa, the flower!" to which his father responded, "Leave it son, it's not ours." Surprise and happiness took over when all of the sudden a voice called out, "One moment! . . . take it, it's yours." These pieces emphasized the symbol of Fidel Castro/rebel/Revolution's power to deliver real change, social justice, and promise for a brighter future. Cartoonists designed these pieces to rebuild the reader's sense of trust, faith, and hope in government. This next piece titled "Sowing the Seeds of the Future," Adigio tied together visual



**Figure 3.40** Adigio, "Sowing the Future of Cuba," *Noticias de Hoy*, September 5, 1959.

connections between revolutionary reform, Cuba's future, and the rebel as the catalyst (Figure 3.40) Its viewers were reminded that the INRA, through the



—¡Hoy estoy de fiesta!  
AFROBADA  
**Figure 3.41** Bidopia,  
“Approved,” *Revolución*, June  
4, 1959, 2.

work of its functionaries and the Rebel Army, distributed property titles and thus, framed a new future. Supporting and defending revolutionary measures also formed a constituent part of the role of revolutionary imagery and the press in general. The following pieces illustrated the contrasting styles found in *Revolución* and *Noticias de Hoy* cartoons (Figures 3.41 and 3.42). Bidopia’s piece showed a Cuban rejoicing at the passing of the Agrarian Reform law, insisting it was a “day of celebration!” The importance of this cartoon lay in its enthusiastic and joyous portrayal of the Cuban citizen’s reaction to the passing of the law, in other words, the new citizen should feel lucky, proud, and happy. Cartoonists needed to suggest the proper emotion and disposition the model citizen should have toward the Revolution as much as they were expected to inform and educate their viewers. In a departure from this sunnier approach, Adigio sought to evoke pride, strength, and intensity with his cartoon. In larger-than-life format, his rendition of the Cuban citizen, showing defiance, holding a victim of injustice, declared “Nothing, or no one can stop the Agrarian Reform and the Revolution!” As a whole, these cartoons did not necessarily provide any detailed



**Figure 3.42** Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*,  
October 23, 1959.

policy information on the Agrarian Reform, but they did establish the attitude, politics, significance, and emotion the Revolutionary Government desired Cubans to appropriate with regards to what it considered the centerpiece of its reform platform.

Although less versatile in terms of creativity and their ability to shape the imagined narrative, advertisements for ministries supplemented information on government projects and activity, detailing expenditures and progress tailored to project an image of efficiency, honesty, and responsibility. Now working under revolutionary control, government

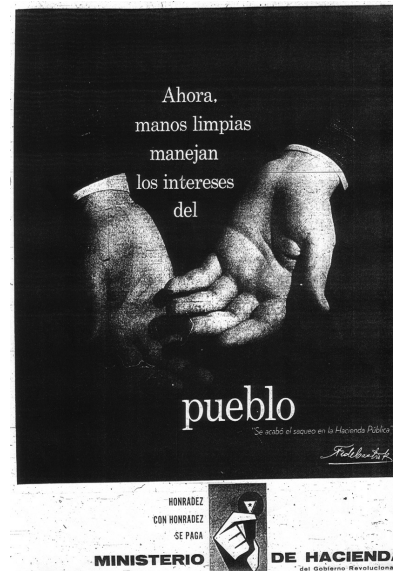


Figure 3.43

ministries functioned as the driving forces behind the organization and implementation of revolutionary projects. These advertisements, not yet considered state-produced, but instead outsourced to pre-revolutionary era advertising agencies like McCann-Erickson, Guastella, Siboney, Mestre-Conill and OTPLA, informed and sold the Revolutionary Government's reforms and vision. Taking into consideration the fact that nearly every Cuban administration since 1933 routinely embezzled from the Ministry of Treasury, it now attempted to shed its image as a source for the enrichment of corrupt politicians. Its new slogan "Honesty with Honesty Pays" reflected the government's attempt at building a new relationship with Cubans, one based on trust (Figure 3.43). In this visually simple, yet effective July advertisement, the Treasury directly

communicated its new identity: “Now, clean hands manage the interests of the people.”<sup>218</sup> To officiate this statement, a quote by Fidel Castro appeared at the bottom along with his signature that read,

“Taking from the public treasury is over.”

Revolutionary projects cost money and public perception of past government spending remained skeptical at best. Advertisements during this first year often cited actual figures, organized into type



Figure 3.44

of expenditure. This emphasis on transparency reflected the government’s mission to project an self-image free of corruption, waste, and embezzlement. This advertisement for the Ministry of Commerce itemized the three hundred million pesos returned to Cubans through the Revolutionary Government’s fiscally-sound cuts on imports, taxes, and prices on basic necessities (Figure 3.44). Each block represents a category, or item of reduction, reporting the amount saved, and a brief summary of the steps taken by the Ministry to achieve these results.<sup>219</sup> At the bottom of the piece, two patriotic and national symbols, a machete—a sign for sugar and imperialism, but in the revolutionary context, redefined as strength, independence, and anti-imperialism, and the hat

<sup>218</sup>Ministerio de Hacienda, “Ahora, manos limpias manejan los intereses del pueblo,” *Revolución*, July 27, 1959, 23.

<sup>219</sup>Ministerio de Comercio, “Más de 300 millones de pesos revertidos al pueblo por las leyes y medidas del gobierno revolucionario,” *Revolución*, September 2, 1959, 4.



(*Mambises*/independence effort) typically seen on Liborio, re-emphasized the idea of the Ministry working toward a national well-being. In March 1959, the Ministry of Public Works reported its review of past contracts and its progress on completing projects and published advertisements arguing that the public would finally benefit from its investments. After their assessment of the construction contracts entered over fourteen years ago, the Revolutionary Government “granted a credit of \$2,155,000.00 to finish these hospital centers so in the end, they can serve the interests of the people to whom they belong.”<sup>220</sup> The bottom, right-hand corner of the ad listed the hospitals to receive credit, the time spent on their construction to date, the amount invested before the Revolution, and the credit available from the Revolutionary Government. This technique aimed to strengthen the Ministry’s image of administrative accountability and responsibility and beyond this, a perception of the Revolutionary Government as honest, effective, and productive.

*Revolución*’s cartoonists created scenes of Havana street-life a buzz with change, promise, enthusiasm, and faith. Bidopia and Chago fueled this atmosphere by filling their pieces with protagonists sporting rosy and excited dispositions toward the Revolution and its plans for the future. In Bidopia’s cartoon “Treatment,” a 26 of



**Figure 3.45** Bidopia, “Treatment,” *Revolución*, February 5, 1959, 13.

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<sup>220</sup>Ministerio de Obras Públicas, *Revolución*, “Ahora se terminarán,” March 6, 1959, 7.



Figure 3.46 Chago, “Julito,” *Revolución*, March 11, 1959, 14.

July Movement doctor performing an examination, told his patient, “Only one month and you can already see you’ve improved!” (Figure 3.45) Chago set *Julito 26*’s action in the streets of the city and in doing so, facilitated the development of a richer exchange between his rebel figure and his audience both inside and outside the imagined narrative. In this next example, an excited citizen engaged an amused *Julito 26* in a recounting of new reforms: “Ah! This is marvelous, first the Agrarian Reform, measures against gambling, then gas, telephone, electricity, etc. and now finally, a reduction in rental rates. What do you think *Julito*?” Pointing to Fidel in the background carving a stone, *Julito* responded, “Nothing, the man keeps hammering the chisel” (Figure 3.46). Cartoonists built up the perception of success around reforms and pride in Fidel/Revolution/Revolutionary Government’s persistence in protecting their progression and fruition. During the first months of the Revolution, Bidopia and Chago ran a thread of imagery that suggested a growing faith in the Revolutionary Government and that it indeed intended to further a nationalist, revolutionary program unlike any previously promised by Republican



EN ORIENTE  
—¿Qué tienes que estás tan contento?...  
—¡Mucha fe!

**Figure 3.47** Bidopia, “In Oriente,” *Revolución*, February 26, 1959, 4.

administrations. As the Revolution radicalized, easing tension and promoting an impression of support for the Revolution and the material value of reforms within the imagined narrative became important. In Bidopia’s “In Oriente,” one peasant asked another, “What’s going on with you that you’re so happy?” The other responded, “A lot of faith” (Figure 3.47). This cartoon indicated that even in

Oriente, hundreds of miles from Havana, Cubans were not only touched by the Revolution, but had faith in it. Under the title “Things Change,” Chago set Julito 26 in the Sierra Maestra, a region significant to revolutionary symbolism, and highlighted several key ideas circulating within *Revolución*’s imagery: honesty, change, and faith in the future (Figure 3.48). The strip centered on a peasant panicking and running from airplanes he assumed aggressive (aerial bombings conducted by Batista’s army during the guerrilla war). “Run Maria! Save the kids, they are reverting to their old ways!” he exclaimed. Julito 26 appeared to



**Figure 3.48** Chago, “Things Change,” *Revolución*, February 7, 1959, 12.

calm their fears saying, “One moment friends! See, now they are presents and well-wishes for everyone!” In the last frame, as the kids sit and play with their toys, the peasant responds, “Yes Julito, now I see how things have changed.” Certainly, trust in the Revolutionary Government and the belief that it only held the best intentions for Cuba’s future constituted a significant message to transmit during these first



EL GUAGUERO  
—Ahí anda desde que fue a la asamblea con Fidel.  
**Figure 3.49** Bidopia, “The Bus Driver,” *Revolución*, April 1, 1959, 2.

months of political, social, and economical uncertainty. A need to promote the appearance of the public’s love and reverence for Fidel Castro in particular came through in pieces like Bidopia’s “Bus Driver” (Figure 3.49). Upon noting the bus driver, who was clearly overwhelmed with admiration and love, two men commented, “He’s been like that since he attended the assembly with Fidel.”<sup>221</sup> Castro’s imagined figure signified tranquility, peace, adoration, and promise. In

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<sup>221</sup>The Plaza of the Revolution functioned as a public, patriotic space where one could witness and experience the magnitude of the revolutionary support and power, as well as strengthen their bond with their “Máximo Líder.” It assumes, even to this day, the revolution’s most tangible, convincing, and spectacular form when it is filled with cheering crowds of revolutionaries. Che Guevara described this relationship: “His [Fidel] own special way of fusing himself with the people can be appreciated only by seeing him in action. At the great public mass meetings one can observe something like the dialogue of two tuning forks whose vibrations interact, producing new sounds. Fidel and the mass begin to vibrate together in a dialogue of growing intensity until they reach the climax in an abrupt conclusion crowned by our cry of struggle and victory.” Ernesto Guevara, “Socialism and Man in Cuba (1965)” in *Che Guevara Reader: Writings by Ernesto Che Guevara on Guerrilla Strategy, Politics, and Revolution*, ed. by David Deutschmann (Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press, 1997), 200.



Figure 3.50 Chago, *Revolución*, May 7, 1959, 3.

early May 1959, Castro traveled to South America to speak at an OAS meeting in Buenos Aires. *Revolución* cartoonists began preparing for his return. Chago designed a series of *Julito 26* to increase the buzz and stir up Cubans' enthusiasm in anticipation of his arrival. Inspired by news events, this piece echoed the gesture of U.S. Ambassador Philip Bonsal in meeting Castro at the airport (Figure 3.50). A Cuban asked another carrying chairs, lunch, and a thermos as he passed by, "Hey, where are you going with all of that?" As Julito 26 happily looked on, the man responded, "To the airport, to sit there and wait for Fidel!" A culture of adoration for Fidel Castro within Chago and Bidopia's imagined narrative formed during this early period; yet as the Revolution confronted other challenges, this use "Fidel" as a motivating, legitimizing figure diminished. The rebel image became synonymous with Fidel Castro as much as he in turn, reflected the Revolution as a whole. To love Castro assumed a love of the Revolution. Bidopia's "Tranquil Dreams" succinctly encapsulated the emotion and relationship *Revolución*, as the official 26 of July Movement's newspaper, considered appropriate between Cubans and their leaders toward the end of the Revolution's first year (Figure 3.51). This sense of tranquility did not last long



SUESO TRANQUILLO

**Figure 3.51** Bidopia, “Tranquil Dreams,” *Revolución*, August 12, 1959, 2.

either inside, or outside the imagined narrative.

As the presence of internal and external enemies, as well as dissenters increasingly fueled a radicalization within revolutionary politics, the need to integrate Cubans into the process of “building the Revolution” grew to the point where the parameters reflected in the imagined narrative

for citizens to negotiate their own freedom slowly

deteriorated. As early as January 1959, a culture

of campaign, of participation, of support for the Revolution developed and imagery played an indispensable role in organizing, perpetuating, and normalizing its existence. Before the formation of mass organizations like the CDR, however, the revolutionary imagery began soliciting Cubans, in varying degrees of obligation and integration, to participate in national, or locally-organized projects. Integration began with participation and within the imagined narrative, this appeared in the form of requesting citizens perform a task, volunteer their skills, or simply follow pieces of advice favorable to the course of the Revolution. The first post-revolutionary mass campaign formed spontaneously with Cubans placing signs all over Havana reading, ‘Gracias, Fidel!’ in anticipation of his arrival for the mass rally on January 8. Mirta Muñoz commented in her book *La publicidad en Cuba, mito y realidad* (2003) that “the *Gracias, Fidel* appearing on the doors of the homes around the entire country was

the first step toward extending the revolutionary message in a printed medium.”<sup>222</sup>

This impulsive show of support did not necessarily carry weighted expectation, or consequences. As the Revolution progressed, it became more difficult for Cubans to remain aloof to its requests for time, work, and alliance. As the revolutionary expectations intensified outside the image world, image producers exert a tone that assumed certain rituals, norms, and values, particularly collectiveness and unity, existed. This assumption that readers were integrated revolutionaries deepened the degree of revolutionariness within the imagined narrative itself and a new confidence emerged in the visual propagation of new values. In other words, in presupposing the “revolutionariness” of its audience, a radicalization in the visual and rhetorical qualities of revolutionary imagery occurred and transformed them into effective agents of propaganda.

The push by cartoons, editorial, government, and private advertisements alike for Cubans to “Consume Cuban Products” reflected the first coordinated visual effort to integrate citizens into the revolutionary process. This campaign largely grew out of an exposition of Cuban products held at the School of Medicine from April 5-11, 1959, and organized by the Association of Medical Students called “Operation Cuban Industry.”<sup>223</sup> It depended on the voluntary and

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<sup>222</sup>Mirta Muñoz, *La publicidad en Cuba*, 81.

<sup>223</sup>Mirta Muñoz noted that this campaign grew beyond the scope of the medical school as industrialists and business owners began to request advertisements through the Association of Advertisers of Cuba (AAC) to ingratiate themselves with the Revolutionary Government amidst rumors of post-victory property expropriations. Mirta Muñoz, interview by author, tape recording, Havana, Cuba, August 10, 2005.



Figure 3.52 *Revolución*, March 17, 1959, 16.

informal willingness of consumers to participate and thus, did not hold the individual directly accountable for not complying. Much of its success hinged on a Cuban's patriotic consciousness and desire to cooperate in a larger national project. On March 27, the Medical Association published an advertisement in *Noticias de Hoy* inviting the "Gentlemen Industrialists that craft, process, or manufacture Cuban products" to participate in the exposition.<sup>224</sup>

*Revolución* created a template for the campaign that utilized the same text, but changed the product and its image in each new piece (Figures 3.52).<sup>225</sup> This advertisement tied support for the campaign to support for the Revolution. Thus, buying Cuban products represented a revolutionary act. The campaign soon trickled into cartoons and *Noticias de Hoy*'s Adigio and *Revolución*'s Chago promoted it in their own particular styles. Adigio's piece cuts to the heart of the imperialist, economic relationship between Cuba and the United States (Figure 3.53). Uncle Sam, drawn wearing a cigarette girl costume, approached a defiant

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<sup>224</sup>Asociación de Estudiantes de Medicina, "Operación Industria Cubana," *Noticias de Hoy*, March 27, 1959, 4.

<sup>225</sup>Each headline read, "You must help . . .! When you [smoke Cuban cigarettes/buy Cuban fabrics], you also are making REVOLUTION." Inside the graphic a smaller text said, "Each Cuban should put in their grain of sand and proclaim with pride that what Cuba produces is as good as the best." Other products featured included beer and cooking oil.





**Figure 3.53** Adigio, “Consume Cuban Products,” *Noticias de Hoy*, February 17, 1959.

Cuban with his arm stretched in a gesture of dismissal; the bottom line read, “Consume Cuban Products.” Louis Pérez suggested the consumption of Cuban products geared to stimulate industry reflected a broader process of “contested terrain.” He noted that in April 1959 Castro commented, “We have been Cubanizing Cuba, and we ourselves lived imbued with that type of complex of doubt, of

resignation and where we undervalued the interest of our nationality before things foreign. We lived with the sensation that everything here was bad.”<sup>226</sup> Chago supported the push to “buy Cuban,” illustrating through *Julito 26* that spending money on Cuban products kept revenue in Cuban hands (Figure 3.54).<sup>227</sup>

Cartoons and advertisements often used nationalism mixed with guilt to varying degrees in order to persuade readers into participating in revolutionary projects. In early 1960, the Cuban Electric Company also created a template that urged Cubans to consume Cuban products, but instead of highlighting an item and connecting it to the Revolution, it emphasized the benefit that support from each

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<sup>226</sup>Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 482. For more discussion on the manifestation of renewed nationalism, see Pérez, 482-485.

<sup>227</sup>In this piece, Castro grabbed a dollar (symbolizing foreign exchange) and said, “Come here, you are a Cuban product and you will stay here” while *Julito 26* watched and commented, “Operation Rescue.” In the next frame, *Julito 26*, eyeing Cuban products, addressed his readers: “Remember, consume Cuban products.” Chago, *Revolución*, April 7, 1959, 15.

**JULITO 26**



**por Chago Armas**



**Figure 3.54** Chago, *Revolución*, April 7, 1959, 15.

consumer could bring to certain economic sectors and the nation (Figure 3.55).

This example insisted that in buying Cuban products, job opportunities for engineers, architects, chemists, and other technicians grew and that “the consumer carries the patriotic duty to influence the products of national industry.”<sup>228</sup>

National progress became the mobilizing logic for this revolutionary program. Considering the pervasiveness and popularity of the American product in Cuban society, this plea may have proved formidable for many and certainly difficult to measure in terms of the public’s response.

Nevertheless, the imagery promoting this campaign



**Figure 3.55** Cuban Electric Co., *Bohemia*, August 14, 1960, 113.

<sup>228</sup> Another entry featured a Cuban housewife, yet it centered more on the effect buying Cuban products would have on employment and agriculture. The ad read, “If you consume products from our soil, you are contributing to the development of our agriculture. If you buy our products preferentially, you are helping the industrialization of our country. The more national products you consume, the more wealth to our agricultural sector, and the more industries will employ more Cubans.” Cia. Cubana de Electricidad, *Revolución*, March 14, 1960, 20.



**Figure 3.56** Ministerio de Salud Pública, *Revolución*, August 28, 1959, 5.

reveals the coordination between cartoonists and advertisers, their manipulation of nationalism as a selling tool, and the construction of templates to facilitate the process of propaganda. It is important to remember that at this point before late 1960, American and Cuban advertising companies operated under their pre-revolutionary staffs, owners, and stylistic precepts. Their approach toward advertising remained shaped by their motivation to sell a

product, the only difference after the Revolution was the application of revolutionary logic and slogans to their pieces. The state-run advertising company Intercommunications did not form until January 1961. The need to incorporate, or obligate citizens into fulfilling requests from the Revolutionary Government grew and this demand affected the tone of imagery by sharpening the degree of expectation and the urgency in its construction and delivery.

By late 1959, ministerial advertisements and cartoons suggested a gradual integration of citizens into the revolutionary process and a developing culture of participation in civic acts and campaigns. Much like the push to “consume Cuban products,” these requests demanded a degree of participation difficult to measure and that in the end, could not assume immediate action in response. In August 1959, the Ministry of Public Health advertised medical positions as “a new battle

with a new uniform” to help poor families in the Sierra Maestra (Figure 3.56).<sup>229</sup>

The most eye-catching message in this piece, “The Revolution Needs Doctors” with the words “in the Countryside” in smaller print, left little doubt that this call for assistance came as a direct, official request from revolutionary authorities. The usage of the words battle and uniform evoked a symbolic reference to the revolutionary struggle in the Sierra Maestra, which added an overall attraction with the prospect of appropriating a rebel-like identity for two, or three months helping those “abandoned in our camps.” No institutional structure existed to enforce this request and the freedom of choice remained under the reader’s control. In another advertisement, the



Figure 3.57

Ministry of Agriculture asked Cubans to gather and donate seeds to grow fruit trees in this “great task to end the year. . . . Be one of those that makes the repopulation of fruit trees possible in this Year of Liberation by gathering seeds and bringing them to the nearest police station, or school”<sup>230</sup> (Figure 3.57). In its final message to its readers, the Ministry charged, “Don’t disappoint the Revolution in this noble campaign! Each seed that you throw away is a tree that

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<sup>229</sup>Ministerio de Salubridad, “La revolución necesita medicos,” *Noticias de Hoy*, August 28, 1959, 5.

<sup>230</sup>Ministerio de Agricultura, “Una gran tarea para este fin de año,” *Noticias de Hoy*, December 17, 1959, 6.



**Figure 3.58** Ministerio de Obras Públicas, *Revolución*, August 20, 1959, 5.

could have been!” It requested immediate action on behalf of the Revolution and made it clear that an unwillingness to comply not only meant the campaign’s failure, but a disappointment to the Revolution itself. The readers still retained the choice to ignore the advertisement’s attempt at inducing guilt for non-compliance. Nevertheless, the advertisement’s link between the campaign and the Revolution ultimately reflected a

broader trend inside and outside the imagined narrative to make the Revolution a citizen’s primary focus. Imagery included associations of action, involvement, efficiency, and success to propagating revolutionary projects. It also became important to create an imagined narrative full of snapshots (illustrated, or photographed), capturing engaged and enthusiastic Cubans. Backed by the slogan “Revolution is Construction,” this Ministry of Public Works advertisement centered on informing readers that from January to August, it had employed over sixty thousand Cubans in projects sponsored by the Revolutionary Government: “These men, soldiers of construction, understand they have to be increasingly efficient, since more and more they know that creating resources and facilities increases the productivity of our *pueblo*; this is the equivalent of the definitive triumph of the Revolution” (Figure 3.58). In essence, its message read that a fine line existed between employment, efficiency, and action and the success of the



**Figure 3.59** Bidopia, “Advice,”  
*Revolución*, September 7, 1959, 29.

Revolution. Publishing the number of participants, in this case sixty thousand, impressed upon readers the magnitude of revolutionary projects and the effectiveness of the Revolution in general. The idea that a citizen’s labor directly related to the course of the Revolution and by extent the country, also proved to be a recurring theme in revolutionary

imagery. Cartoonists Adigio (*Noticias de Hoy*), Bidopia (*Revolución*), and Pecruz (José Cruz Montaña, *Bohemia*) propagated a rise in public participation in revolutionary projects. The time had arrived for Cubans to take a hands-on approach to revolutionary life and become active

(Figure 3.59). In this piece by Bidopia titled “Advice,” a doctor suggested to his patient, “Do something . . . for example, teach an illiterate how to read!” Adigio’s cartoon communicated its message directly: “A step to the front” (Figure 3.60). This January 1960 cartoon by Pecruz titled “Second Year,” featured Castro watching a determined Cuban (in traditional Liborio-style dress) pull up his sleeve

(Figure 3.61). The caption read, “Let’s roll up our sleeves since we still have a



**Figure 3.60** Adigio, “A Pass to the Front,” *Noticias de Hoy*, November 19, 1959.



**Figure 3.61** Pecruz, “Second Year,” *Bohemia*, January 17, 1960, 126.

lot to do.”<sup>231</sup> The Revolutionary Government, through its ministry advertisements and with the support of revolutionary cartoonists, increasingly called its citizens to action and this in turn, incrementally transformed the style and tone of dialogue between the image world and its reader. Eventually, the deepening of this dialogue from one of casual persuasion to one of urgent demand exemplified one of the differences between commercial advertisements and their more

revolutionary evolution.

Some government projects enticed and incorporated Cubans into the revolutionary experience by extending direct benefits to their participants. On February 29, 1959, the Revolutionary Government created the National Institute of Housing and Savings (Instituto Nacional de Ahorro y Viviendas, INAV) to function as a lottery, or savings account that in turn, sponsored the building of thousands of houses. Unlike other government institutions, the INAV did not receive its funding from the Revolutionary Government, but depended the sale of vouchers. These vouchers could be cashed in at one hundred and ten percent of their value in five years, or less if redeemed before their maturity; in this way, Cubans could eventually own a home. In addition to explaining the importance of

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<sup>231</sup>Pecruz, “Segundo Año,” *Bohemia*, January 17, 1960, 126.



Figure 3.62 INAV, *Revolución*, September 19, 1959, 10.

purchasing vouchers (*bonos*) every week, INAV advertisements boasted the strength and frantic work of its laborers, who after six months grew increasingly near their goal of building ten thousand homes by December 1959 (Figure 3.62). With an actual photograph of men building and a mass of Cubans underneath, the INAV insisted that “these houses rise up because there is a *pueblo* on its feet.”<sup>232</sup> By 1960, the

INAV boasted the completion of ten thousand homes and defined itself as a mechanism that embraced “all the doctrine of the Revolution. It is the *pueblo* working, saving, creating, hand in hand with the State. It is the new confidence.”<sup>233</sup> It contained a language evoking important revolutionary values inspired by the example of the rebel: action, progress, future, and trust. It also

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<sup>232</sup>Instituto Nacional de Ahorro y Vivienda (INAV), “Estas casas se levantan porque hay un pueblo de pie,” *Revolución*, September 19, 1959, 10.

<sup>233</sup>*De la renta de Lotería al INAV de hoy* identified applicants as “Workers, professionals, and students buy the vouchers . . . [vouchers] are the credentials of the new Cubans, of the new Cuba of today.” Instituto Nacional de Ahorro y Vivienda, Departamento de Prensa y Relaciones Públicas, *De la renta de lotería al INAV de hoy* (Havana: Imprenta C.T.C. Revolucionaria, 1960), 15 and 16. In another pamphlet *A través del INAV, cómo obtener su casa*, the INAV noted that by April 4, 1961 they had received 40,155 solicitors. It required solicitors to meet certain criteria in order to qualify for housing: “Be in need of a home; hold a stable job; be a pensioner or retired, of good morals and conduct; and that no solicitor, or family member suffer from a contagious, or infectious disease.” The solicitor also had to provide a “workplace certificate where as proof of employment and good conduct.” INAV, *A través del INAV, cómo obtener su casa* (Havana: s.n., 1961), 9.





**Figure 3.63** INAV, *Carteles*, November 29, 1959, 2.

projected a new *pueblo* increasingly becoming enthusiastically and truly revolutionary.

Those who contributed to the INAV would be entered into a special lottery to win a new home, and not just any home, but an modern home “with an entryway, living room, dining room, three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a

porch.”<sup>234</sup> The INAV ad campaign featured a new clean and contemporary life gained from

buying vouchers (Figure 3.63). Under the headline, “Buying vouchers, you can make

your own happiness,” this advertisement centered on a mother tending to her new garden as she watched her husband arrive home and greet their daughter on her tricycle. “And how happy you will feel,” it continued, “of knowing you are cooperating in a honest and clean way with one of the most generous works of the Revolution: the construction of your own home and one for all Cubans!”<sup>235</sup> The INAV thus provided a “clean and honest” project that both benefitted the participant, as well as society at large and incorporated him, or her into the

<sup>234</sup>INAV, “Su casa ‘nueva’,” *Noticias de Hoy*, September 12 , 1959, 4. The INAV had various models and floor plans, and boasted the completion of 10,000 homes in its first year of construction. INAV, “Como dijo Fidel: 10,000 casas en un año,” *Revolución*, February 20, 1960, 13.

<sup>235</sup>INAV, “Comprando bonos usted puede hacer su felicidad,” *Carteles*, November 29, 1959, 2.

Revolution. The implications of obtaining purity and happiness by sharing in revolutionary projects instead of remaining outside of them foreshadowed a concept that would only intensify as the Revolution progressed. In their April 1960 ad, the INAV provided readers with proof that “one more house . . . another happy family” (Figure 3.64).<sup>236</sup> Father and son, Juan y Pío Socarrás,

won a home worth \$5,000, winning week after week over other competing couples in the cultural program sponsored by the National Institute of Housing and Savings, “Winning and Saving.” You can also have your own home. Buy vouchers from the INAV every week, since the more vouchers you buy, the more the INAV can construct, and you will have more opportunity to have your own home.



**Figure 3.64** INAV, *Revolución*, April 5, 1960, 3.

The strength of this advertisement lay in its use of photography featuring real winners, who through their incorporation and integration into the INAV program, provided the narrative and its readers with an authentic example of success within the revolutionary experience. Photographs added an aura of authenticity and actuality by injecting the outside world into the imagined, endowing it with a documentary edge. Isolated

revolutionary projects like those sponsored by different ministries initiated a culture of participation both inside and outside

<sup>236</sup>INAV, “Una casa más,” *Revolución*, April 5, 1960, 3.

imagery. This increasing tendency to ask readers to become engaged in projects and events beyond their personal lives marked the beginnings of what in essence reflected an appropriation of the Cuban citizen by the Revolution.

The nationalization of privately-owned American and Cuban industry generated a thread of imagery that placed the Cuban worker in the position of protagonist, benefactor, and protector of an historic and patriotic victory, earned within the broader revolutionary struggle to achieve economic independence. In mid June 1960, Castro announced the nationalization of oil refineries owned by Esso, Shell, and Texaco in response to their refusal to process Soviet crude purchased under trade agreements made in early February. This act led to a chain of retaliations between the Cuban and American governments that ended in the rupture of diplomatic relations by January 1961.<sup>237</sup> The Cuban Institute of Petroleum, created to organize oil nationalization and direct production, published a series of advertisements assuring readers that “the petroleum kept on coming”

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<sup>237</sup>Other industries, both Cuban and American, underwent a period of state control, or “intervention” before nationalization. In his essay “The Economics of the Cuban Revolution,” Robin Blackburn noted that in the mid-1960, the Revolutionary Government had gained two hundred million dollars in assets from various takeovers, e.g., the Match Trust firms; the Matanzas bus company; Cuba’s largest textile mill; the telephone company; four frozen fish companies; and Havana’s twenty four leather supply companies. James Nelson Goodsell, *Fidel Castro’s Personal Revolution in Cuba: 1959-1973* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 41. On July 9, 1960, six hundred American companies were ordered to present affidavits of raw materials, spare parts, and files. During the months of August and September, the Revolutionary Government nationalized all American property including banks. On October 24, the U.S. retaliated by imposing a trade embargo on Cuba (with the exception of foodstuffs and medicines). During this same month, 382 Cuban owned companies (sugar refineries, banks, and wholesale and retail businesses) were expropriated. Jorge Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1978), 146-47.



**Figure 3.65** Instituto Cubano del Petróleo, *Revolución*, July 20, 1960, 11.

(Figure 3.65). Generated on behalf of Shell Oil of Cuba, “now under Revolutionary Administration,” this piece affirmed that “with renewed enthusiasm and patriotic fervor, the technicians and workers of the Shell Refinery labored arduously to maintain the normal rhythm of supply and

perfect distribution.” Next to a photograph of a worker, the Institute announced, “The Revolution won a new battle and the personnel, as always, has responded: present!” These ads elevated the position of the worker within the imagined narrative of national production. He, or she became the new hero tied to an historic moment that signified a fresh sense of belonging not only to these nationalized companies, but to a brighter future as an integral participant in the Revolution. In short, like the rebel, the worker became part of a liberating process toward another greater Cuban independence. In late October, *Bohemia*’s Pecruz published “The Nationalization,” illustrating a Cuban dressed in traditional Liborio-style clothing and a worker shaking hands (Figure 3.66). In a gesture of unity and congratulations, the Cuban



**Figure 3.66** Pecruz, “The Nationalization,” *Bohemia*, October 30, 1960, 112.

said, “Oh good, now we speak the same language!” With this piece, he impressed upon his readers the idea that working under American ownership equaled being a foreigner in your own country. Cuban industries and businesses, had also succumbed to nationalization and this occurrence found little play within the imagined narrative. The loss of property to the Revolutionary Government became overshadowed by the message emphasizing and celebrating a newfound independence. Fernández observed this patriotic revival, perpetuated and informed by the Revolutionary Government, provided Cubans “a measure of comfort by making sense of a world that was rapidly changing around them [Cubans]. . . . The language of the politics of passion referred to recurrent themes of Cuban history (including the relationship with the United States, social equity, economic diversification, honest democratic conduct in public affairs) and to the aspirations for a moral sovereign political community. As such it was an autochthonous cultural expression, meaningful to the Cuban people.”<sup>238</sup> In an ad decorated by a simple Cuban flag (independence/nationalism), the workers at the soap factory of Crusellas, Sabatés y Gravi, a company known to have one of the largest and most diverse advertising departments before the Revolution, wrote:

the employees, workers, salesmen, artists, and radio announcers working for Crusellas, Sabatés y Gravi, joyously and enthusiastically support the recent Law 890 that nationalized 382 companies . . . . The Revolutionary Government has once again taken a valiant, expedient, and decisive step against aggressions and in measuring the feelings of the people, acted with proper

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<sup>238</sup>Fernández, 67.



Figure 3.67

drive and rose to safeguard the economy and our country's sovereignty.<sup>239</sup>

Other companies like Arechabala, one of Cuba's largest distilleries, not only pledged its support for nationalizations, but declared it would "march at the head of the progressive industries of the country."

Today, the workers and staff of Arechabala feel joy toward the nationalizations that put our industry in the hands of the people and constitutes a solid pillar

in attaining total independence and sovereignty of

our country" (Figure 3.67).<sup>240</sup> Similar to the vows of support for the rebels during the early days of January 1959, these advertisements, published on behalf of the workers, emphasized not only their patriotic pride and faith in the revolutionary process, but also a protectionist and aggressive attitude directed against the United States in particular. They reflected an important coupling of concepts within the visual script; an integrated Cuban population affecting a monumental

<sup>239</sup>At the bottom of this ad, the words, "Patria o Muerte, Venceremos!" appeared; it became the Revolution's most circulated slogan. In the month before *Bohemia* published this piece, Siboney advertising, a subsidiary of Crusellas, Sabatés y Gravi (owned by Colgate/Palmolive and Proctor and Gamble), became the first firm to be nationalized. Crusellas, Sabatés y Gravi followed with its employees either finding positions at the Consolidation of Publicity (COP), established by the Ministry of Labor and the Industrialization section of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), or seeking employment outside advertising. Crusellas, Sabatés y Gravi, *Bohemia*, October 23, 1960, 54.

<sup>240</sup>Arechabala was a Cuban owned, founded by Spanish immigrants in 1878. Arechabala, S.A., "Una nación con industrias propias es un pueblo libre," *Revolución*, November 28, 1960, 11.

moment in Cuban history against the country's most symbolic and threatening enemy.

An aggression toward domestic and foreign enemies within the revolutionary imagined narrative intensified as the confrontation over the nationalization of Cuban and American industry peaked. The need to nurture a revolutionary, civic consciousness grew out of the radicalization of the Revolution as it responded to internal and external crises that threatened its survival as its first year came to a close. Though Hugh Thomas insisted in his work *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom* (1998) that “Castro’s own temperament required tension and probably demanded an enemy,” acts of sabotage and terrorism against the Revolution added to the climate of polarization. On June 13, 1959, a series of bombs exploded during a mass rally in Havana. Subsequently, a clause applying the death penalty for those guilty of “counter-revolutionary” acts was amended to the Constitution of 1940.<sup>241</sup> In October, six or seven small planes reportedly left Miami and dropped explosive devices over the Pinar del Río, damaging the Niagara Sugar Mill.<sup>242</sup> Around the same time, Hubert Matos, the Rebel Army Commander in Camagüey, resigned in protest to “Communist infiltration” among his troops and Díaz Lanz, the head of the Rebel Air Force, piloted a two-engine B25 bomber from Florida to Havana and dropped leaflets

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<sup>241</sup>Thomas, 1238.

<sup>242</sup>Fidel Castro, “The Revolution is Here to Stay, October 26, 1959” (Havana: Editorial Marcha, 1959) 4-5. Thomas noted that among the twenty men captured after the bombings on 11 October, two of the pilots were American. Thomas, 1243.

(he signed himself) claiming Castro was a Communist.<sup>243</sup> The Revolutionary Government warned citizens of more attacks and became increasingly concerned with rumors circulating that Eisenhower planned an invasion of Cuba before the end of his term in office.<sup>244</sup> Rafael Díaz Balart, Fidel Castro's brother-in-law and former Batista youth leader, formed the first counter-revolutionary movement in exile, the White Rose, while other groups like the Revolutionary Rescue Movement (Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria, MRR) and the Revolutionary Movement of the People (Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo, MRP) received funding and logistical support from the CIA to carry out acts of sabotage inside Cuba.<sup>245</sup> Cartoons, in particular, nourished the image of a dangerous street life, filled with subversive plots and looming "enemies of the people." The spectrum of those considered "counter-revolutionary" stretched from benign characters like Manengue to enemies plotting against and directly attacking the stability of the Revolution and the lives of its citizens. The list was short, but distinguished: the United States, Miami-based exiles (known as *gusanos*, or worms), capitalists, the non-aligned press, and anti-revolutionary

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<sup>243</sup>Ibid., 1245.

<sup>244</sup>On March 17, 1960, Eisenhower authorized the organization of guerrilla training camps in Guatemala for the purpose of forming an invasion force set to overthrow Castro. Domínguez, 146. The CIA persuaded exile groups (Rosa Blanca, MRR, and MRP) to form a 'united front' and train in Guatemala and the U.S. counter-insurgency school in Panama. Thomas, 1283.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid., 1214 and 1275; Juan M. del Águila, *Cuba: Dilemmas of a Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 50; Patterson, 258; Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, eds., *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 348.





**Figure 3.68** Adigio, “The Same Flag, the Same Dagger,” *Noticias de Hoy*, November 6, 1959.

guerrillas in the Escambray region of the island.<sup>246</sup>

While *Revolución* cartoonists focused on Manengue early on, *Noticias de Hoy*’s ideological position permitted its cartoonists Adigio and Suria to identify and attack enemies like the non-aligned press, capitalists, or the U.S. without fear of political reprisal, or embarrassment. Under the title

“The Same Flag, the Same Dagger,” Adigio

highlighted all the figures publically criticized, or

labeled as enemies of the Revolution (and Communism) as of November 1959:

Imperialism (U.S.), Rafael Trujillo, the international press, Díaz Lanz, Hubert Matos, the White Rose, and the newspaper *Diario de la Marina* (Figure 3.68). In

October 1959, Suria drew the following piece featuring a grotesque, yet silly illustration of a counterrevolutionary with wings on his back, a

swastika tattoo on one arm and a heart on the other, blowing a horn with a dollar sign on it, and heavily



**Figure 3.69** Suria, *Noticias de Hoy*, October 16, 1959, 2.

<sup>246</sup>Fernández noted that “opponents, and even positive skeptics and enlightened critics, a minority in the first two years, were singled out as traitors, counterrevolutionaries, *gusanos* (worms), and *anti-cubanos* (anti-Cubans).” Fernández, 76.



**Figure 3.70** Chago, “Without Words,” *Revolución*, February 1, 1960, 3.

armed (Figure 3.69).<sup>247</sup> The caption above his head, which seems to whistle out from his horn read, “I only came to visit an aunt that lives in the Escambray.” *Noticias de Hoy* pushed the visual connection between domestic counter-revolutionaries backed financially by both Miami groups and the American government more so than *Revolución*. The following *Julito*

26 cartoon suggested

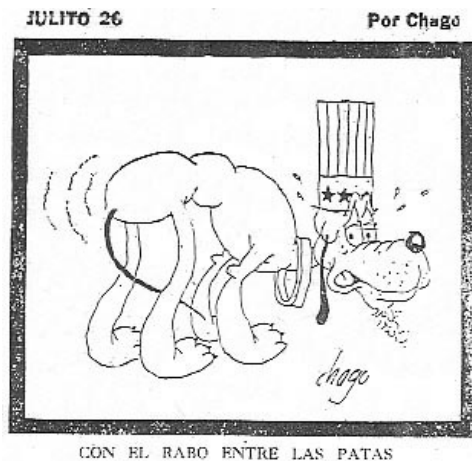
the *pueblo* not only fight back, but meet their aggressor’s challenges directly (Figure 3.70). Chago included a socio-economic categorization of the Cuban *pueblo* (peasant, worker, and skilled professional), a visualization common in *Noticias de Hoy*’s cartoons. This piece signified an integrated position of the *pueblo* that assumes rebel-image qualities of heroism, protection, aggression, and sacrifice.

The next *Julito 26* submission titled “Emancipation” reflected the battle over the fate of Cuban sugar and criticized American domination and manipulations of its market (Figure 3.71). The formalization of trade with the USSR in February and the termination of sugar trade with the U.S. in July reverberated through the



**Figure 3.71** Chago, “Emancipation,” *Revolución*, February 2, 1959, 3.

<sup>247</sup>Suría and Adigio’s pieces frequently referenced Nazism by using the swastika and they increasingly associated it with American imperialism.



**Figure 3.72** Chago, "With his Tail Between his Legs," *Revolución*, July 16, 1960, 2.

imagined narrative as a victory.<sup>248</sup> Chago satirized a defeated Uncle Sam through the symbol of Mickey Mouse's dog Pluto walking away with his tail between his legs (Figure 3.72). During these months (February-July 1960), his series acted in concert with the deterioration of Cuban and U.S. diplomatic relations. He

projected a more aggressive image of the *pueblo* taking a defiant stance against the U.S. on behalf of the Revolution and from the most official revolutionary mouthpiece in the press, *Revolución*. In doing this, he formalized the U.S.'s position as an enemy of the Revolution and added a more rebel-like quality to the Cuban citizen and its identity within the imagined narrative. 1960 proved to be a pivotal year for the Revolution. The Revolutionary Government ensured its Revolution's economic and political independence through severing diplomatic ties with the United States and declaring its critics and saboteurs as official enemies. Imagery related a caustic atmosphere further electrified by a mixture of

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<sup>248</sup>As relations with the United States worsened, the Revolutionary Government sold sugar to the Soviet Union in November 1959. On February 13, 1960, Soviet premier Mikoyan arrived during a Soviet scientific, cultural, and technical exhibit held in Havana and signed the first formal commercial agreement promising to purchase Cuban sugar at world market prices (in U.S. dollars) and credit for Soviet equipment. The USSR agreed to buy 425,000 tons of sugar in 1960 and one million tons every year thereafter. The U.S. cut Cuba's sugar quota completely in July 6, 1960 and the Soviet Union purchased the remaining 700,000 tons. Goodsell, 168.

patriotism, joy, paranoia, and uncertainty surrounding the process of nationalization. With the future of the Revolution at stake, the same idealized heroic, supportive, participatory, enthusiastic, and patriotic Cuban citizen being nurtured in this imagined narrative, would play a vital role in its protection. A focus on vigilance gained precedence alongside the establishment of a revolutionary unity and consciousness in an increasingly unstable, visuality of the Revolution.

As the noise surrounding the diplomatic confrontation with the United States escalated to fevered pitch, cartoonists prepared Cubans for the appearance of previously hidden enemies and pushed the need to be vigilant, defensive, and suspicious as critical to the survival of the Revolution. Hugh Thomas noted that on December 17, 1959, Castro “predicted that next year his followers would have to defend the Revolution with weapons in hand, for a tremendous campaign against the Revolution had been mounted; workers in bars, servants in private houses, should denounce to the police all remarks against the Revolution . . .”<sup>249</sup> From 1960 and beyond, vigilance became a thread of imagery and a key part of a citizen’s duty and consciousness. Cartoonists used their skills to cultivate possible scenarios that not only reinforced perceptions of danger and subversion, but impressed upon their audiences the idea that as a united front, citizens could be heroes and that a “clearer,” or more candid revolutionary position must be imparted to others. As a consequence, cartoons emphasized increased suspicion

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<sup>249</sup>Thomas, 1256.

of those who behaved strangely, or seemed to have something to hide. *Costumbrista* cartoons more so than the political, or editorial pieces typical of artists like Chago and Adigio, primarily suited this thread on vigilance due to their inherent quality of representing ordinary people in everyday situations.<sup>250</sup> They appealed to a wide audience and *Bohemia*, more so than other newspapers and magazines, featured *costumbrismo* on a consistent basis. From January to May 1960, “Humor



**Figure 3.73** Níco, “Protest,” *Bohemia*, April 10, 1960, 126.

and Revolution,” *Bohemia*’s cartoon page, carried a number of pieces that guided citizens on how to develop a vigilant eye against counterrevolutionary activity, that is, of knowing how to identify and denounce an enemy in any environment.

*Bohemia* cartoonists used a mask as a euphemism to hiding behind a revolutionary facade, or worse, to covering up counter-revolutionary activity. According to the imagined narrative, suspicion and following through on a gut-instinct carried with it the possibility of protecting the Revolution/nation and the potential for committing a revolutionary act. “Humor and Revolution” cartoonists designed a series of pieces playing off the phrase “to be clear” (*estar claro*) as an allusion to the need to be open and not hide anti-revolutionary intentions. Níco’s “Protest” displayed a Cuban waving his finger at another holding up a mask that read, “Revolutionary” (Figure 3.73). “Listen,” he said,

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<sup>250</sup>See Chapter One for a more detailed discussion of *costumbrismo* before the Revolution and the artists associated with this style.



**CARNIVAL,**  
—¡Te conozco mascarita...!  
**DAGOBERTO.**

**Figure 3.74** Dagoberto,  
“Carnival,” *Bohemia*,  
February 21, 1960, 126.

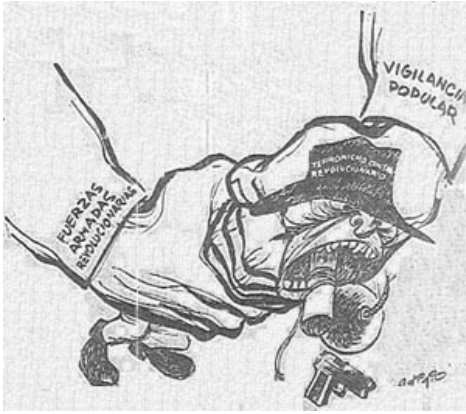
“take off that mask, because here you have to define yourself!” Dagoberto insisted in his work “Carnival” that danger lurked in even the most innocuous and celebratory of occasions (Figure 3.74).<sup>251</sup> In his piece “Revolutionary Mother-in-Law,” Silvio suggested in a facetious manner that even in the home, dangers remained unobserved. This revolutionary mother-in-law discovered young lovers seeking privacy in the dark and said, “What’s going on, youngsters? Don’t you know that you have to be clear around here?” (Figure 3.75) *Costumbrismo* served as an ideal space for revolutionary points of propaganda like vigilance (in this case) to be set within imagined storylines, culturally familiar to most Cubans. These scenarios created associations between known cultural experiences and the desired revolutionary effect. As the year passed, imagery intensified the “revolutionariness” of its integrated protagonists. As *costumbrista* pieces suggested, revolutionaries not only stayed abreast of changes or politics, but could quickly recognize vulnerabilities, challenges, and trickery, even in their own homes. In addition to recognizing danger and uncovering counter-revolutionary intentions and plots, cartoonists



**SUEGRA REVOLUCIONARIA.**  
—¿Qué pasa, jovencitos? ¿No sa-  
ben ustedes que aquí hay que  
andar, claro?  
**SILVIO.**

**Figure 3.75** Silvio,  
“Revolutionary Mother-in-Law,”  
May 15, 1960, 126.

<sup>251</sup>The caption reads “I know you, *mascarita*!” *Mascarita* is a diminutive form of mask.



**Figure 3.76** Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, June 25, 1959.

proposed an imaginary end, many times violent, to those wishing to harm the Revolution.

Toward the end of 1959, throughout 1960 and beyond, cartoonists actively propagated the fight against internal and external enemies and ultimately, insisted

there existed a need for a permanent state of vigilance and at times, violent repression. Their pieces offered readers a vision of themselves, of a popular unity and belonging, and of an indestructible front; they forwarded the idea that the *pueblo* could and would conquer all enemies. Since June 1959, Adigio pushed citizens to remain on guard with this piece of a sinister-looking counter-revolutionary terrorist being squeezed by popular vigilance on one hand and by the Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, FAR)—a military organization formed from remnants of the Rebel Army in mid-1959 and later formalized with its own ministry, MinFAR in October—on the other (Figure 3.76).

*Noticias de Hoy* cartoonists condoning violence as a means to combat enemies should not have resonated shockingly to their readers, yet in Chago's typically upbeat scenarios with largely good-natured



**Figure 3.77** Chago, “Opportune Clarification,” *Revolución*, November 17, 1959, 8.



**Figure 3.78** Chago, “Slogan,”  
*Revolución*, August 11, 1959, 19.

characters, aggression appeared as a bit more of a surprise. In late 1959, he submitted this cartoon featuring two dogs reading headlines that quoted Castro warning scared Cubans to find a puppy to cuddle up to for comfort (Figure 3.77). The caption read, “Whoever is scared should take care of themselves,

because we are with the Revolution.” While his piece certainly had a comic and cute

effect, his message was very blunt: those not with the Revolution would find themselves isolated and unprotected. Chago not only drove the idea that crushing the counter-revolution would take place, but that it fell within the realm of possibility. The need to protect the Revolution meant propagating the perception of an integrated, action-ready *pueblo* that would quickly take up arms upon any given order. In his piece, “Slogan,” Chago delivered violence with a smile, featuring Julito 26 and a Cuban citizen (*pueblo*), both armed with machetes (strength), holding up a newspaper with the words “Smash the Counter-Revolution” (Figure 3.78). Underneath the image, the caption read, “Try to break us, see if you can!” Key words like smash, crush, and squeeze appeared frequently in connection with the thread of imagery on enemies. Here the Liborio-style Cuban/*pueblo* appears in harmony with Julito 26 as part of a united front against counter-revolutionary activity, adding a twist of strength, defiance, and revolutionary alliance not previously associated with his imagery (*Liborio, El*





**Figure 3.79** Chago, *Revolución*, January 11, 1960, 21.

*Bobo, El Loquito*). By January 1960, Chago's level of cartooned violence towards counter-revolutionaries intensified, matched by an even more confident, machete-wielding *pueblo* (Figure 3.79). To a degree, the visualization of attacks on counter-revolutionaries symbolized a new type of Cuban identity, one in which

ordinary Cubans appropriated a level of heroics reserved for insurrectionists by directly defending the Revolution. On December 28, 1960, the nationalized store Flogar published an advertisement condemning the “criminal attempt on their adjacent cafeteria, perpetrated at the hands of mercenaries in the service of imperialist interests and placing the lives of innocent children in danger. Those responsible for this despicable act are mistaken in thinking they can scare us, because with each act, we reaffirm the slogan ‘Country or Death [*Patria o Muerte*].”<sup>252</sup> Flogar’s advertisement, though reassuring its customers that the

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<sup>252</sup>Flogar, “Seguimos al servicio del pueblo,” *Revolución*, December 28, 1960, 6. On December 24 in the early morning, a bomb exploded in Flogar, located in the shopping district of Galiano and San Rafael, injuring dozens of Cubans. Authorities arrested seventeen men and discovered bomb-making factories in connection with the attack. Carlos Alberto Montaner, later a self-identified counter-revolutionary with CIA link, was a member of the MRR and escape conviction due to his age. He was seventeen at the time of the bombing. Montaner left Cuba in September 1961. Jean-Guy Allard, “Montaner, the Terrorist,” *Granma International*, August 2, 2005, <http://www.granma.cu/ingles/2005/agosto/mar2/31montaner.html> and MH Editorial Board Member, “Terrorist Carlos Alberto Montaner & Jean-Guy Allard's 2005 Expose,” comment posted June 24, 2009, <http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view>

store remained open for business despite damages, assumed a tone, verbiage, and style similar to official sources, exemplified by the usage of short slogans

“Country, or Death! Ready for Battle! With Cuba and with the Revolution!”

Certainly *Revolución* controlled the publication of its advertisements, but it did not create them (with the exception of its editorial notices). While the authorship of this Flogar piece remains unknown, the COP formed during this period intensified the revolutionary style of its imagery, which may reflect the heavier use of jargon. Throughout 1960, revolutionary imagery in general acquired a more intense militaristic tone and symbolism with a compelling mix of nationalist rhetoric. The rise of the revolutionary civilian militia and its associated symbols magnified the visual presence of the rebel and deepened its significance as a predominant quality in the new Cuban identity.

On October 26, 1959, the Revolutionary Government created the National Revolutionary Militias, a civilian section of the FAR, as the first mass organization charged with training all willing and able men, women, and children to protect the Revolution from its internal and external enemies. Constantly inspired by the image and memory of the rebel, they represented an organization for citizens determined to join the Revolution and offer their labor and free time. By July 1960, the Militias were in full swing and would soon be supplemented by their own intelligence system, the CDR, an organization that formed in September of 1960, but showed its true strength by April 1961. The growth of the Militia

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[\\_all&address=405x16554](#) (accessed July 30, 2009).

and mass organizations that followed, fed from the increasing collective strength, unity, and patriotism of a citizenry becoming accustomed to shifts in its national self-perception and direction. *Revolución* editor Carlos Franqui described the militia:

They were volunteers, they were hard workers, and they were somewhere between soldier and civilians. They represented spontaneity and organization. The militiaman was the third hero of 1959. He was the collective hero, the true “Party of the Revolution.” Men, women, young, old, black, mulatto, peasants, students, professional people, intellectuals, middle-class people, the poor. The militia was the new Revolution that gave an identity to all, without prejudice. It asked only for volunteers; it gave military training, it provided care for factories and it endowed all with political and human awareness.<sup>253</sup>

The response and strength of the militia reflected the Revolutionary Government’s ability to mobilize the population at this point in time. Visually, the rhetoric and symbolism promoting the militia encapsulated key revolutionary values undergoing development, such as anti-imperialism, vigilance, mass unity, revolutionary support, volunteering, and sacrifice; all aspects of a good revolutionary lifestyle and spirit.

Advertisements and cartoons featuring the militia interpolated defense into the growing qualities of the new, revolutionary Cuban identity and in doing so, established one of the main roles of the revolutionary citizen. The militias represented the ultimate appropriation of rebel identity as the first mass organization wherein participants could prove their worth as active

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<sup>253</sup>Michael J. Mazarr, “The Cuban Security Apparatus,” in Georges Fauriol and Eva Loser, eds. *Cuba: The International Dimension* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 262.

revolutionaries in a state of alert.<sup>254</sup> Antoni Kapcia wrote, “Boosted especially by the atmosphere of vigilance, siege, and threat around the *Crisis del Caribe*, militias realized the self-image of the *pueblo en armas* (people in arms), recalling the *mambises*, the 1930s ‘action groups’ and naturally, the 1953-58 rebels, empowering average Cubans by entrusting them with arms and the responsibility for defending Cuba and the Revolution.”<sup>255</sup> The militias embodied important, new revolutionary symbols and values that fit in easily with associations image makers had been establishing up to this point. The everyday Cuban could now effectively claim his, or her own revolutionary symbols (i.e., the rifle, beret, and uniform) with pride. Growing economic shortages along with government intervention in industry, whether as a result of direct takeover of abandoned enterprises, or nationalization, led to a preference for staffing revolutionary personnel (despite their level of expertise) and an emphasis on maintaining optimum production levels. Soon the effects of the American embargo on Cuba, especially the shortages in spare parts, and the adjustments to trade with the Soviets like inadequate port facilities and differences in machine gauges, began to take hold.<sup>256</sup> As concerns with sabotage and shortages rose, the union of defense

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<sup>254</sup>By April 1960, the militia reportedly had 100,000 members and grew to 200,000 by the end of the year. Applicants of any age, sex, and occupation sign up; however, the quality of one’s commitment certainly depended on their health, stamina, and amount of free time. Militia activity consisted of military drills, weapons training, and marching. Domínguez, 208-09.

<sup>255</sup>Kapcia, 113.

<sup>256</sup>Domínguez, 147-48.



Figure 3.80

and production occurred within the imagined narrative.

In a May Day ad beginning with the slogan “Work, Rifle, and Defense of the Revolution,” the Alférez meat packing plant and Suki crackers reminded readers that “the army is the uniformed Cuban people. The Rebel Army grew from the people and the people, ready to safeguard their Revolution, integrated into the militia” (Figure 3.80).<sup>257</sup> Though published in

conjunction with the International Worker’s Day celebration, the link between defense, labor and the working class’ role in “defending [production] with a rifle pointed at any aggressor” spread throughout militia imagery. In an advertisement in the FAR magazine *Verde Olivo*, Polar beer visually molded together labor, defense, and country, emphasizing the “force of the people to the service of the country. Every worker a militia member . . . and every militia member a guardian of liberty” (Figure 3.81).<sup>258</sup> Visually, the militia reflected the ultimate path to an appropriation of the rebel

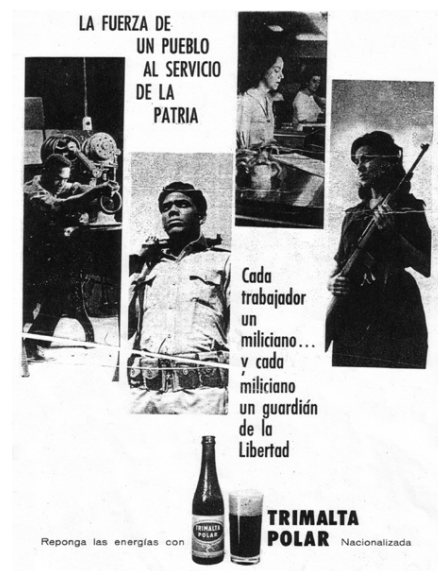


Figure 3.81 Trimalta Polar, *Verde Olivo*, July 10, 1960, 49.

<sup>257</sup>Empacadora Alférez y Galletería Suki, “Trabajo y fusil en defensa de la revolución,” *Noticias de Hoy*, May 1, 1960, 6.

<sup>258</sup>Polar Nacionalizada, *Verde Olivo*, July 10, 1960, 49.



**Figure 3.82** Pepsi-Cola, *Revolución*, November 14, 1960, 4.

identity without gender constraints, or an insurrectionist past. Militia dressed in rebel uniform, carried a rifle, and served as defenders of the country and its liberty. The rebel identity found its universalization through the militia, and through the militia, the Cuban people found their new rebel identity. This November 1960 advertisement from the “workers and employees of Pepsi-Cola” juxtaposed strong visuals of labor and defense, affirming that production continued “at

full speed” (Figure 3.82). Underneath the inspiring words “Serenely waiting, working at full force with a rifle by my side, it read:

Before the threat of imperialism, it is the duty of everyone to defend the country and the Revolution. To defend them with our work by maintaining production and with our rifle if we are assigned the honor of combat. The workers and employees of Pepsi-Cola, now under the intervention of the Revolutionary Government, serenely await the aggression, working full speed with a rifle by our side.

The irony of an advertisement for the Pepsi company, now under Cuban state ownership, pushing for the defense of itself and its interveners against United States’ “imperialist aggression,” certainly marked a new era of Revolution. This piece stressed the *duty* of revolutionary citizens to defend the country and keep the economy working smoothly. Instead of being urged to drink Pepsi, advertisements now sold nationalism, Revolution, and a progressive Cuba. This imagery showed Cubans a new *official* self, their new national identity. Even



Figure 3.83

Nationalized Sherwin-Williams sold defense alongside its brushes and paints: “One with a rifle . . . the other with a paint brush, both help to protect the house given to you by the Revolution” (Figure 3.83). This COP-designed advertisement, a mixture of capitalist promotion and revolutionary message, pushed new home owners to “demonstrate their happiness in being proprietors by using high quality Cuban paints.”<sup>259</sup>

It emphasized the militia’s role in safeguarding liberty, peace, and property and protecting a Revolution that sought to improve Cuban lives. At the end of 1960, cartoonists featured Cubans as protagonists in an imagined narrative that increasingly mirrored their real-world experience (Figure 3.84). Pecruz’s “Actuality” reminded Cubans of their new role as militia and their incorporation into the Revolution’s defense structure. The official emphasis on labor and defense resulted in a new evolution in revolutionary citizenship and identity, one that expected Cubans to assume multiple public roles. As a consequence, the Revolution effectively “nationalized” private life (Figures 3.85).

Cartoons and advertisements actively elaborated a new Cuban identity based on the rebel image, engaged within an evolving revolutionary experience.

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<sup>259</sup>Sherwin-Williams Nacionalizada, “Uno con el fusil . . . al otro con la brocha,” *Revolución*, November 14, 1960, 2.



Figure 3.84 Pecruz, "Actuality," *Bohemia*, November 13, 1960, 55.

They forged a revolutionary unity through a renewed sense of patriotism, fueled by politico-historical elements inherent in Cuban nationalism and anti-imperialism. They advanced this new identity, at times existing alongside its traditional representation (Liborio), through a series of challenges, reassurances, and orientations. Cartoonists and advertisers increasingly designed images of the *pueblo* as an integrated team player, incorporated and valued in a revolutionary process that required its time, labor, and support.

Readers consumed their new self-image and integrated, revolutionary identity through a set of imagined scenarios that featured them confronting counter-revolutionaries and enemies like Manengue and the United States; defending the Revolution and their country as strong, battle-ready militia; and participating in a myriad of projects and significant



Figure 3.85 Chago, "Always Alert," *Bohemia*, November 13, 1960, 56.

events designed to propel Cuba into a brighter future. The nationalization of industries and the Bay of Pigs provided suitable contexts for sharpening and accelerating the growing radicalism within the imagined narrative and solidifying



revolutionary codes and values like heroism, sacrifice, vigilance, defense, unity, and loyalty. Together these events and reforms coalesced into a narrative that facilitated the visualization of an enthusiastic, unified, and active *pueblo*. It chronicled, accelerated, and reinforced the process of “nationalizing” the private citizen. This idealized *pueblo* ultimately reflected what the Revolutionary Government desired and determined to be revolutionary. The rise of revolutionary mass organizations forced a new visual evolution in *pueblo*’s role and identity, one closely informed by an ideological twist in the Revolution itself. The next chapter continues to examine the socialization of the revolutionary citizen within this new setting that intensified the process of integration through active participation.

## Chapter 4: The New Visuality of a Maturing Revolutionary Cuban, 1961-1963

A metamorphoses in tone, approach, and symbolism emerged as revolutionary cartoonists and advertisers continued to fuse politics with the imagined narrative and refine a new citizenry as the Cartooned Revolution entered into a new stage of development. In the context of the nationalization of privately-owned industries and growing attempts by outside forces to frustrate promises of peace and progress, Fidel Castro declared the Revolution “socialist” at the gates of the Colón Cemetery on April 16, 1961. The next day, over two thousand CIA-trained Miami exiles landed at Playa Girón in hopes of inciting a domestic insurrection. The plan failed and became a key historical moment in the Revolution that would come to have deep resonance in the imagined narrative. The increasing concern for state security fed the existing aesthetic of the rebel, drawing up a heightened symbolism of militarism. Post-Girón cartooning called upon the reading public to engage in more discipline, more action, more performance, and more integration. This period, from 1961 to 1963, featured a visual and rhetorical transformation of cartoons and advertisements into more mature mediums of state communication and propaganda. The period is characterized by the careful calibration of a refined revolutionary message, one with an unapologetic appeal to ease the reading public into a socialist political ideology. Cartoonists worked to guide newly-integrated revolutionaries and shape their ideological consciousness through an ever-changing experience; their

visualizations reflected a deepening of their commitment to redefine, to reorient, and to harmonize all aspects of public and private life with the needs of the Revolution. Revolutionary imagery injected new values and ideological languages of vigilance, collectivism, equality, activism, conservation, and discipline. It attacked anti-revolutionary behavior, promoted volunteer labor, and mobilized recruitment for mass organization-directed campaigns. A new twist in dialogue between the revolutionary advertisers and their reader occurred, one that routinized an expectation of obedience, of action and support, and of responsibility on behalf of the latter to the former's pleas. The following chapter traces a richer visual construction of a more mature and ideologically-sophisticated revolutionary citizen as he or she, assumed an active command and stronger purpose within an increasingly complicated imagined narrative.

After the nationalization of a number of American and Cuban-owned industries at the end of 1960, the Revolutionary Government initiated a broad economic restructuring coordinated by ministries, the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas, ORI), and state-sanctioned mass organizations. While the reforms generally originated out of the economic emergencies brought on by disruptions in production and the crisis of national defense, officials also utilized them as a means of mobilizing Cubans into integrated revolutionary citizens. Nationalizations effectively placed the command of the economy in the hands of the Revolutionary Government, yet the dramatic economic, professional, and social chaos resulting from this shift in ownership created a new host of problems. In October 1960, the American

embargo coupled with the emigration of professionals and skilled laborers, mainly to the U.S., led to major disruptions in production and a decrease in the quality of labor. As integrated revolutionaries filled job vacancies that held power over agro-industrial and administrative controls, the establishment of a political and social consciousness based on values complimentary to a state-run economy (e.g., honesty, collectiveness, efficiency, discipline, sacrifice, and equality), reached a new level of importance. In other words, the rebel identity tailored for mass consumption and defined in the imagined narrative primarily in terms of defense, patriotism, unity, and heroism, continued to evolve and accommodate new values set by the revolutionary agenda. Castro formed the ORI in July 1961, as a national organization composed of representatives from the 26 of July Movement (Movimiento 26 de Julio, M267), the Popular Socialist Party (Partido Popular Socialista, PSP), and the Revolutionary Directorate (Directorio Revolucionario, DR). Together, these organizations were to coordinate and organize the strength and abilities of mass organizations to the needs of the Revolution.<sup>260</sup> Mass organizations, particularly the CDR, facilitated

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<sup>260</sup>Castro had no interest in building formal revolutionary institutions before 1965. ORI president and long-time PSP member Aníbal Escalante attempted to centralize and organize revolutionary programs through a socialist-style bureaucracy. Castro charged Escalante with sectarianism by attempting to create an independent apparatus filled with old, hard-line communists from the PSP. In March 1962, the ORI ceased to exist as an entity and the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista, PURS) took its place. Since Castro insisted PURS membership center on merit and revolutionary consciousness instead of political affiliation, a purge of intractable PSP members ensued and until 1965, no formal communist party existed. Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 43-44; Dominguez, 209-11.

the active involvement and ideological transformation of Cuban citizens into the tactical force behind revolutionary effectiveness and accomplishments. The militia served as a test of the Revolutionary Government's power in mobilizing the population into actively participating in a critical task, in this case, domestic defense. By the end of 1960, a host of other mass organizations appeared, each tailored to a specific sector of the population. A citizen's participation in a mass organization facilitated his or her access to revolutionary life and strengthened their physical, social, ideological, emotional, and public bond with the Revolution in general.

Belonging to a revolutionary organization meant integration with the Revolution and thus, survival in an increasingly complicated public life. New priorities and pressures appeared as the Revolution invaded leisure and home life with campaigns and groups of integrated, enthusiastic revolutionaries instructed to council non-conformist and recruit passive sectors. Richard Fagen aptly noted that "a primary aim of political socialization in Cuba is to produce a participating citizen, not just one who can recite the revolutionary catechism perfectly. The test of the new Cuban man is how he behaves—whether or not he works, fights, studies, cooperates, sacrifices, and contributes in the prescribed manner."<sup>261</sup> Peter Kenez described Soviet mass organizations like the youth's *Komsomol* and the women's *Zhenotdel* as "transmission belts" for ideas, but also for Soviet new-

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<sup>261</sup>Richard Fagen, *Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 7.

speak by bringing the Revolution directly to the Russian people.<sup>262</sup> In Cuba, a mass organization existed for every group, age, sex, and profession imaginable; any citizen that claimed an inability to join, or not finding a perfect fit defied reality and civic responsibility.<sup>263</sup> A woman, for example, could belong to the FMC *and* be a member of her local CDR *and* carry out militia duty at night, *as well as* attend meetings for the Confederation of Cuban Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC). They functioned either independently, or at times in conjunction with each other, but always with the same goal: to carry out assigned orders from the ORI. Gunder Frank's study of Sagua de Tánamo in Oriente, reveals a new type of social webbing and dynamics that forced citizens to extend their participation into networks and areas previously unexplored:

As I try to talk with these people, they run off to this meeting or that, at all hours of the day and night, explaining that they are the *responsable* of the local youth group, or of the *Alfabetización* Committee of the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement, or of some political education committee, or of another one of the thousand other voluntary community service and educational organizations at work, not to run dances and picnics, but to advance the Revolution and its work.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup>Kenez, 84-85.

<sup>263</sup>Mass organizations existed for children like the Union of Rebel Pioneers (Unión de Pioneros Rebeldes, UPR) created in April 1961; the Association of Rebel Youth (Asociación de Jóvenes Revolucionaria, AJR) established May 1960 and later the Union of Communist Youth in April 1961 (Unión de Jóvenes Comunista, UJC). In May 1961, the National Association of Small Farmers (Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños, ANAP) solicited the membership of cooperatives and farmers and provided technical and educational assistance.

<sup>264</sup>A. Gunder Frank, "Cuba: A Revolution of the People," in *Cuba: Twenty-Five Years of Revolution, 1959-1984*, edited by Sandor Halebsky and John M. Kirk (New York: Praeger, 1985), 416.

As the need for manpower and legwork on behalf of the Revolution increased, escaping the reach of mass organizations proved more difficult. Since the CDR and organizations like the young pioneers, or the rebel youth drew their members from educational institutions, neighborhoods, and the workplace, their control over and within Cubans' public and personal space appeared unrelenting and this facilitated their ability to coerce recruits. Once integrated, a member's status within the group depended on their attitude toward labor and their level of commitment: "When a true revolutionary commits to any mass organizations, [he, or she] fulfills it completely, and in that way, demonstrates [his, or her] level of consciousness and revolutionary quality."<sup>265</sup> With enough recognition and merit, one could earn the role of *responsable*, or group leader and enter the ranks of the vanguard. Participation also implied a public show of revolutionariness and as integration became vital, surveillance of active and inactive group members, non-conformists, even dissidents through the eyes and ears of organizations like the CDR, intensified. Within the imagined narrative, participation in mass organizations evoked concepts of heroism, patriotism, loyalty, struggle, sacrifice; values associated with the rebel identity. Cartoons and now, state-produced revolutionary advertisements, played an indispensable role in bolstering recruitment, tweaking policies, stirring enthusiasm, communicating projects, and coordinating organizations like never before.

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<sup>265</sup>"Guardia, un derecho," *Con la guardia en alto*, May 15, 1962, 5.

Castro's socialist commitment deepened the relationship between the content, creators, and purpose of revolutionary imagery in Cuba. The priority placed on revolutionary integration and consciousness after 1961 altered the tone and appearance of cartoons and advertisements, especially those published in *Revolución*. The impending clash between the COP, the ad hoc advertising company created after the nationalization of pre-revolutionary firms, and the PSP-dominated COR, marked the end of American-style consumer advertising and the beginning of what the COR termed an era of *propaganda revolucionaria*.<sup>266</sup> Ideology and practicality, specifically the condemnation of the capitalist system and its focus on marketing, in addition to the growing scarcity of consumer products, led to a more socialist-inspired perspective on advertising. The COR rejected a "bourgeois," capitalist-inspired approach to selling in a product-starved environment and insisted instead on developing messages that oriented readers, divulged information, and served the needs of the Revolution and its society more directly. Since January 1961, the state-owned advertising agency, Intercommunications, functioned as the central institution for the production of revolutionary advertisements for ministries and mass organizations. On March

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<sup>266</sup>This clash between the COP and COR peaked at the beginning of March 1961, when COR director César Escalante established the official position on state advertising, making a distinction between capitalist advertising and socialist propaganda, charging the former as unrealistic, bourgeois, and pushing a capitalist agenda. Bermúdez, 90. On May 31, 1961, the Revolutionary Government officially dissolved the COP. Mirta Muñoz argued in her work, *La publicidad en Cuba* that the COP never really gained momentum and remained weak under Che Guevara's direction under the Department of Industrialization section of the INRA. Muñoz, *La publicidad*, 46. For more discussion on the COP and the COR, see Chapter Two.



26, 1961, in a speech given at the International Journalist Organization's reception honoring the newspaper *Revolución*, Castro commented on the fate of advertising, information, and the newspaper:

we should coordinate the news among all news organs; to coordinate campaigns; to coordinate enlightened public opinion; and coordinate the efforts of the press with the plans of the Revolution, with the goals of the Revolution . . . There are a great number of advertisements which are no longer important. . . . We must develop the revolutionary conscience of the people; we must explain the fundamental principles of the Revolution. A better coordination between state organism and the means of communication must be achieved; we must work systematically in this field; we must rid ourselves of all exclusivism [*sic*] in these things, and think that in the same degree as it serves the Revolution, the press will gain more prestige.<sup>267</sup>

The explosion of public works, volunteer labor brigades, and collective campaigns added to the reconfiguration the visual rhetoric of cartoons and revolutionary advertisements. In an increasingly authoritarian tone, intensified by a text and symbolism drawn directly from the rebel experience, imagery relentlessly pushed Cubans to sustain a high level of vigilance, to develop a deeper revolutionary consciousness, to teach illiterates, to volunteer labor in the countryside, or to recycle plastics and glass. Together, cartoonists and advertisers actively shaped the dialogue and image-world relationship between newspaper and magazine readers and the official voices of the Revolution and ceased to exclusively entertain, or sell products. Cartoonists like Nuez, Rosen, and Pecruz used their wit to propagate new values like conservatism, efficiency, collectivism, volunteer labor, enthusiasm, and discipline. They chastised those lacking

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<sup>267</sup>Castro, "The Press Has the Great Task of Orienting the People," 30-32.

revolutionary morality, warned against excessive bureaucratic abuses, and criticized the systematic fleecing of state-property and mismanagement of resources. Revolutionary advertisements spoke for official sources and functioned as a medium for direct recruitment, orientation, and communication for campaigns sponsored by the ORI and ministries.<sup>268</sup> They carefully tailored their messages to each target group, taking pains to emphasize proper ideological values, or cultural norms needed to gain Cubans' attention. Revolutionary advertisers effectively responded to policy changes and the intensification of campaign social, or material needs. In October 1962, *Revolución* designed space for a series that exclusively focused on public announcements with visual components, dedicated to communicating information on mass organizations, their campaigns, and new revolutionary policies. The "Mural" series, formatted to be cut out, circulated, or posted, grew in importance as a source for publishing intra-group news, events, and meetings, particularly updates and statistics on mass campaigns. Perhaps by virtue of its numbers, of its ability to infiltrate easily into everyday life, of its readiness to quickly execute orders from the ORI, the CDR became the most important and advertised mass organization during this period.

CDR recruitment advertisements represented a watershed in revolutionary imagery. Infused with a language of patriotism, tied ever closer to a rebel

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<sup>268</sup>Mass organizations published their own serials dedicated to keep integrated, enthusiastic, and "vanguard" members informed, guided, and mobilized: *Con la Guardia en Alto* (CDR); *Verde Olivo* (FAR); *Mujeres* (FMC); and *Juventud Rebelde* (UJC).

identity, the CDR's communication program called upon citizens to embrace a new degree of personal sacrifice and integration. On the night of September 28, 1960, from the balcony of the Presidential Palace overlooking a crowd of cheering Cubans, Fidel Castro formally called for the creation of "committees of revolutionary vigilance." In essence, he charged citizens with the task of spying on one another in order to weed out "enemies of the Revolution," "counter-revolutionaries," and "imperialist lackeys."<sup>269</sup> The idea of forming block-by-block committees of integrated revolutionaries charged with keeping an eye on each other caught on quickly. The fear, paranoia, and angst fueled by acts of sabotage, deteriorating relations with the U.S., and rumors of an impending invasion, contributed to the ease with which citizens took charge of their own defense and created a powerful movement designed to crush their own privacy. As Louis Pérez astutely noted, "The defense of the nation became indistinguishable from the defense of the Revolution and, in fact, at once accelerated and facilitated the centralization of power, curtailment of civil liberties, and elimination of opposition, all in the name of national security."<sup>270</sup> The CDR's ability to individually discipline and infiltrate a local environment, to perpetually intimidate and exhaust those reluctant to join, and to quickly respond to any need, no matter how tedious, earned it a special role among mass

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<sup>269</sup>According to Fagen, the leadership had discussed the need for a vigilance network since the explosion of French freighter *La Coubre* in March 1960. At a mass meeting on August 13, 1960, a month before their official launch, Castro requested the crowd repeat an oath which would later become the CDR's own. Fagen, 70.

<sup>270</sup>Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 324.



Figure 4.1

organizations. It symbol carried power and appeared in a variety of forms, including posters and street murals.<sup>271</sup> As a whole, its form of revolutionary advertisement focused at first on recruitment needs, vigilance, and nationally and locally-directed “fronts,” or campaigns. From January to February 1961, the CDR recruitment advertisements deepened the role of patriotism, furthered the concept of the heroic *pueblo*, and thus, strengthened the rebel identity in

citizenship. Many of these pieces employed a similar rhetoric to the style featured in 1959 *votos* advertisements, arguing that Cubans stood at the helm of an historical moment. A deeper sense of purity, strength, impenetrability, and heroism circulated through the CDR’s advertisements, in their attempt to energize readers. In the following example, above a photograph of Castro speaking to an impressive number of Cubans now simply known as the *pueblo*, a bold print headline read, “A vigilant *pueblo* will never be overcome!” (Figure 4.1) By using a photograph instead of an illustration, this piece gave a documentary edge to the imagined *pueblo*, providing it an actuality, or realism Cuban advertisers up to this

<sup>271</sup> *Revolución*’s Mural series cited an instance of a CDR mural spontaneously appearing on street wall at the CDR “Humberto Lamotte” block in the Vedado, on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. An artist named Lilliam designed it based on current CDR events in the neighborhood, featuring a personage he created named “Puloly.” *Revolución*, October 10, 1962, 6.

point had not explored as a method of persuasion. This figure also exemplified elements of revolutionary propaganda (i.e., stark, direct, socially and politically oriented). It reflected a turn in the identity of the *pueblo*, suggesting a new strength that simply could not be beaten: “Neither imperialists, nor reactionaries and their counter-revolutionary groups can ever outplay a people like ours who are disposed to any sacrifice to protect their revolutionary conquests and continue building them.”<sup>272</sup> This quote assumed an integrated reader, prepared to sacrifice himself, or herself to protect the Revolution, much like the rebel had done from the Sierra Maestra. Defense and vigilance had now taken on a deeper and more definitive role within the construction of the new revolutionary citizen. An insertion at the bottom of the piece, accentuating the portion of Castro’s speech given on September 28, 1960 that unveiled the Revolutionary Government’s plans to form vigilance committees, added an official and authoritative quality to it and set it within an historical moment of great significance. Another submission titled “Two Historic Documents that Symbolize the Defense of the Country” featured images of two excerpts, one from Castro’s 1953 speech “History Will Absolve Me” and a manuscript belonging to José Martí’s Revolutionary Party of Cuba. It suggested that at appropriate moments in history “our patriots, of yesterday and today, have known how to defend the country with their arms, talent, and courage.” It reinforced the connection between the CDR, an historic moment, and one’s ability to appropriate a patriotic and heroic status

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<sup>272</sup>CDR, “Un pueblo vigilante jamás será vencido!” *Bohemia*, February 12, 1961, 103.



Figure 4.2

by becoming a member: “now it is your turn to defend it [Cuba] as well against the imperialist offensive and reactionaries; to impede counter-revolutionary movements, join your neighborhood Committee for the Defense of the Revolution.”<sup>273</sup>

This next piece suggested joining the CDR prevented a return to a darker past filled with exploitation and slavery (Figure 4.2). A large photograph featuring young pioneers running

outdoors loomed above another of poverty-

stricken, barefoot children. The words, “If the pueblo had been conscious of its great force, exploitation and abuse would have never endured for half a century,” encased the two images.<sup>274</sup> It drew a contrast between a miserable past, disfigured by imperialist greed with a glorious, promise-filled present and independent future courtesy of the Revolution and now protected by the CDR. This plea from the CDR reminded Cubans that “any tip could preserve the gains of the Revolution against the maneuvers of enemies that would like to see the enslavement of all, of men and women, even children in the new Cuba.” Civic

<sup>273</sup>CDR, “Dos documentos históricos que simbolizan la defensa de la patria,” *Bohemia*, January 29, 1961, 91.

<sup>274</sup>Though Castro did not declare the Revolution socialist until April 16, this anti-imperialist stance against the United States outlined in Declaration of Havana speech (September 1960) figured prevalently in revolutionary rhetoric since the period of nationalizations. CDR, “Si el pueblo hubiera tenido conciencia,” *Revolución*, January 14, 1961, 11.



Figure 4.3

responsibility never seemed so dire. In essence, this message argued that joining the CDR could prevent a return to a period of imperialist rule when exploitation, abuse, and slavery occurred regularly. Here, anti-imperialism and the promise of an eternally independent Cuba acted as mobilizing agents. This next appeal for recruits ran frequently throughout major organs in the revolutionary press, insisting that vigilance, as a part of defending the Revolution, constituted every “honest citizen’s revolutionary duty” (Figure 4.3).<sup>275</sup> A section of an oath to increase vigilance taken at a mass rally on the night of August 13, 1960, before the official declaration of the CDR in September, appeared underneath the symbol designed by *Noticias de Hoy* cartoonist Adigio Benítez.<sup>276</sup> Failing to join the CDR reflected the betrayal of a public, official promise as a revolutionary citizen and the conscious decision to maintain a untrustworthy position toward the Revolution. In a piece published after the Bay of Pigs invasion April 1961, the CDR National Directorate announced its goal of reaching one hundred thousand

<sup>275</sup> CDR, *Revolución*, January 10, 1961, 10. The CDR published this in *Verde Olivo* on January 29 and in *Bohemia*, on January 15, 1961.

<sup>276</sup> The oath read, “We swear to elevate our revolutionary vigilance at work, in our neighborhood, on the street, to discover counter-revolutionaries conspirators, saboteurs, imperialist propagandists, and counter-revolutionaries themselves, to silence them with our response, or turn them into the revolutionary authorities.”



Figure 4.4

committees with five hundred thousand members.<sup>277</sup> As CDR membership expanded and its need for recruits lessened, so did its advertisers' degree of persuasive finesse. Adding a new symbol with a Cuban twist to their imagery (an arm raising a machete in defiance), the CDR published an unemotional and direct appeal, atypical of pieces previously featured in its recruitment series (Figure 4.4). It simply stated

that the “imperialist threat was at hand and before another brutal aggression could take place, the *pueblo* stood united and organized.”<sup>278</sup> Recruitment advertisements used symbols like the machete, a shield, and the Cuban flag to project a unified, defiant, strong, determined, and ready Cuban *pueblo*. In a crossover between genres, Chago plugged this new CDR symbol into one of his illustrations, effectively appropriating an official and authoritative voice to an art style generally associated with entertainment (Figure 4.5). Shown giving the muscle a little pinch, the revolutionary exclaimed, “On high alert and ready for

<sup>277</sup> Although estimates vary, Richard Fagen determined 8,000 committees with a total of 70,000 members in existence at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Fagen, 247. The official CDR magazine *Con la Guardia en Alto* recorded more than 100,000 committees in existence by February 1962. CDR, *Con la Guardia en Alto*, February 15, 1962, 6.

<sup>278</sup> The quote continued, “On each block, in each factory, in each cooperative, in each state farm, a Committee for the Defense of the Revolution . . . the more revolutionary vigilance that can close the path of the enemies of our country, of our Socialist Revolution!”





**Figure 4.5** Chago, *Bohemia*, June 4, 1961, 71.

whatever comes!” Chago’s reputation as a Sierra Maestra insurrectionist and his position as artistic editor of *Revolución* leaves little doubt that what may seem as a playful, possibly even subversive disposition toward the CDR, should also be read in concert with other cartoons (with the exception of *Noticias de Hoy*) that approached serious topics in an enthusiastic and spirited way. The rise of the CDR marked the

permanency of defense and vigilance as integral parts of a revolutionary political culture. Cuba would remain at a high state of alert and in the imagined narrative, the “unmasking” of counter-revolutionaries evolved into a much more intense state of sacrifice and defense with a greater degree of violence. CDR imagery, without underestimating its commitment to uprooting counter-revolutionaries, reflected a much more volatile environment that expected and promoted an unprecedented level of revolutionary consciousness, violence, fear, caution, and citizenship.

Financed and armed by various agencies of the United States national security apparatus and military, the Miami-based invasion force that landed on Cuban soil on April 15, 1961, fueled widespread fear and paranoia within Cuban society and ultimately nourished and legitimized a culture of violence and vigilance led by the CDR within the imagined narrative. During the Bay of Pigs invasion, the CDR arrested and detained over one hundred thousand Cubans; a show of force that earned it a tremendous amount of social respect and



**Figure 4.6** Rosen, *Verde Olivo*, January 15, 1961, 97.

revolutionary power.<sup>279</sup> By September 1963, the CDR boasted over one and a half million members with one in three between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Forty-four percent of CDR members were women.<sup>280</sup> CDR-centered cartoons featured women and children alongside the male revolutionary as agents of violence against *gusanos*, a word that became synonymous with the counter-revolutionary and the Miami terrorists. The official narrative promoted and substantiated both outside and inside the image world argued that the United States perpetuated, armed, and supported counter-revolutionary plots, generally originated in, but not exclusive to, Miami (Figure 4.6). This piece by the *Verde Olivo* cartoonist Rosen featured an armed Liborio (note that this visualization of the Cuban still ran concurrently with its rebel-like counterpart), holding a Cuban flag, defiantly shouting the, by now staple, revolutionary slogan: “Country, or Death! We will overcome!” at Uncle Sam seated with mercenaries on his lap and surrounded by worms. A weak and cowardly imagined *pueblo* like Liborio, could never incite the pride and inner-strength these images sought to evoke in the face of a military power like the United States. *Bohemia*’s Dagoberto animated a CDR symbol nearly identical

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<sup>279</sup>Fagen noted an Italian journalist Gianni Corbi estimated the number of those detained to be around two hundred thousand, but he considered that a liberal estimate. Fagen, footnote. 12, 247.

<sup>280</sup>*Ibid.*, 77 and 83.

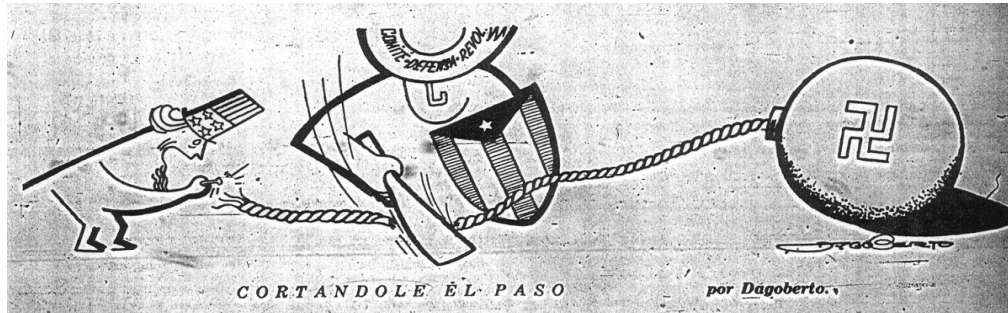


Figure 4.7 Dagoberto, *Bohemia*, June 25, 1961, 92.

to the official emblem, to “intercept” Uncle Sam’s Nazified bomb (Figure 4.7).<sup>281</sup>

Cartoonists to a large extent set their imagined scenarios to show CDR members “smashing” *gusanos*, either by stepping on them, or attacking them with clubs (Figures 4.8 and 4.9). In August 1962, *Verde Olivo* cartoonists Delgado and Tejedor reminded Cubans to “smash the *gusanera* (breeding ground for worms)” and to “always be on the offensive.”

Discovering counter-revolutionaries and unveiling plots did not remain an exclusive responsibility of CDR members, but of all Cubans and at all time, even in the workplace (Figure 4.10). Adigio showed this counter-revolutionary cornered by representatives of the Cuban *pueblo* (woman, professional, Afro-Cuban, militia, and peasant); a



Figure 4.8 J. Delgado, *Verde Olivo*, August 5, 1962.

<sup>281</sup>On a number of occasions, Castro accused the United States of fascist-like behavior, particularly of brutalities, propaganda, and jingoism: “We Could Shoot Spies and Traitors,” *Revolución*, December 17, 1960; “Gun’s Yes, and Who is Taking Them Away from the People,” *Ibid.*, November 28, 1960; and “Address at Ceremony to Honor the Martyrs of March 13,” *Ibid.*, March 14, 1961.

socio-economic breakdown common in his work and reflective of Soviet peasant/worker imagery. Cartoonists included CDR youth as part of the imagined narratives's vigilance task force, giving them equal authority to detain, even violently crush counter-revolutionaries (Figure 4.11). Rosen drew a group of tough kids resting on a CDR shield watching two *gusanos* as one prepared a bomb while the



**Figure 4.9** Tejedor, *Verde Olivo*, August 5, 1962.



**Figure 4.10** Rosen, *Verde Olivo*, November 12, 1961.

other stood as lookout. The CDR may have been exclusively created with the idea of vigilance in mind, but in the end, the task continued to fall on society at large. Drawn on the heels of the October 1962 missile crisis, Chago reminded his readers in his piece “Eye a lot of Eye” that vigilance should

never wane, but must be maintained at all times and by everyone (Figure 4.12).

CDR vigilance imagery presented an armed and defiant *pueblo* that also personified the Revolution as a ubiquitous and threatening entity. Nevertheless, defense and vigilance did not remain the CDR's primary concern. The CDR's numbers, as well as its ability to connect and infiltrate deep into the recesses of its environment, made it the ideal mechanism for the execution of a variety of tasks.

The CDR evolved into a much more versatile

organization with duties extending beyond its responsibilities of vigilance and



**Figure 4.11** Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, May 31, 1961.

defense. It mobilized the revolutionary and neutral core of the *pueblo*, pushing for a greater integration, socialization, and participation of its mass into “fronts” and “battalions.” Public participation, that is, actively taking part in an outward-oriented



**Figure 4.12** Chago, “Eye a lot of Eye,” *Revolución*, October 29, 1962, 14.

revolutionary task, earned aspiring, or well-integrated citizens recognition among local authorities and peers, as well as deepened their revolutionary commitment.

In his 1961 anniversary speech to the CDR, Castro warned that “the isolated citizen, for all his patriotism, for all his revolutionary fervor, lacks strength, lacks effectiveness; the Revolution cannot count on isolated people. The Revolution should count and can only always count on organized people.”<sup>282</sup> In their article, “Political Culture and Popular Participation in Cuba,” Rafael Hernández and Haroldo Dilla noted that “the political call for participation of the Revolution has been sufficiently broad and autochthonous in its objectives and values—social justice, increase in the standard of living, development, national sovereignty—and in its organizational aspects to involve people and sectors whose norms and aspirations do not coincide exactly with the ideological ends of

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<sup>282</sup>His criticism became more volatile: “Who are those that have no interest in organizing? They are the worms, the parasites, the loafers, those that don’t work. But those who don’t have and will not have interest in organizing or belonging to a mass organization, are the enemies of the pueblo, the enemies of the masses, the parasites, the exploiters, the loafers, those who don’t work and simply live off the work of others.” Fidel Castro, “Discursos de Fidel en los aniversarios de los CDR, 1960-1967,” (Havana: Instituto del Libro, 1968), 38 and 41.

the system.<sup>283</sup> Thus, a sense of nationalist, social, and economic commitment facilitated the integration into revolutionary projects. Imagery concentrating on mass campaigns, specifically revolutionary advertisements, certainly supports Hernández and Dilla's argument. National economic and social development lay at the heart of the mobilizing, rhetorical discourse in Cuban revolutionary imagery. By 1963, the CDR became the clearing house for collective activity and boasted fourteen different fronts of revolutionary action: coordination; organization; administration of finances; revolutionary instruction; vigilance; popular defense; education; public health administration; urban reform; provisioning and rationing; voluntary work; propaganda and cultural instruction; sports and recreation; and international peace.<sup>284</sup> Each CDR assigned a *responsable*, or leader to a particular front, for example, culture, sports, or public health. *Responsables* received instructions from the National Directorate of the CDR, or at times directly from a particular ministry. Armed with specific instructions, they informed and organized CDR members into conducting neighborhood cleanups, promoting vaccination drives, collecting recyclables,

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<sup>283</sup>A CDR representative sat on the committee along with others from the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Industries, and the INRA. Rafael Hernández and Haroldo Dilla, "Political Culture and Popular Participation in Cuba," *Latin American Perspectives* 18, vol.2 (Spring 1991): 47.

<sup>284</sup>In addition to the weekly neighborhood CDR meetings where members discussed new policies and projects, three nights each week, an intensive study of Castro's speeches and Marxist-Leninist ideology took place called Circles of Revolutionary Instruction (Círculos de Instrucción Revolucionaria, CIR). By September 1962, 945 circles existed with 16,000 members and grew to a little over 2,350 by 1964. Fagen, 80 and 87.



**COMPAÑERO  
RESPONSABLE  
DE  
SALUD  
PÚBLICA  
DE  
LOS  
CDR**

Este mensaje va dirigido a ti, para pedirte la máxima cooperación en el cuidado y mantenimiento de los latrones para basura domiciliar, situados en cada cuadra por los CDR. Preocúpate de que estén siempre bien tapados y que cumplan su función. Igualmente debes hacer con los nuevos receptores de basura que el Ministerio de Salud Pública está situando en las principales esquinas de la ciudad.

No lo olvides compañero, esta es nuestra obligación para contribuir a desarrollar un país sano y limpio.

**MIN. DE SALUD PÚBLICA  
JUCEI HABANA - CDR**

**Figure 4.13** Ministerio de Salud Pública and CDR, “Comrade Responsible for CDR Public Health,” *Noticias de Hoy*, May 29, 1963, 5.

distributing rations, encouraging savings, organizing “Circles of Revolutionary Instruction,” or conducting census.<sup>285</sup> Advertisers either focused on informing readers of a front’s progress, delivering messages, stirring revolutionary fervor, or announcing upcoming projects. The duration and frequency of an image thread designed to push a particular front depended upon the latter’s ability to meet recruitment needs, to maintain its enthusiasm and momentum, and to demonstrate its success. The following sample published in May 1963 featured a direct message to the CDR *responsable* for public health, specifying the importance of securing the lids on neighborhood trash cans (Figure 4.13). It began, “This message is directed

at you [*responsable*] to ask for your utmost cooperation in the care and maintenance of neighborhood trash receptacles . . . Do not forget comrade, it is

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<sup>285</sup>Precipitated by the shortages caused by the U.S. embargo, Castro called on the CDR and FMC to conduct a census, organized by zones, on the household consumption of oil and butter. On March 12, 1962, Castro, in response to President Kennedy’s total embargo enforced a month earlier, created the National Assembly for the Distribution of Provisions (Junta Nacional para la Distribución de los Abastecimientos, JUNDA). With the help of the CDR, the JUNDA organized and directed a system of rationing primary foods, (e.g., oil, rice, beans, flour, beef, chicken, fish, eggs, milk, vegetables, and butter). The CDR became responsible for distributing ration booklets (*libreta*) and registering families to a collection center. Mirta Muñoz and Arnaldo Vega, *El pan cierto de cada día* (Havana: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, 2003), 55 and 63-64.



Figure 4.14

our obligation to contribute to the development of a healthy and clean country.”<sup>286</sup> The *responsible* embodied a closer link to the Revolution and stood at the helm of the CDR revolutionary experience.

Ideally, he or she stayed abreast of

current events, communicated goals to members, stirred enthusiasm for revolutionary work, and supervised the direction of each project. *Revolución*’s “Mural” series figured prominently as one of the most consistently used channels of communication between mass organizations and the general public. Newspaper editors designed the series so that readers could cut out its notices. A pair of illustrated scissors cutting along a dotted line with the words “Material for the mural in your work center. Cut out and paste it up!” indicated the lasting and propagandistic role of newspaper imagery, not to mention a growing directness in its style of address. This example titled “With Our Guard Up High, We Fulfill These Tasks!” listed all the activities the CDR would “continue to protect from their combat position at the rearguard” of the Revolution (Figure 4.14).<sup>287</sup>

<sup>286</sup>Ministerio de Salud Pública, JUCEI, and CDR, “Compañero responsable de salud pública de los CDR,” *Noticias de Hoy*, May 29, 1963, 5.

<sup>287</sup>Activities included increasing “collective popular revolutionary vigilance”; integrating local members into the Popular Defense Militias; organizing Sanitary Brigades, creating primary courses for assistants and voluntary blood donors; promoting solidarity and giving assistance to the families of our brothers in the trenches; taking all measures of security and protection of the civil population



Revolutionary advertisements increasingly addressed readers in a manner that assumed their integration and their fervor, even to the point of militancy. This disposition, or assumption of a reader's degree of revolutionariness constitutes one of their key evolutions during this period (1961-1963) from advertisements appearing the first two years. The CDR quickly gained an all-purpose reputation that could not be matched by other mass groups, which accounted for the significant volume of revolutionary imagery designed to mobilize and further its labor.

The recycling, or reuse of scarce materials in order to reduce the adverse effects of the U.S. embargo led to a wave of imagery reflecting the centrality of CDR in revolutionary society and its role in national development. The decline in American imports led to sharp decreases in the availability of plastics, metals, and other basic materials, forcing a nation-wide drive to reuse, refurbish, or recycle goods. Revolutionary advertisements like this piece published in *Noticias de Hoy*, *Bohemia*, and *Verde Olivo*, framed recycling as a patriotic duty, one directly tied to a new independent future and Cuban progress. In September 1961, the Ministry of Industries and the CDR jointly addressed CDR members in this piece titled "Against the Imperialist Blockade: Cooperate with the Campaign of Saving of the Ministry of Industry," asking them to join the campaign and collect gathered materials (Figure 4.15). It explained that "because of your [CDR

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recommended in times of attack; and maintaining all normal activities, i.e., Vaccination Campaign, discussion of the Third Congress of Councils for the Municipal of Education, the drafts for the Plans of Culture, the Education census, and the other tasks. "Mural: Con la guardia en alto!" *Revolución*, November 7, 1962, 6.



Figure 4.15

member] great sense of responsibility, we have confided in the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution to retrieve all of the materials collected by housewives for the campaign. Now, our country's industrialization depends on you. Listen: Housewives are already saving, even boxes of matches! Now it is your turn to do your part.”<sup>288</sup> With greater frequency, revolutionary advertisements stressed that citizens and in this case CDR members, carried the responsibility of Cuba's future, of its ability to successfully transform itself into an

industrialized nation, and of its strength in overcoming obstacles imposed by the so-called imperialists and counter-revolutionaries. By teaming up with the CDR, the Ministry reached the public more directly, facilitated material collections, quickly alleviated shortages, and embedded the idea of conservation more effectively. Collecting materials from “house to house” did not work out as well as the Ministry and the CDR expected and campaign propaganda changed accordingly. In a playful series published between April and June 1962, the Ministry of Industries designed templates that focused on a different recyclable item and instructed citizens to simply take their materials to their local CDRs (Figures 4.16 and 4.17). Each piece argued that though the item may be broken

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<sup>288</sup>Ministry of Industries and CDR, “Contra el bloqueo imperialista coopera con la campaña de ahorro del Ministerio de Industrias,” *Revolución*, September 2, 1961, 7.



Figure 4.16

and no longer of use, in this case a key and an empty cigarette box, it could be used by “our industries.” Metals could be melted down and recast into new parts, tools, or products. “Throw away? . . . Nothing,” it continued, “Take bottles, all plastics, old rags, paper, cardboard, scrap metal, and cans to your Committee for Defense. All of this material is used, or processed in our industries!”<sup>289</sup>

Templates like these facilitated the job of the revolutionary advertiser, simplified the message visually, and transmitted it repeatedly in a way that secured renewed attention from the reader. Imagery molded conservation into a new revolutionary behavior and value ultimately leading to a stronger Cuban independence. Participation in the recycling campaign did not require a large amount of effort on the part of the citizen aside from dropping off plastic and glass bottles, or stamps to designated receptor sites run by the CDR and it signified one of the organization’s most important fronts.



Figure 4.17

The effects of the economic embargo and the nationalization of industry combined to prioritize recycling, efficiency, and collectiveness within the

<sup>289</sup>Ministerio de Industrias, “Llévame a tu comite!” *Revolución*, April 3, 1962, 11 and *Noticias de Hoy*, May 24, 1962, 6.

imagined narrative after

Castro's declaration of socialism in April 1961.

Cartoons and revolutionary advertisements focused on orienting citizens into new work regimes, mass organizations and policy changes;

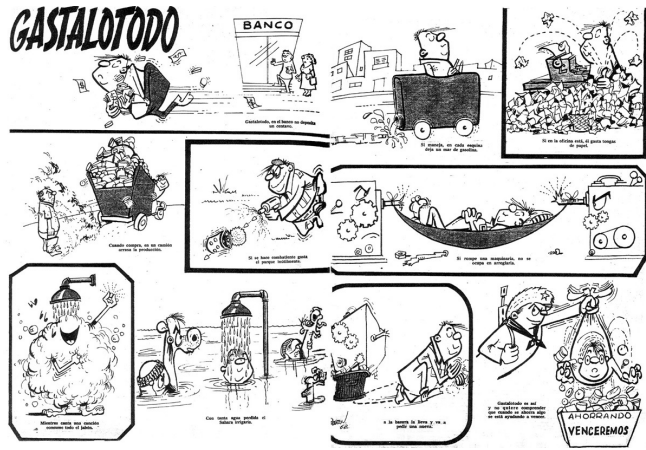


Figure 4.18

acclimatizing them to the rigors of material conservation; and promoting a new social consciousness based on a mixture of revolutionary and socialist tenets. Not surprisingly, cartoonists like *Verde Olivo*'s Rosen (Rosendo Gutiérrez) took a more humorous approach to establishing a new culture of conservation and social consciousness than the Ministry of Industry, or the CDR. Despite Rosen's whimsicalness and humor, his message remained the same as that of government sources: good revolutionaries understood waste weakened the productive capacity of Cuban industry and as a result, Cuba's independent future. In a two-page spread he introduced readers to *Gastalotodo*, or Mr. Waste Everything (Figure 4.18). He featured Gastalotodo in a variety of wasteful situations, each topping the absurdity of the previous one, culminating into a series of blunders that readers knew at this point to be officially intolerable. Rosen illustrated Gastalotodo refusing to deposit his money in the bank (a reference to the CDR campaign to open savings accounts); wasting bullets shooting a tin can (badly needed as an "imperialist attack" was imminent); singing in the shower while

using enough soap and water “to irrigate the Sahara desert” (water and electricity conservation were paramount); burning through tons of gasoline; using excessive amounts of paper at the office; and opting to replace his broken machinery instead of fixing it himself (encouraged by the CTC and the Ministry of Industries as a response to the growing lack of spare parts).<sup>290</sup> The bottom of the cartoon read, “Gastalotodo is this way and refuses to understand that when we conserve something, we are helping in our triumph. By saving, we will overcome.” Although Rosen’s message focused on conservation exclusively, many of Gastalotodo’s transgressions echoed the type of careless “individualism” and “anti-revolutionary” behavior common in other threads of imagery running concurrently that denounced laziness, tardiness, absenteeism, theft, overzealousness, egoism, and mismanagement. His approach to conservation also reflected the broader role of cartoonists in criticizing within the Revolution by exposing problems, though not offering solutions. Using the revolutionary imagined narrative as a medium to critique the world outside it proved highly effective, especially since cartoons attracted readers through their humor and breadth of communication. In the case of Gastalotodo, an “integrated” reader

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<sup>290</sup>Rosen, “Gastalotodo,” *Verde Olivo*, February 18, 1962, 91. The establishment of savings accounts as a CDR front provided the Revolutionary Government with funds to reinvest in on-going projects. The expansion of the defense sector placed a strain on bullet supplies; a problem frequently addressed in *Verde Olivo*. Stressing the need to conserve electricity and water began as early as 1959 and grew to include paper products, oils, and gasoline as the effects of the embargo intensified throughout 1962. Repairing one’s machinery also became an important propaganda campaign centering on industry and will be examined in more detail in the next chapter on Socialist Emulation.

who considered him, or herself above committing these types of transgressions may have found the piece amusing, or aptly descriptive. However, Rosen's cartoon also carried the potential to alarm and correct those guilty of behavior and antics similar to Gastalotodo.

Cartoonists, more so than advertisers, played a much more fluid and direct role in defining and shaping revolutionary behavior within the imagined world. Generally, revolutionary advertisers limited their discourse to information and rhetoric designed to persuade, or evoke enthusiasm for a given directive, or campaign on behalf of a ministry, or mass organizations that predetermined the subject and approach of the piece. Cartoonists, however, exercised a greater freedom of choice and presentation in terms of subject. This freedom to change themes and remain open to inspirations facilitated their ability to effect cultural change, explain revolutionary ideology, and correct disruptive social behavior. Revolutionary imagery presented socialism as a collective project. *Bohemia's* José Cruz Montaña (Pecruz) drew a series of pieces focusing on anti-revolutionary behaviors generated by material and consumer shortages stemming from the U.S. trade embargo. His work also criticized bureaucratic inefficiency, poor quality control, and the growing breakdown in workplace professionalism, resulting from the nationalization of industries and the Revolutionary Government's insistence on full employment. As the centrally-planned economy matured, paperwork, meetings, and disorganization weighed heavily upon the Revolution's burgeoning bureaucracy. "Let's Get Organized!" comically presented readers with a number of motley scenarios highlighting transgressions



Figure 4.19

plaguing the workplace (Figure 4.19). In a six-frame demonstration of common misconduct, Pecruz attacked inefficiency, idleness, inattentiveness, tardiness, and unscrupulousness. In the first frame, two workers packaged a poorly-made pair of shoes, figuring perhaps they may appeal to a masochist. The next frame criticized the ineffectiveness and distraction of a never-ending strings of meetings proposed by some overzealous workers. In the third frame a boss cancelled a staff meeting and announced he would be leaving early to take his wife to the movies. The forth frame featured a secretary who forgot to call headquarters and misplaced an important document because she was overworked. The next frame showed an employee blaming his tardiness on the economic blockade for preventing the importation of alarm clocks. In the last frame, an employee demanded five certificates, four memorandums, eight letters, and twenty-four flyers in order to fulfill a customer's needs.<sup>291</sup> In exposing Cubans to the type of people he felt "needed improvement," Pecruz reminded readers that their behavior in the workplace affected the overall efficiency and collective-oriented initiatives that ensured successes beyond the borders of their

<sup>291</sup>Pecruz, "A Organizarnos!" *Bohemia*, January 18, 1963, 114.

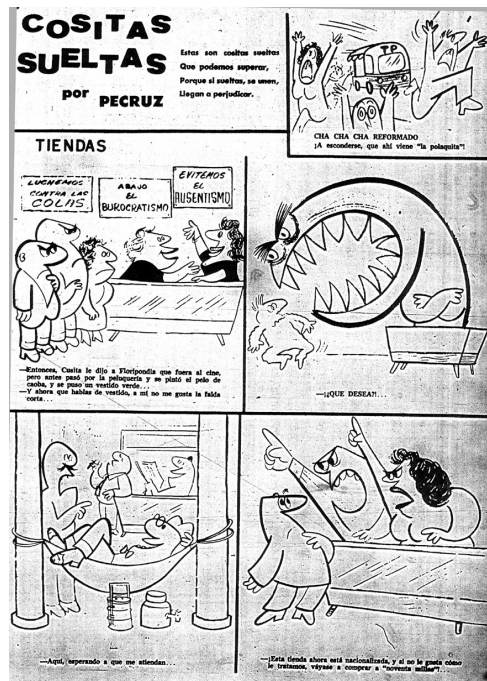


Figure 4.20

immediate environment. It became important for readers to visualize the consequences of their inaction, of their inefficiency, and of their lack of concern for doing things properly. In criticizing poor behavior, Pecruz's role took on an educative twist perhaps in a format more accessible and acceptable to a popular audience. In another piece titled "Little Things," he used his wit to denounce the negative attitudes in public areas that

fueled social tensions (Figure 4.20). The growing shortage of consumer goods and rationing forced citizens to take time off of work, or leisure activities to search and queue for their basic necessities. Shopping became a tense errand for many. Pecruz prefaced his cartoon by telling his readers, "These are the loose ends that we can improve, because if we let things go, they will come together to cause more damage."<sup>292</sup> The first frame featured a line of angry customer waiting to be served by two women gossiping behind the counter: "Then, Cusita told Floripondia that she should go to the movies, but beforehand, stop by the hairdresser's, dye her hair brown and wear a green dress . . ." With a hint of irony, three signs hung behind them reading, "We Fight against Long Lines,"

<sup>292</sup>Pecruz, "Cositas sueltas," *Bohemia*, March 22, 1963, 84.



“Down with Bureaucratism,” and “Avoid Absenteeism.” In the next frame, a frightened man cowered in front of a clerk whose head grew as his anger increased. The clerk screamed, “What do you want?!” In the following frame, a customer approached and questioned another man camped out in a hammock with food and water stored underneath who responded, “I’m here, waiting to be attended.” In the last frame, a customer recoiled as two angry clerks shouted, “This store has been nationalized and if you don’t like how we’re treating you, go ninety miles north to shop!” Pecruz’s collection of imagined scenarios addressed real-life problems plaguing the Cuban service and production industry as a whole. In nationalizing industry, the Revolutionary Government and its Revolution, nationalized corresponding public spaces and the behaviors within them. As if by default, public space became vulnerable to revolutionary power and control. Cartoonists like Rosen and Pecruz exercised criticism *within* the Revolution, affecting its development in a positive and sanctioned manner. They also, for instance, showed a negative side, or duality to the heroic *pueblo* typical of CDR imagery. Similar to the motivations of his peers, for René de la Nuez, *Negativo Compañero* originated because he “wanted to make criticism, but criticism from the point of a revolutionary.”<sup>293</sup>

As the socialist, revolutionary society congealed and citizens acclimatized to new sets of expectations and responsibilities, cartoonists realigned their focus beyond that of counter-revolutionaries and political opportunists to include

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<sup>293</sup>René de la Nuez, interview.

enemies from *within* the Revolution, even from among the cadre. Chago's *Julito* 26 and Bidopia's Manengue pieces explored a highly contextualized, anti-revolutionary behavior for a less-seasoned readership, one specifically tied to an immediate post-revolutionary environment and less exposed to a defined version of revolutionary identity. Other enemy-oriented cartoons like those focusing on the CDR, centered on domestic and international terrorists activities. Shifts in power resulting from the advancement of revolutionaries into upper-level bureaucratic posts, in addition to the rise of new groups such as the militia, expanded opportunities for systemic abuse and mischief. Cartoonists began to look inward, using their own personal experiences and observations as inspiration. In general and to a larger degree than the norm, cartoonists were integrated revolutionaries and criticizing *within* the Revolution became part of their revolutionary experience. Pecruz joined the militia, Nuez frequently took part in volunteer labor activities; both used their art to relay their experiences. In March 1961, René de la Nuez launched his series called *Negativo, compañero* designed to expose areas in revolutionary society plagued by transgressions and pre-revolutionary recidivism.<sup>294</sup> In considering his work, Nuez noted,

That section [*Negativo, compañero*] was strong. There were people who abused power. *Negativo, compañero* was for creating

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<sup>294</sup>In an interview with Nuez, he explained that the militia commonly used the phrase "Negativo, compañero," or Negative, comrade during this period as a proper form of saying 'No' to one another. René de la Nuez, interview. On November 16, 1962, Pecruz published a piece in *Bohemia* called "Notes on Popular Defense" and signed it the "Militia man Pecruz, Bon 2742." In it he discussed his group's occasional lack of discipline, the integration of more mature members, and inability of some to follow orders.

a new consciousness of comradeship. It was one of the things I did during that period that was the most interesting, and I liked it. And it had many possibilities, there was a lot of material from which to get ideas. During that period I went to work centers, I went to volunteer labor and I was part of that. You have to be part of that. All cartoonists took part revolutionary experiences, voluntary work. The cartoonists always views life through a critical prism and how was I going to do this without criticizing the Revolution, unless it was a *compañero* I was criticizing and that's why I did *Negativo, compañero*.<sup>295</sup>

To a great extent, this series expressed Nuez's revolutionariness which mirrored the official line of ideological consciousness. *Negativo, compañero* served readers as a guide for what constituted anti-revolutionary behavior in a variety of settings and degrees of severity. His single-framed cartoons depicted the integrated and non-integrated caught in a wide-array of unflattering acts: wasting, or stealing state-owned materials; recurrent absenteeism and tardiness at the workplace; hoarding goods and desiring luxury items; abuses of power and status; forming cliques, or faking revolutionary fervor.

*Negativo, compañero* exposed *Revolución*'s readers to series of anti-revolutionary behaviors plaguing everyday life, drawn from the personal experience of the revolutionary cartoonist himself. Nuez's own life as an integrated revolutionary informed his own ideological development which in turn, inspired his desire to critique behavior he considered damaging to the process. In this way, he exercised a greater freedom within his art in pushing the parameters of idealism, yet he remained confined by a growing ideological paradigm. Rationing did not satisfy consumer demands and access to state-owned goods

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<sup>295</sup>Ibid.



**Figure 4.21** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 17, 1961, 2.

tempted Cubans to simply take what now “belonged to the *pueblo*.” Hoarding, stealing, and yearning for past luxuries occurred, conditioned by a pre-revolutionary culture accustomed to networking, bribes, and *botellas*.<sup>296</sup> In figure 4.21, a Cuban man happy at the prospect of adding to his linen closet, stuffed a towel in his bag saying, “I’m going to take this towel as a souvenir.” Hoarding items not available in local stores, or on the ration list grew in conjunction with the drop in imports, especially of coveted American goods.<sup>297</sup> In this next segment, Nuez featured a Cuban casually declaring, “I’ve been in line in over ten stores and I’ve gathered nearly forty bars of soap!” (Figure 4.22) Amassing scarce commodities while the Revolutionary Government emphasized recycling and the moral importance of the collective constituted a new level of deviancy. In March, Che Guevara commented, “We can be sure that difficult months lay ahead, months of struggle and scarcity, we can guarantee that the *pueblo* will not starve, that the *pueblo* will be dressed and

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<sup>296</sup>Domínguez, 232 and Susan Eckstein, *Back from the Future* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 10-11.

<sup>297</sup>Though the black market may have been at a nascent stage during the period running *Negativo, compañero*. Rationing of cooking oil began in July 1961, but the system did not expand until mid 1962. At that point, “a black market in everything from lemonade to chickens to brooms flourished under the noses of the police and CDRs.” Rhoda Rabkin, *Cuban Politics: The Revolutionary Experiment* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 53.



**Figure 4.22** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 13, 1961, 2.

that the *pueblo* will have shoes.”<sup>298</sup> This next piece revealed a lingering desire among many Cubans for American products and “the old days” as one man complained to another, “The only thing that bothers me is not being able to shave with “Gillette” (Figure 4.23). Cubans cornered by Nuez’s non-conformists conveyed looks of disgust, apathy, or disapproval.

Through *Negativo, compañero*, Nuez scolded and shamed his fellow revolutionaries. By exaggerating violations against the collective, he contrasted the integrity of sacrifice with the grotesque selfishness of individualism and hoped to affect revolutionary consciousness.

The growth of mass organizations brought on a marked redistribution of socio-political power, ushering a new class of bureaucrats, revolutionary zealots, and opportunists, and *Negativo, compañero* set to task attacking the egoism and exclusivity creeping among the revolutionary elite. In an objection to a surge in “sectarian behavior,” Castro warned of growing power-centers associated with the rise of bureaucratic networking: “There are people who give and take while putting on airs, causing unbelievable harm to the



**Figure 4.23** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 24, 1961, 2.

<sup>298</sup>Mirta Muñiz, *El pan cierto*, 49.

Revolution, and then there are those that create a groups and claim they give the orders here. One has to gain authority with prestige, by example, by morals.”<sup>299</sup> Abusing one’s access to goods and privileges directly, or through a network of well-positioned friends became a recurrent problem. Through *Negativo, compañero* Nuez accused these cadres of displaying too much revolutionary intensity, creating cliques, and resisting



**Figure 4.24** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 2, 1961, 2.

constructive criticism. Contradictions in the revolutionary message produced confusion as to what constituted a suitable amount of “revolutionariness.”<sup>300</sup> One needed to be enthusiastic, but not too overbearing; creative, but not too experimental; conservative, but not too rigid. In this entry, Nuez denounced those who considered themselves more revolutionary than others without merit (Figure 4.24). As his backdrop, he chose a meeting; a process of decision-making increasingly considered too inefficient and time-consuming. From the podium, a head-strong bureaucrat announced, “Here, you have to do what I want, because I am very revolutionary.” Self-motivated gain, exclusivity, laziness, and

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<sup>299</sup>Fidel Castro, “Autocrítica de la Revolución,” (Montevideo: Ediciones Uruguay, 1962), 74.

<sup>300</sup>Lilian Cabrera discusses the contradictions in values projected within the revolutionary message: “It may be difficult for the individual to reconcile the encouraged use of his ingenuity with ‘initiative’ in problem-solving with the imperatives of complying with Party directives and orders from the higher administration.” Lilian Eleanor Cabrera, “Character Models of the Cuban Revolutionary Regime,” Volume I (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1981), 45.



**Figure 4.25** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 18, 1961, 2.

opportunism ranked high on the list of rising anti-revolutionary and non-conformist attitudes within this new socialist phase. This example featured two workers arguing over helping another carrying boxes in the background (Figure 4.25). One worker said to the other, “I’m going to help him,” but the other responded, “Leave him alone, that’s why they pay him.” Nuez’s series reminded readers

that the purity and honesty central to the revolutionary identity should also be present in revolutionary authority and camaraderie. It rejected those who highjacked the Revolution in the name of progress, labor, ideology, and the collective. Nuez also emphasized the negative effects of forming cliques, that it added to the instability and low morale of working toward the common good (Figure 4.26). In this figure, a group of revolutionary citizens point to another saying, “You don’t fit here, you are not a member of our little group.” In essence, he communicated to his readers that unity, not isolation, led to success.

Dissension within the ranks posed a threat to the collective and weakening the overall strength of the Revolution.<sup>301</sup> If left



**Figure 4.26** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 11, 1961, 2.

<sup>301</sup>Castro considered “divisionism” one of the largest threats to the Revolution, arguing imperialists and counter-revolutionaries hoped to stir dissension within mass



**Figure 4.27** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 1, 1961, 2.

unchecked, this type of behavior would breed unsanctioned individualism and dilute the Revolution, its culture, and its vision.

*Negativo, compañero* exposed anti-revolutionary behavior among integrated revolutionaries by attacking the childish, the irresponsible, and the undignified, in other words,

conduct not fitting a representative of the

Revolution. Cubans in positions of authority diluted

the mystical aura of revolutionary power by disregarding procedures and showing an undisciplined approach toward their tasks. *Negativo, compañero* drew from Nuez's first-hand experiences in the militia. He reminded his readers that harmony and unity among the cadre guiding the revolutionary process proved vital to their role as middlemen between their leaders and the public. Echoing the criticism on cliques set within the bureaucratic setting, figure 4.27 featured one militia pompously boasting to another, "I'm better than you, because I'm wearing a green beret." Simply wearing a uniform, carrying a rifle, or using revolutionary language, all considered vehicles of power within the narrative and outside of it, did not automatically translate into *being* revolutionary. The pettiness, laziness, and carelessness Nuez insisted circulated within the culture of the militia, functioned as commentary in other areas of revolutionary society plagued with

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organization in particular to weaken the Revolution. Fidel Castro, "Cuba's Socialist Destiny, July 26, 1961" (New York; Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 1961), 7-8.



*Negativo, compañero* por Nuez



**Figure 4.28** Nuez,  
*Revolución*, March 27,  
1961, 7.

similar problems. For example, an installment of *Negativo, compañero* that centered on a militia complaining he would not stand guard unless he received a rifle proved no different from the trivialities surrounding workplace cliques. In this example, a plain-clothed member of the militia walked toward another on guard duty and casually told him, “Don’t search me, I am militia” (Figure 4.28). Considering the heavy emphasis on defense and the real and assumed ubiquitousness of

dangerous, crafty, and distrustful counter-revolutionaries in the imagined world and beyond, this guard’s lax in vigilance should have immediately registered as a severe violation of protocol among the reading audience. Other scenes concentrated on rank and file militia displaying little more than immaturity and laziness. In figure 4.29, a militia member pulled a gun on another and said jokingly, “Don’t be scared, the safety is on!” Playing with an loaded gun and scaring others in a society riddled with paranoia certainly did not figure into the Revolutionary Government’s vision of an armed and ready populace.

This *Negativo, compañero* submission zeroed in on two guards hiding behind a building watching another on duty in the distance (Figure 4.30). One guard mischievously proposed to the other, “Hey, let’s scare that comrade over there on patrol!” Guard duty required great sacrifice in terms of

*Negativo, compañero* por Nuez



**Figure 4.29** Nuez,  
*Revolución*, April 3, 1961,  
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*Negativo, compañero* por Nuez



**Figure 4.30** Nuez,  
*Revolución*, March 22,  
1961, 2.

both personal safety and free time, a luxury that had become “nationalized” as well. This next piece showed a militia arriving late to guard duty, excusing himself by saying, “Hey, I had to arrive an hour and a half late to relieve you, sorry buddy” (Figure 4.31). Nuez’s parody of guard duty revealed a lack of concern for the seriousness and primacy of one’s revolutionary role. This section of the series also suggested not only abuses of revolutionary

power, but a certain degree of mistrust in the Cuban populace and its ability to submit to critical revolutionary duty. It argued that egoism and personal life trumped civic duty; a clear duality in the maturing Cuban *pueblo* image. Other sketches included militia claiming enough discipline and refusing further training, intra-group fighting, and covering up blunders. *Negativo, compañero* appeared at the height of domestic and international tensions and violence, a time that coincided with Castro’s declaration of socialism and the Bay of Pigs invasion. At this moment, the imagined narrative propagated the need for defense and discipline above all else. The CDR focused

on establishing socio-political lines of revolutionary and non-aligned citizens and a lack of interest and consideration for one’s degree of involvement in the revolutionary process simply ceased to be possible. Nuez’s *Negativo, compañero* stemmed from this growing insistence that deviating from and disrespecting the

*Negativo, compañero* por Nuez



**Figure 4.31** Nuez,  
*Revolución*, March 23,  
1961, 2.

codes of revolutionary power tore at the very heart of officialdom and the Revolution itself. In a process that increasingly depended on the participation and goodwill of its citizens, promoting their image as an enthusiastic, disciplined, and harmoniously unified entity proved vital to maintaining the public's faith in the Revolution and its possibilities. At the same time, Nuez's role as a revolutionary cartoonist, from a broader perspective, served to close the gap between reality and the imagined narrative. In order to ensure a respectable revolutionary elite like *responsables*, brigade leaders, vanguard, cartoonists like Nuez, Rosen, and Pecruz resorted to exposing problems and misbehavior, hoping to correcting these flaws and eradicate systemic weaknesses. Overall, this process of adjusting the Revolution within the imagined narrative required delicacy since excessive criticism could potentially undermine its legitimacy. Cartoonists tended to focus on strengthening the values and attitude of the ideal revolutionary citizen over deconstructing its antithesis. The imagined revolutionary citizen predominantly showed enthusiasm, joy, and passion toward the tasks ahead and this version as opposed to one in *Negativo, compañero*, circulated with more frequency. The good *pueblo* would largely dominate any visions of a *negativo compañero*.

Volunteer labor evolved into an important new labor regime and its thread of imagery elaborated a new stage in the process of building the revolutionary citizen. Propagated as one of the most integrated and intensive forms of participation, volunteer labor, in terms of ideological significance, reflected a purist vision of revolutionary unity, dedication, and support. The terms "volunteer labor," "shock workers," "fronts," and "brigades" were not new within

the lexicon of Soviet culture, yet in the Cuban context, this influx of militarism and authoritarian approach to labor and revolutionary projects in general, constituted a new discourse that blended well with rebel imagery and rhetoric.<sup>302</sup> Cultural activities before the Revolution like community volunteering, collections, church organizations and other charity functions facilitated the channeling of Cubans into broader revolutionary acts.<sup>303</sup> In 1959, through the Organization for Volunteer Labor (Organización de Trabajo Voluntario, OTV), the Revolutionary Government coordinated and recruited enthusiastic citizens to participate in beautification campaigns around Havana. Despite its efforts, the CTC took over the OTV and volunteer work did not become a routine form of labor until December 1961. Each mass organization, the FMC, CDR, UJC, and the ANAP to name a few, deployed volunteer “battalions” and “brigades” to different parts of the island to cut sugarcane, gather coffee, cotton, tomatoes and

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<sup>302</sup>During the Stalinist “socialist offensive” in 1929, officials established mass competitions based on a number of fronts (industrialization, collectivization, cultural, anti-religious, literary, and ideological) to fulfill the First Five-Year Plan. Each front led by “armies,” “heroes,” and specialized “shock worker brigades,” represented a precursor to the Stakhanov movement. Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 28. In summer 1966, Mao Zedong called on “Red Guard brigades” to stamp out the “Four Olds,” (i.e., old customs, old habits, old culture, and old thinking). Patricia Powell and Joseph Wong, “Propaganda Posters from the Chinese Cultural Revolution,” *The Historian* 54, no. 4 (1997): 781. Chapter Five will discuss the rise of Socialist competition, or emulation in Cuba.

<sup>303</sup>Some of Cuba most prominent socio-cultural traditions served as points of cultural comparison from which Cubans could draw from to acclimatize themselves to new collective work routines. Domínguez attributes this acclimatization to the experiences and rituals emanating from pre-revolutionary semi-religious socio-cultural institutions such as Abakúa and the two largest Spanish charity associations, the Centro Gallego and Centro Asturiano. Domínguez, 466-67.

fruits, or plant trees. They also donated time in urban factories, working on assembly lines, shops, cleaning and repairing railroad tracks, or painting public buildings.<sup>304</sup> CDR volunteer labor focused mainly on collecting recycled materials, soliciting the opening of savings accounts, and administering vaccinations. Typically, fifty volunteers, one *responsable*, and one political officer formed each battalion. Each battalion was expected to have its own transportation, its own motivational songs, a flag, and a name.<sup>305</sup> At times, the CDR joined other groups like the UJC and labor syndicates as reinforcements. The Revolution redefined labor “as an existential imperative, a moral obligation, a fundamental social principle, and a standard for assessing individual merit.”<sup>306</sup> The imagined narrative infused the “look” of labor with positivity, presenting it as a joyous and pleasurable pastime and this was particularly true of visuals concentrating on volunteer labor. By 1962, volunteer labor not only played an valuable role in the construction of Cuba’s socialist society, but according to

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<sup>304</sup>Carmelo Mesa Lago isolated four distinct forms of volunteer labor: extra hours after a normal work day; weekend, mainly Sunday labor; volunteer labor during annual vacation; and in a period of several months due to unemployment, or part of an officially sanctioned battalion. Frente Obrero Revolucionario Democratico Cubano, “El trabajo en Cuba socialista; trabajo voluntario, las “normas” y las “metas” la emulacion socialista,” (Miami: Frente Obrero Revolucionario Democratico Cubano Ediciones, no.1, 1965), 14.

<sup>305</sup>Many battalions were named after well known revolutionary martyrs. “Trabajo voluntario, nadie podrá cortar caña por la libre,” *Con la guardia en alto*, January 15, 1962, 25-26.

<sup>306</sup>Cabrera, 71.



**Figure 4.32**

revolutionary imagery, represented one of the most revolutionary experiences available to enthusiastic militants.

The imagery centering on volunteer labor projected an active citizenry, enthusiastically involved in massive campaigns

tailored to enhance Cuba's future. Through the Havana Provincial M26-7 authorities, the OTV solicited Cubans in late 1959 to dedicate their free time to the Revolution (Figure 4.32). This sample, containing a form that subscribers could cut and fill out, notified readers that the Revolution had something for everyone and their free time could be better spent in volunteer services to the state in both "physical and intellectual activities."<sup>307</sup> It insisted that "your greatest help towards the work of the Revolutionary Government is registering with the OTV" and simply requested participants communicate the time and manner of volunteering that suited them best. Enthusiastic supporters of the Revolution that wanted to initiate their integration could do so in a voluntary way by participating in OTV work. However, as the Revolution advanced, solicitations evolved into requirements and the tone and approach of imagery changed to match the immediacy of the project accordingly. The Federation of Construction published several advertisements in mid-1960 announcing the building of "urban centers" and insisting that "only you are absent" from joining their "Labor Brigade of

<sup>307</sup>Organización de Trabajadores Voluntarios, "Ese tiempo que te sobra dáselo a la revolución," *Revolución*, October 9, 1959, 20.



Figure 4.33

Revolutionary Work.”<sup>308</sup> One could subscribe at a number of kiosks around Havana, manned by militia. The advertisement’s attempt at producing a feeling of guilt within its reader by suggesting that only he, or she remained absent from participating, reflected a growing forcefulness, authoritarianism, and imposition within government-sponsored imagery. In another submission,

the Federation boasted the *pueblo*’s feverish work toward the opening of an urban center large enough to house four thousand families called the “City of Builders,” complete with schools, recreation parks, and commercial shops (Figure 4.33). It encouraged Cubans to fill out their application since “all of this depends on the voluntary effort of the citizenry; another demonstration of the *pueblo*’s unity in the great work of the Revolution.”<sup>309</sup> In an attempt to stimulate enthusiasm and win recruits, *Bohemia* photographed revolutionary leaders participating in volunteer labor, cutting sugarcane, or working in factory assembly lines. Even Che Guevara volunteered his time at the City of



Figure 4.34

<sup>308</sup>Federación de la Construcción, “Solamente faltas tú!” *Revolución*, August 2, 1960, 2.

<sup>309</sup>Federación de la Construcción, “El pueblo levanta la ciudad de los constructores,” *Revolución*, July 12, 1960, 6.

Builders. A *Bohemia* article on his efforts noted that “the battle of construction is as important as the defense of beaches and coasts . . . and that is why the men of the Revolutionary Government take stolen hours of time to sweat with the worker, sink into the same mud, lined up along side each other, together getting their hands dirty in the same task.”<sup>310</sup> Within the imagined narrative, volunteer labor projects intensified and appeared increasingly ubiquitous and massive. Next to a photo of a large trash can filled with bottles, paper products, and plastics, a housewife and her children stood happily packing a box full of materials, framed by the words, “This is how we threw away millions of pesos! Now: we will take advantage of everything!”<sup>311</sup> Underneath the photo, the Ministry of Industries announced that as of the beginning of August, “battalions

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<sup>310</sup>“Para el placer de ver la patria crecer,” *Bohemia*, January 29 1961, 70. On another occasion, *Bohemia* published a photograph of Fidel Castro working diligently as a volunteer cane cutter next to a song written in his honor by Indio Naborí, titled “Are You Surprised, Comrade!” Its lyrics reinforced messages of revolutionary equality and collectivism, emphasizing volunteer labor as an effort that included *everyone*, even leaders—a clear departure from the pre-revolutionary relationship between elites and the Cuban masses. The song began by exclaiming, “The Prime Minister . . . here? Here, in the cane field. In one hand, a machete and behind the machete, a hurricane, cutting, cutting cane as he has cut misdeeds. A machete-wielding minister! Are you surprised, comrade? Cuba works and it does not want a loafer in its cells.” *Bohemia*, July 2, 1961, 51. On the first *subbotnik* (a derivative of the word *subбота*, Saturday) May Day 1919, Lenin reportedly entered the Kremlin courtyard and joined a group of construction workers in volunteer labor, lifting heavily logs and moving debris. He appeared on the courtyard at nine in the morning and approached the unit commander saying, “Comrade Commander, permit me to join your unit for participation in the subbotnik.” This act, photographed and later transformed into propaganda, became part of the Lenin myth. Nina Turmarkin, *Lenin Lives!*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 55.

<sup>311</sup>Ministry of Industries, “Ahora: lo aprovechamos todo!” *Bohemia*, July 9, 1961, 51.





Figure 4.35

of volunteer laborers” would be conducting a house-to-house collection of any accumulated materials (Figure 4.34). By 1962, the vitality of the *trabajo voluntario* exploded as a work regime and it earned a spot among the recurring themes

published in *Revolución*’s “Mural” series.

*Revolución*’s “Mural” emerged as a central space for promoting volunteer labor projects in a manner that magnified their popularity, impact, variety, and universality. Beginning June 1962, Mural frequently reported news on the formation of volunteer labor brigades and upcoming projects, publishing numbers and listing groups, giving viewers a sense of the variety, accessibility, appeal, and scale of collective experiences. Using illustrations, photographs, and text, it communicated important announcements, status reports, and other commentary on mass organizations and broader revolutionary policy. It became a permanent section in *Revolución*, one that combined the flavor of visual propaganda with a journalistic integrity and added to the revolutionary, imagined community. In this example, Mural illustrated scenes of CDR volunteer labor, listed priorities, and detailed the formation of Battalions for Volunteer Labor (Figure 4.35).

“Activities for the CDR to Develop on the Front of Volunteer Labor” dictated that battalions of an unlimited number of participants would be organized under the



Figure 4.36

collection of glass containers, “complete” the task of gathering of stamps and buttons, and “call for” citizens to take materials to the *responsable* in charge of volunteer labor at their local workplace, or neighborhood CDR. This piece reflected a new tone and style of request for action, one that called for discipline, for more effort, and for a greater degree of performance.<sup>312</sup> This Mural section reported a strong turnout for a variety of rural volunteer projects sponsored by the Public Administration syndicate: 47,492 workers labored 229,804 hours in agriculture tasks yielding 83,840.88 pesos saved; urban center workers totaled 18,250 and labored 435,249 hours, and saved the government 308,777.06 pesos

<sup>312</sup>“Mural, Actividades que deben desarrollar los CDR en el frente de trabajo voluntario,” *Revolución*, November 15, 1962, 6. In its 1963 pamphlet titled, “Memories of the CDR, 1962,” the CDR National Directorate announced that through its Battalions of Volunteer Labor, it organized a total of 746,298 volunteers to pick coffee, cut cane, plant fruits, construct schools, open savings accounts, and collect bottles, cardboard, and postage stamps. Their efforts yielded approximately nine million tons of glass, over three thousand pounds of postage stamps, over forty thousand pesos in savings, and nearly one hundred and fifty thousand new planted seedlings. *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, Memorias CDR, 1962* (Havana: National Direction of the CDR, ECAG Taller 207-03 “Alfredo López,” 1963), 89-93.

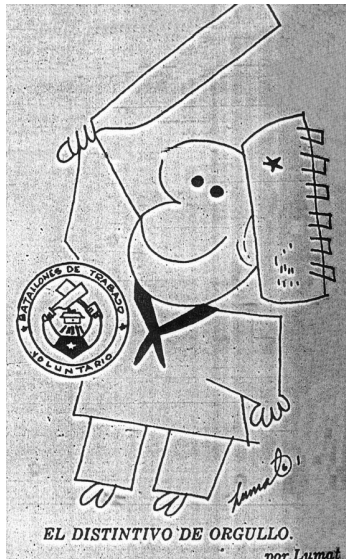
(Figure 4.36).<sup>313</sup> Publishing the number of participants, the total hours dedicated to volunteer work, and the amount of government revenue saved, stressed the enormity of projects, the degree of



Figure 4.37

enthusiasm for participation, and positive effect volunteer labor had on the Cuban economy and budget. Reporting statistics also communicated success and transparency. Mural projected an atmosphere of collectivism, a deeper revolutionary integration, and an active, hard working *pueblo*. For most mass organizations like the CDR, it became the heart of their revolutionary experience. The attention Mural editors gave to detailing statistics suggests they hoped to impress readers by the magnitude of the imagined, revolutionary community and stir passive supporters of the Revolution, or at the very least, non-conformists into becoming part of these experiences. Another entry in August 1963 featured a massive, nation-wide volunteer project, sponsored by the CTC, seeking to recruit only the best-of-the-best workers to participate in the special Red Volunteer Battalions, “Camilo Cienfuegos” (Figure 4.37). The CTC promised twenty-three thousand permanent volunteer workers from Havana, Oriente, Pinar del Río, Matanzas, Las Villas, and Camagüey for forty five days of labor in the coffee

<sup>313</sup>Mural, “Trabajos voluntarios,” *Revolución*, January 10, 1963, 6.



**Figure 4.38** Lumat, *Bohemia*, July 30, 1961, 146.

harvest. Chosen during worker assemblies, the same assemblies that awarded vanguard status to workers, these volunteer laborers represented an elite force of revolutionaries. “An honor to those,” the section continued, “who because of their revolutionary conscience, their exemplary attitude toward labor, and their decision to work hard on the production front and are productive in general, deserve this merit.”<sup>314</sup> To Mural readers, labor appeared as a

ubiquitous and honorable experience that represented the most dedicated and progressive sectors of the Revolution’s future.

In projecting volunteer labor as a joyous, progressive, and dignified experience, cartoonists redefined the emotional response and attitude toward labor in general. In 1961, cartoonists presented volunteer labor as an activity that should be viewed with pride and as a path to continued independence from American imperialism (Figures 4.38 and 4.39). In the first figure, a cane cutter beamed with self-confidence as he held his machete up high, suggesting a

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<sup>314</sup>Workers who stayed behind were reminded to maintain production and complete tasks belonging to those chosen for the Red Volunteer Battalions. *Revolución*, “Mural, a integrar los batallones rojos voluntarios “Camilo Cienfuegos,” August 17, 1963, 8. By the end of 1962, the number of hours of volunteer labor were recorded in each worker’s identification booklet. The CTC obligated workers participating in Socialist Emulation competitions to sign contracts promising a certain amount of volunteer labor hours. Those who refused to pledge contractually had their names listed publically and singled out as a “latecomer to unity.” *Frente Obrero Revolucionario Democrático Cubano*, “El trabajo en Cuba socialista,” 16.



**Figure 4.39** Tejedor, “Sunday at Two Distinct Cañaverales,” *Verde Olivo*, June 11, 1961.

strength, defiance, and moral superiority in holding the distinct honor of being accepted into a battalion. The machete evolved from a symbol associated with sugar, exploitation, and imperialism to a revolutionary weapon evoking defense, progress, anti-imperialism, and independence. Volunteer labor cartoons communicated a picture of an integrated revolutionary citizen that happily labored beyond his, or her immediate benefit. It also reflected a greater “nationalization” of private time. The next image juxtaposed the American and Cuban Sunday, a day generally associated with rest and relaxation. Tejedor’s “A Sunday at two distinct *cañaverales*” highlighted a Cuban diligently cutting sugarcane next to a blooming garden, while across the pond, two American soldiers lay about drinking next to a patched up rocket.<sup>315</sup> It reinforced the general perception cartoonists constructed of American service men leading a bankrupt, lazy, and alcohol-fueled lifestyle. As volunteer labor entrenched itself into Cuban socialist culture as a new form of work from 1962 onward, cartoons called the *pueblo* into action, repeating new outing-inspired slogans and featuring a happily engaged citizenry tackling a variety of tasks. Nuez, inspired by his own participation in volunteer activities, channeled his

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<sup>315</sup>The letter “Ñ” in the word “cañaveral,” or cane field was substituted for the letter “N” in the name of the United States Air Force station, Cape Canaveral, allowing for the comparison.





**Figure 4.41** Harry Reade, *Noticias de Hoy*, February 8, 1962.

happy revolutionaries harvesting coffee under the order, “Let’s Gather Coffee!” (Figure 4.42) This piece like others that associated the act of volunteer labor, of harvesting, of uninterrupted industrial production, of projects furthering economic development with strength, perseverance, defiance, defense, and

patriotism, reflected the lingering economic, cultural, and psychological impact of the rupture in American

and Cuban relations. Cartoonists reassured Cubans that revolutionary change could overcome the losses resulting from breaking with the United States. In

1935, Josef Stalin told a group of Stakhanovites, “Life has become better comrades; life has become more joyous, and

when you are living joyously, work turns out well.”<sup>317</sup> Certainly on the whole, cartoonists

portrayed revolutionary life and its work as a more joyous pastime considering the increasing degree of sacrifice, anxiety, and fear circulating



**Figure 4.42** Ardiñ, *Verde Olivo*, September 9, 1962.

outside the imagined narrative during this period, marked by the October 1962, Cuban Missile Crisis. Punctuated with one of the Revolution’s most circulated,

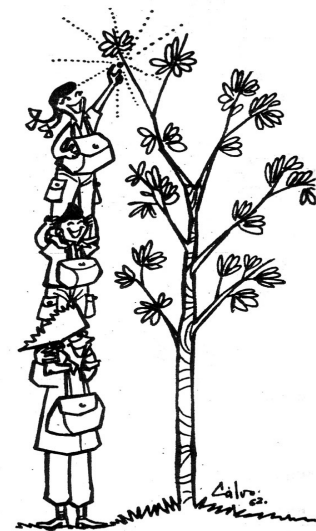
<sup>317</sup>Stakhanovites, named after Alexsei Stakhanov, were workers who produced far beyond their expected goals. Stakhanovites will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter theme on Socialist Emulation. Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 6.



**Figure 4.43** Ardion, *Verde Olivo*, July 8, 1962, 35.

motivational slogans, this next piece captured man, woman, child, and dog enthusiastically running to volunteer their efforts (Figure 4.43). It evoked excitement, unity, happiness, fun, and progress; a family effort and outing. This next cartoon reiterated the importance of teamwork

as this family creatively met the challenge put forth by another popular slogan, “Do not leave any seed uncollected!” (Figure 4.44)<sup>318</sup> This window into what *Bohemia* cartoonist Pecruz called a “scene at home” revealed an imagined family engaged in the two most important aspects of revolutionary life during this period, study and work (Figure 4.45). In this piece, a young boy assured his father that he would not miss one day of school while his dad joined others for the coffee harvest. By late 1964, volunteer labor had



QUE NO QUEDE NI UN SOLO GRANO  
SIN RECOGER

**Figure 4.44** Calvo, *Verde Olivo*, October 7, 1962, 97.

become mandatory. Che Guevara deemed it to be “the factor that most develops the conscience of the workers to prepare them for the path toward a new society

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<sup>318</sup>“Everyone to the (insert location/task)” and “Don’t leave any (insert material) standing or, without being collected” constituted two of the most recycled volunteer labor slogans used to motivate citizens into a variety of campaigns during this period.





ESCENA HOGAREÑA. por PECRUZ  
—Pipo, y mientras tú recoges café,  
yo no faltaré ni un solo día a la es-  
cuela.

Figure 4.45 Pecruz, "Scene at Home," *Bohemia*, September 20, 1963, 56.

without classes."<sup>319</sup> Volunteer labor expanded both the Cuban revolutionary experience and consciousness. The imagined narrative enhanced the process of redefining labor by crystallizing certain essential values of progress, dignity, pride, honesty, sacrifice, unity, and patriotism through the power of its visualization. These new values marked the 1963 *pueblo* and beyond.

In an ever-increasing dangerous environment, now shaped by a socialist ideology

that inherently contained a determined and permanent enemy in imperialism, a battle-ready, strong, defiant, and united imagined *pueblo* now protected and advanced the progression of the Revolution and by extension, Cuba. The rhetoric emphasizing the geo-political context of imperialism vis-à-vis the United States and the economic disruptions generated by the embargo, provided the imagined narrative a series of patriotic and historic moments that could be related to other subjects like defense, vigilance, volunteer labor, and mass organization-directed campaigns. Revolutionary imagery during this period from 1961 to 1963, reflected a deeper control over revolutionary citizens by their government through

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<sup>319</sup>Quoted from a Che Guevara speech given at a ceremony honoring those receiving Certificates of Communist Volunteer Labor on August 15, 1964. Each industrial and agricultural worker had to donate a total of 240 hours every six months. Frente Obrero Revolucionario Democrático Cubano, "El trabajo en Cuba socialista," 33.

its mass organizations. It propagated an alarmism beyond defense and vigilance, announcing peremptory battles and the formation of brigades as an approach to agricultural and industrial development. It played a vital role in informing, guiding, and recruiting manpower for volunteer labor and campaigns organized by the CDR and other mass organizations. CDR imagery, in particular, introduced a more sophisticated use of patriotism as a means to mobilize recruits, furnished advertisers with a suitable thread to elaborate ideas of revolutionary unity and heroism, and inaugurated new characters like the *gusano* into the imagined narrative. *Revolución*'s "Mural" series also augmented the visualization of economic progress, of ubiquitous success, and of universal integration into the revolutionary experience. Cartoonists critiqued anti-revolutionary behavior like absenteeism, waste, stealing, and cliques to shape a new revolutionary consciousness inside and outside the workplace based on socialist codes of discipline, collectivism, leadership, organization, activism, and efficiency. In contrast to revolutionary advertisers, they exercised more freedom of choice in terms of topic and some, in the case of René de la Nuez, readily pulled from their own revolutionary experiences to readjust negative social trends through the command of their pens. In this sense, they negotiated a criticism of the Revolution with an educative act, all the while careful not to undermine the legitimacy of the Revolution itself. Revolutionary imagery assumed a new integrated reader and in doing so, radicalized its expectations, its tone, and its approach to mobilizing and addressing its audience and passed onto it more and more responsibility for the success and survival of the Revolution. This

perception, substantiated by the historical record, manifested itself in the demeanor and shrinking parameters of choice given by the visual rhetoric found in state-generated, revolutionary advertisements. The ideal citizen living in the revolutionary imagined narrative viewed his, or her responsibility to the Revolution with honor and duty; approached Cuba's defense with strength, sacrifice, and vigor; and labored voluntarily with an unmatched joy, efficiency, and satisfaction that stemmed from their faith in a better future through the Revolution. The next chapter explores the link between the imagined narrative and two of the most important national campaigns associated with this period, the Literacy Campaign of 1961 and Socialist Emulation, 1962-1963. These two case studies provide contexts for a closer examination of the coordination of revolutionary imagery, particularly cartoons and state-generated advertisements, with larger revolutionary projects and agenda of socio-political indoctrination.

## Chapter 5: Case Studies in Revolutionary Imagery: Campaña de Alfabetización, 1961 and Emulación Socialista, 1962-1963

This chapter focuses on the imagery developing and sustaining two prominent national campaigns of the early revolutionary period: Campaña de Alfabetización (Literacy Campaign) and Emulación Socialista (Socialist Emulation). Examining the imagery used to recruit and address the ever-changing needs of the Cuban literacy effort reveals a tightly synchronized and highly charged, organized coordination between government ministries and mass organizations as they quickly responded to successes and failures. The campaign's imagery coincided with the institutional, aesthetic, and stylistic transition of advertisements to their revolutionary form, resulting in two approaches to mass recruitment and mobilization. Socialist Emulation, a new type of labor regime borrowed from Soviet labor culture of the 1930s, appeared toward the end of 1962 as a method to re-energize a troubled economy and industrial activity. Its imagery, while still in its incipient stage, incorporated previously propagated visual threads that merged to construct the new Cuban worker. Imagery centering on labor values, methods, and shop floor politics from 1959 to the debut of Socialist Emulation in 1962, elaborated state expectations in the performance and attitude of workers as hoped to evolve as socialist laborers. Both campaigns assumed a revolutionary active, enthusiastically engaged, and ideologically sophisticated reading public. This chapter concentrates on the

building of each campaign's imagined narrative and how these shaped the revolutionary citizen.

As the first successful national mobilization, the Literacy Campaign of 1961 commanded the coordination and development of institutional, social, political, and visual resources on an unprecedented scale. Arguably, one of the most pivotal and historical moments of the Revolution, the Revolutionary Government viewed the Literacy Campaign as an essential condition for ideological unity and socialist indoctrination. Lenin and his contemporaries understood that the creation of a strong political consciousness required a literate populace. In his work, *Birth of the Propaganda State*, Kenez noted literacy as essential to Lenin's views on the process of indoctrination: "The illiterate person stood outside of politics and for Lenin, everything was political. Without literacy, everything is rumor, fairy tales and prejudice."<sup>320</sup> A literacy campaign provided the perfect vehicle for unifying the country culturally by reaching Cubans not yet acquainted with the works of the Revolution while simultaneously raising their political and educational knowledge to a caliber sufficient for further socialization. Castro and his collaborators also understood early on that an ideologically unified, revolutionary citizenry would strengthen their program. Literacy work had begun in the rebel-liberated zones of the Sierra Maestra as educated soldiers taught illiterate combatants which totaled approximately eighty

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<sup>320</sup>Kenez, 72.

percent of the Rebel Army.<sup>321</sup> On March 31, 1959, the Revolutionary Government promulgated Law 187, recognizing a “national importance to facilitate on a grand scale the means of production of educational and cultural works that stimulate the formation of a defined revolutionary consciousness.”<sup>322</sup> In the two years following the Rebel Army’s entrance into Havana, the Rebel Army, the INRA, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Public Works—both now under revolutionary administration—built rural schools, converted military barracks into classrooms, and developed instructional centers and train teachers in urban areas.<sup>323</sup> The INRA, through its technical, material, and cultural assistance program, joined the Rebel Army in the recruitment of secondary school students and members of the AJR to form “brigades” to tackle

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<sup>321</sup>Nikolai Kolesnikov, “Cuba; educación popular y preparación de los cuadros nacionales, 1959-1982,” (Moscow: Editorial progreso, 1983), 87. Che Guevara was the first of the rebel leaders to teach his troops to read and subsequently set up the first school run by rebel soldiers in El Hombrito. Guillermina Ares, *Alfabetización en Cuba, historia y testimonios*, (Havana, Editora Política, 2000), 6.

<sup>322</sup>Mariano Sanchez Roca, “Nuevo ordenamiento legal de la enseñanza: legislación revolucionaria de Ministerio de Educación,” (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1960), 531. As early as 1953, Castro discussed the need to battle illiteracy in Cuba in his “History Will Absolve Me” speech and in the Sierra Maestra Manifesto (1957) as part of a broader history, dominated by “domestic tyrants and foreign exploiters” who imposed an economic structure designed to maintain the poor culturally and fiscally bankrupt. The result was “social, economic, and political backwardness and degradation.” Fagen, 34-35.

<sup>323</sup>During 1959-1961, the INRA and the Ministry of Education oversaw the building of 671 primary rural schools with a total of 1700 classrooms; 339 primary urban schools with a total of 3400 classrooms; 99 new secondary schools; six technical schools; and one college level institute. Ministerio de Educación, “Informe de la Republica de Cuba a la duodécima reunión de la conferencia de la UNESCO, 1962” (Havana: Impresa Nacional de Cuba, 1963), 43.

rural literacy.<sup>324</sup> Three groups of over one thousand participants took courses at a Rebel Army installation in Minas del Frio in the Sierra Maestra from May 1960 to January 1961. During their training, the Ministry of Education geared up for a broader campaign and created a National Commission on Literacy in September 1960, organizing its work through four main departments (technical, statistics, propaganda, and finance and administration). Consolidated Publicity (COP) created three teams to work for the Commission's propaganda department. Headed by Mirta Muñiz, a student of advertising at McCann Erickson International in New York, the COP graphic design personnel created the cover art for an instructor's manual *Alfabetizamos* and a primer *Venceremos*, as well as revolutionary imagery targeting Minas de Frio's brigades and volunteers, and other materials, including popular songs, symbols, poems, and posters.<sup>325</sup> Early

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<sup>324</sup>Primarily, the Department of Technical, Material, and Cultural Assistant to the Peasant, through the Department of Education, began census work, operated schools, distributed medicines, vaccinations, and technical help throughout Santiago de Cuba in the extreme eastern part of the island. By October 1959, it became part of the INRA and took charge of organizing volunteer education work. Ares, 16-35 passim.

<sup>325</sup>The Ministry of Education's propaganda team consisted of Mirta Muñiz (director); Guillermo Menéndez, José Luis Pintos, and Mario Masvidal (general design); and Eduardo Saborit (musician). Menéndez designed the National Commission symbol and Masvidal developed the emblems of Conrado Benítez brigade, its lantern, and the covers of *Venceremos* and *Alfabetizamos*. The COP remained under the direction of the Industrialization section of the INRA. Bermúdez, 88. The instructor's manual *Alfabetizamos* contained fifteen themes of "revolutionary orientation": the Revolution; Fidel is our leader; the land is ours; cooperatives; the right of housing; Cuba had wealth, yet was poor; nationalization; industrialization; the Revolution transformed barracks into schools; discrimination; friends and enemies; imperialism; international commerce; war and peace; international unity; democracy; workers and peasants; the people are united and alert; the liberty of being cultured; health; popular recreation; alphabetization; the

literacy efforts based their statistical information from of a literacy census conducted by the Ministry of Education in 1953. The census placed the proportion of illiterates in Cuba at a rate of one in four and locating those surveyed became an immediate challenge confronting the Ministry and its Commission.<sup>326</sup> In general, the Commission's approach to literacy resembled that of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire by employing a politically engaged, instructional vocabulary and thought-provoking photographs. Pedagogy emphasized the need for a dialogue between teacher and student.<sup>327</sup> The first Minas de Frio's pilot literacy brigades "Los Coquitos," named after one of the four islands forming Cuba's archipelago called Cayo Coco, appeared in the Zapata Swamp, a very poor area south of the Matanzas province, with a high rate of illiterates the Commission considered a proper test site. These rehearsals would later serve the Ministry's campaign authorities as a springboard from

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Revolution wins all battles; and the Declaration of Havana. Ministerio de Educación, *Alfabetizamos* (Havana: Talleres de Imprenta Nacional de Cuba, 1961), 7 and Ares, 99.

<sup>326</sup>The bulk of the Ministry's information drew from the 1953 census which claimed twenty-five percent of Cubans over ten years old had no schooling and half had dropped out after the sixth grade. It cited forty-two percent illiteracy in rural areas and eleven percent in cities. Fagen, 35 and 40 and the Ministerio de Educación, "Alfabetización, nacionalización de la enseñanza," (Havana: Imprensa Nacional de Cuba, 1961), 27. Jonathan Kozol places the illiteracy rate at twenty percent by the time the Revolution launched its campaign. He attributes this reduction to the ongoing literacy work of the Rebel Army, the INRA, and the experimental programs of 1959-60. Kozol, 360.

<sup>327</sup>The friendship between the National Director for Adult Education Dr. Raúl Ferrer and Paulo Freire had an impact on the style of the Cuban literacy campaign. Jonathan Kozol, "A New Look at the Literacy Campaign in Cuba," *Harvard Educational Review*, v.48, no.3 (August 1978), 353-54.



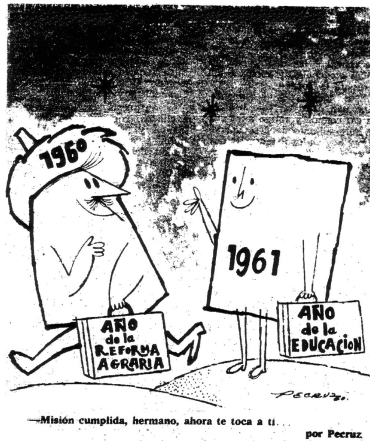
which to orient, organize, and recruit. On September 26, 1960, Fidel Castro's bold claim in front of the United Nations' General Assembly that illiteracy would be eradicated in Cuba by December 1961 coincided with an ongoing campaign to make his promise a reality.<sup>328</sup> At its heart, according to the Ministry of Education, the campaign set the foundation for basic socialist indoctrination: "The literacy campaign brings justice and a moral obligation to the Revolution and prepares Cubans for socialism. Alphabetization is necessary for the intellectual level and expertise required to push forward socialism."<sup>329</sup> By virtue of its unprecedented level of mass participation and its symbolic potency as a national "battle," the campaign remains one of the most important and most propagated revolutionary moments during this period. Its imagery reveals the development, flow, and twist of a message in motion, one designed to address unforeseen changes, recruit participants as needed, maintain proper levels of enthusiasm, and inform readers of its progress.

Establishing the perfect symbol and language to represent the spirit of the Literacy campaign constituted one of the first evolutions in its imagery. The campaign needed an inspirational association, or symbolic focal point that not only embodied enough power to galvanize a volunteer spirit and guided it in a lasting and a meaningful way, but be unmistakably Cuban and revolutionary.

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<sup>328</sup>Castro declared, "Our pueblo proposes to liberate itself against illiteracy in a great battle with the ambitious goal of teaching every illiterate how to read and write by the end of next year." Ministerio de Educación, "Alfabetización, nacionalización de la enseñanza," 26.

<sup>329</sup>Ibid., 41.



**Figure 5.1** Pecruz, *Bohemia*, January 1, 1961, 64.

January 1961 officially launched the year of education and cartoonists, in their role as visual commentators of the Revolution, began incorporating literacy into their reservoir of themes (Figure 5.1). In this piece by Pecruz, the “Year of Agrarian Reform” announced his mission completed and symbolically passed the torch to the “Year of Education.” Literacy joined other

revolutionary priorities like defense, or volunteer labor (Figure 5.2). In January, the campaign remained isolated to its volunteer efforts in the Zapata Swamp and the work of the Los Coquitos pilot literacy brigades. A speech given by Castro on January 28 at the inauguration of the Abel Santamaría School-City (*Ciudad Escolar, Abel Santamaría*), converted from one of Batista’s most infamous army garrisons Camp Columbia, he officially launched the Year of Education. Revolutionary advertisers publicizing the opening of the School-City employed José Martí, Cuba’s most famous patriot, writer, poet, and teacher, as a mobilizing symbol (Figure 5.3).<sup>330</sup> This



**Figure 5.2** Sureda, *Bohemia*, January 29, 1961, 128.

<sup>330</sup>This quote appeared in Martí’s 1884 essay “Maestros ambulantes” where he encouraged teachers to go out into the countryside to educate the peasantry and hopefully stir their interest in learning. He noted “to be good is the only way to be happy; to be cultured is the only way to be free” (ser bueno es el único modo de ser dichoso; ser culto es el único modo de ser libre). José Martí, “Maestros ambulantes,” *Trabajo*, January 23, 1961, 41.



**Figure 5.3** Ministerio de Educación, *Bohemia*, January 29, 1961, 43.

sample invited the *pueblo* to the inauguration of the School-City to honor “the creative and fertile work of our Revolution.” It featured a group of cheering Young Pioneers, celebrating another promise fulfilled by the Revolution under the bust of Martí: “Martí promised us!!” The Ministry of Education signed each of their revolutionary advertisements with a quote from José Martí as their new slogan “To be educated is to be free.” In a series of revolutionary advertisements by the Ministry of Education, the Revolutionary Government joined by nationalized businesses and department stores appeared alongside the figure of Martí. A variety of quotes touching on education, graced announcements of the upcoming speech at the School-City captioned the advertisements. Martí’s status as the symbol for Cuban literacy, however, proved ephemeral and was soon replaced by another that emerged directly from the revolutionary experience, Conrado Benítez. According to the official legend, Conrado Benítez, a poor Afro-Cuban student, not yet nineteen years old and of working-class origin, was a graduate of the volunteer contingents trained at the Rebel Army installation at Minas del Frio. On January 5, 1961, a band of “counter-revolutionaries” captured and killed Benítez, a peasant, and a militia member while traveling to the La Reunión ranch in the municipality of Trinidad. Benítez, reportedly, was carrying his Center of Communist Training card from

Minas del Frio, books, revolutionary instruction manuals, and photographs.<sup>331</sup>

The official Benítez story contained all the axiological, circumstantial, and symbolic elements necessary for him to become the perfect martyr for the Literacy Campaign. He was young, poor, Afro-Cuban, integrated, acting under revolutionary orders, sacrificing and dedicating his time to the betterment of his country, and ambushed by “imperialist enemies.” In his speech at the inauguration of the Abel Santamaría School-City on January 28, Castro concluded Benítez became an easy target because “he was poor, he was a Negro, and he was a teacher. There you have three reasons why the agents of imperialism assassinated him.”<sup>332</sup> Castro called one hundred thousand volunteers to be recruited from students who had completed the sixth grade for the formation of literacy brigades by April 15. Bearing the name of Conrado Benítez, the mobilization of these young volunteers launched a broader mobilization of the Cuban *pueblo* through the CDR, FMC, and other mass organizations. Varadero, an exclusive beach community ninety miles from Havana in Matanzas, catering to the very wealthy before the Revolution, became the training site for the Conrado Benítez brigades. Between the months of April and May, more than one hundred thousand boys and girls, mostly ranging from ages ten to nineteen, answered Castro’s call and trained for eight to ten days in what Jonathan Kozol termed an act of “ethical exhilaration.” Armed with the instructor’s manual *Alfabetizemos*

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<sup>331</sup>Ares, 91-92.

<sup>332</sup>Fagen, 42.

developed by the Commission's COP-staffed propaganda team, these recruits were instructed to "find a new path of [their] own, firm and clear, but not authoritarian; purposeful, sequential, and well paced, but never abusive, never condescending."<sup>333</sup> The same energy, spirit, and optimism circulating within society after the revolutionary victory in early 1959 seemed to resurface as a portion of Cuba's youth jumped at the chance of sharing in an adventure similar to that of Castro's own experience.<sup>334</sup>

Recruitment advertisements for the Conrado Benítez brigades employed a wide range of persuasive tactics designed to entice Cuban youth to participate and soothe nervous and apprehensive parents. In order to quell parental anxiety about sending their children to training camps designed to prepare them for spending weeks in the most underdeveloped and virtually unknown interior of the island, the Commission published informational propaganda, inspirational poems, songs,

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<sup>333</sup>The training site at Varadero, made up of mansions, old estates, and hotels, opened on April 15, 1961 with nine dining rooms, three hundred cooks, and over seventy-five housing facilities and one thousand students in attendance. It housed up to twelve thousand brigadiers and teachers at one time and closed after five months. Kozol, 347 and 350. A comparison with Soviet literacy efforts in the 1920s prove appropriate as Narkompros, the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment, headed by Nadezhda Krupskaya called for a spread of literary schools where literates would teach illiterates and Anatoly Lunacharsky created an alphabetizing primer geared toward political indoctrination. Kenez, 75.

<sup>334</sup>Most brigadiers were white (61%) from major cities like Havana (34%) and Oriente (31%), and between the ages of 10-14 (40%) and 15-19 (47%). Kozol insisted that a "socialist conviction" did not act as a major force of mobilization. Instead, he attributed a sense of not wanting to let Castro down, or draw upon Cuba the humiliation of such a public failure as key factors in recruitment. Kozol, 343-44 and Fagen, 45. Other sources noted the brigades totaled 105, 664 members at their height with 54, 953 girls and 50,711 boys participating. Kolesnikov, 89.

and imagery reminiscent of commercial advertisements that appealed to readers' sense of adventure and entertainment. The Commission delivered its messages under the Conrado Benítez brigades, circulating this piece called "Ten Questions and Ten Responses on the Literacy Brigades, Conrado Benítez" (Figure 5.4). Largely an informational advertisement, it explained the makeup of the brigades, their recruitment, available chaperones, sign up locations, equipment provided, a monthly stipend, visitor information, and finally their destination.<sup>335</sup> While most recruits were girls, this young boy (perhaps a reference to the qualities of strength

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<sup>335</sup> 1) What are the Conrado Benítez Brigades? An army of volunteer teachers that will eradicate illiteracy in every corner of our island. 2) Who can become a *brigadista*? Only those sixth graders and above including high school students who have been authorized by their parents. 3) Who will accompany the *brigadista*? Primary and secondary school teachers who have renounced their summer vacations, as well as parents and family members who would like to join the campaign. 4) Where can you sign up? Local education centers where you can also pick up permission forms. 5) Where will they train? They will train in Varadero for one week on the manuals *Alfabeticemos*, and *Venceremos*. They will also enjoy the sun, beach, sports, and other outside activities. 6) Will they receive financial help? They will receive a monthly stipend of ten pesos for personal expenses. 7) What equipment will they receive? They will be equipt with one pair of boots, two pairs of socks, one belt, one green beret, one backpack, one hammock, one lantern, one copy of *Venceremos* and *Alfabeticemos*, two pants, two shirts, a Brigade guide, a moral code of the *Brigadista*, and a book on stories of José Martí. 8) How will the brigades be formed? Each brigade is made up of four battalions, each battalion is made up of five companies, each company is made up of three platoons, and each platoon is made of twenty-eight *brigadistas* with two auxiliaries and a *responsable*, usually a teacher. 9) Where will the brigades go? Boys will go to rural zones and girls to city centers. Peasants will already know they are coming and are ready to receive them as their own children. 10) Can parents and family members visit *brigadistas* in their designated spots? The National Institute of Interior Tourism (Instituto Nacional de la Industria Turística, INIT), in conjunction with the National Commission of Literacy is preparing excursions for parents and family members at special prices. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, "10 repuestas a 10 preguntas sobre las brigadas de alfabetización Conrado Benítez," *Bohemia*, April 16, 1961, 16. Also published *Verde Olivo*, April 23, 1961, 96-97.



Figure 5.4

to Varadero took place on the heels of the Bay of Pigs invasion (April 17-20).

The Commission, in partnership with the National Institute of Interior Tourism (Instituto Nacional de la Industria Turística, INIT), invited family members to

sunny Varadero in an effort to strengthen their confidence. Mother's Day

provided the perfect occasion for a visit and for only three pesos per person,

“family, friends . . . the whole *pueblo*” would receive transportation, lodging,

breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Underneath a photograph of a happy family with

palm trees, beachfront, and a yacht, the Commission made its pitch:

Become intimately acquainted with the comfortable healthy life and high spirit of revolutionary confraternity that prevails in each activity and training they [*brigadistas*] receive before departing into our countryside to sow the flower of learning. Pay them a visit, feel proud as a family member, friend, and Cuban of these thousands and thousands of young *brigadistas* who conscious of their duty are going to combat imperialism by teaching illiterates (Figure 5.5).<sup>336</sup>

<sup>336</sup>Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización y INIT, “Las brigadas Conrado Benítez los esperan en Varadero,” *Noticias de Hoy*, May 6, 1961, 5.



**Figure 5.5** Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Noticias de Hoy*, May 6, 1961, 5.

This piece exemplified of the mixture of consumer advertising and revolutionary propaganda associated with the American-trained, COP members working for the propaganda department of the Commission. Visually, it evoked vacation, sun, fun, unity, relaxation, yet its text urged readers to join in “revolutionary confraternity” in support of these youngsters preparing to “combat imperialism.” The Commission’s propaganda department sold Varadero with American-inspired

skill steeped in revolutionary language. Without a doubt, the idea of spending months isolated in the interior of the island, teaching in unsanitary and inhospitable conditions during summer vacation, required enticing recruits with more than patriotism, pride, or the prospect of personal independence. Commission advertisements lured youth with images promising outdoor sports and entertainment like this piece featuring a smiling Conrado Benítez *brigadista* pointing to an ocean full of sun-bathers and swimmers in the background (Figure 5.6). “Before marching off into our countryside to sow the flower of learning,” it read, “I enjoy vacationing in



**Figure 5.6** Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Bohemia*, June 18, 1961, 2.





**Figure 5.7** Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Noticias de Hoy*, June 10, 1961, 10.

Varadero.” Underneath the main headline sat a group of photos highlighting *brigadistas* attending class, enjoying music, and traveling in a train car into the interior. The Commission indicated that in addition to recreational activities, art, and sports, students received instructions on proper “social and civic revolutionary training,” as well as the use of the manual and primer *Alfabeticemos* and *Venceremos*. Its propaganda cleverly molded happiness, sun, and fun with rebel symbolism,

instruction, and revolutionary slogans, “We Will Win One More Battle against Imperialism!” and “We Will Succeed! Learning to Read and Write, We Will Overcome!” This Commission recruitment sample appealed to the reader’s sense of patriotism and emphasized the child’s broader role in this historical moment: “Come forward, comrade! We’re waiting for you! Come teach with us and fulfil your duty to the Country! Join the fight for Peace! We want you to be one of us . . . unite with the Conrado Benítez brigades!” (Figure 5.7) Similar to the rhetoric found in CDR, or nationalization imagery, this piece reminded readers they were part of a “tremendous battle that no other country has proposed to win in such a short period of time” and the “Conrado Benítez brigades wait for you to write a

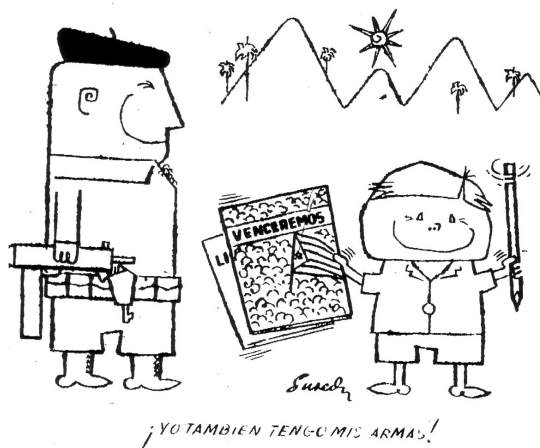


Figure 5.8 Sureda, *Bohemia*, April 9, 1961, 15.

campaign, also praised the *brigadista* effort. This cartoon published in *Bohemia* featured a little fellow proudly displaying a pencil and copy of *Venceremos* alongside a smiling militia member (Figure 5.8). The caption at the bottom read, “I also have my weapons!” With the *brigadistas*, the youth entered the imagined narrative in full force, becoming part of the larger historical moment, armed with their own hymn. By August 1961, the Conrado Benítez brigades set off to the Sierra Maestra to write their own revolutionary chapter and the press followed to document their campaign.<sup>338</sup>

<sup>337</sup>Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, “Adelante Juventud!” *Noticias de Hoy*, June 10, 1961, 11.

<sup>338</sup>Hymn of the Conrado Benítez brigades: “Cuba! Cuba! Study, Work, and Rifles! Pencil, Primer, and Manual! Teach! We will overcome! We are the Conrado Benítez brigades, we are the vanguard of the Revolution. With our books held high, we are completing the goal of literacy Cuba! Through the mountains and valleys the *brigadista* travels, accomplishing tasks for the country, fighting for peace. Down with imperialism, up with liberty. We bring the light of truth through letters.” Ares, 101.



**Figure 5.9** Report of the Conrado Benítez,” *Bohemia*, June 18, 1961, 91.

*Bohemia*’s series, “Reports of the Conrado Benítez Brigades,” presented readers with an idyllic picture of two Cubas unifying under the revolutionary experience and added an inspiring and documentary thread to campaign imagery. Perhaps to maintain the *brigadistas*’ enthusiasm alive, dispel rumors, calm fears, or stir interests in joining their campaign, these reports always projected a sunny and cozy look into *brigadista* life on-

location, featuring actual photographs of these teachers and their students interacting, working, and bonding (Figure 5.9). Each series featured the *brigadistas*’ mascot, a happy little lantern that hung in the corners of certain photographs, giving encouraging thoughts and commentary, generally praising subjects for a job well done. Reports painted a rosy picture of *brigadistas* paired up with their students by gender, happily taking part in the daily routines of their hosts.<sup>339</sup> Bridging the cultural gap between urban and rural Cuba constituted one of the campaign’s chief ideological goals. The Ministry of Education noted that strengthening the connection between urban and rural areas constituted a goal of the campaign and sending a “mobilized section of the youth to the mountains, to sleep in hammocks, to get bitten by mosquitos, and to forego eating meat for days

<sup>339</sup>The Commission purposefully sent boys to the most remote part of the countryside and maintained the girls near cities and populated locales. *Ibid.*, 74.

together with the peasant, would harden them, strengthen them, and bring them closer to their peasant brothers.”<sup>340</sup> The report featured in Figure 5.9 projected this harmonious connection between the *brigadistas* and their rural hosts, repeating ideas and phrases commonly found in other literacy propaganda. It began by reminding readers that “wherever a Cuban exists who does not know how to read, a brigadier will be alongside, sowing the flower of learning.”<sup>341</sup> Boys labored “arm in arm with the peasants” while girls stayed behind “with the women on the patio taking care of the chickens.” The report continued, “Later, after completing their house chores they remained on the porch embroidering, enjoying the breeze, and a tranquil and wholesome conversation. When the men arrived from working the fields, the porch would double as a schoolroom.” *Bohemia* punctuated its report by assuring readers that “they will return filled with pride from doing their duty, they will be more man and more woman . . . better citizens for the *patria* (homeland) of tomorrow!”<sup>342</sup> This report reiterated revolutionary values previously propagated in other threads of imagery: progress, unity, patriotism, and labor. Other reports suggested *brigadistas* viewed their hosts as a second family, even referring to them as “Mami and Papi.” One such submission recounted, “Papi and Antonio [*brigadista*] had already become

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<sup>340</sup>Ministerio de Educación, “Alfabetización, nacionalización de la enseñanza,” 35.

<sup>341</sup>Despite the Revolution’s insistence on a growing equality between the sexes, the report’s narrative reaffirmed traditional gender roles.

<sup>342</sup>“Report of the Conrado Benítez Brigades,” *Bohemia*, June 18, 1961, 91.

great friends, spending the day together in the field checking on the charcoal ovens and animals. At night, Papi, a trained medic, gave everyone a checkup.”<sup>343</sup> *Bohemia* promoted an imagined, sanitized view of an engaged and integrated urban youth and rural citizenry, sharpened with a documentary edge that only photographs could provide. In another report, the story followed a girl *brigadista*’s experience, featuring her combing her new friend’s hair, sewing clothes and curtains with “Mami,” and later helping to prepare dinner. As always, at the end of the day and “with great anticipation,” everyone gathered around to read from their manuals.<sup>344</sup> While the range of real-life experiences varied and not every match could be as compatible as those featured in *Bohemia*’s series, the revolutionary experience presented in the imagined narrative sustained a consistent picture of true integration and cooperation between urban and rural Cuba in order to maintain the degree of enthusiasm and devotion necessary for this awesome task.<sup>345</sup> Through their visual and textual messages, reports left

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<sup>343</sup>*Bohemia*, July 2, 1961, 59.

<sup>344</sup>*Bohemia*, June 11, 1961, 91.

<sup>345</sup>In the case of Beatriz, a young woman interviewed by sociologist Oscar Lewis, fear of pregnancy and being stuck in “god knows where” were deep concerns. Nevertheless, she felt that the “campaign was a great thing, a historic event . . . I’d be embarrassed to explain to my grandchildren, ‘No, I didn’t join the Literacy Campaign; I was too eager to see my sister again’ . . . it seemed to me that would be down-right immoral. Besides, it was a beautiful opportunity to experience perhaps one-thousandth of the things Fidel had been through.” Beatriz begged to be assigned to a very rural area and was shocked to encounter racism towards the Afro-Cubans in her village, widespread practices of bestiality, as well as unfair antagonism from her hostess toward her unwillingness to completely submit to her every whim. Chomsky, Carr, and Smorkaloff, *Cuba Reader: History, Politics, and Culture*, 389-93. Their training stressed a complete integration into rural daily life, including working in the

readers assuming friendship, progress, happiness, family, and growth prevailed in campaign hot spots.

By August, a shift in design responsibilities within the propaganda department of the Commission transformed the look and tone of its campaign imagery as the next installment of recruitment advertisements sought to mobilize mass organizations. Although the Conrado Benítez brigades and other Commission volunteer groups like the FMC and the Rebel Army located a large percentage of those listed in the 1953 census, more work needed to be done by August 30 at the start of the National Congress on Literacy.<sup>346</sup> On August 3, in a joint resolution a number of mass organizations led by the CDR vowed to “comb the streets and neighborhoods for illiterates.”<sup>347</sup> In preparation for the National Congress on Literacy, the Commission intensified its push to enlist more volunteer teachers by increasing its recruitment propaganda and directly addressing mass organizations.<sup>348</sup> The dissolution of the COP at the end of May

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fields. Many participants retained fonder memories like Armando Valdéz, who recalled being shocked by his host’s poor conditions, but still felt “excited to be part of something which had never happened in our land before. . . . It was, for me, the dying of an old life and the start of something absolutely new.” Kozol, 349.

<sup>346</sup>By late August only 119,000 participants had completed the program out of the 500,000 being taught. Kozol, 355.

<sup>347</sup>Ares, 123.

<sup>348</sup>The National Commission of Literacy created a form (in triplicate) designed to register CDR volunteers and any campaign participants under their supervision. It published instructions in *Revolución* for CDR members to follow when filling out the form. In this way, it kept track of the CDR’s progress in enrolling volunteers, in pairing up teachers with their would-be students, and in distributing the literacy manuals *Venceremos* and *Alfabetizemos*. *Revolución*, August

and the integration of a number of their personnel (including those working in Commission projects) into the state-run propaganda agency Intercommunications, affected the format, tone, and approach to recruitment, yet this visual change did not appear immediately in the summer months.<sup>349</sup> The contrast in style of the revolutionary advertisement of Intercommunications designers to that of the COP present before June 1961 is noticeable. Aesthetically, Intercommunications propaganda appeared more formulaic, authoritarian, and slogan-driven. In a piece simply showing a group of arms holding up the Commission's symbolic flag, it read "Everyone to the final battle! A total liquidation of illiteracy in 1961! We have to find illiterates! We need more teachers! Worker, peasant, teacher, intellectual, youth, women, united we will triumph teaching those who don't know how! Victory is within every Cuban!"<sup>350</sup> This new recruitment series projected an atmosphere of battle-ready mobilization, of active and intensely

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7, 1961, 4.

<sup>349</sup>Mirta Muñoz, head of one of the COP design teams for the Commission propaganda department, returned to radio and television programming under Intercommunications. Another COP team member, Alberto Camejo Pozo Fernández, also transferred to Intercommunications and worked on pieces for the Ministry of Public Health. Intercommunications generated revolutionary advertisements for ministries and ORI mass organizations like the INRA, CDR, FMC, and AJR. Mirta Muñoz, interview by author, tape recording, Havana, Cuba, August 10, 2005. During this transition, the Commission of Revolutionary Orientation (COR) director and also member of the Executive Committee of the ORI, César Escalante Dellundé, created the infamous "Technical Team" out of the remaining COP personnel to work specifically for COR. Intercommunications also fused with the COR during this period. Bermúdez, 88-89, 94 and 96. For more on the transition from the COP to Intercommunications, see Chapter Two.

<sup>350</sup>Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización y Ministerio de Educación, "Todos a la batalla final contra el analfabetismo!" *Bohemia*, July 30, 1961, 39.



**Figure 5.10** Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización and CDR, *Revolución*, August 1, 1961, 11.

integrated mass organizations, and an immediacy in its tone that argued inevitable success. Each piece carried the Commission flag and the new slogan, “Everyone to the final battle against illiteracy!” The Commission and the CDR co-authored this sample, pledging to recruit one hundred thousand new Popular Alphabetizers for the “final battle against illiteracy” (Figure 5.10). It noted that “actively

incorporated” urban and rural CDR members began mobilizing “workers, peasants, housewives . . . the whole *pueblo*” toward the creation of one hundred thousand new Popular Teachers and “within each CDR’s radius of action, not one illiterate will be left without beginning to learn immediately!”<sup>351</sup> This series reflected the strong connection between the imagined narrative and outside events as the push to locate those untouched by the literacy campaign drove the Commission to depend on all mass organizations under the umbrella of the ORI. This example requested members of mass organizations under the ORI to band together and assist the CDR in completing this “grand and beautiful task in a very short time” (Figure 5.11). It repeated phrases like “victory is within every Cuba,” and emphasized that “this is the last opportunity to give your effort and win the

<sup>351</sup> Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización y Dirección Nacional de los Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, “A todos los comités de defensa de la revolución,” *Revolución*, August 1, 1961, 11.





**Figure 5.11** Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Revolución*, August 9, 1961, 11.

final battle against illiteracy. Through your organization, cooperate with the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, which has integrated itself to the National Campaign for Literacy in realizing a plan that contributes to the success of the National Congress of Literacy.”<sup>352</sup> Intercommunications developed templates for their revolutionary advertisements and as the congress drew

near, the Commission published a series that targeted mass organization individually.<sup>353</sup> Each submission began with the word “Onward!” contained a representative photo of the group, and segued into an introductory message followed by the heart of its request (Figures 5.12 and 5.13). The piece designed for the FMC took into accounts its work recruiting and teaching for the campaign. Their plea began, “Onward, Woman of the Federation! Complete one more task for the Literacy campaign. You, as a woman of the Federation, have been present together with the Conrado Benítez brigades, together with the Popular Alphabetizers and now it is necessary for you to join in the task realized by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.” To the members of MINIFAR,

<sup>352</sup>Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Revolución*, August 9, 1961, 11.

<sup>353</sup>Bermúdez, 92 and 96.



**Figure 5.12** Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización and FMC, *Revolución*, August 11, 1961, 11

the Commission urged, “Onward, Comrades! Taking the Literacy campaign to a successful end equals the defense of our Socialist Revolution.” Addressing the ANAP, the Commission recognized that “the comrades of the National Association of Small Farmers, at this moment when you labor toward the progress of our country, you are advancing different tasks . . . responsible for protecting our countryside .

. . . responsible for a large portion of our agriculture subsistence and now, the responsible for eradicating

illiteracy.”<sup>354</sup> In soliciting mass organizations individually, the Commission directly communicated responsibility to members and thus, strengthened the link between its propaganda and the reader. This series reflects the dynamic use of the revolutionary advertisement as a means of communication between a government entity such as the National Commission for Literacy and mass organizations during a period of intense change, mobilization, and activity.

An examination of the imagery for the Literacy Campaign provides an insight into the language, tone, approach employed by a state institution, in this

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<sup>354</sup>Each piece contained the stock message: “Incorporate yourself in the revolutionary task realized by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. Register every last illiterate. Recruit new Popular Alphabetizers so that every illiterate begins learning immediately. These are the two urgent tasks that must be completed before August 30, two tasks that we can meet with your effort, united with the Revolutionary Organizations. Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, *Revolución*, August 11-19, 1961.



**Figure 5.13** Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización and MINFAR, *Revolución*, August 19, 1961, 11.

case the National Commission of Literacy, to elaborate one of the most important, short-term mobilization efforts to occur during the period of this study. It also covers a span of months in which key stylistic changes in state-directed imagery took place. The dissolution of the COP and completion of campaign revolutionary advertisements under Intercommunications allows for a stark contrast between the methods of persuasion between “revolutionary” and

“pseudo-revolutionary” advertisers. Intercommunications advertisements lacked the spirited and subtly, persuasive technique used by COP designers to sell mobilization. Instead, Intercommunications relied on the same “historic moment” discourse and battle-ready language it used to recruit CDR volunteers, or push for the recycling of primary materials. Between August and September 1961, the Commission reportedly submitted nearly thirty thousand pieces of propaganda throughout Cuba’s mass media outlets.<sup>355</sup> *Revolución*’s editors placed most of the Commission’s revolutionary advertisements next to local cinema listings in order to enhance their visibility. The amount of time and money invested into publishing such an overabundance of imagery suggests its value as an effective

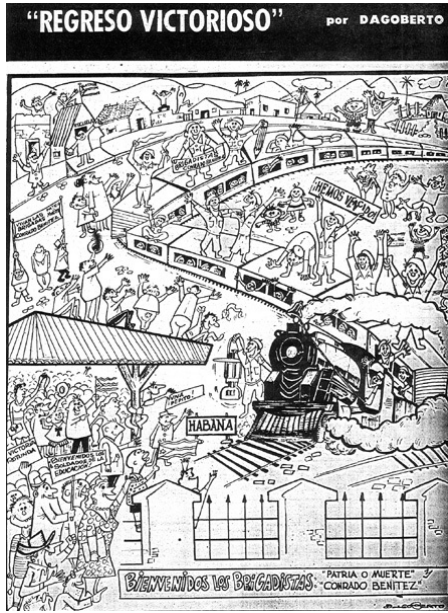
<sup>355</sup>Radio stations transmitted literacy campaign updates and information approximately fifteen times per day in fifteen to forty-five minutes intervals. The Conrado Benítez hymn aired six time per day as well. Kolenikov, 92.

means of communication. In the end, the Literacy Campaign was a success. Nearly 22,000 workers, mobilized into “Victory, or Death” brigades, joined 120,000 Popular Teachers, 105,000 Conrado Benítez youngsters, and 44,000 university and secondary education teachers in Cuba’s interior for what proved to be a formidable teaching force.<sup>356</sup> Achieving total literacy in Cuba not only enhanced the integrity of Fidel Castro’s promises to his fellow Cubans and the international opinion of his Revolution, but also symbolized another step toward full liberation from the legacy of American imperialism both inside and outside the imagined world. At the end of December, the nationally-mobilized brigade force working to reduce their country’s rate of illiteracy did so to below five percent. At the very least, as Jonathan Kozol noted, it “enable 707,000 adults to read posters, poems, and songs written and distributed specifically for their use and to comprehend the rudiments of the front page of a paper geared to their extremely modest competence.”<sup>357</sup> On December 22, 1961, Havana celebrated the return of its brigades in a mass celebration in the Plaza of the Revolution, José Martí. Two days later, *Bohemia* published a cartoon drawn by Dagoberto as an elaborate tribute to the successful end of the Literacy Campaign. The scene featured hundreds of Cubans in the throes of sheer jubilation and pride at the

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<sup>356</sup>Ministerio de Educación, “Informe de la Republica,” 21. Numbers vary slightly in other sources with Victory, or Death brigades totaling anywhere from thirteen thousand to fifteen thousand, see Kolesnikov, 90 and the Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, “Cuba: educación y cultura,” (Havana: Empresa consolidada de artes gráficas, 1963), 49.

<sup>357</sup>Jonathan Kozol, *Children of the Revolution: A Yankee Teacher in the Cuban Schools* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978), 56.



**Figure 5.14** Dagoberto, “Victorious Return,” *Bohemia*, December 24, 1961, 130.

return of their new heroes (Figure 5.14). Dagoberto’s image captures the euphoria and spirit surrounding this historical moment of the *pueblo* in its first united, national victory against one of the obstacles to progress the Revolution vowed to overcome. In an almost unprecedented showing, Dagoberto’s meticulously detailed cartoon included the *whole* *pueblo*; a coming together of Cuba’s urban and rural communities, men and women, children and elderly, all celebrating the success of their effort.

### Socialist Emulation

Building a new labor culture, ethics, and revolutionary worker did not assume the degree of priority as other threads within the imagined narrative during this period (1959-1963). However, this is not to say that revolutionary imagery did not concentrate on working class issues, or address production needs and shop floor culture. Multiple threads of imagery incrementally appeared and converged to prepare workers for a labor campaign based on competition and workplace ethics that reflected a nascent form of vanguardism. After October 1962, Socialist Emulation emerged alongside volunteer work as a new labor regime appealing to the Revolution’s most enthusiastic, efficient, and loyal

workers. This section on Socialist Emulation will examine the types of workplace values and labor culture built before its official launch. It focuses not so much on the imagery of Socialist Emulation itself (which did not reach full development during this period in terms of image variety and number), as it does on the individual threads of imagery that imagined workplace culture and values (e.g., the reduction of absenteeism and loafing; the acceleration of recycling and productivity). By examining these antecedents to Socialist Emulation, we gain insight into the visual elaboration of a new worker in transition toward a more mature context of socialist labor, of the formation of a new set of shop floor politics and ethics, and of the social and economic weaknesses plaguing its success.

Depending on the source of the imagery, during the first two years of the Revolution, workers did not dominate the imagined narrative as noticeable protagonists, or as an integrated sector of the *pueblo* into the revolutionary experience. Most visualizations of their exploits and struggle remained isolated to *Noticias de Hoy* cartoonists, with the exception of imagery concentrating on the nationalization of industries. A gradual, visual redefinition of the worker, however, did take place and by the end of 1961, new associations of labor with production, efficiency, mechanization, and vanguardism emerged. Immediately after the rebel victory, advertisements like this one by Polar Beer linked the renewed promise of economic progress to the worker's ability to realize its path through "constructive and intense labor" (Figure 5.15). However, after work, the "moment belongs to Polar since there's nothing like a cold Polar to complete the



Figure 5.15

satisfaction of completed duty. Polar reanimates! Polar brings joy to the moment! Polar wins friends! And that's why after work, the moment belongs to Polar."<sup>358</sup> Intense labor would soon belong to the Revolution and volunteer labor, not Polar beer, would "reanimate" workers and bring them together in joy and friendship. This advertisement juxtaposed

labor and leisure as compatible and sequential; by 1961, the Revolution in a sense, "nationalized" leisure and pleasure, and imagery promoted them visually as intrinsic to the act of labor itself. Two days before the Polar advertisement appeared in the popular magazine *Carteles*, PSP cartoonist Adigio Benítez featured a peasant, a blue-collar worker, and the rebel image of Fidel pulling an industrialist onto the train labeled "Revolution" (Figure 5.16).<sup>359</sup>

<sup>358</sup>Polar, "Sí, el momento es de trabajar," *Carteles*, March 22, 1959, 65.

<sup>359</sup>After Castro's victory, the 26 of July Movement and the PSP formed labor committees and together took over the CTC with the 26 of July holding top positions vacated by exiled or jailed labor officials who backed the Batista administration and the corrupt labor leader, Eusebio Mujal. In May, CTC elections awarded the 26 of July Movement with 87% of the vote while PSP candidates received only 7% of the total. Despite winning only 224 delegates out of 3,200 representatives at the November convention, leaders of the provisional executive committee proposed a "unity" slate of candidates to the executive committee that included PSP members. Fidel and Raúl Castro persisted in maintaining unity; a move that in effect approved a reshuffling in the executive committee, leaving communists in charge of three key posts (organization, press and propaganda, and international relations). Shortly after the congress, from December through May of the following year, a wave of purges hit the trade union leadership, ousting those branded as "anti-unity," in addition to those former supporters of Batista. These purges, in effect, re-established the PSP domination of the CTC lost in the mid 1940s, albeit under the auspices of the Revolutionary Government. Efrén Córdova, *Castro and the Cuban Labor Movement*:



**Figure 5.16** Adigio, *Noticias de Hoy*, March 20, 1959.

The message in this piece communicated to readers that the PSP and its Confederation of Cuban Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC) representatives, allied with Castro and his Revolution, sought harmony with industrialists toward building a new Cuba. During the first few months of the Revolution, the CTC took advantage

of the euphoria surrounding the rebel victory to renegotiate labor contracts from planters and industrialists, particularly seeking a twenty percent wage increase for all workers. Though Castro courted labor and the Ministry of Labor backed workers' demands, he asked them to avoid striking as a negotiating tactic for the sake of cooperation with capital. Strikes were common despite his plea.<sup>360</sup>

*Revolución* cartoonists Bidopia and Chago addressed strikes from different political angles. In March 1959, Bidopia published "Dissatisfied" which centered on an angry worker striking, holding a sign reading, "No Right Exists" (Figure 5.17). A curious



**Figure 5.17** Bidopia, "Dissatisfied," *Revolución*, March 18, 1959, 2.

Cuban asked, "Of what?" The picketer responded, "That they want me to work!"

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*Statecraft and Soviet in a Revolutionary Period, 1959-1961* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 54-55 and 71 and Pérez-Stable, 67-69.

<sup>360</sup>Pérez, *Cuba, between Reform and Revolution*, 317, Robert Jackson Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in Cuba* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 186-87, and Domínguez, 142.





**Figure 5.18** Bidopia, “Reasons,” *Revolución*, April 30, 1959, 16.

Surprisingly, this cartoon undermined Castro’s appeal to workers in February to continue production without stoppages during contract negotiations and instead, sided with the worker. In a much more politically aligned piece a month later, Bidopia used Manengue to emphasize the official push toward reducing

unemployment and the social transformations taking

place within labor itself (Figure 5.18).<sup>361</sup> In this figure titled “Reasons,”

Manengue, known for his socio-political networking and fondness for sinecures, protested the end of the *botella* with a sign that read, “We the workers.” An

amused blue-collar worker watching Manengue

commented, “Manengue, how things have changed!”

A perspiring Manengue angrily looked up at his sign and responded, “They’ve made me change.” On

May 26, Chago published this piece “Inopportune”

that displayed a group of striking workers jumping on a sinking boat (Figure 5.19). Liborio, now acting

as an ally of government instead of its victim, yelled, “If you continue this way, you will sink the boat!”

At this time, the Revolutionary Government through its Ministry of Labor



**Figure 5.19** Chago, “Inopportune,” *Revolución*, May 26, 1959, 2.

<sup>361</sup>No formal biography on Arsenio Bidopia exists. In an interview with René de la Nuez, he noted that Bidopia was not of his generation, but much older and “more traditional.” Bidopia’s work does not appear in *Revolución* past the month of November 1959. René de la Nuez, interview.

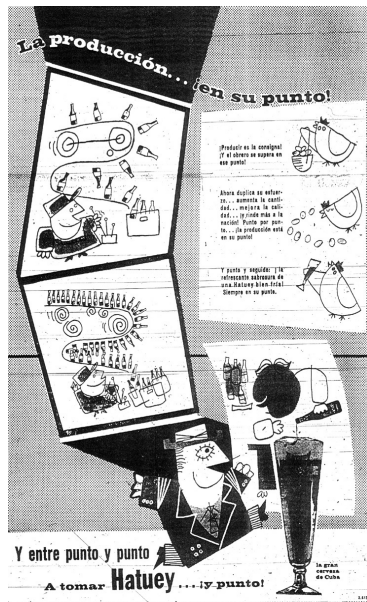


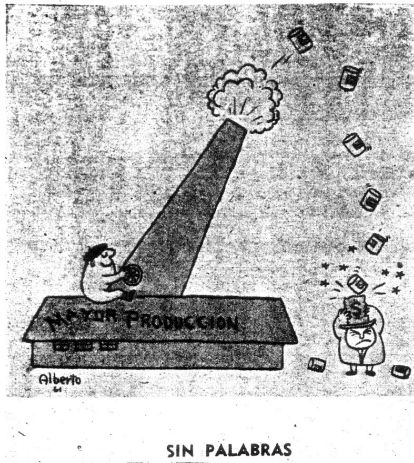
Figure 5.20

mediated over five thousand labor disputes, awarding 66 million to sugar workers and 20 million to other sectors via wage increases.<sup>362</sup> Outside of *Noticias de Hoy*, labor did not represent as a central actor within revolutionary imagery until the nationalization of Cuban and American industries in 1960. It appeared as either intractable, or concerned with its own self-interest. Though the imagery of nationalization, examined in Chapter Three, endowed the worker with a new

sense of honor and heroism within the imagined narrative, this next piece from *Revolución* by the Cuban Hatuey beer company revealed this transformation of labor into a progressive protagonist had not materialized consistently at this point (Figure 5.20). This example reflected a transitional phase between the commercial advertisement and the revolutionary advertisement by selling a product while framing it in the language of the Revolution: “Production is the slogan! And the worker excels on this point! Now [he and she] multiply this effort, increase quantity, improve quality, and produce more for the nation! Point by point, production is on point!”<sup>363</sup> The emphasis in this piece on the link between quantity and quality and ultimately, production for a better Cuba,

<sup>362</sup>Pérez-Stable, 68.

<sup>363</sup>Hatuey, “La producción en su punto!” *Revolución*, December 14, 1960, 17.



**Figure 5.21** Alberto, *Verde Olivo*, February 12, 1961, 98.

contrasted with Polar's advertisement a year earlier that connected beer and labor with friendship, networking, and relaxation. In developing a visual relationship between beer and labor that used production as a stimulus instead of a more marketable association like leisure, this piece reflected an effort on behalf of advertisers to incorporate revolutionary

messages. This also points to a broader redefinition of labor, both inside and outside the imagined narrative, by incrementally replacing the relationship of labor to leisure and private life with one focusing on production and sacrifice. After 1960, cartoons promoted labor in terms of increasing production, hard work, dedication, and efficiency.

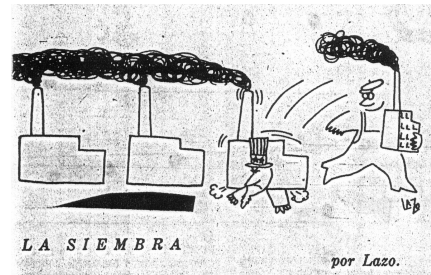
After the nationalization of private industries, the visual discourse



**Figure 5.22** Sureda, *Verde Olivo*, June 4, 1961, 98.

surrounding production intensified and took on a reflexive, nationalist rhetoric using anti-imperialist/anti-American symbolism. Throughout 1961, cartoons promoted production as a weapon against the United States with nationalist undertones, visually transmitted through violent attacks on the figure of Uncle Sam (Figures 5.21 and 5.22). These two cartoons, drawn months apart by two different cartoonists, featured Uncle Sam as a victim of assault by a worker

engaged in production. These acts of violence against the United States in the name of economic progress alluded to the belief, or insistence that Cuba would persevere despite the loss of materials, labor, and support resulting from the embargo and rupture of



**Figure 5.23** Lazo, “The Planting,” *Bohemia*, September 10, 1961, 130.

diplomatic relations. In the last chapter, I discussed the impact of the embargo on primary materials and the Cuban response, organized by the CDR and the Ministry of Industry, to save and recycle bottles, plastics, metals, and paper products. Other setbacks like the deficiency in spare parts and the emigration of American and Cuban technicians, brought industry to a halt in many sectors, especially consumer, energy, construction, and automotive products. Shortages in soaps, perfumes, toothpaste, paper, plastic and glass containers, tires, paint,



**Figure 5.24** Pitin, *Bohemia*, September 3, 1961, 73.

electricity, cement, beer and soft drinks, textiles, and electricity overwhelmed production capabilities and by 1962, the Revolutionary Government imposed rationing.<sup>364</sup> Nevertheless, pieces like “The Planting” by Lazo argued that Cuba’s capacity to expand industry (Cuba/progress/production/ anti-imperialism) remained healthy, even powerful enough to surpass capitalist

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<sup>364</sup>Entrepreneurs who chose to remain decreased investments in fear of future nationalizations. Louis Pérez, Jr. reported that over eighty percent of exiles arriving in Miami throughout 1962 were from the professional/managerial class. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 343.

economic growth (Figure 5.23). However inspiring, these cartoons remained a poor simulation of the world outside this imagined, revolutionary model.

A darker side of production existed within the imagined narrative, one that reflected systemic weaknesses in labor productivity and culture. Imagery on production and productivity did not remain as rosy and motivational as this simplistic representation by Pitín (Figure 5.24). Not all commentary on production proved positive. Pecruz, showing a healthy dose of wit in this piece



LA CONSIGNA —por PECRUZ  
—Estoy enamorado de una chiquita.  
—¡Pues mira a ver si también te enamoras de tu trabajo, que hay que aumentar la producción!

Figure 5.25 Pecruz, “The Slogan,” *Bohemia*, August 9, 1963, 55.

titled “The Slogan,” zeroed in on one of the leading obstacles to fluid and effective production that plagued labor culture during the early days of the Revolution.

Figure 5.25 centered on two workers on the factory floor.

One approached the other and exclaimed, “I am crazy in love for this girl!!” The other sharply replied, “well, you

better see if you can also fall in love with your job,

because we have to increase production!” Underneath

the humor, this cartoon touched upon workplace

behaviors that consistently disrupted the flow of production (e.g., distraction, inefficiency, and idleness). In May 1961, Castro warned workers that “although we have rid ourselves of many of the *gusanos*, we have not yet come near to wiping them out. . . . And what right has anyone to live as an idler? . . . You must work.”<sup>365</sup> Those chosen to replace emigrant technicians and managers did not

<sup>365</sup>Bunck, 130.

*Negativo, compañero por Nuez*



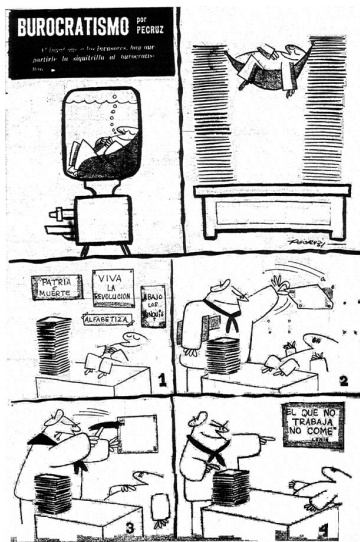
**Figure 5.26** Nuez, *Revolución*, April 1, 1961, 2.

demonstrate the same level of expertise, plunging many shop floors into chaos, dissension and in certain areas, a full stoppage. The next year, at a meeting with labor officials, Che Guevara asked, “What is better for the nation, to maintain the absurd inefficiency of our industries so that everybody works and receives a disguised subsidy, or to increase productivity to the maximum?”<sup>366</sup> Labor productivity

declined as the Revolutionary Government’s push for full employment dampened worker morale. True to form, Nuez’s *Negativo, compañero* addressed vagrancy and insubordination. Some of his pieces showed workers unwilling to dedicate extra hours to production, taking advantage of favors and friendship to shirk responsibilities, or simply covering up bad conduct and abuses. In this piece, Nuez criticized the loafer, displaying an employee hiding behind stacked boxes with his boss in the background. The cartoon’s text balloon read, “I’ll hide here for a while so the boss won’t force me to work” (Figure 5.26). Pecruz frequently criticized the creeping vagrancy within the expanding Cuban bureaucracy. This cartoon opened with a bureaucrat fast asleep, dreaming that he was nestled neatly within a water cooler and napping in a hammock suspended by paperwork (Figure 5.27). He began his piece titled

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<sup>366</sup>Guevara continued to say that increasing labor productivity would be better despite the effects it would have on unemployment. Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *The Economy of Socialist Cuba, A Two-Decade Appraisal*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 132.



**Figure 5.27** Pecruz,  
“Bureaucracy,” *Bohemia*,  
November 5, 1961, 130.

“Bureaucracy” with a lead-in stating, “Much like what was done to the invaders, we have to break the back of the bureaucracy.” A militant appeared and ripped the signs above the bureaucrats desk that featured revolutionary slogans and numbered in frames one through four, stripped of him of his pseudo-militancy and in a small gesture of justice, replaced his motivational poster with one bearing the classic socialist principle, Lenin’s maxim “he who does not work, shall not eat.”<sup>367</sup> Vagrancy

constituted one of several behaviors weakening the productive capacity of Cuban industry. Production imagery called for workers to show energy, enthusiasm, and commitment. Productivity and production also symbolized another weapon against imperialism, one that asserted Cubans could overcome the loss of American trade, supplies, and patronage. This type of visual self-admission, or self-criticism through an exposure of systemic weakness within labor culture on a broader scale, undermined pieces that promoted a more positive spin on the progress and strength of industry. However, if cartoonists took a completely utopian approach to the imagined narrative, all credibility and legitimacy would be lost. In addition to battling vagrancy and inefficiency, cartoonists joined the Revolutionary Government in its bid to reduce other anti-revolutionary behaviors

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<sup>367</sup>Vladimir Lenin, *State and Revolution* (Sydney: Resistance Books, 1999), 81.

plaguing the workplace and thwarted Cuba's progress toward a rapid and expansive industrialization: absenteeism and tardiness.

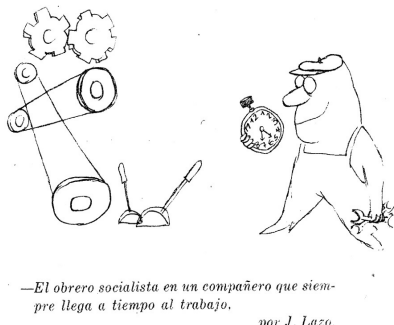
Absenteeism and tardiness spiraled out of control during these early years and denouncing these two disruptions to economic recovery became a recurrent theme for revolutionary cartoonists. The Revolutionary Government initially tried to quell the increase in absenteeism and other disciplinary issues through coercive tactics and outright humiliation. Workplace leaders publically shamed offenders by posting their names in common areas and at times, committees were organized to visit sick workers to ensure their absence was legitimate.<sup>368</sup> At the CTC congress in November 1961, resolutions passed establishing the following tasks and regulations expected of revolutionary workers: to increase production and productivity; to conserve primary materials; to eradicate labor absenteeism; to organize volunteer work; to ensure safe working conditions; to prevent accidents; to enhance technical skills; and to promote a socialist consciousness.<sup>369</sup> By July 1962, the state required each worker, whether employed or not, to carry a identification booklet at all times; without it, employment would not be given. This fourteen page booklet summarized a worker's labor history, attitude, skills, absenteeism, degree of political consciousness and indoctrination, punctuality, volunteer labor, and membership in revolutionary organizations like the CDR, or

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<sup>368</sup>Bunck, 132.

<sup>369</sup>Pérez-Stable, 103.





**Figure 5.28** Lazo, *Bohemia*, November 19, 1961, 130.

militia.<sup>370</sup> A month later, a resolution passed into Cuban law that penalized workers found to be consistently tardy, absent, or simply, unproductive.<sup>371</sup> With few protections and freedoms left, disgruntled workers exercised their power and communicated their displeasure through other means like sabotage and theft.

Slowdowns represented old, or pre-revolutionary behaviors now considered intolerable in socialist labor culture. The cartoonist Lazo defined the socialist worker as “a comrade who always arrived to work on time” (Figure 5.28). No tricks, or ornamentation required, his representation was simple: a worker, a wrench, and his watch. Within the imagined narrative of the workplace, poor labor discipline, from stealing to absenteeism, represented immoral and anti-socialist behavior. Pitín’s drew his protagonist sneaking into work



**Figure 5.29** Pitín, “Barefoot Morality,” *Noticias de Hoy*, November 19, 1961, 6.

with shoes in hand to escape detection, a reference to deception and disloyalty (Figure 5.29). He titled his piece “With a Barefoot Moral,” implying tardiness amounted to no less than immorality. These imagined scenarios no doubt rang

<sup>370</sup>Cuban Economic Research Project (CERP), *Labor Conditions in Communist Cuba* (Miami: University of Miami, 1963), 14.

<sup>371</sup>Bunck, 134.



**Figure 5.30** Nuez, *Revolución*, April 7, 1961, 2.

true to the reading public and much like other areas cartoonists critiqued, these were inspired by real-world behavior. Nuez's *Negativo, compañero* dedicated a number of pieces to the problems of absenteeism and tardiness, blaming root causes as an abuse of friendship with the boss; feigning an illness; even claiming guard

duty. This *Negativo, compañero* centered on two

militia, one shamelessly declaring to the other, “Well, when I have guard duty from midnight to six in the morning, I don’t go to work that day” (Figure 5.30).



**Figure 5.31** Calvo, Verde Olivo, November 5, 1961, 98.

Sleeping in, or not setting an alarm clock, appeared as an excuse for tardiness, or absenteeism in a number of pieces. Cartoonists used this recurrent excuse on a number of occasions as in these two examples that showed workers receiving rude awakenings (Figures 5.31 and 5.32) Other cartoonists like *Noticias de Hoy*’s Harry Reade and *Bohemia*’s Pecruz, injected humor into their pieces and compounded the perception of absenteeism with laziness and recreation (Figures 5.33 and 5.34).<sup>372</sup> Reade kept his criticism on the

<sup>372</sup>In February 1961, Harry Reade arrived in Cuba and joined a special arm of the militia for international volunteers. He quickly received work with *Noticias de Hoy* and remained, later working as an animator for the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (Instituto Cubano de Arte y Industria Cinematográficos, ICAIC) until 1969. Maxwell Joseph Bannah, “A Cause for Animation: Harry Reade and the Cuban Revolution” (Ph.D. diss., Queensland



**Figure 5.32** Tejedor, Verde  
*Olivo*, September 16, 1962, 98.

lighter side of the attack with this comic depiction of a grown man squeezed into a dinosaur-shaped floatation device while calling into his labor center: “Hey buddy, I’m still sick.” Reade ridiculed and infantilized the worker by emphasizing leisure over

work. Pecruz, on the other hand, added an

undertone of sarcasm to his piece “Juan, Exemplary Worker.” In this example, one worker complained to Juan that Roberto had not come to work in days. Juan responded, “Then he’s a brilliant employee.” Pointing to a large pile of paperwork on Roberto’s desk, he continued, “Sure, see how his absence shines!”

Cartoons focusing on pressing labor issues like absenteeism and tardiness were revolutionary in and of themselves since they did not constitute a common concern for mainstream cartoonists before the

Revolution. These themes now reflected a revolutionary act on the part of revolutionary cartoonists. They held

the creative ability and social responsibility to reprimand the reading public daily, quickly, and in a manner that resounded personally and coincided with the needs of the Revolution. They could use humor to lighten within the imagined narrative what in the outside world carried serious repercussions. Not all imagery

“¡Oye chico, sigo enfermo!”



**Figure 5.33** Harry Reade,  
*Noticias de Hoy*, November 22, 1961, 6.



Figure 5.34 Pecruz, *Bohemia*, October 5, 1962, 76.

discussing labor behavior and ethics appeared in the form of criticisms and admonishments. Some threads projected a positive and integrated worker that met production challenges with enthusiasm and inventiveness.

Revolutionary imagery concentrating on overcoming the scarcity of spare parts presented a more engaged and creative worker determined to surpass obstacles. The American embargo on trade affected the availability of replacement parts for existing machinery and Cubans had to take action. Minister of Industry Che Guevara hoped Soviet machinery could supplement, or surpass American capabilities, but imported machinery and other materials left industry leaders disappointed and frustrated by the difference in technology and quality. In a speech during the First Reunion of National Production in Havana on August 1961, he commented that “none of the production goals we had set have been met . . . one or two of the consolidated enterprises fulfilled their goal. The lack of spare parts and raw materials have been the two fundamental problems we have encountered.”<sup>373</sup> Regino Boti, Minister of the Economy, echoed Guevara’s

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<sup>373</sup>CERP, 26.

*Negativo, compañero por Nuez*



**Figure 5.35** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 20, 1961, 2.

concerns, explaining that Cubans did not really understand, or know the inner-workings of their factories:

Only the American owners know the delicate mechanism that made the whole thing tick. Soviet experts came to the rescue, but knew nothing about the factory's hidden secrets. Worse still, they brought no spare parts . . . and so we had to learn the whole thing from scratch. Our public transport system—buses, trains, trucks—ran short of spare parts, which could only be found in the United States. We tried to put Russian engines into General Motors buses, but without success; we would also have had to change the automatic transmissions for Russian manual ones.<sup>374</sup>

Cartoonists set to task on pushing the conservation of spare parts and seeking creative solutions to overcoming breakdowns and material shortages. In March 1961, Nuez dedicated several submissions of *Negativo, compañero* that set the tone and scenario for

*Negativo, compañero por Nuez*



**Figure 5.36** Nuez, *Revolución*, March 7, 1961, 7.

<sup>374</sup> Boti gave the example of a condensed-milk factory belonging to Connecticut owners that was “run by remote control from the head office. When there was a breakdown, the technician simply phoned Connecticut and told them what he thought had gone wrong.” In 1959, trade with socialist countries amounted to less than two million pesos, but in 1961, the total reached under six million pesos. K.S. Karol, *Guerrillas in Power, the Course of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang Publishers, 1970), 224-25.



**Figure 5.37** *Noticias de Hoy*, May 10, 1961, 11.

what not to do, emphasizing a need to not only conserve material, but to take the initiative to fix broken machinery. In this example, a worker proudly stood by his machinery and boasted to another coworker, “Mechanic? What for? I fix this machine myself, though what it needs is to work” (Figure 5.35). In another entry, a worker casually discarded a broken wrench as he walked by a trash

can commenting, “This tool can be fixed, but its

easier to ask for a new one” (Figure 5.36). Nuez linked waste and negligence to laziness, immaturity, and disrespect. According to authorities, improper handling of machinery and tools resulted in loss of time, efficiency, materials, and overall quality in output. It became more important to effectively and rationally utilize existing resources before abandoning the old for something new.<sup>375</sup> In early May 1961, Committees of Spare Parts organized in the workplace and the Ministry of Industry created a new visual campaign based on the slogan, “Your Machinery is also Your Trench—Defend It!” This thread of imagery set rules for conserving and recycling spare parts and framed this directive as another “battle” against imperialism. This piece by the Ministry of Industries featured a Cuban hard at

<sup>375</sup>“Mural,” *Revolución*, April 23, 1963, 8. *Revolución*’s Mural linked conservation of materials to Soviet history. It noted that Vladimir Lenin complained of waste and theft in the workplace since the early days of their Revolution. Lenin labeled those who stole from the state as enemies of the people and that in the Cuban case, it would become the responsibility of the “vanguard” to weed out this element.



Figure 5.38 Dagoberto, *Bohemia*, June 4, 1961, 130.

work and argued that the “Yankee blockade” left Cuban industry short of spare parts, because “imperialism knows that the greater part of our industry is American-made” (Figure 5.37).<sup>376</sup> It noted that the Revolutionary Government and “friendly countries” were working together to develop and obtain necessary spare parts, but “we need you, worker, in this decisive battle.” To comply with the campaign, workers had to “learn their machinery, report shortages and problems, provide their work center’s Committee for Spare Parts with suggestions, and find solutions to prevent stoppages.” This thread in revolutionary advertisements pushed a new work ethic and ideological codes, charging workers to rationalize work routines through creativity and collectivity in solving problems and a more efficient use of machinery. It asked for maximum effort and motivation and for a desire toward moral and technical self-improvement.

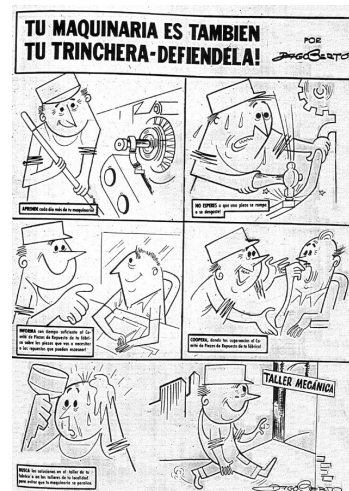


Figure 5.39 Dagoberto, *Bohemia*, October 15, 1961, 23.

<sup>376</sup>Ministerio de Industrias, “Tu maquinaria es tambien tu trinchera-defiéndela!” *Noticias de Hoy*, May 10, 1961, 11.



**Figure 5.40** *Bohemia*, June 18, 1961, 19.

Cartoonists picked up on the campaign and inserted it into their art (Figure 5.38). Using his own brand of enthusiasm and appeal, Dagoberto illustrated a simple, yet forceful use of the campaign’s slogan in this piece titled “Revolutionary Exhortation.” Months later, in a clear reflection of his degree of dedication to the cause, he published a more elaborate piece repeating the Ministry of Industry’s instructions verbatim (Figure 5.39). Not only does it

provide evidence of a cartoonist’s engagement with official campaigns and a supportive relationship between two types of revolutionary imagery, but it also shows a continuity of artistic interest in a particular area. Images like this piece “Care for your Machinery” acted as visual reminders that the battle continued and more specifically, the link between mechanical upkeep and the overall health of the Cuban economy (Figure 5.40). By October, the Ministry of Industry declared the battle over replacement parts a success “thanks to the efforts of the working class and its sense of responsibility during this historic time in which we are living.” This piece framed the victory as another “honor” for the working class, one that deserves “joyous and enthusiastic celebration”; however, it urged workers to continue requesting materials on time, to maintain



**Figure 5.41** *Revolución*, October 2, 1961, 12.



stock of replacement parts, and if necessary, to construct them (Figure 5.41). The push to care for and repair tools represented the foundation to a larger plan to stimulate workers into reconstructing and in some cases, inventing new machinery. Juxtaposed with imagery on absenteeism, laziness, and tardiness, this picture of the revolutionary worker matched his idealized self, a creative, enthusiastic, class-conscious hero that through ingenuity and care, surpassed obstacles implanted by the imperial aggressor.

A far cry from the immoral, non-committed and disgruntled laborer common to *Negativo, compañero*, a new turn in the Ministry of Industry's campaign to conserve machinery and spare parts generated imagery that featured real worker-heroes. In December 1961, the Ministry launched a new campaign, designed to expand the drive to care for and recycle spare parts that provided a new visualization of the worker as an engaged, creative, and self-sufficient member of the revolutionary community. Aptly named, "Construct Your Machinery," the campaign encouraged factory workers to cannibalize unusable apparatuses and increase production by improvising solutions geared to enhance their productivity. To a great extent, a Taylorist approach lay at its foundation. The burden of seeking new resources and boosting productivity by inventing and restructuring new machines to increase time-saving routines, or maximizing labor tasks fell upon management, but in this case, Cuban workers. This emphasis on mechanization and rationalization also had its parallels in Soviet history. The "cult of the machine" figured strongly in Lenin's earliest visions for Soviet industrialization. In his work, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and*



**Figure 5.42** *Verde Olivo*, December 3, 1961, 2.

*Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*,

Richard Stites insisted that in Lenin's view, "the factory was not only an arena of production and an idyll of elegant precision, but also a moral gymnasium for the exercise of good character."<sup>377</sup>

Another parallel to within the Latin American sphere lay in the Brazilian example of the state and its industrialist allies, through the creation of

two agencies, the National Service for Industrial

Training led by Roberto Simonsen and the Industrial Social Service run by Roberto Mange. In the hopes of attaining what Barbara Weinstein identified in her work *For Social Peace in Brazil* (1996), as "strategies to 'remake' the Brazilian worker and to insure social peace," these state-run agencies designed programs to rationalize shop floor routines to Taylorist principles and applied a Fordist philosophy to socializing and moralizing workers.<sup>378</sup> In an effort not only to conserve and recycle spare parts, but to employ time-saving routines with a

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<sup>377</sup>Lenin was particularly interested in Taylorist scientific management and labor organization. Taylorist schedules and time-saving movements appealed to Russia's Tsarist culture of militarism. Fordism also influence early Soviet industrial culture in both managerial and working class circles. Soviet technocrats admired him for his vision of efficiency, while workers viewed him as an inventor and mechanical genius. Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 146 and 149.

<sup>378</sup>Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) 6, 10, and 32.

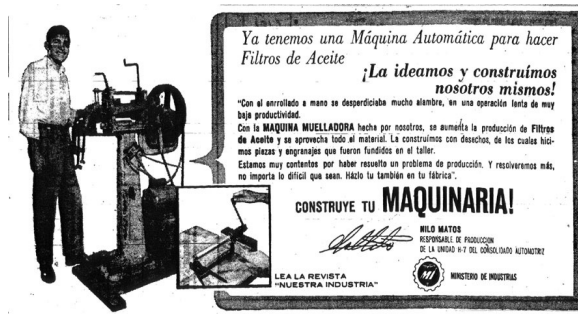


Figure 5.43 *Noticias de Hoy*, June 23, 1962, 7.

touch of Taylorism in its most rudimentary form: to build a machine out of recycled parts, or invent one from scratch that not only increased production and saved time, but materials as well.

The Ministry launched the campaign to “Construct Your Machinery” to intertextually dialogue with the campaign to “Conserve and Recycle Spare Parts” (Figure 5.42). This piece addressed the worker directly and acknowledged the inroads already made to overcome material shortages. It began, “Worker, you have demonstrated your capacity to construct replacement parts, now construct your own machinery.” To show proof of its success, a series of visual success stories under the slogan “Construct Your Machinery!” quickly emerged, highlighting real workers photographed next to their innovative, mechanical creations. Each inventor, in his own words, explained the challenge that led to the machine’s development and its merits. All used recycled, unusable parts to build machines that increased production and enhanced the overall product quality. Figure 5.43 focused on Nilo Matos and his machine the *Muelladora*, which refined and increased the production of oil filters. Matos explained that the winding of wire by hand used to create the filters slowed down the production



Figure 5.44 *Noticias de Hoy*, December 22, 1961, 8.

process and increased waste. He insisted that the success of his *Muelladora*, made of scrap pieces reformed into new components, has inspired him to continue seeking fresh ways to combat recurrent problems.<sup>379</sup> This piece contained a number of important work codes and ethics the Revolutionary Government desired workers to develop. Matos was creative, he recycled materials, he devised a time-saving work routine that increased production and productivity, and most of all, he reflected a revolutionary spirit full of enthusiasm, loyalty, and determination. In another piece, José Antonio Ruiz, a mechanic at the tire factory #5 (formerly Good Year Tires), created a machine that cut paraffin more efficiently and demanded less operators (Figure 5.44). Ruiz argued that measures had to be taken in order to “place a rock in the path of imperialism,” and if everyone did a little bit, the battle over machinery would be won. He ended his quote by urging fellow workers to be inventive and noting that “our comrades are enthusiastic and are working on other things.”<sup>380</sup> Ruiz reiterated the importance of thwarting the machinations of imperialism and emphasized that through collective work, solutions and success for Cuba lay ahead. These pieces, featuring real workers applying revolutionary directives and showing an unparalleled degree of social consciousness, enthusiasm, and integration, provided the reading public with a powerful visualization of workplace culture not based on an imagined revolutionary experience, but *the* revolutionary

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<sup>379</sup>Ministerio de Industrias, *Noticias de Hoy*, June 23, 1962, 7.

<sup>380</sup>Ministerio de Industrias, *Noticias de Hoy*, December 22, 1961, 8.

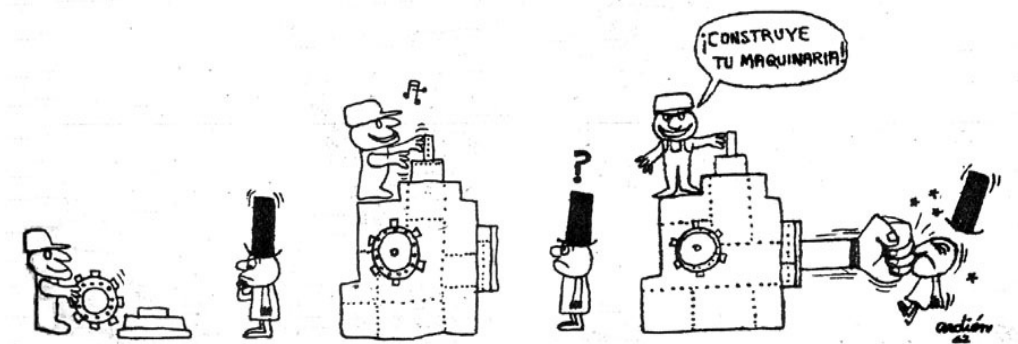


Figure 5.45 Ardion, *Verde Olivo*, March 25, 1962, 35.

experience. They propagated an earnest community of workers imbued with revolutionary fervor, a far cry from the imagined Revolution drawn in *Negativo, compañero*. In another example, Pedro Llop, a mechanic at a lactose factory, took a used motor and pump to create a *Ligador de Mezclas*, a machine that dissolved and mixed ingredients in ice cream more thoroughly.<sup>381</sup> He boasted his invention could stir a more homogenous blend much quicker: “the job took us seven and one-half hours to complete and now it takes us six! What we have done for the Revolution, you can too! If something is wrong in your industry, don’t cross your arms . . . invent it!” In look and style similar to Ruiz and Matos, Llop praised his machine’s efficiency, its time-saving capabilities, and its success in increasing production, but he also urged readers to follow his example and take initiative in their own workplace. This series communicated exactly what the Ministry, the CTC, and the Revolutionary Government reiterated in speeches, sanctions, and regulations: an enthusiastic, socially and materially conscious worker solved problems and facilitated Cuban economic progress through his

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<sup>381</sup>Ministerio de Industrias, *Noticias de Hoy*, January 12, 1962, 8.

sense of patriotism and revolutionary-inspired initiative. It revealed officials' expectations for a much more sophisticated level of commitment from the working class, as well as evidence of a growing vanguard community. Cartoonists helped to round out the campaign's overall visual diversity as well (Figure 5.45). In this example, the cartoonist Ardión illustrated a worker happily building a machine in front of a puzzled, capitalist onlooker. At the end of the sequence, a large fist thrust out from the front of the machine, dealing the capitalist an unexpected and painful blow. The worker proudly exclaimed, "Construct your machinery!" Production like defense, became another weapon of the Revolution against class enemies and imperialism. This image thread not only featured documentary evidence of the laboring *pueblo*'s integration and submission to a greater revolutionary commitment, but also projected the formation of a new revolutionary, socialist consciousness.

The campaign for Socialist Emulation in labor reflected a fusion of the most sophisticated revolutionary codes and values propagated on a broader scale within the imagined narrative during this period: collectiveness, selflessness, efficiency, organization, responsibility, unity, enthusiasm, and mobilization. Competition lay at the heart of the Socialist Emulation campaign; however, it transcended a focus on quantity to include elements of revolutionary unity, spirit, discipline, and consciousness. A Ministry of Labor Resolution (No. 16782), passed on August 20, 1960, established "a minimum labor standard to be performed through the work day, a system of bonuses, or additional payments

granted to those who exceed this minimum.”<sup>382</sup> With this resolution, a nascent form of Socialist Emulation in Cuba was born. Workers signed contracts agreeing to compete on an individual, or collective basis and to maintain and exceed the set emulation indexes (e.g., meet quantitative and qualitative production goals; avoid spoilage and waste; curb tardiness and absenteeism; maintain equipment and low accident rates; and participate in volunteer labor and revolutionary instruction circles). Factory assemblies set work norms and the winners needed to achieve high percentages, based on points, under each emulation index.<sup>383</sup> According to “Instructions for Establishment and Control for the Fulfillment of Labor Standards,” a well-publicized circulation among newspapers during October 1962, a worker who “is slow and performs a task smaller than what he should and must do, is an enemy of ours and of all the people.”<sup>384</sup> Putting things a bit more delicately, PSP leader Blas Roca, now part

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<sup>382</sup>CERP, 54.

<sup>383</sup>Workers who attained one hundred percent of each index gained the maximum allotted points assigned in that category. For example, one hundred percent of anti-waste and material conservation equaled fifty points, or eighty for producing high quality products. Frente Obrero Revolucionario Democrático Cubano (FORDC), “El trabajo en Cuba socialista; trabajo voluntario, las “normas” y las “metas” la emulación socialista,” (Miami: Frente Obrero Revolucionario Democrático Cubano Ediciones, no. 1, 1965), 67.

<sup>384</sup>CERP, 54. The atmosphere of competition reached the highest levels of government. In an act of solidarity and showmanship, Fidel Castro competed against himself in his own version of individual emulation. According to the Official Gazette on February 7, 1963, Castro cut an accumulated 2, 751 arrobas of sugarcane in four days (April 12-16, 1962) at an average of 550 arrobas per day. Castro claimed he continuously increasingly exceeded his daily output, because he was “emulating against himself.” He encouraged canecutters to follow his example in what he coined as the “samurai” method. An experienced cane cutter averaged 200-250 arrobas

of the National Directorate of the ORI, emphasized that “norms give those the opportunity to distinguish between a good worker and a bad worker, to distinguish between the worker who puts in effort and the worker that does not.”<sup>385</sup> Che Guevara had argued since early 1961 that Socialist Emulation constituted a “weapon to increase production and an instrument to elevate the consciousness of the masses.”<sup>386</sup> By 1962, the Ministry created a National Commission on Emulation to oversee provincial and local commissions and communicate competitor results on material loss, product quality, technical education, punctuality, as well as the general progress of competitions. *Revolución’s* Mural, the Ministry of Labor, and the CTC began producing imagery designed to inform, instruct, and orient workers to the purpose, scope, and goals of Socialist Emulation. Explained through a series of indexes that reinforced work codes and values propagated to this point, the campaign promised success and honor to its workers and sought to build a vanguard among them. As we have examined, labor imagery leading up to the campaign sought to instill positive values and combat negative behaviors within labor culture.

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daily. Castro’s numbers increased daily (Monday, 306; Tuesday, 417; Wednesday, 564; Thursday, 580; and Friday, 884). *FORDC*, 74.

<sup>385</sup>Blas Roca, “Crece la responsabilidad de los sindicatos en la construcción del socialismo,” (Havana: Editorial CTC-R, 1962), 6.

<sup>386</sup>Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Roberto Hernández, “Labor Organization and Wages,” in Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Revolutionary Change in Cuba* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1971), 235.



The idea of Socialist Emulation stemmed from the Soviet experience as a means of reaching a more refined system of labor rationalization and inevitably, the formation of the New Soviet Man. Originally, it grew out of Vladimir Lenin's assertion that workers competing against each other in an enthusiastic and spontaneous fashion bred a vigorous and productive work environment. Workers frequently participated in sector-wide, regional production competitions and soon, the "shock worker," a term used to identify enthusiastic and goal-oriented workers and offset the indolent, appeared in Soviet terminology. Mikhail Heller credited the rise of the shock worker as "a turning point in the development of a policy toward the proletariat, and marked the beginning of a new stage in the formation of the Soviet Man."<sup>387</sup> Shock workers welcomed extra hours, took wage cuts if needed, and actively engaged in workshop discussions and competitions. They became the first marker for excellence among workers; one that would inspire the competitive nature of Soviet work culture. This culture of Socialist competition that featured heroic-levels of production, increased in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist industrialization drive of the 1930s.<sup>388</sup> It remained a relatively isolated endeavor until 1935, when Alexei Stakhanov, a Donbass coal miner, accepted the challenge of Konstantin Petrov, the ingenious

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<sup>387</sup>Lenin was the first to articulate the concept of socialist competition in response to raising the quality and level of socialist construction. In April 1929, the Communist Party passed a resolution on socialist competition and in May, refined its ideological components. Mikhail Heller, *Cogs in the Wheel: The Formation of Soviet Man*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1988), 120.

<sup>388</sup>*Ibid.*, 119-20.

secretary of a local party cell, to participate in a new labor competition to find the best hewer. Petrov gathered over two hundred of the best shock workers surrounding the Golubovka mine and designed a plan in which they would function as an auxiliary support group to Stakhanov's individual efforts. He arranged solutions to chronic work-related disturbances such as breaks in the flow of compressed air, wood shortages, poor ventilation, and overcrowded mine shafts. In the end, Stakhanov, with the help of two other support workers, hewed little over one hundred tons of coal in under six hours; earned two hundred rubles, instead of his usual thirty per shift; and nearly doubled the amount of coal that would normally be hewed by eight men.<sup>389</sup> His accomplishment launched a new push toward Socialist Emulation. Lewis Siegelbaum noted, "The idealized Stakhanovite, the purposeful, well-rounded individual, was a particularly well articulated example of the New Soviet Man."<sup>390</sup> For Stalin, though, this Stakhanovite version of the New Soviet Man would be no less than "a 'cog' in the gigantic wheel of the Soviet state."<sup>391</sup> Although Cuban officials, particularly

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<sup>389</sup>Stakhanov credited his two auxiliary workers and favorable work conditions with his overall success. Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 67-71 passim.

<sup>390</sup>*Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>391</sup>In 1961, Nikita Khrushchev announced the maturity of this "cog" by 1981; a specimen he insisted would reveal a "high ideological commitment, broad education, moral purity, and physical perfection. While the Soviet Union has a long history of building the New Soviet Man, by the early 1980s, party ideologists Mikhail Suslov and Konstantin Chernenko conceded this goal had yet to materialize in all its manifestations." Heller, 5 and 6.



**Figure 5.46**

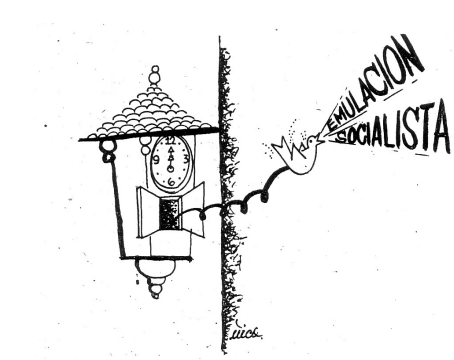
Castro, began outlining formal indicators for their revolutionary persona in speeches, a mature socialist ideology, including indicators for the New Man, remained loosely articulated in official propaganda during this period.<sup>392</sup> Qualities common in Soviet definitions of the New Man remained underdeveloped like the emphasis on classlessness, atheism, party loyalty, militant, health, internationalism, gender neutral, and

scientific.<sup>393</sup> Both Cuban and Soviet Socialist Emulation models did share, to varying degrees, an emphasis on activism and teamwork; militancy and spontaneous initiative; collectivism and individualism; professional skill and natural ability; and physical prowess and ideological proficiency. Nevertheless, Socialist Emulation raised expectations that the material abundance required to maintain a communist society could be met and sustained. It attained a more formal reputation as a standard form of socialist labor upon its arrival to Cuba.

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<sup>392</sup>Castro speeches on the bureaucracy, his critique of Escalante's handling of the ORI (Integrated Revolutionary Organizations), and the creation of PURS (United Party of the Socialist Revolution), outlined expectations for revolutionary comportment and consciousness. Fidel Castro, *Algunos problemas de los métodos y formas de trabajo de las O.R.I., discurso del 26 de Marzo de 1961*; Fidel Castro *Denounces Bureaucracy and Sectarianism, Speech of March 26, 1962*; and Fidel Castro *Speaks on Marxism-Leninism*.

<sup>393</sup>Thomas Woody, *New Minds: New Man? The Emergence of the Soviet Citizen* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1932), 468-77.



**Figure 5.47** Níco, *Verde Olivo*, August 6, 1961, 98.

Revolutionary imagery defining broad concepts and specific indexes considered vital to the success of Socialist Emulation, drew upon the existing visual rhetoric on labor and assumed an audience prepared for this next phase of socialist work. Images not only identified key points on emulation, but

functioned as spaces to revive revolutionary duty, ideological consciousness, and patriotism.

Initially, visual calls for emulation, beginning as early as April 1961 in agriculture and intensifying after October 1962 in industries, framed it as a collective endeavor that symbolized patriotic unity and the success of Cuba's future. This example by the Ministry of Public Works affirmed that the

“collective efforts, the patriotic enthusiasm, and the will of social service unite in Socialist

Emulation,” and construction workers “understand this and follow through” (Figure 5.46).<sup>394</sup> Imagery expected the reading public to not only participate

enthusiastically, but also to understand and accomplish revolutionary tasks. It addressed a seasoned reader, ready for instruction. *Bohemia*'s Níco signified the



**Figure 5.48** Verde Olivo, October 28, 1962, 98.

<sup>394</sup>Ministerio de Obras Públicas, “Vence el Pueblo!” *Bohemia*, October 22, 1961, 131.

call for emulation with this simple cartoon of a Cuckoo clock announcing its start (Figure 5.47). In a widely-distributed piece titled, “Ten Questions on Emulation,” the Ministry of Labor and the CTC presented a visually simple and textually succinct description of the most relevant aspects of the new campaign (Figure 5.48).<sup>395</sup> It explained emulation objectives, organization, indexes, scoring, and prizes, while emphasizing key concepts to building a heroic and active vision of the new socialist worker (e.g., productive, responsible, professional, and superior). “To be a vanguard worker,” it began, “is one of the most honorable and highest distinctions. In socialism, vanguard workers are the true and authentic heroes of the new society we are constructing. National emulation gives you the opportunity of becoming a vanguard worker and of contributing, with your effort, with your labor, with your example, the great tasks that are underway in our country.” Like most campaigns during this period, the path of Socialist Emulation and the role of the worker ultimately tied into a larger form of patriotism and the very success of socialism, the Revolution, and ultimately nationalist visions for Cuba. Emulation provided another path to revolutionary heroism. With the example of men like Jose Antonio Ruiz, Nilos Matos, and Pedro Llop, the reading public could become inspired and motivated to give more effort, more time, more enthusiasm. Socialist Emulation imagery, more than any other thread during this period, contained more of the nascent components of

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<sup>395</sup>This piece ran throughout October 1962 and into March 1963 in *Bohemia* (October 19, 1962, 75 and March 22, 1963, 14-15); *Verde Olivo* (October 28, 1962, 98); and *Revolución* (October 12, 1962, 6).

revolutionary socialization desired not just in an idealized worker, but on a broader scale in a revolutionary citizen. In a speech to the CTC on September 5, 1962, Blas Roca inspired his audience:

Socialist Emulation brings out the best in each worker; in the increase of production and the quality of production, and at the same time, tries to help those who are behind so production is increased for all. Socialist Emulation tries to wake up the initiative of everyone, to the enthusiasm of all. If the administrator of a factory wants to win emulation, he will seek the most productive methods of labor, seek out weaknesses of his industry where production becomes stuck, where it cannot progress, etc. in order to improve it faster and win the pennant, the glorious title of winning the Socialist Emulation. The worker who wants to win emulation also puts in effort; not only does he worry about working more, but also that the whole factory works more . . . because this is what winning emulation depends on; not just personal triumph, but the triumph of the whole factory.<sup>396</sup>

*Revolución*'s Mural entry on Socialist Emulation urged workers to support, engage, and teach one another in addition to emphasizing the importance of mechanization and rationalizing production (Figure 5.49). This piece



**Figure 5.49** *Revolución*, March 15, 1963, 6.

argued that now the duty of workers “who know more must teach and help those who knows less” and this all depended on the “mutual assistance and friendly collaboration between workers,” or what Lenin referred to as part of an exercise in good character. It combined revolutionary, now socialist codes, encouraging

<sup>396</sup>Roca, 15.



Figure 5.50

collectivism and activism. Thus, like other revolutionary endeavors, it suggested in this case that through the process of increasing productivity, the worker experienced an ethical and moral transformation that was inspirational and socially significant to Cuban citizenship. This message reflected the same type of camaraderie and team work recounted by Ruiz, Matos, and Llop. Socialist Emulation joined a laundry list of

revolutionary experiences like joining the CDR and volunteer brigades through which citizens proved their bravery, civic worth, patriotic fervor, degree of integration, and mature political consciousness.

Visual glimpses of the nascent vanguard worker, the Cuban equivalent of a Soviet-style Stakhanovite, did exist by the end of 1963 and catapulted its recipient to new heights in the imagined narrative. This March piece from the National Commission of Emulation captured the vanguard ideals perfectly in a heroic language now all too familiar: “To be a Vanguard Worker is a distinction, and one of the highest honors. In Socialism, vanguard workers are the true and authentic heroes of the new society we are constructing. The national emulation gives you the opportunity of becoming a vanguard worker and to contribute your efforts, with your labor and example, to the great achievements of our *patria*” (Figure 5.50).<sup>397</sup> Perhaps the most potent type of imagery

<sup>397</sup>Comisión Nacional de Emulación, “Gánate el honoroso titulo de trabajador de vanguardia,” *Noticias de Hoy*, March 5, 1963, 4. *Revolución* published the same

within the Revolution's visual culture during these first years were photographs, corresponding quotes, and articles on the real *pueblo* in action. An article in *Bohemia* spotlighted Reynaldo Castro, the best sugarcane cutter in Cuba during 1962 (Figure 5.51).<sup>398</sup>

Mr. Castro voluntarily integrated himself with a mechanized brigade on the farm, "Enrique Noda," which then renamed itself after the revolutionary hero, Camilo Cienfuegos. After questioning his motivation to join a brigade instead of emulating individually,

Castro stated that "when the Revolution requests that cane should be cut in brigades, it is because it is what is most convenient to the *patria*, and no other attitude could be expected from me."<sup>399</sup> His conception of his own



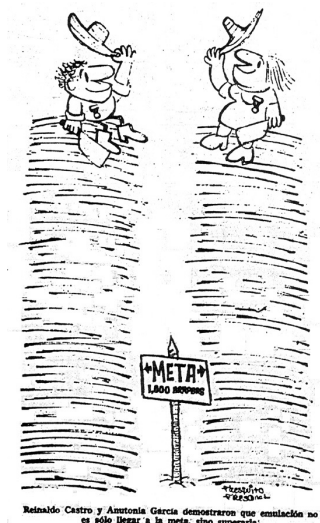
Figure 5.51

advertisement on March 4, 1963, 6.

<sup>398</sup>Hugh Thomas insisted that the constant focus on work heros bred jealousy among workers and that questions were raised on whether, or not Reynaldo Castro actually cut an average of 1,280 arrobas of sugarcane each day. Thomas, 1446. In the Soviet Union, Stakhanovites suffered violent attacks, even death at the hands of other workers. Gorky Automotive workers, brothers Ivan and Feodor Kriachkov, were found guilty and sentenced to death by a military tribunal for the murder of Ivan Schmerov, a Stakhanovite whose only crime had been to increase his daily productivity by two hundred percent. One of the most explosive cases surrounded coal mine engineer S. Plotnikov. Plotnikov allegedly had become so infuriated by the successes of Stakhanovites at a local Chelyabinsk mine that he pushed for accelerated digging in an extremely unsafe pit which caused its collapse and the death of those diggers. "Heros of Labor," *Time* magazine, vol. 26, no. 25, December 16, 1935, 27-28.

<sup>399</sup>Alberto Cardenas, "Reynaldo Castro, el mejor machetero de Cuba, se integra a una brigada mecanizada," *Bohemia*, December 26, 1963, 6.





**Figure 5.52** Frequito

Fresquet, *Bohemia*, May 24, 1963, 34.

socialist/revolutionary identity incorporated main points and ideological codes propagated within labor imagery and beyond: loyalty to the Revolution and its needs with a hint of enthusiasm and sacrifice.

Castro's vanguard status earned him star power.

Cartoonist Frequito Fresquet published a cartoon page in *Bohemia* called "Emulation and Harvest (*zafra*)"

featuring a tribute to Castro which read "Reynaldo

Castro and Antonia García demonstrated that

emulation not only is reaching a goal, but surpassing it!" (Figure 5.52) During a speech on the eve of the International Workers Day celebrations, Che Guevara, in addition to presenting prizes to forty five of the most distinguished vanguard workers, including Stakhanov-like sugarcane cutter Reynaldo Castro, he asserted, "I would not say to these men that they have made a cult out of production, rather they have made great developments in political consciousness."<sup>400</sup> In 1965, Che Guevara considered the achievement of a New Man in Cuba had little hope. He directly addressed its status in his letter to the Uruguayan weekly *La Marcha* editor, Carlos Quijano: "In this period of the building of socialism we can see the new man being born. The image is not yet completely finished—it will never be, since the process goes forward hand in hand with the development of new

<sup>400</sup>Vanguard workers received diplomas, houses, or automobiles. Inocente Rodríguez won a trip to Czechoslovakia. *Revolución*, May 2, 1962, 4.

economic forms.”<sup>401</sup> Nevertheless, early in the Revolution, men like Reynaldo Castro exemplified the most indispensable facets and spirit of the New Man. They exhibited a dedication to national needs, a commitment to the collective, a moral disposition toward labor, and a mature degree of political consciousness.

No matter how enthusiastically presented, or encouraging Socialist Emulation imagery appeared, in the end, the campaign failed to gain vitality and produce desired results on a mass scale. Officials attempted to give it an air of excitement despite the fact that Socialist Emulation grew out of a resolution instead of shop floor culture. In a speech delivered to the CTC on August 21, 1962, Minister of Industry Che Guevara, insisted that although the Revolutionary Government had “turned emulation into a formal competition and separated it from its logical strong point . . . workers, conscious of its importance, full of revolutionary enthusiasm, broke down the formal barriers and began on their own to organize emulation in different production units.”<sup>402</sup> Evidence shows that enthusiasm for the new campaign waned, plagued by the need to coerce participants and excessive formalization.<sup>403</sup> As early as September 1962, Minister

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<sup>401</sup>Deutschmann, 203.

<sup>402</sup>Ibid., 118. Excerpt from the CTC speech, “A new culture of work, August 21, 1962.”

<sup>403</sup>Havana showed only a nine percent increase in Socialist Emulation participants from April 1961 to December 1962 with over eleven thousand factories and a little over seven hundred thousand workers participating in competitions. FORDC, 63-64. During the heaviest period of Socialist Emulation, Moscow boasted twenty-two factories with six million participants at the end of 1935 to nearly thirty million participants by mid-1936 alone. Siegelbaum, 156.

of Labor Martínez Sánchez conceded to *Revolución*, “We have to recognize that this country [emulation] has not acquired its true hold. And the main reason is because the working masses have not participated in emulation.” General Secretary of the CTC Lázaro Peña echoed in the same edition that emulation “has yet to catch between the masses.” Both Martínez Sánchez and Peña attributed bureaucratic excesses as part of the reason workers became less than enthusiastic in joining emulation contracts.<sup>404</sup> By 1966, after revising its regulations four times, officials finally came to terms with its continuing weaknesses and scrapped it as a method of production, conceding they had failed “to infuse into Socialist Emulation the movement of masses it requires . . . all formal or administrative concepts of the same must be discarded.”<sup>405</sup> If participation remained low, images concentrating on Socialist Emulation during this early period remained optimistic and conceded little evidence to its unpopularity.

By concentrating on cartoons and advertisements constructing and guiding the campaigns on literacy and Socialist Emulation, we gain a stronger appreciation for the interplay of revolutionary imagery and its artists and the institutional framework that coordinated “image events” within the imagined

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<sup>404</sup>Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT), *La situación laboral en la Cuba Castrista* (Mexico: Publicaciones especiales ORIT-CIOSL, 1964), 6 and 9. In addition to admitting emulation had not gained a following, Martínez Sánchez blamed its “bureaucratic character,” and continued to note that “we are largely at fault in the committing of these errors.” Peña commented around the same time to the First National Evaluation of Emulation that it had “not taken root among the working class as it should have . . . [due] to the formal bureaucratic method employed.” CERP, 56.

<sup>405</sup>Mesa-Lago, “Labor Organization and Wages,” 242.

narrative. Within imagery centering on literacy, the National Commission on Literacy employed all its faculties into incorporating the best elements of revolutionary advertising and graphic art in order to create a mobilizing, engaging, and triumphant view of one of the Revolution's most important achievements: the near complete literacy of its population. With the help of the COP and later Intercommunications, the National Commission built new symbols drawn from a singular story, that of Conrado Benítez, and fashioned them to inspire and direct this monumental, revolutionary experience. The revolutionary advertisement, undergoing its own aesthetic and rhetorical transition from COP-inspired to Intercommunications-designed pieces, provided a view of an evolving visualization within this art and its ability to respond to campaign changes and needs; to ramp up enthusiasm at critical points; to engage mass organizations directly and encourage recruitment; and to sustain a strong message in motion.

Socialist Emulation remained an underdeveloped thread of imagery during the years of this study, but it furnishes an end point, or a framework from which to contextualize and appreciate the socialization of the worker and the building of his identity during the Revolution's early socialist phase. The imagined narrative ultimately redefined labor from its commercial associations with leisure to its assuming a vital position at the front-lines of the fight against imperialism. Threads of imagery like *Negativo, compañero* and "Construct Your Machinery" juxtaposed the positive and negative worker self-image, both shaping new behaviors and providing evidence of a *real* burgeoning vanguard. In examining the imagined narrative elaborating shop floor politics and behavior, as well as the

ideological codes and values orienting the evolution of a labor identity toward Socialist Emulation, we not only gain an idea of the official role and look of the worker within Cuban revolutionary society, but the degree of vanguardism associated and expected in terms of this classic, socialist hero.

Together, image threads on the Literacy Campaign and Socialist Emulation furnish examples of a citizenry visualized to be active agents in a revolutionary process that had matured well beyond the phase of armed insurgency. The iconic rebel, embodied in the *barbudo* young male, continued to evoke the Sierra experience. This image would continue to reverberate through the imagined narrative symbolically in the rifle or beret, and in the language of heroism, sacrifice, and patriotism. Yet, the image of the *pueblo* featured in and beyond the Literacy Campaign had evolved from its once static, weakened, and single-bodied state as Liborio, El Bobo, and El Loquito into an active and determined collective, working and defending the new Cuba in multiple settings and in varied ways. Images of the young volunteer teacher and the civilian laborer redefined work inside and outside the imagined narrative as an area where the revolutionary citizen conserved materials, devoted time enthusiastically, and excelled, individually and collectively, in creating innovative methods of production that promised a progressive future. However, certain negative elements appearing within the visual threads that informed Socialist Emulation, problematized the happy, progressive *pueblo* facing incredible odds in 1963. Visual elaborations of vanguardism, exemplified by real workers like Reynaldo Castro, or those highlighted in the campaign to “Construct Your Machinery,”

coexisted alongside another less-than-ideal image of the worker found in *Negativo, Compañero*. A duality arose with a good versus bad worker/citizen existing side by side, juxtaposing absenteeism and enthusiasm; waste and conservation of spare parts; and loafing and emulation competition. This dualism reflects an ideal not yet reached, a 1963 *pueblo* undergoing growing pains, a nascent revolutionary consciousness unable to match its imagined enthusiasm and sophistication within the visual world. The vanguard worker reflected the most elevated type of revolutionary citizen as work became a central quality of the *pueblo* itself and to the revolutionary experience. Imagery preceding Socialist Emulation challenged its readiness by exposing its weaknesses, yet inevitably in keeping with the function of propaganda to support and defend the Revolution, the good *pueblo* embodied in Reynaldo Castro overshadowed any *negativo compañero*.

## Conclusion

The “cartooned revolution” continues to evince powerful meanings among contemporary Cubans. During the interviews conducted with several surviving cartoonists in 2005, I asked each artist to consider his early revolutionary experience. The responses indicated that the cartooned revolution continues to be an occasion for self-reflection about the art of cartooning and the politics of life in revolutionary Cuba. For Adigio Benítez, it was “part of the divulgation of an idea, in this case, the ideas, principles, slogans, and actions of the Revolution. I saw it as a necessity of the revolutionary artist to use the mediums of communication and expression to take all these ideas to the *pueblo*, communicate them, and make them clear.” *Bohemia*’s Níco considered cartooning a major art and a reflection of the Revolution itself: “The *pueblo* finds within the cartoon what it wants to say, but does not have the means to express it. If you take a collection of *Palante*, you see the history of the Revolution.<sup>406</sup> There came the Special Period [1990s] where they closed things and the humor magazine, *Palante* did not stop.” In 1959, Nuez developed Don Cizaño, a character symbolizing the non-aligned press. In 1960, during a moment of heightened ferment, students and revolutionary supporters burnt the image of Don Cizaño in effigy on the steps of the University of Havana. Nuez recalled, “And then, the character was over. I couldn’t resurrect him. The *pueblo* buried him and I

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<sup>406</sup>Adigio Benítez, interview and Antonio Mariño Souto, interview.

couldn't bring him back. There was a moment things just changed, you couldn't stick to something perennial, something eternal. Things were transforming and you can't create this stuff from a desk, because it's not palpable. You must defend the Revolution consciously and be a part of it because if not, what are you going to defend? You'd always be on a plane foreign to the Revolution."<sup>407</sup>

Rafael Fornés and Adigio Benítez still revisit the cartooned revolution from time to time and respond to it as a reflection of their history as professionals and their value as artists more so than as revolutionaries. Adigio, now as a Professor Emeritus of the Superior Institute of Art in Havana, considered his work during these early years critically: "Sometimes I look at my work and think it is well done. Many pieces I think are a shot in the dark, not necessarily in terms of ideas, but in terms of the drawing. Some I consider bad. My first vocation is painting. I don't think I was really a cartoonist by birth like Nuez, or Chago, but that I was part of a collaborative effort, participating in the Revolution and the press."<sup>408</sup> Fornés felt he stood apart from the political cartoonists of this period:

I never thought that what I did, or said would have any resonance, or significance in Cuban society. I always drew to amuse it. In my comic strips you see "man," and you will understand it today in the same way as you would twenty, or fifty years ago. It is timeless. Many nights I sit and look at my work now, and it has the same validity for me as it did forty years ago. But a political

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<sup>407</sup>Nuez's Mogollón, a character representing vagrancy, fell prey to another public incineration on the steps of the university. René de la Nuez, interview.

<sup>408</sup>Adigio Benítez, interview.



cartoon? No, that has a past. That's how I know I'm not a political cartoonist. I've always lived in the clouds.<sup>409</sup>

Each cartoonist viewed the link between his art, his past, and the world around him differently. It was a means of communication, a reflection of the outside world, or a vehicle to help shape his environment. The fall of Don Cizaño calls attention to the link between the artist and his public, as well as the overall intensity with which Cubans revered the genre, in addition to its ephemeral quality.

As a form of communication, reflection, and social construction, the Cuban cartoon tradition has remained a constant force within Cuban society since its first appearance and circulation on the steps of the Tacón Theater in 1848. On September 18, 1980, Cuban and Soviet cosmonauts, Arnaldo Tamayo and Yuri Romanenko, took with them into the outer atmosphere sand from Playa Girón, the Cuban shield and flag, and a cartoon by Nuez. By this measure, Nuez's cartoon represented a national treasure, on par with the icons of Cuban patriotism that bridged the anti-imperial and nationalist struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

A tradition of political cartooning in Cuba grew out of historical conditions shaped by the nineteenth-century struggle for independence against Spanish colonial rule and the repression and censorship suffered at the hands of twentieth-century Republican governments. In the face of Spanish attempts to strangle the voices of a growing creole nationalism, a network of newspapers and

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<sup>409</sup>Rafael Fornés, interview.

comic supplements, such as *El Cubano Libre* and *Cacarajícara*, emerged to play a role in championing the cause of independence fighters, José Martí and his *mambises*. These nascent outlets of a graphic anti-colonial nationalism continued to be refined in a peacetime, Plattist Cuba that came to be dominated by American political and commercial interests. An indication of American cultural influence was the influx of King Syndicate comics and commercial advertising into the Cuban newspaper. Popular and elite newspapers like *Diario de la Marina* and *Información*, published American comics alongside Cuban favorites, as in the case of Eduardo Abela's *El Bobo*. The aesthetic style, color, cultural difference, and by comparison, low cost of publishing an American comics strip, forced Cuban artists to not only compete for space and readership, but to carve out new outlets for their work by creating magazines like Ricardo de la Torriente's *La Política Cómica*, or Conrado Massaguer's *Social*. Nevertheless, out of this new peacetime, post-colonial narrative, the first comic articulation of the *pueblo* representation emerged in *Liborio*. Cuban cartoonists, under the constant threat of repression and censorship, criticized social, political, and economic conditions through visual devices (*choteo* and codes) designed to give indirect voice to the *pueblo*'s "reactions," "feelings," "frustrations," and "hopes." This *pueblo* representation evolved, along with its codes through a series of generational evolutions (e.g., Torriente's *Liborio*, Abela's *El Bobo*, and Nuez's *El Loquito*). The undertone of nationalism within Cuban cartooning continued after the revolutionary victory, yet its focus and use within the imagined narrative transformed into a means of supporting the state and defending its interests. The

traditions and lessons of the pre-revolutionary press that transferred into the revolutionary era did not stem from conservative and liberal newspapers like *Diario de la Marina*, or *Prensa Libre*, but under their more leftist elements. The emerging guerrilla struggle, press structure, and revolutionary personalities rising out of the Sierra Maestra reflected a new generation of radical “insurgents” set to dismantle Republican politics. They would in short time supersede and delegitimize the part of the Cuban press long-associated with participating in a culture of political compromise and bribery under Fulgencio Batista.

The new Revolutionary state, supported by the loyalties of its press allies, both Sierra and Havana-based, politically engineered the collapse of the pre-revolutionary press and replaced it with institutions and professionals armed with a vision and an agenda set to promote a revolutionary future. Government leaders, especially Castro himself, publically exploited the corruption and political compromise of the conservative and liberal pre-revolutionary press. Through a series of measured attacks in speeches, cartoons, government interventions (*coletilla*) and outright takeovers, the fall of the pre-revolutionary press and the rise of a revolutionary-inspired version, occurred at times peacefully, or at times publically as it did on the steps of the University of Havana, as students and other Cubans burned *Diario de la Marina* in effigy. The Free Press Committee led by Dagoberto Ponce intervened and expropriated the newspapers like *Avance* and *Información*, where in an act of revolutionariness, its newspaper staffs actively turned against their owners and in essence, furthered limitations on their own freedom of speech. Revolutionary newspapers

enthusiastically filled in the rhetorical vacuum and office space of their pre-revolutionary predecessors. The flurry of professional and institutional changes that followed carved out space and increased the volume of work for revolutionary cartoonists, now enjoying a supportive relationship with the state. Revolutionary cartoon magazines like *El Pitirre* and *Palante y Palante* provided more expressive and free-form outlets for graphic illustration, devoid of competition, yet still within the confines of revolutionary politics. With the either forced, or self-imposed exile of a number of pre-revolutionary cartoonists, the profession opened up to unknown talents and set revolutionary politics and sympathies as part of the requirement for employment. In this way, by placing the controls of cartooning in the hands of loyalists like Santiago Armada (Chago) and Carlos Franqui of *Revolución*, or Antonio Mariño (Ñico) and Enrique de la Osa of *Bohemia*, the Revolution controlled the “who, what, and how” in its press. Major aesthetic and contextual changes within comic art, precipitated (of course) by revolutionary politics and their direction, fueled an increasing politicalization of *costumbrismo*, leaving magazines and existentialist works like *Zig-Zag* and Chago’s *Salomon*, superfluous and giving the overlook and style of the cartoon, in Pecruz’s terms, “a combative” edge. Cartoons were “de-funnied” and took on an educative role in the press. Inspired by their love for the Revolution, cartoonists Nuez, Pecruz, Adigio, Rosen and Chago, to name a few, literally and figuratively drew it as the center of their art along with new symbols of expression. The transformation of the commercial advertisement into their revolutionary form took place gradually as advertising companies added revolutionary tones and

slogans into their selling points. The grand finale took place under their nationalization when the remnants of the field were unceremoniously ushered into the COP and coerced into toeing a revolutionary line by the COR. With the Literacy Campaign as its last hurrah, the COP dissolved and made way for a new era in revolutionary advertisements, led by Intercommunications, its Technical Team, and the ever-present shadow of Escalante and the COR. By the time Castro stood in front of the assembly of journalists, artists, and writers at the three-day conference in the National Library on June 30, 1961, and delivered his infamous speech, “Words to the Intellectuals,” the new state sat on top of an efficient, loyal, and ready, visual propaganda machine.

The growing politics of representation surrounding the rebel image as a point of emulation and confidence for some, and symbol evoking anxiety and fear in others, framed the discursive parameters around the reformist agenda and legitimacy of the new revolutionary state during its first two years. Initially, elite attempts at constructing their own public perception of the rebel by redefining and pigeonholing him—through the visual rhetoric of their *votos*—to an exclusive place in Cuban history as a guerrilla and not a politician, only bolstered his status within Cuban political culture. In a bid for normalcy, conservative and liberal cartoonists like Roseñada and Silvio, entered into a battle of visual wits with *Revolución* heavy-weights Chago and Bidopia, in an attempt to monopolize the iconic significance of the beard, catapulting its symbol to new heights within the imagined narrative. Labeled a fad and drawn with absurdity, visions of the rebel forcing the *pueblo* to figuratively “jump through hoops” to fit into the new scene,

narrowed into a discussion against political opportunism, dominated by Chago's *Julito 26*. Through battles with his nemesis January 2nd, *Julito 26* educated his audience to the bag of tricks at this new Manengue's disposal and socialized his audience on the intentions, attitude, and protection the rebel had to offer as a guide and ally of the *pueblo*. *Julito 26* joined a number of characters that incrementally showed audiences the new parameters of a revolutionary identity and the official expectations in civic comportment. Cartoonists and advertisers narrated the reformist initiatives of the Revolutionary Government, presenting visuals favorable to strengthening its legitimacy and difference from the political stylings of previous Republican administrations. The crux lay in emphasizing *action* along with honesty, efficiency, and social justice. The figure of Fidel Castro emerged as a focal point for symbolizing trust, faith, and a new leadership. Cartoonist featured a gracious and faithful *pueblo* largely from the position of spectator, benefactor, and recipient of revolutionary rewards and benefits.

At the dawn of its second year, the *pueblo* assumed the level of protagonist within the imagined narrative. Initially, ministries and campaigns urged citizens to simply Consume Cuban products or purchase INAV bonds, but incrementally, they began soliciting volunteers and more of the reading public's leisure time. By mid-1960, a new twist in the visualization of the revolutionary citizen and the rebel image occurred in the imagery of the Militia under the slogan, "Rifle, Labor, and Country." The still-new revolutionary citizen, now dressed in rebel symbols (rifle and beret), joined the front lines in protecting the country against an old enemy, American imperialism; a context heightened by

real-world violence and sabotage. The nationalization of industries reflected what Marcus Wood characterized as a point of trauma in this story, where radical politics and the imagined *pueblo* collided and the narrative took a watershed turn. Another spike in anti-imperialist and nationalist visual rhetoric, heightened by the diplomatic face-off between the United States and the Castro government over the processing of Soviet oil, the embargo, nationalizations, and finally, a break in relations, fueled an explosion of defense, vigilance, and enemy imagery that tightened the revolutionary community together like never before.

Cuba's socialist commitment, immediately followed by the Playa Girón invasion in April 1961, along with the growing economic effects of the American embargo on its trade, informed the purpose and content of revolutionary imagery and its now active, revolutionary *pueblo* protagonist. Cartoonists and advertisers drew associations to socialism with positive qualifiers such as progress, production, camaraderie, construction, science, and technology. These projections proved essential in maintaining the public's belief that revolutionary leaders possessed the gift of foresight in choosing a progressive path toward an independent Cuba despite ongoing challenges. Ultimately, socialism added a new vigor and self-importance to being revolutionary, re-kindling Cuban-ness, strengthening collectivism, and nurturing a vanguard consciousness. Generally framed as nationalist projects against the imperialist aggressor or the economic stranglehold of capitalism, an explosion of public works, volunteer labor, and collective campaigns, with mass organizations at the helm, reconfigured the tone, emotion, and orientation of cartoons and now, revolutionary advertisements.

Within the imagined narrative, volunteer laborers ‘worked circles’ around their capitalist counterparts; they defended and remained vigilant lest the ‘imperialist invaders’ returned to plunge Cuba into another ‘period of slavery, or darkness’; recycled bottles and other products as a way to ‘stand strong’ against America’s economic stranglehold; and showed Uncle Sam a we-can-do-it-without-you attitude. This became the 1963 *pueblo. Revolución*’s Mural nurtured a culture of advertising record industrial outputs, impressive volunteer efforts, spectacular harvests, all in an effort to impress its readers with the positive impact of Cuba’s socialist-style production and an active imagined/real revolutionary community. Material and labor shortages aggravated by the American embargo and general disruption in trade flows, forced the Revolutionary Government to lean heavily on its workforce. Thus, with practical needs and revolutionary politics at play, volunteer labor emerged and redefined Cuban attitudes toward devoting their leisure time to the Revolution. Labor now became a honorable and happy experience that should be given freely and willingly and performed with pride and dedication. In essence, it represented a greater nationalization of a citizen’s time. With so many projects at work, the frequency of recruitment and solicitations, pushes for enthusiasm and success, increased and with it, the re-projection of a radical, active, and integrated *pueblo*. A new type of audience became assumed and its hyperbolized re-projection marked another visual evolution of the new revolutionary citizen and identity; a 1963 version of an independent, strong *pueblo* with rebel roots. Particularly within the imagery of the CDR on defense and vigilance, a militarized, rebel element showed most acutely within the



embodiment of the revolutionary *pueblo*. Dealings with new enemies (*gusanos*) featured a violent, defiant, and alert public involved at all times in a civic duty that evoked the memory of rebel heroics and reset parameters for new forms of belonging. Yet, this idealized, strong revolutionary identity was not without its duality. While the actions inside the visual narrative featured a more mature *pueblo*, cartoonists like Nuez and his *Negativo, compañero*, appeared to inject a problematic side to an otherwise harmonious and consistent construction of the new citizen. Inspired by the artist's real-world experience, this line of criticism, geared toward purifying negative elements and shaping a fine-tuned, revolutionary consciousness, represented the closest approach toward a "freedom of speech" and candidness on the part of the cartoonist. It reflected *their* revolutionary act within the confines of revolutionary rules. Careful not to tarnish the aura of infallibility surrounding revolutionary mystique, it narrowed the distance between the imagined narrative and the outside world by bringing in its uglier side.

If the visual narrative presented readers with the *pueblo*'s less attractive qualities, the Literacy Campaign and heroic acts within the labor community overshadowed these with genuine moments of activism and the embodiment of a new identity, based on a revolutionary spirit. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans (young and old, male and female, worker and housewife), participated in one of the most unforgettable moments during this early period. An examination of revolutionary imagery building the Literacy campaign of 1961, revealed the institutional coordination of a harmonious message in touch with real-time events.

It opens a window into the institutional shifts affecting the imagined world as COP-design teams joined Intercommunications and coordinated a well-publicized dialogue between the National Commission on Literacy and the efforts of a highly-mobilized people, led by mass organizations. Intercommunications' templates, encouraging each mass organization to move "Onward!" with their work, publishing numbers taught, and featuring photographic Reports of the Brigades (courtesy of *Bohemia*), projected the awesome power of a mobilized, imagined revolutionary community. Similarly, while *Negativo, compañero* scolded lazy workers in an attempt at influencing good shop floor behavior, another image of an integrated and active laborer appeared alongside. With campaigns like "Recycle Spare Parts" and "Construct Your Machinery," a documentary revolutionary experience unfolded within the imagined narrative. Photographic images of ingenious workers next to their Taylorist-inspired machines, recounting their efforts using revolutionary newspeak, reinforced a sense of the validity to the imagined narrative. This visual proof of a new type of labor hero, exemplified by men and women like Reynaldo Castro, counter-balanced and out-shined the less-than-favorable view of loafers and fostered one of a growing vanguardism instead.

Cuban comic art after this period reached new heights. In an interview with the author, Níco considered Cuba "a country of humorists, we have a joke for everything, even tragedies."<sup>410</sup> Books focusing on the art of Cuban cartoons,

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<sup>410</sup>Antonio Mariño, interview.

their history, and the function of the press found consistent patronage through two publishing houses established in the 1980s, Editorial Pablo de la Torriente (1985) and Editora Abril (1980). Chago, Nuez, and others authored a number of books, featuring their popular characters and themes. Many Cuban cartoonists took part in national and international exhibits, winning awards and earning themselves a strong reputation in skill and talent among competitors.<sup>411</sup> Nuez won the National Hero of Labor medal; the Lázaro Peña Order (First Class); a prize from *Krokodil* (a satirical Soviet magazine); the Seal of José Martí, even the Golden Seal of Ho Chi Minh. Other honors were more symbolic. The dedication of San Antonio de los Baños as a “City of Humor” remains the greatest honor given to Cuban cartoonists and their profession. Hometown to René de la Nuez, Eduardo Abela, and Jose Luis Posada, situated just outside of Havana, and marked with its own monument featuring Nuez’s Loquito, on March 17, 1979, a humor museum opened to the public, featuring humor collections from the colonial, republic, and revolutionary periods. It includes the famous Tácon Theatre cartoon circulated by Cirilo Villaverde, Chago’s *Julito* 26 originals, and the complete collection of *El Pitirre* and *Palante y Palante*. Since its inception, the museum hosts the

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<sup>411</sup>Chago works were shown individually in Havana and abroad [“Humor Gnosis, Ninguno, Otro,” 1975; “Salomón,” 2005; and “Chago,” in New York City, 2000] and collectively [“Dibujos humorísticos,” 1959 and “Fair of the Royal College of Art,” 2002]. In Nuez’s lifetime, he has drawn over 35,000 cartoons. Jaime Sarusky, “A Cartoonist Who Heralds Victory,” *Granma Weekly Review*, June 19, 1983, 6. Since 1963, Nuez held individual expositions in Havana, Prague, Mexico, Austria, Nicaragua, Berlin, Paris, Canada, and Spain. Adigio has participated in hundreds of domestic and international expositions, especially those featuring his paintings. He received recognition as a founder of the National Art School and the Order of Felix Varela.

International Biennial of Humor, an exhibition with prizes and workshops geared toward the exchange of aesthetic and stylistic ideas and cultural history.

Cartoonists from over twenty countries take part in the festival; in 1989, the sixth welcomed three hundred cartoonists from forty countries, with more than one thousand entries.<sup>412</sup> San Antonio de los Baños represents a true humor and active literary community, giving testament to the popularity and value Cubans and their government place on comic art. Without this attention, the assumption of its role as a purveyor of mass art would prove weak.

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<sup>412</sup>“San Antonio de los Baños,” *Bienales de Humor*, <<http://www.trabajadores.cubaweb.cu/especiales>> (29 February 2004). San Antonio’s tobacco factories played a role in nurturing not only worker literacy, but the culture of humor and the cartoon. In 1915, cartoonists and painters Eduardo Abela and Manuel Alfonso inaugurated the first collective caricature exposition at the local Artisan Circle. Jorge L. Pérez, “San Antonio de los Baños, la villa de humor,” *UPEC*, 81, no.1 (Enero-Febrero 1981), 7.

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