

UNA REVISTA AL SERVICIO DE LA NACIÓN:  
*BOHEMIA* AND THE EVOLUTION OF CUBAN JOURNALISM (1908-1960)

By

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To my parents, Elio and Oilda Denis, for their unconditional love and support, and for instilling in me a love of *patria* at a young age. The memory of them and their sacrifice burns bright in their children and grandchildren.

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In 1958 Cuba's most influential magazine, *Bohemia*, reached a circulation of half a million copies; the largest in Latin America. The publication's editor, Miguel Ángel Quevedo, had established the magazine as the critical voice of Cuba, one that was deeply rooted in a messianic understanding of its role in shaping the contours of nationhood and historical memory, encouraging various forms of civic activism and participation, building and supporting the Republic's civic institutions, confronting dictatorship and repression, and holding Cuba's leaders accountable. *Bohemia's* evolution was a process that often mirrored and even led similar processes in the development of Cuban journalism.

This study aims to depict the evolution of Cuban journalism and how *Bohemia* intervened in that process and helped to effectively shape the political culture of republican Cuba. Its founder's mission to reclaim Cuban sovereignty and agency through a neocolonial context takes on revolutionary overtones when his son was forced to steer the struggling publication through the challenges of dictatorship, corruption, violence, and economic hardship. When the younger Quevedo took over *Bohemia* from his ailing father in 1927, the magazine grew in radicalism to become a voice for a more politically, socially, and economically democratic Cuba. *Bohemia's* amplified voice and its radical agitation for change coincided with significant shifts in the social,

political, and economic contexts that were the results of both global and domestic conditions. Its agitation for radical change in the late 1920s and 1930s was notable in that it was one of a handful of publications to explicitly do so. By the 1940s and 1950s *Bohemia's* mission under the founder's son intensifies as it becomes the most radical voice in the mainstream press to agitate for revolutionary change to the country's political culture; a clamor buttressed by the magazine's fervent opposition to all dictatorships and support for Latin American revolutionaries.



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **The Massacre of 1912, Cuba's Yellow Journalism and the Irony of Bohemia's Silence**

Desde su fundación en 1908 'Bohemia' ha mantenido una política editorial inalterable, basada en el solo principio de servir a los intereses de la comunidad... Creemos que cada página de 'Bohemia' refleja el sentir popular y procuramos en cada caso defender la causa de la justicia y la razón, para el bien de Cuba y de nuestros conciudadanos. <sup>1</sup>

-Miguel Ángel Quevedo

*Bohemia*, May 10, 1953

In the spring of 1912 the Cuban press waged a full-scale discursive war against the nation's blacks. Newspaper headlines screamed with depictions of blacks as "lawless savages", "anti-white" and "anti-Cuban", stoking racial fear and hatred among Cuban whites. <sup>2</sup> The ostensible cause was the armed protest of the first (and only) black political party in Cuba, the Partido Independiente de Color (PIC) which was contesting the Morúa Law, legislation that had essentially outlawed the party. Fears of a black revolt that aimed to not only wrest control from political elites but also pillage what the whites considered civilization stemmed from the days of the Haitian Revolution, when whites feared a similar fate would befall their own slave society. As Melina Pappademos shows, the press embarked on a rampage of anti-black and racist coverage of events. <sup>3</sup> The sole exception was the weekly magazine *Bohemia*, which enjoyed a weekly circulation of five thousand copies at a time when the country's population was

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<sup>1</sup> Miguel Ángel Quevedo, "Principios fundamentales de la Revista Bohemia que interesan a los Lectores y Anunciantes," *Bohemia*, May 10, 1953, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 194.

<sup>3</sup> Melina Pappademos, *Black Activism and the Cuban Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 158.

approximately 2,358,000. Its refusal to engage in the hysteria was the conscious decision on the part of its founder and editor Miguel Ángel Quevedo Pérez. Steeped in the tradition of the writing and journalism of José Martí and others that helped to ultimately create the Cuban republic, Quevedo Pérez belonged to the first generation of Cubans that believed in the transformative effects of the press on the project of nation-building.

As that spring wore on, and the press continued to rage against the imminent danger of a race war, President José Miguel Gómez, who had fought alongside blacks in the nation's independence wars of the late nineteenth century and had previously championed racial equality, concluded that "racist terror" was "the only viable solution to the crisis."<sup>4</sup> The press became complicit in the resulting repression, which included the slaughter of almost five thousand blacks. Aline Helg shows the brutal effectiveness of the early republic's press in casting the PIC and all blacks as inherently dangerous to society. The daily *El Día* loudly proclaimed:

This is a racist uprising, an uprising of blacks, in other words, an enormous danger and a common danger... (Racist movements) are moved by hatred, and their purpose is negative, perverse; they are only conceived by something as black as hatred... This is the free and beautiful America defending herself against a clawing scratch from Africa.<sup>5</sup>

The anxiety leading up to the PIC's armed protest and the resulting massacre, it seems, were good for the newspaper and magazine business.

As Aline Helg notes: "Newspapers promptly revived the fear-inducing icons of the bloodthirsty black beast, the black rapist of white women, and the black fanatic *brujo*."<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 196-196.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 195. The word *brujo* translates to sorcerer and was frequently used by white Cubans, including renowned ethnologist Fernando Ortiz, to label the Afro-Cuban religions such as Santería as witchcraft. Between 1902 and 1905 Ortiz, then a young lawyer, explored the urban subculture of Afro-Cubans, their religious beliefs and practices, and published his first book on the subject in 1906 as *Los Negros Brujos* (The Black Sorcerers). See Fernando Ortiz,

press was complicit in the wholesale repression and slaughter of blacks through its deliberate distortion of the conflict. By conveying the idea that the PIC armed revolt was a race war it ignited and increased fears among whites and “systematically spread false and exaggerated rumors.”<sup>7</sup> As Lillian Guerra notes, public justification of state repression came from not only the white population but the press, “which depicted the uprising as an unabashed campaign of black-on-white violence inspired by nothing more than racial hatred.”<sup>8</sup> Through their sensationalistic efforts, at a time when everyone on the island wanted to know what was happening, they also sold thousands of copies. The emphasis of sensationalism over facts illustrated a style of yellow journalism that was rooted in the run up to the US intervention of Cuba’s 1895 Independence War. The war between the American publishers William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer had inspired a profit-driven type of news coverage best exemplified by their depiction of developments in Cuba between 1895 and 1898. Cuban publications did not have to look too far back in the past to find a style they could emulate and cash in on.<sup>9</sup>

The daily *El Mundo*, which in its first advertisement in 1901 vowed to stake a clear nationalist editorial line that would campaign against the Platt Amendment, grossly exaggerated the number of protesters and their number of arms, an egregious error that it refused to acknowledge even forty years later. Writing a one-hundred fifty-page retrospective of the newspaper in 1951, Cuban historian Herminio Portell-Vilá, barely acknowledged *El Mundo*’s

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*Los Negros Brujos*, (Madrid: La Libreria de Fernando Fe, 1906). For information on Ortiz and his work on *Los Negros Brujos* see Diana Iznaga Beira, *El estudio del arte negro Fernando Ortiz*, (Biblioteca Virtual Universal, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>8</sup> Lillian Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 229.

<sup>9</sup> David R. Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America’s Emergence as a World Power*, (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2007), 223.

coverage of the 1912 uprising and subsequent massacre, much less any responsibility in its role in provoking fear and violence in the massacre. In writing about those years Portel-Vilá recalled *El Mundo*'s "extraordinary journalistic triumphs", especially the photographs of Cuban warships and of the events "relating to the Race War of 1911-1912."<sup>10</sup> Along with *El Mundo*, the daily *La Discusión* also helped propagate the rumor that the protest by the PIC was actually a Haitian-led Afro-Caribbean conspiracy; a tactic that preyed on white Cubans' long-standing fear of a Haitian-style revolution that aimed to wrest the island from white control.<sup>11</sup>

As the Cuban press began to warn of the dangers of a black armed revolt and engaged in fear-mongering and rumor, the magazine *Bohemia*, continued its coverage of the country's cultural life. One notable edition featured wall-to-wall coverage of all things related to the province of Camagüey, which neighbored the province of Oriente, where most of the revolt and subsequent repression would take place. A glittering celebration of the heroic province that had produced several of the island's revolutionary figures, martyred heroes and intellectual icons, Quevedo Pérez chose to feature his friend Aurelia Castillo de González's letter to him on the first page. Castillo de González, a journalist and poet who had been expelled by the notorious Spanish military leader Valeriano Weyler during the 1895 War, had once been accused of sympathizing with the independence movement and deported to Barcelona until the war ended in 1898. Her letter's placement, underneath the art-nouveau styled font that read BOHEMIA, and graced the first page of every edition, guaranteed that Castillo's words would likely be read by the magazine's readers.

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<sup>10</sup> Herminio Portell Vilá, *Medio Siglo de El Mundo y Homenaje al Periódico "El Mundo"* (Miami: Editorial Cubana, 2001), 67.

<sup>11</sup> Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 197.

Addressed to Quevedo Pérez, whom she addressed as “my friend”, the letter reads more like a soliloquy in which she waxes poetic about the homage that was paid to her in her native province and her attendance at the inauguration of a bronze statue to revolutionary leader, and fellow Camagüeyan, Ignacio Agramonte. The letter is indeed a celebration of Agramonte and everything Camagüeyan, but more broadly, if not more significantly, it is a tribute to Cuban nationhood, or *patria*. She describes the marvel of Agramonte’s statue as rooted in Eurocentric grandeur, but ultimately a work of art emblematic of the virtue of *patria*:

Y el arte, el arte Italiano, el más excelso, ha hecho del bronce y de la piedra el altar del patriotismo Cubano, la cúspide de heroísmo y de virtudes á que todas las generaciones venideras, como la presente, deben alzar ojos arrobados y corazones enardecidos dispuestos á lo más bello: el sacrificio por la patria, y á las virtudes, á todo lo grande que en esa cúspide se simboliza. No, no he soñado. La Hermosa realidad está allí.<sup>12</sup>

Quevedo’s reverence for Castillo is evident in *Bohemia*’s description of her as “Ilustre poetisa Camagueyana, Gloria de las letras patrias”, but this type of coverage, wrought in symbolic notions of an evolving vision of Cubanness, or *Cubanidad*, is what lit up the pages of the young magazine at a time when social and political turmoil threatened to thrust the island into yet another US occupation or worse. As other publications continued to ruthlessly dehumanize a significant minority of its population *Bohemia* celebrated Cuban martyrs, cultural institutions and probed for deeper meanings of *patria*. In consciously deciding to regularly afford space for female journalists, even high-profile placements such as the front page, Quevedo Pérez was also demonstrating his faith in women’s ability to engage readers through a profession that had been limited to males until the 1860s.<sup>13</sup> Nowhere on its pages did Quevedo Pérez choose to

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<sup>12</sup> Aurelia Castillo de González, “Camagüey,” *Bohemia*, March 26, 1912, 122.

<sup>13</sup> Ana Nuñez Machín, *Mujeres en el periodismo cubano*, (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1989), 22.

chronicle the unfolding socio-political turmoil that was being sensationalized and manipulated on the pages of the other publications.

Under his stewardship of *Bohemia* (1908-1926), Quevedo Pérez's commitment to helping construct and consolidate a sense of Cuban national identity was achieved in two ways. First, in helping to discover and promote distinctly Cuban artists Quevedo Pérez demonstrated a nationalistic streak that highly valued homegrown artistic talent and sought to build the island's cultural institutions through the contributions of native Cubans. Second, in intentionally using historic events such as February 24's Grito de Baire and the mythic appeal of foundational heroes such as Ignacio Agramonte, Quevedo Pérez sought to give meaning to the notions of *Cubanidad* and *patria* to more actively involve the reader in the process of nation-building while selling magazines and making a profit. Quevedo Pérez's commitment to strengthening the nation's civil society included creating Cuban versions of American institutions and the building of *Bohemia* as an institution that could catalyze Cubans to engage in civic activism.

*Bohemia's* potential to demonstrate political radicalism was evident not only through its founder's actions but, as is demonstrated from *Bohemia's* silence on the so-called Race War of 1912, his inactions. Through his magazine's silence, Quevedo Pérez committed the most politically radical act he could: *Bohemia* neither sensationalized nor distorted the armed protest of the PIC. By breaking with rank and becoming possibly the only white journalist to refuse to give in to the hysteria of the press, Quevedo Pérez enshrined his young publication in a veneer of liberalism and independence which would guide it for almost fifty years.

The press' manipulation of the protest movement and massacre would have two significant effects: it portrayed the slaughter of thousands of blacks as a necessary maneuver to restore social unity; and it further marginalized blacks, who not only suffered from the

dehumanization of being inaccurately characterized but also from the egregious violation of their human rights.<sup>14</sup> That *Bohemia* declined to participate in what was an otherwise universal lynching by the mainstream press underscores its founder's refusal to exploit the power of the press to instill and spread fear. Moreover, at a time when the demand for news reached its peak in the early republic, Quevedo P ez's refusal to place profit over principle becomes emblematic of *Bohemia*'s ability and willingness to intervene in the country's political culture. *Bohemia* established a tradition that would relentlessly steer the magazine in an independent direction and would make it one of the only, and even perhaps *the* only, publication that did not profit from its attachment to the government *du jour*. By maintaining its independence, *Bohemia* became the best representation of Cuba's pre-revolutionary free press. By maintaining its fidelity to constructing and consolidating its sense of *cubanidad*, it became popularly known as the bulwark of Cuban national identity, *el baluarte de la identidad nacional*. Fidel Castro would later expound on that moniker and call *Bohemia*, "nuestro m s firme baluarte."<sup>15</sup> In the process, it managed to sell more weekly copies, and enjoyed the highest circulation, of any publication in all Latin America between the late 1920s and 1960.

To understand the extent of *Bohemia*'s (and both Quevedos) power in Cuba from 1908-1958 it is necessary to go back, even at the risk of what might seem predictable, to Jos  Mart . But, the belief that journalism could serve as the vehicle in the creation of a nation that had been betrayed by two US military occupations, the Platt Amendment, and native oligarchs whose main concern was the distribution of the spoils of power among themselves, has deep and

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<sup>14</sup> Alejandro Leonardo Fern ndez Calder n, *P ginas en conflicto: debate racial en la prensa cubana (1912-1930)*, (Havana: Editorial UH, 2014), 31.

<sup>15</sup> For a collection of Fidel Castro's articles and interviews as well as documents on the leader published in *Bohemia*, see *Fidel en Bohemia: "Nuestro m s firme baluarte,"* (Havana: Editoria Pol tica, 2008).

inescapable roots in the journalism of the nineteenth century. Cuban-American historian Ada Ferrer argues that Martí and his generation of journalists essentially constructed a vision for Cuban nationhood through their writings, a factor that helped create a momentum for not only the imagination of a *patria*, but for the mobilization of Cubans that would take up arms for that nation: “Clearly they saw their writing as more than representation; they saw it also as weapon and war strategy, as a central part of the very process of insurgency they were seeking to describe.”<sup>16</sup> In imagining the first two wars of independence they could create a powerful impetus for a third.

As John M. Kirk notes, émigré newspapers such as the PRC’s *Patria* and Raimundo Cabrera’s volumes of *Cuba y América* and *Cuba y sus jueces* presented Cubans with blueprints for nation-building. Martí’s PRC itself became a model of the idealized Cuban state and broadened the revolutionary political power base at the same time.<sup>17</sup> In Eileen Marie McGovern’s study of four nineteenth century Cuban émigré newspapers she deduced a trend that underscored the democratization of the independence movement. *El Mensajero Semanal* covered mostly Europeans but *La Verdad*, *La Revolución* and *Patria* focused mostly on covering Cubans. As the independence movement matured, “Martí assured a role for every Cuban in the PRC.”<sup>18</sup> While *La Verdad* lacked labor coverage, *Patria* was steeped in its coverage of the labor movement, further indicating the democratization of the independence movement.<sup>19</sup> *Patria* thus

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<sup>16</sup> Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898*, (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 115.

<sup>17</sup> Eileen Maria McGovern, *From Varela to Martí: Four nineteenth century Cuban émigré newspapers*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1990), 221. For the original source see John M. Kirk, *Jose Martí. Mentor of the Cuban Nation*, (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1983).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.



represented “the culmination of decades of struggle” and quite figuratively “became the revolution.” The legacy of these publications as powerful forces for political activism and political change, was indelibly stitched in the minds of the first generation of the Cuban republic’s journalists and editors.

Louis A. Pérez Jr. describes the redemption of the “redemptive revolution” as “a recurring theme of the republic”; a mission that preoccupied the first generation of the republic’s political and civic leaders:

In many important ways, much of Cuban politics, revolutionary as well as institutional, turned on who most faithfully interpreted and most zealously pursued the ideals of Martí’s “redemptive revolution.” The unfinished revolution of 1895-1898 gave decisive shape and content to republican politics, a legacy that served as a mandate to revolution for the next three generations of Cubans.<sup>20</sup>

This redemptive mission became a motivating factor in Quevedo Pérez’s attempt, through *Bohemia*, at reclaiming what he envisioned as the legacy of the socio-political vicissitudes of the late nineteenth century: the notion of a free, fair, and independent *patria*.

When his son and namesake, Miguel Ángel Quevedo de la Lastra takes over *Bohemia* in 1927, the magazine’s mission changes from one of reclaiming a republic from the clutches of neocolonialism to revolutionizing the country’s political structures to change the republic from one ruled by greed and violence to one more representative of ordinary Cubans. The younger Quevedo’s messianic vision is defined as much by the context of Cuba’s political, social, and economic crises that his generation would face. Broadly known as the Generation of 1930, the republic’s second generation of Cubans included a wide spectrum of ideologically diverse “revolutionaries” such as Juan Antonio Mella, Rubén Martínez Villena, Antonio Guiteras, and

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<sup>20</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires 1878-1902*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1983), 386.

(later president of the Republic) Carlos Prío Socarrás. In the process, the younger and financially astute Quevedo, would not only steer *Bohemia* in a new direction that would lead some Cubans to consider the publication a national institution, he would increase its circulation and readership to unprecedented numbers on a regional scale, making it Latin America's most widely circulated publication.

This study grew out of the conviction that the print press, and particularly the weekly magazine *Bohemia*, constitutes a neglected source for Cuban history that remains virtually unexplored by scholars, who instead utilize Cuban publications as sources of information but rarely as objects of study in themselves. The evolution of Cuba's print media throughout the republican period (1902-1958) is a rich field of study because it exemplifies the hopes and frustrations of the Cuban people, particularly in their capacity as an organized society vis-à-vis the Cuban state as a political entity. As one of the few independent news sources untainted by bribes or auto-censorship, *Bohemia's* coverage put flesh on the political narrative of Cuba's republican history. Studying *Bohemia's* critical political coverage, especially considering its leading role in the struggle against the Machado and Batista dictatorships, offers a window onto the hopes and frustrations of the Cuban polity as interpreted by the media vehicle that claimed to best represent them. Cuban journalist Pedro Yanes, who worked with *Bohemia* in the 1950s and was a close friend of Quevedo, encapsulates the relationship between *Bohemia* and the Cuban people: "*Bohemia* was more than anything a quintessentially Cuban product and Cuba's history, all of it, is contained in its pages."<sup>21</sup>

This study aims to depict the evolution of Cuban journalism and how *Bohemia* intervened in that process and helped shape the political culture of republican Cuba. Its founder's mission to

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<sup>21</sup> Taped interview with Pedro Yanes by Richard Denis, Miami, FL, May 29, 2015.

reclaim Cuban sovereignty and agency through a neocolonial context takes on revolutionary overtones when his son was forced to steer the struggling publication through the challenges of dictatorship, corruption, violence, and economic hardship. When the younger Quevedo took over *Bohemia* from his ailing father in 1927, the magazine grew in radicalism to become a voice for a more politically, socially, and economically democratic Cuba. *Bohemia's* amplified voice and its radical agitation for change was facilitated by the significant shifts in the social, political, and economic contexts that were the results of both global and domestic conditions. Its agitation for radical change in the late 1920s and 1930s was notable in that it was one of a handful of publications to explicitly do so. By the 1940s and 1950s *Bohemia's* mission under the founder's son intensifies as it becomes the most radical voice in the mainstream press to agitate for revolutionary change to the country's political culture; a clamor buttressed by the magazine's fervent opposition to all dictatorships and support for Latin American revolutionaries.

### **A Look at the Literature on the Cuban Republican Press**

While Cuban historiography is diversifying, and moving away from binary representations of pre-revolutionary Cuba, there has not been an extensive study on the relationship between the press and politics in Cuba. Ivette Villaescusa's recent work on the challenges of the Cuban press of the 1950s frames the press' challenges within a binary ideological framework limited to a confrontation between a bourgeois and revolutionary press.<sup>22</sup> Her assessment is highly problematic because it places a publication like *Bohemia* squarely into the bourgeois camp, describing the publication as a “defender of bourgeois democracy as characterized by the United States” and as a magazine that transmitted American values and way

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<sup>22</sup> Ivette Villaescusa, *Desafíos de la prensa cubana*, (Havana: Editora Historia, 2015), 20.

of life.<sup>23</sup> Although Villaescusa recognizes *Bohemia's* journalistic contributions in documenting Cuba's political events she all but ignores the magazine's significant role in highlighting the island's social and economic problems, a theme that is inescapable from even a cursory glance at its coverage of the years 1927-1933. Her analysis also glosses over *Bohemia's* earlier efforts in promoting a nationalist culture and its significant role in shaping public discourse in a way that encouraged multi-class participation, such as the multitude of contests and campaigns that were sponsored by the magazine that were open to all Cubans, and often inspired the wealthier classes to donate their time and money in helping poor Cubans.

Similar errors plague other studies from within Cuba. Juan Marrero's ambitiously titled *Dos siglos de periodismo en Cuba* aims to analyze two centuries of Cuban journalism in one-hundred and thirty pages. Marrero's analysis suffers as much from the veracity of his sources as it does from the limitations imposed by the selectivity and narrow focus of the material. Cuban (and Havana based) writer Waldo Fernández Cuenca's unbridled examination of the waning days of freedom of the press on the island in 1959-1960 points out that Marrero's depiction of *Prensa Libre's* early opposition to Agrarian Reform rests on words from the newspaper's editorials that warn (on January 30 and February 6, 1959 respectively): "Eso de la ley agrarian hay que pensarlo más despacio"; and "Ciudadanos, nos estamos pasando peligrosamente de la raya."<sup>24</sup>

Ruby Hart Phillips, a correspondent for the *New York Times* who lived in Cuba for close to thirty years, wrote two books that chronicled her time in Cuba, covering the fall of the Machado dictatorship, the rise and fall of Batista, and the rise and triumph of Fidel Castro's rebel movement. Phillips' deep-rootedness in the island certainly clouded her perspective but it is her

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>24</sup> Waldo Fernández Cuenca, *La Imposición del Silencio: Como se clausuró la libertad de prensa en Cuba 1959-1960*, (Madrid: Hypermedia Ediciones, 2016), 117.

claim of strict objectivity that most discredits her work. By painting the Cubans as a volatile and proud people who respect American democratic principles but resent American influence in Cuba's economic, social, and political life, Phillips relegates her analysis to a one-dimensional caricature of a complex people living a history that requires a more nuanced interpretation. If anything, the myriadThe sentiment inherent in the title of her first book, *Cuba: Island of Paradox* has gone on to characterize journalistic description of Cuba as an island beset by contradiction.

In 1957, Phillips arranged for the visit of a fellow *Times* writer who was then preparing to engage directly with the nascent armed insurrection in the Sierra Maestra mountains of eastern Cuba. Herbert Matthews, perhaps the most famous journalist to cover Cuba, has received outsized attention because he was the first journalist to visit Fidel Castro in his mountain hideout. By interviewing Castro, Matthews dispelled the Batista regime's claim that the rebel leader had been killed. He also catapulted the rebel leader (and indeed the whole island of Cuba) onto the American consciousness. While the Cuban media, particularly publications like *Bohemia* in the mainstream press, and clandestine newspapers played a greater role in tapping into the Cuban consciousness and concluding that Castro and his movement were perhaps the best and only alternative to Batista's regime, Matthews remains legendary in American journalistic circles for his pioneering feat. It is impossible to deny the impact the first Matthews interview had in introducing the larger than life personality of Castro to many Americans, but there were other notable journalists, particularly Jules Dubois and Andrew St. George, who spent longer periods in Cuba and delved deeper into the nuances of the civil war.

In his 1961 book on his experiences in Cuba, *The Cuban Story*, Matthews is at once reflective and defensive about his role as a journalist in enabling the rise of what some were

already calling a dictatorship. “Those of us who live with history and try to relate it know how inaccurately it is chronicled when it happens, how much of it is colored by the point of view, how many different truths there are, what a complicated world we live in.”<sup>25</sup> While Matthews defends his actions and reiterates his faith in the Revolution, he simultaneously attempts to absolve himself of any further responsibility for Castro’s violations of civil liberties.

Matthews remains problematic precisely because of the mythic status achieved by his reporting on Castro and the Revolution. While Leonard Ray Teel’s much more recent *Reporting the Cuban Revolution: How Castro Manipulated the American Journalists*, rightly contextualizes Matthews role with respect to the rest of the reporting done by American media outlets, it does so through an ethnocentric lens that dismisses the role of the Cuban media, which was relatively advanced in the 1950s, by pointing to Batista’s censorship as the reason for its insignificance. The first Cuban publication to publish Matthews’ now legendary story “Cuban Rebel Is Visited in Hideout” was *Bohemia* on March 3, 1957, the first edition of the magazine to print after the original article ran in the *New York Times*.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, Teel’s contribution lies in telling the important stories of the other American journalists who undoubtedly had an impact on how Americans viewed the Cuban insurrection, namely Jules Dubois and Andrew St. George and in doing so from a somewhat objective point of view.

There were also several clandestine publications that had a significant impact on the Cuban people’s perception of both Batista’s regime and the various forms of opposition, especially Castro’s 26 of July Movement. It is important to note that Jules Dubois and Andrew

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<sup>25</sup> Herbert L. Matthews, *The Cuban Story*, (New York: George Braziller, 1961), 311.

<sup>26</sup> Matthews’ story was picked up by *Bohemia* on March 3, 1957, the first edition to print after the original article ran and the first uncensored edition in three months. See Herbert Matthews, “Cuban Rebel Is Visited in Hideout,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1957, 1. For the Spanish version run in *Bohemia* see Herbert Matthews, “Famoso corresponsal americano entrevista a Fidel Castro,” *Bohemia*, March 3, 1957, sup. 2-4.

St. George played significant roles in the portrayal of Castro and his rebels as freedom fighters, but it is just as important, if not more so, to credit the role of Cuba's mainstream media, especially *Bohemia* and the daily newspaper *Prensa Libre*, as well as the clandestine publications in legitimating and even ennobling the cause of the opposition, especially with respect to Castro's wing of the 26 of July movement and his band of rebels.

Media scholars William and Harva Hachten described revolutionary media as an "illegal and subversive mass communication utilizing the press...to overthrow a government."<sup>27</sup> What makes *Bohemia* exceptional in this case is that it was independently owned and had reflected the popular currents of Cuban cultural life for fifty years. *Bohemia's* often scathing critique of the Batista regime and its coverage of the regime's injustices set it apart from much of the rest of Cuba's print media. Its pages told the stories of the victims of the dictatorship by printing graphic images and stories that were often sensationalized. Longer works on the Cuban media's role on the country's political situation are certainly rare, but there has been some scholarly work that has explicitly dealt with this relationship and its consequences.

One of the first English-language studies to specifically deal with the media's role in the Cuban Revolution. *The Selling of Fidel Castro: The Media and the Cuban Revolution*, edited by William Ratliff, features an important chapter by historian Carlos Ripoll that was the most extensive treatment yet of the press from 1952-1960 in Cuba. While Ripoll's main purpose seems to be to make a comparative study between what he calls Batista's "autocratic censorship" and Castro's "totalitarian censorship", he nonetheless illustrates the outsized role the media, led by *Bohemia*, played in Batista's ouster:

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<sup>27</sup> Juanita Darling, *Latin America, Media, and Revolution: Communication in Modern Mesoamerica*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 7.

In the final analysis, it was not Castro's guerillas or popular dissatisfaction with an immoral regime that brought Batista down (although there was plenty of that dissatisfaction). It was, in fact, the press that, notwithstanding the punishment it received, gradually undermined the dictatorship by denouncing its illegal claim to power and its abuses at every opportunity.<sup>28</sup>

Here, the Hachten definition of revolutionary media's purpose in overthrowing the government, while problematic, nonetheless supports Ripoll's conclusions. His analysis also dovetails with Antonio Gramsci's axiom on the necessity of both coercion and consensus to maintain power. Ripoll credits the press for the breakdown of Batista's legitimacy and by extension his regime's dominating hold on the Cuban people.

Beginning with the 1952 coup, Ripoll covers *Bohemia*'s emergence as "the most militant of the antigovernment periodicals" and cites the first editorial to protest Batista's usurping of democracy: "the coup d'état of March 10 was a grave error which has shattered the hopes of an entire people to achieve excellence within a framework of democratic legality and mutual respect..."<sup>29</sup> Ripoll then chronicles the various articles and editorials lambasting the regime that followed in the ensuing months as well as Batista's new statutes effecting fundamental changes in former constitutional norms.<sup>30</sup> Public protests continued, however, and even though civil rights were suspended off and on for the next year, the press, especially *Bohemia*, did not relent in its attacks against Batista.<sup>31</sup>

Following Castro's failed raid of the Moncada barracks in 1953 and the Batista government's use of torture tactics on the insurrectionists, the press had the chance to print the

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<sup>28</sup> Carlos Ripoll, "The Press in Cuba, 1952-1960: Autocratic and Totalitarian Censorship," in *The Selling of Fidel Castro: The Media and the Cuban Revolution*, ed William E. Ratliff, (New Brunswick: Transaction, Inc., 1987), 85.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.



news but civil rights were immediately suspended. The government (Ripoll calls Batista an inept dictator) did not fully enforce censorship and *Bohemia* “published photographs of the events, clear evidence of the brutality of the authorities.”<sup>32</sup> Ripoll’s characterization of Batista’s ineptitude probably stems from Batista’s desire in legitimating his rule, just as he had done when he was constitutionally elected to a four year term after serving almost seven as Cuba’s military strongman. He constantly strove to distinguish himself from seemingly more ruthless dictators such as the Dominican Republic’s Trujillo. To this end, he would periodically suspend and then reinstate constitutional guarantees, and granted amnesty to political prisoners, most notably, and to his everlasting chagrin, Fidel and Raul Castro in May of 1955.

The following first chapter will provide a broad view of the relationship between Cuba’s print media and the various political currents on the island throughout its history, with a focus on the Republican period (1902-1958). The second chapter will examine the socio-political context in which *Bohemia* transitioned from its early phase as a provider of cultural and literary content aimed primarily at Cuba’s upper classes to its role as one of the leading critical voices in the press. It will show how the magazine’s commitment to civic activism and its notion of what the Republic should be was reflected in the myriad causes and campaigns engaged on its behalf. It will also look at how the younger Quevedo’s time as editor (1927-1960) was framed by an ideological evolution that mirrored the political and social upheaval of the island. The third chapter will examine how this transformation was reflected in *Bohemia*’s editorial line with respect to the political vicissitudes of the 1950s, starting with Batista’s coup on March 10, 1952. Editorials provide a public forum for the dissemination of ideas and political issues ripe for discussion and debate. Thus, an analysis of *Bohemia*’s editorials on key political events of the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 89.

1950s affords an opportunity to shed insight on Quevedo's manipulation of *Bohemia's* historic role as the critical voice in the Cuban press in his efforts to shape public and political discourses. These editorials also help shed light on the confrontation between the press and censorship through Quevedo's interpretation of Batista's various violations of press freedoms.

CHAPTER 2  
*ENFRENTAMIENTO: THE RUMBA BETWEEN CUBA'S PRINT MEDIA AND  
POLITICS*

**A Brief History of Cuba's Press:** The often-intimate relationship between the Cuban periodical press and the political and cultural life of the country began in May of 1764, only a year after the British had returned Cuba to Spain after a ten-month occupation of the island, with the publication of *Gaceta de la Habana*.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of the English occupation, Spain had committed herself to administrative reform and it is likely that Captain General Ambrosio Funes de Villalpando (1763-1766), viewed the printing of a newspaper as one element of the reform process that could prove useful to the colonial government and beneficial to the general population.<sup>2</sup>

Colonial authorities were conscious of the potential of the press to complement the role of government and help build economic prosperity but they were also aware that unconstrained press freedom threatened their authority. But as Larry Jensen notes: "the utility of a carefully monitored press still overshadowed the menace of its revolutionary potential."<sup>3</sup> To control the printing industry, the colonial government established the *Imprenta de la Capitanía General*, a printing house that would dominate Havana until the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The first surviving edition of *Gaceta* from 1782 g year *Imprenta*, was ready to publish the country's first newspaper,

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<sup>1</sup> Andrés Ángulo Perez, *La prensa en Cuba: Proceso histórico*, (Havana: Editorial O'Reilly, 1955), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Larry Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism: Press, Politics, and Culture in Cuba, 1790-1840*, (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1988), 6.

<sup>4</sup> John A. Lent, *Bibliography of Cuban Mass Communications*, (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 1992), 1.

the *Gazeta de la Habana*.<sup>5</sup> Cuba one of Spain's key cultural and commercial centers, Cuba would benefit by having one of the first printing industries in the Caribbean and Central America. .<sup>6</sup>

However, with the publication of the twice weekly, four-page gazette *Papel Periódico de la Habana* in 1790, the history of the Cuban press began in earnest. *Papel Periódico* (1790-1810) printed the official communications of the colonial bureaucracy, pre-censored news from Europe, and some advertisements. It was an auspicious time for Cuba to begin printing a newspaper: the island would soon become awash in an era of prosperity predicated on the massive importation of African slaves into Havana, the demise of Saint Domingue as the Caribbean's leading sugar producer and the neutral shipping that resulted from the disruption of communication between Spain and her colonies due to the war with France.<sup>7</sup> Colonial officials and the sugar elite conspired to build institutions that would buttress Cuba's growing sugar/slave society and it was support from colonial institutions such as the *Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais* that proved indispensable to the flourishing of the island's nascent press. In 1793, the *Sociedad* assumed proprietary and editorial rights over the *Papel Periódico* and promoted sugar interests at the expense of other peninsular commercial interests.<sup>8</sup> In fact, *Papel Periódico* played a central role in promoting the island's emergence as the world's leading sugar producer in the 1790s.<sup>9</sup> This unprecedented power illustrated the enormous potential of the periodical press to

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<sup>5</sup> *Gaxeta de la Habana* is known to have first appeared in 1782 and was edited by the Catalans Diego de la Barrera and then Francisco Seguï

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>7</sup> Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

reach and impact the island's citizens. Therefore, the creation, cultivation and flourishing of a free, socially engaged press lay at the foundation of the concept of Cuban nationhood from the late 1700s through 1960, a year when Cuba's national press became an official branch of the Cuban government under Fidel Castro.<sup>10</sup>

*Papel Periodico* was also the first publication to demonstrate the press' potential as a conduit for the flourishing of a vibrant literary culture. These literary possibilities, Larry Jensen argues, encouraged Cuban writers to write "exhortatory essays" that debated the virtues and vices of Cuban societal customs in a style known as *costumbrismo*.<sup>11</sup> The first *costumbrista* essay to appear in the press appeared in a 1790 edition of *Papel Periodico* and focused on gambling, underscoring *costumbrismo*'s traditional concern with individual and social morality.<sup>12</sup> This literary genre, while borrowed from eighteenth century Spain, represented a vehicle by which Latin American writers and journalists sought to define and explain their everyday life and their distinctly American customs. *Costumbrista* essays in *Papel Periodico* reflected the periodical's almost singular focus on *criollo* interests and heralded a change of Cuban consciousness; a fundamental shift in the way Cubans thought about themselves.<sup>13</sup> As Louis A. Perez notes, cultural forms such as costumbrismo reflected a developing sense of identity and *criollo* awareness of their differences with *peninsulares* heightened a consciousness of community between *criollos*, "nothing less than a presentiment of nationality on the eve of the

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<sup>10</sup> Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2012),

<sup>11</sup> Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 55, 145 (n43)

<sup>13</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 67. One of Cuba's leading *costumbristas* was Cirilo Villaverde, best known for the romantic novel *Cecilia Valdes*.

Latin American wars for an independent nationality.”<sup>14</sup>

As the nineteenth century began, Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer launched the daily *El Regañon de La Habana* (1800-1802), the first Cuban periodical to use satire in critiques on Havana’s society and rivals such as the *Papel Periódico*. Known as ‘the first maestro of Cuban journalism’, Ferrer also pioneered the inclusion of literary criticism in Cuban publications.<sup>15</sup> But Cuba’s early experiments with freedom of the press in the constitutional periods of the 1810s and 1820s did not automatically lead to new spaces where editors and writers were free to express overt anticolonial sentiment, although editors certainly found clever ways to address colonial malfeasance.

The free press legislation that emanated out of Spain in late 1810 introduced Cubans to the island’s first period of press freedom and the industry began to flourish. By 1812, Cuba boasted ten newspapers: two dailies, one triweekly, and seven weeklies.<sup>16</sup> That same year, Cuban journalists officially gathered together for the first time as the *Junta General de Periodistas* (General Junta of Journalists).<sup>17</sup> From within closed doors, this little-known organization articulated its collective discontent with colonial despotism. A document with detailed notes from the gathering proclaimed:

Congregados todos los periodistas de La Habana en lugar seguro, donde libres de los ignorantes, de los partidarios de la tiranía y de los aduladores sempiternos de los déspotas pudiesen tratr de reformas de abusos y de proponer los medios convenientes para remediar los males que afligen a nuestra patria...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>15</sup> Salvador Bueno, *Costumbristas Cubanos del Siglo XIX*, (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1983), xiii.

<sup>16</sup> Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, 36.

<sup>17</sup> Rafael Soto Paz, “Documento Sensacional: Una Junta de Periodistas del Año 1812,” In *Album del Cincuentenario*, published by Asociación de Reporters de la Habana, 1952, 159.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 159.

José de Aguiar's newspaper *El Tío Bartolo* (1820-1821) used fictional characters to muse on colonial abuses of power. Its format was pleasant gossip, Larry Jensen writes, but the substance "was a detailed public scrutiny of the connections of political power and influence on the island."<sup>19</sup> It was a stylistic choice that would later be emulated by Raimundo Cabrera in his groundbreaking *Cuba y sus jueces* (1887). Constitutional freedoms notwithstanding, the Cuban press remain somewhat subdued in its criticism of the colonial system and its officials.

It wasn't until 1824 that priest/philosopher Felix Varela published the first publication to advocate for Cuban independence from Spain, *El Habanero*. The timing was not coincidental. With the restoration, the press was once again muzzled and subject to pre-censorship. Varela left Spain and settled in Philadelphia where he published *El Habanero* under his own name. Colonial repression of seemingly seditious exile publications like *El Habanero* had its limits however. Although ninety-two copies of its second edition were confiscated in Matanzas, many more circulated undetected, much to the consternation of Captain General Vives, who worried that young educated Cubans were being indoctrinated by Varela's work.<sup>20</sup> The newspaper was, for the most part, a study of political unrest and oppression that analyzed how to correct the unbearable conditions in mid 1820s colonial Cuba.<sup>21</sup> In boldly calling for the freedom of Cuba from colonialism, whether the Spanish king liked it or not, Varela risked his life, and in the third and fourth editions, he exposed an assassination plot against him by agents of the King.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jense, *Children of Colonial Depsotism*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph J. McCadden, "The New York to Cuba Axis of Father Varela," *The Americas* 20, no. 4 (1964): Cambridge University Press, 380.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

The circulation of *El Habanero* underscored the consequences that exile newspapers such as *El Habanero* would have on Cuba and the formation of a collective Cuban consciousness. Although only seven issues were published in two years, *El Habanero* would help shape the contours of revolutionary thought that would mold Cubans such as Jose Maria de Mendive, whose pupil José Martí would take on the cause of independence. *El Habanero*'s impact would also serve as a harbinger of the periodical press's potential role in inciting political innovation and change. In the absence of an accountable colonial power that would periodically tighten the screws of repression on a *criollo* population that was beginning to view itself as a nation, Cubans began to view the press as an institution to which they could turn to; one that legitimated their grievances and sought to construct alternative solutions. Varela's experiment highlighted the potential far-reaching power of the press and provided a valuable symbol of the press as a fourth power: a fourth branch of government that British politician Edmund Burke called (when describing the reporter's galley in Parliament) "more important far than they all."

*El Habanero* also unleashed the power of a nascent émigré press that would, as Louis A. Perez argues, contribute to the consciousness of nationality by creating open fields of exchange and expanding the modes of communication to produce a more unified and informed constituency.<sup>23</sup> David Sartorius has argued that Varela's contributions influenced an intellectual explosion in the 1820s and 1830s that led to increased public discourse on Cuban nationality at a time when the public sphere of civil society was expanding across Latin America; developments that prompted concerned colonial officials to respond with censorship and repression.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Pérez, Louis A. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 44.

<sup>24</sup> David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 70.



Manuel Moreno Friginals notes that in the decade between 1824 and 1834 Cubans experienced “an age of cultural splendor and growing refinement in the dominant sector.” As David Sartorius notes, Havana’s *criollo* elites led these developments through their membership in the *Sociedad Economica*, with founded one of Cuba’s first journals to be published: *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (1831-1834; 1910-1959).<sup>25</sup> This seminal publication played an important role in molding the consciousness of the first generation of writers and journalists in the Republic, including Quevedo Pérez. The journal, which can be considered the precursor to the magazines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries bemoaned the cultural lag suffered in the colony and aimed at the revolutionary task of serving as a Cuban literary organ with a distinctly Cuban voice.<sup>26</sup> To that end it publicly announced its intent:

It is truly astonishing that in this unfortunate land, a land in which culture and elegance reside, a periodical devoted to disseminating and promoting knowledge of the most worthy of our own and foreign literary works, to criticizing and judging them, has not emerged. These publications, which has given much impetus to and served as a great incentive for other nations, are, with few exceptions, unknown among us.<sup>27</sup>

The editors of *Revista Bimestre Cubana* employed the Cuban writer and intellectual José Antonio Saco as its director, were clearly pointing to the paradoxical nature of an island that featured an aristocracy wealthier than any other in the world, surpassing even the British royal family, but did not have a publication that would critically analyze its rich wealth of cultural content. The statement was a nationalist cry aimed at reclaiming Cuban agency over the island’s cultural life and the magazine itself would go on to revolutionize Cuban intellectual thought by

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<sup>25</sup> Manuel Moreno Friginals, *Cuba/España, España/Cuba: Historia común*, (Madrid: Grijalbo Mondadori, 1995), 195. From Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*, 70.

<sup>26</sup> Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba: A Social History of Print Culture, 1830s-1990s*, (New York: Garland, 1997), 34.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

publishing the writings of Cuba's great mid-nineteenth century's intellectuals, Félix Varela, José de la Luz y Caballero, Felipe Poey, and Domingo del Monte. These writers voiced their hopes for Cuba's economic and political autonomy from Spain in the face of government repression. The magazine stopped printing in 1834 as a protest to the deportation of Saco, its director, who was exiled due to his political opinions, especially his hostility toward the slave trade.<sup>28</sup>

Although not always, the *Sociedad Economica* adhered to the norms of acceptable public discourse established by colonial officials even if those norms restricted the periodical press and people's accessibility to it.<sup>29</sup> The primary concern for colonial authorities remained silencing news of anticolonial or revolutionary movements.<sup>30</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed however, journalism irrevocably influenced, and often led the charge on the revolutionary hopes and social causes of the Cuban people.<sup>31</sup> During the first revolutionary war (1868-1878) newspapers such as *El Cubano Libre*, which called itself 'the first independent newspaper published in Cuba' and was founded by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes in 1868, openly expressed the revolutionary aspirations of the men and women fighting for Cuban independence, the *mambises*, and came to represent the intransigence and combativeness of Cuban patriotism.<sup>32</sup>

Journalist Raimundo Cabrera, who at sixteen joined the rebellion against Spain, became best known for book, *Cuba y sus jueces* (1887) was a searing indictment on the Spanish colonial system that defended Cuba's interests against the injustices he saw with respect to the colonial

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<sup>28</sup> José María Aguilera Manzano, *La formación de la identidad cubana (el debate Saco-La Sagra)*, (Havana: Editorial CSIC, 2005), 11. Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, 108.

<sup>29</sup> Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Michael B. Salwen, *Latin American Journalism*, (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1991), 54.

<sup>32</sup> Ambrosio Fonet, *El Libro en Cuba: Siglos XVIII y XIX*, (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2014), 200.

government. Because of the liberalization of colonial policies in the 1880s, spaces for these types of writings produced critiques such as Cabrera's.<sup>33</sup> Cabrera wrote and published the book in a mere six weeks. In four months, three editions had been published and thousands of copies were sent to population centers in the interior of the country as well as in Key West and Tampa. The book's impact was revolutionary: Spanish occupational forces reported confiscating copies from insurgent camps in 1895, the first year of the independence war.<sup>34</sup>

In preparing for the 1895 war which aimed to oust Spanish rule for good on the island, José Martí's journalistic works, such as the newspaper *Patria*, were instrumental in inspiring patriotic fervor among Cubans and exiles alike and influenced the foundation of a Cuban republic. The origins of the notion of journalism as an effective nation-building tool stem back to Martí's twenty years of writing on Latin America. Martí's PRC, which comprised about five hundred clubs, was effectively stitched together by *Patria* and other newspapers that effectively catalyzed Cubans around the need for independence from Spain. The contributions of Martí and journalists such as Juan Gualberto Gómez and Enrique José Varona proved indispensable in shaping the foundational discourse that guided the island in its transition from colony to republic to revolution. As Ada Ferrer notes, in the last two decades of the century, Havana experienced a minor publishing boom as over "five hundred magazines, newspapers, and other serial publications appeared in the city in this period."<sup>35</sup> These writings were fundamental to constructing an "ideological campaign to negate Spanish representations of the nationalist

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<sup>33</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 113.

<sup>34</sup> Raimundo Cabrera, *Desde mi sitio*, (Havana: Imprenta "El Siglo XX", 1911), 125.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

movement, which was then coalescing around the notion of an independent Cuban nation.”<sup>36</sup> As Marial Iglesias Utset argues, newspapers and other writings played a critical role in promoting the cause of independence and “in disseminating and fomenting acceptance of these fundamental representations of the nation.”<sup>37</sup> The power of journalism in shaping nationhood was not lost on the early editors of the republic such as Quevedo Pérez of Bohemia and José Manuel Govín of the daily newspaper *El Mundo* (1901-1969). In fact, that these editors used their journalistic power to shape their respective, and often competing, visions of nation.<sup>38</sup>

As Lilian Guerra argues, conflicting visions of nationhood “formed the central axis of Cuba’s social and political development until 1921.”<sup>39</sup> The pro-imperialist nationalist newspaper *Patria* “did not venerate a Martí who sought to mediate social differences among Cubans” but instead interpreted “the 1895 War and memories of Martí in terms of self-reliance and self-abnegation.”<sup>40</sup> *Patria*’s June 17, 1895 edition, achieves significance in that it becomes the first publication to publicly eulogize Martí:

Al entrar en prensa el presente número recibimos la cruel certidumbre de que ya no existe el Apóstol ejemplar, el maestro querido, el abnegado José Martí. *Patria*, reverente y atribulada, dedicará todo su número próximo a glorificar al patriota, a enaltecer el inmortal.<sup>41</sup>

In its tribute to its founder, *Patria* also became the first press organ to mythologize Martí’s

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>37</sup> Marial Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History of Cuba During the US Occupation, 1898-1902*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 106.

<sup>38</sup> Portell Vilá, *Medio Siglo de El Mundo*, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí*, 12.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Juan Marrero, *Dos Siglos de Periodismo en Cuba: Momentos hechos y rostros*, (Havana: Pablo de la Torre Editorial, 1999), 43.

legacy after his death.

The revolutionary leaders of the 1895-98 War well understood the critical role the press played in both spreading their ideas and goals and in galvanizing Cubans to their cause. In an 1894 letter to revolutionary journalist Enrique Trujillo, Generalissimo Maximo Gomez succinctly captured this sentiment when he wrote: "...without the press we can accomplish nothing."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the press was instrumental in contributing to a unified and informed constituency and in the process of creating open fields of exchange and expanding the modes of communication it became an important conduit of competing versions of nationhood.<sup>43</sup>

Most major developments and innovations in the press and print technology in the last half of the nineteenth century came from the United States. These advancements helped reduce production costs and increased circulation, providing larger audiences for Cuban émigré newspapers such as *Patria*. The circumstances of exile, as Louis A. Perez points out, "had a major impact on the elements used to define and defend patria."<sup>44</sup> Publications like *Patria* affected the character of identity by using the same methods to create nation and shape the content of nationality, a condition that led to the development of a powerful émigré press.<sup>45</sup>

Although colonial repression, especially censorship, adversely impacted the mission of nineteenth century Cuban writers and journalists, they nevertheless found inventive ways to undermine colonial authority through methods such as the "blank page". If monarchical censors suppressed an article it would appear in the publication as a blank column, signaling to the reader

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<sup>42</sup> Raul Quintana Suarez, *Fidel Castro y la prensa escrita: Legado y contemporaneidad*, (Havana, Universidad de Ciencias Pedagogicas, 2009), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban*, 44-45.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

“the existence of movements of opposition to official policy.”<sup>46</sup>

The demand for freedom of the press in Cuba, as in other countries, became a transformative impulse that created, for the first time, something like a public space, where Cubans could exchange ideas and assert the right to be kept informed.<sup>47</sup> The rise of the newspaper in Cuba, as well the Cuban émigré publications in the United States, began to establish Cubans as politically mature subjects while at the same time mobilizing them for certain ends, namely confrontation with colonial master Spain as well as participation in the creation of a distinctly Cuban nation. Indeed, as Louis A. Perez shows, the discursive process itself often functioned as a means of mobilization.<sup>48</sup> As had been the case for the United States, it was during the latter part of the nineteenth century that the idea of the press as an institutional counterweight to the government, a “fourth power”, began to take root in Cuba’s nascent political culture.<sup>49</sup> The increasing democratization of Cuba’s press meant that publications gave voice to a diversity of voices and would soon become, in and of itself, a political force to be reckoned with.

A crucial element that often determined the lens by which Cubans negotiated their vision<sup>50</sup> of nationhood was undoubtedly race. The racial question, along with the type of society an independent Cuban state should have, were core elements that framed separatist discourse in the late nineteenth century. Blacks joined the political debates in efforts to enhance their political,

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<sup>46</sup> Smorkaloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba*, 42.

<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 29.

<sup>48</sup> Perez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Osterhammel, *Transformation of the World*, 31.

<sup>50</sup> Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 40.

social, and economic participation.<sup>51</sup> Rebecca J. Scott argues that mutual aid societies, known as *Sociedades de la Raza de Color*, increased their salience as the main form of association for black Cubans by the 1880s.<sup>52</sup> This trend, Scott shows, “was accompanied by the proliferation of newspapers and journals written by and for members of the black and mulatto communities.”<sup>53</sup> Most of these associations and publications focused on issues such as education, recreation, social welfare, and in some cases political objectives.<sup>54</sup>

Juan Gualberto Gómez, an ardent nationalist who was mulatto son of ex-slaves, used the press as a mechanism of protest in which he voiced his support for social justice, racial equality, and his opposition to foreign encroachments on Cuban sovereignty.<sup>55</sup> As editor of the most important black newspaper of the 1890s *La Igualdad* (1892-1895), Gomez’s discursive strategy entailed promoting a counterideology to white supremacy by reasserting the value of blackness. He did this by featuring articles that highlighted the fundamental role blacks had played in both the economic prosperity of the island and in the independence war and abolition.<sup>56</sup>

*La Igualdad*, as Aline Helg notes, was read by not only literate Cubans but also to illiterate audiences, demonstrating the significant potential of the publication to “diffuse its message broadly.”<sup>57</sup> David Sartorius shows that the question of literacy particularly resonated

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<sup>51</sup> Pappademos, *Black Political Activism*, 133.

<sup>52</sup> By 1889 there were thirty-two mutual aid societies whose names reflected their respective philosophies and purposes: El Trabajo, El Amparo, Socorros, Mutuos, La Fraternidad, El Progreso, La Amistad, La Igualdad, La Luz, Las Hijas del Progreso, and so on. See Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 269.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>55</sup> Pappademos, *Black Political Activism.*, 73.

<sup>56</sup> Helg., *Our Rightful Share*, 39.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

with black Cubans in the nineteenth century because despite low literacy rates, Cubans were privy to traditions of listening to newspapers and other texts read aloud in spaces such as cigar factories, rural estates, and the meeting halls of clubs and associations.<sup>58</sup>

In fact, readers in cigar factories had long played important roles in the dissemination of information to workers who were either semiliterate or illiterate, resulting in the politicization of the working class. Famed Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz recounted the origin of the custom in 1864 when, on the initiative of the workers, the custom was permanently established in a cigar factory in Bejucal.<sup>59</sup> Ortiz describes how reading aloud in the cigar factories became “an instrument of local propaganda” and advanced the political consciousness of tobacco workers, who thus became the first Cuban workers “to form associations to protect class interests.”<sup>60</sup> It was no accident that these workers were among the most fervent supporters of Jose Marti’s efforts to achieve Cuban independence. It was also not surprising that readers and workers alike would become journalists themselves. In late 1865, cigar-worker Saturnino Martinez would launch the first labor newspaper *La Aurora*, a weekly that circulated primarily among cigar-workers and exposed the bad working conditions of some tobacco factories.<sup>61</sup> Martinez would also lead the formation of one of Cuba’s first trade unions, the Asociación de Tabaqueros de la Habana in 1866, which set a pattern for Cuban labor organization by conducting a series of strikes that sought demands from the employing firms in the tobacco

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<sup>58</sup> Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*, 148.

<sup>59</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 89.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Jackson Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in Cuba*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 8.



industry.<sup>62</sup> The advent of labor journalism in Cuba thus dovetailed with the growth of trade unionism, underscoring the crucial link between the culture of literacy and the politicization of a new elite working class.

*Lector*-turned-journalists Martin Morúa Delgado and Rafael Serra y Montalvo highlight the intersectionality of classism and racism and in Morúa's case provides an example of how a former *lector* and journalist rose to himself become a politician. Morúa, who authored the 1910 Morúa Amendment introduced at the beginning of this work, would become the first black president of the Senate, and eschewed the need for political mobilization based on race and embraced transracial nationalism.<sup>63</sup> Morúa offers an extreme example of how a member of the subaltern population used literacy to politicize himself and other Cubans and end up a member of the political establishment only a few years after independence.

By 1910 Cuba's literacy rate was relatively high by Latin American standards at 57%, a figure that would rise to 64% by 1920 and 71% by 1930.<sup>64</sup> The rise in literacy certainly provided an expanding market for the press, but it also did not necessarily exclude those who were less educated. While most literates tended to live in urban areas, there existed a culture of literacy among semi-literates and even illiterates even in the more isolated hamlets of Cuba's countryside. Marial Iglesias Utset illustrates the case of a former slave who was taught to read by the mistress of the house and during the first US occupation (1898-1902) serves as a translator of sorts to her illiterate fellow villagers, who gather outside her house to listen to and discuss the news. In this way, a space is created "for the exchange and spread of opinion, a space which also

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>63</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 133.

<sup>64</sup> Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, "Literacy," [www.OurWorldinData.org/data/education-knowledge/literacy](http://www.OurWorldinData.org/data/education-knowledge/literacy), Accessed May 1, 2016.

links political deliberations occurring on a national level, as synthesized in the newspaper reports, with the concerns and interests of a small, outlying community.”<sup>65</sup> Many semiliterate and illiterate Cubans therefore were also aware of unfolding political events and could assign their own meaning to such events.

Semi-literates were often attracted to and participated in the culture of literacy through the sale of publications that they not only could afford, but that often articulated their own working-class concerns. Robert M. Buffington’s new study on the impact of the Mexico City penny press on the formation of working-class consciousness in the early twentieth century illustrates how this type of media effectively reached its target audience through a combination of eye-catching graphics, acerbic political and social critique and a wicked sense of humor.<sup>66</sup> In Cuba, where a social revolution had already occurred in the 1890s and a series of would be revolutions throughout the next twenty years threatened to further alter the political landscape and shift power away from entrenched elites, a vibrant popular culture flourished by the 1920s. As literacy expanded to more working class Cubans, a market for the consumption of cheap novels with lurid titles and images such as *La Cigarrera* and *Memorias de un Teniente Mahadista* appealed to working- class Cubans because they often portrayed the upward mobilization of its protagonists. These novels represented a sort of Cuban counterpart to the Mexican penny press and engaged semiliterate and poor Cubans in an ever-expanding culture of literacy that would have repercussions in the content and appeal of future publications such as *Bohemia* and in the potential for the further politicization and mobilization of Cubans.

Throughout the course of two hundred years, Cuban journalists have alternatively

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<sup>65</sup> Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History*, 108.

<sup>66</sup> Robert M. Buffington, *A Sentimental Education for the Working Man: The Mexico City Penny Press, 1900-1910*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 11.

struggled under colonial governments and post-colonial dictatorships, enjoying brief periods of press freedoms. One of those periods was the early republic (1902-1929) when a form of oligarchic democracy best characterized Cuba's political system. As Elizabeth Fox argues, an autonomous cultural and literary tradition in Latin America influenced the early years of development of print media.<sup>67</sup> Nowhere was this influence more apparent than in magazines such as *El Figaro* (1885-1933) whose administrator Quevedo Pérez was inspired by that publication's successful formula when he founded *Bohemia* in 1908. Started in 1885 in colonial times, *El Figaro* itself was modeled on the weekly French magazine *L'Illustration* (1843-1944) known for the quality of its graphic illustrations and rich artistic content drawn from fin-de-siècle Paris.<sup>68</sup> *El Figaro* became known for its publication of high quality photographs of Cuba's landscapes and its most illustrious citizens which included political and intellectual elites. It was its coverage of singular events in the late colonial/early Republican times however that proved influential in shaping the ideas and discourse around the notion of a Cuban nation.<sup>69</sup> These early periods of media development would soon give way to times of strong nationalistic, populist, and even socialization movements.<sup>70</sup>

The influence of magazines such as *El Figaro* on *Bohemia* cannot be overstated. Its groundbreaking coverage of events such as the end of the first US occupation, the 1906 revolution aimed to oust President Tomas Estrada Palma and the 1908 election that Cubans hoped would usher in a new sovereign era, was framed by images such as the raising of the

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<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Fox, *Media and Politics in Latin America: The Struggle for Democracy*, (London: Sage Publications, 1988), 172.

<sup>68</sup> Marrero, *Dos Siglos* 51.

<sup>69</sup> Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History*, 106.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

Cuban flag in 1902. *El Figaro* also strove to give meaning to historic events in the not so distant past, such as the Ten Years War, the nature of the Spanish colonial regime, and the death and legacy of independence hero Antonio Maceo.<sup>71</sup> It was these methods for catalyzing Cubans around their own distinct historical memory and instilling a sense of pride around the building of the nation's institutions that *El Figaro's* former administrator Quevedo Perez made a conscious effort to bring to *Bohemia* resulting in an overlap of style that would lend an almost instant credibility to the latter. It was easy to see traces of *El Figaro's* resplendent images of the 1908 election candidates in *Bohemia's* coverage of the 1912 election. Intimate portraits and stories of political candidates in *El Figaro* would be copied in *Bohemia* for years; a stylistic approach to journalism that allowed the reader to become intimately familiar with the nation's aspiring leaders. Images such as political portraits of the nation's early political figures of the first three decades of the Republic asserted the illegitimacy of *Plattismo* and stoked the currents of nationalism that would only grow stronger. *Bohemia* would also go on to emulate the long features *El Figaro* would run on anniversaries such as the death of foundational heroes and martyrs such as Martí and Maceo; stories that sought to interpret their legacies for new generations of Cubans.<sup>72</sup>

On the tenth anniversary of Antonio Maceo's death in December 1906 *El Figaro* published a splashy tribute to the fallen hero that was become known for its printing of the alleged suicide letter of Panchito Gómez, the son of the chief of the Rebel Army Máximo Gómez, who died alongside Maceo in battle in 1896. The printing of primary sources such as the

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>72</sup> While the early editions of *Bohemia* do not survive, there is a collection of editions that begin with the magazine's resurgence in 1910 in *Bohemia's* archive in its Havana location. Editions of *El Figaro* from the late 1900s are available at the University of Miami's Cuban Heritage Collection in Miami, Florida.

alleged suicide note, as well as photographs, documents and manifestos involved the reader in not just the reading of the material but in the construction of Cubans' visions of themselves as a nation with a proud historical past. Robert C. Nathan notes how images of the Maceo-Gómez union "served to represent racial unity and to obscure or co-opt racial inequalities and conflict."

<sup>73</sup> White Cubans edited Cuba's historical past in mainstream publications by proudly adhering to the "race-less nation" sophistry. A 1938 editorial from *Bohemia* declared: "by uniting in death, Antonio Maceo and Panchito Gómez Toro...black and white were immortalized in fraternity."<sup>74</sup>

But the printing of primary sources and documents in magazines like *El Figaro* and *Bohemia* presented Cuban readers with the opportunity to edit the past for themselves. The proliferation of alternative representations of Maceo, and the Maceo-Gómez union in the 1920s and 1930s are a testament to the empowering potential of these unedited documents and sources to shape and frame Cubans perception of their history and of themselves.

No less influential on *Bohemia's* early ethos was Raimundo Cabrera's magazine *Cuba y América*, which in the 1890s had covered high society events that served as veritable fundraisers for the coming war for independence.<sup>75</sup> Known as *la cronica social*, these pages, pregnant with patriotic fervor that extolled the cause of *Cuba Libre*, would be replicated in the early years of *Bohemia*, where female agency was often wedded to the cause of devotion to *patria*; as is evidenced from Castillo de González's two-page spread on the revolutionary bona fides of her native Camagüey province.

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<sup>73</sup> Robert C. Nathan, "Imagining Antonio Maceo: Memory, Mythology and Nation in Cuba, 1896-1959," (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007), 58.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>75</sup> Guerra, *Myth of Martí*, 78.

The success of the magazine format in publications like *El Figaro* and *Cuba y América* likely inspired the proliferation of magazines in the 1910s that featured glossy photographs, the social chronicles of the island's elite, and long-winded essays on meanings of *patria*. The latest technological innovations, such as the machine that would allow color printing known as *la tricómia*, were pioneered in Latin America by *Bohemia* in 1914 and would revolutionize magazine printing. That year also witnessed the beginning of the sugar boom when Cuba became the world's top producer of sugar, as European producing countries became mired in World War I. Sugar prices continued to rise and Cuba enjoyed a time of unprecedented prosperity known as the *Dance of the Millions* (1914-1921).

A surge of newspapers and magazines, both general interest and more specific, hit newsstands. By the early 1920s Havana alone enjoyed a plethora of publications that included fourteen dailies of a general or political character; approximately seven dedicated to covering commercial or merchant information; fourteen that focused on various immigrant communities that lived in Havana; and around fifteen so-called little political periodicals known as *periodiquitos políticos*.<sup>76</sup> What makes this amount of news publications even more impressive is the fact that by 1924 Havana's population stood at only 400,000. The most popular magazines were those of a general interest, known as *variedades*, which included *El Figaro* and *Bohemia*, and would be joined in 1916 by the new venture of a young talented illustrator and caricaturist named Conrado W. Massaguer. The magazine *Social* (1916-1933; 1935-1938) aimed to reach what was then an expanding haute-boirgeoisie class; a group Massaguer parodied in his famous caricatures. That same year, the Institute of Graphic Arts opened in Havana, and it was there in 1919 that *Social* would make history by printing an issue that carried the inscription: "The first

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<sup>76</sup> Amaya, 2003, 86.

publication in the entire world printed entirely by offset.”<sup>77</sup> The success of *Social* prompted the launching of *Carteles* (1919-1960), a magazine likely modeled on *Bohemia* which Massaguer and his brother Oscar hoped would reach a broader and less elitist audience.<sup>78</sup>

After the US occupation of Cuba ended in 1902, Cubans viewed the press as the primary vehicle to help them build links between national identity and the Republic. Cubans looked to the press to help them shape their respective definitions of Cuban nationality while the press defined national identity per prevailing political and cultural characteristics.<sup>79</sup> The press promoted visions of nationhood and varying approaches to *Cubanidad* by often mocking the island’s political system. As early as 1905 the newspaper *La política cómica* debuted the character of Liborio, the quintessential Cuban country bumpkin, or *guajiro*, that was emblematic of the ideologically ambivalent Cuban of the first two decades of the Republic.<sup>80</sup>

By the 1920s, the tension between the press and the governments of Alberto Zayas (1921-1925) and the autocratic rule of Gerardo Machado (1925-1933) would reflect the tension between multiclass elements of Cuban society and corrupt, oligarchic governments that were all too willing to allow US political and economic imperialism to flourish on the island. As Louis Pérez notes, the emergence of a Cuban entrepreneurial class served to give shape to a new political constituency that was increasingly susceptible to the appeal of economic nationalism and to whom the political leaders’ deference to foreign capital was becoming unacceptable.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Smorkoloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba*, 113.

<sup>78</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *Crónicas: arte, literatura, política: Volume 8*, (Havana: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1985), 3.

<sup>79</sup> Patricia Pardiñas-Barnes, “Jorge Mañach: Prensa, periodismo y comunicación,” *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana* 21-22 (summer/fall 2001), 3.

<sup>80</sup> Marrero, *Dos Siglos*, 55.

<sup>81</sup> Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 232-233.

That tension would soon erupt into a full-scale confrontation between the press and Machado's regime. It would also irrevocably alter the content of many of these magazines to include biting social commentary.

A budding nationalist sentiment at home, coupled with International events such as the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the Russian Revolution of 1917, combined to exacerbate tensions between Cubans and the state, and perhaps more importantly, tacitly legitimated the use of civil disobedience, and even violence, as a mechanism for effecting revolutionary change. Both revolutions provided ideological currents that permeated Cuban cultural life and would form the basis of a new sense of Cuban nationalism, predicated on notions of populism, social justice, and anti-imperialism.

The shock waves from the Mexican revolution would reverberate in the Cuban press. Many Mexican journalists chose to exile themselves in Cuba and contributed aspects of their culture and technological knowledge that invigorated Cuban journalism.<sup>82</sup> Mexican exile Santiago Suarez Longoria went on to become director of *El Heraldo de Cuba*, a daily founded by journalist Manuel Marquez Sterling in 1913.<sup>83</sup> Mexican exile Querido Moheno brought his acerbic style to the conservative *Diario de la Marina* where he wrote an article comparing then US president Woodrow Wilson to the diabolical biblical figure of Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest who was the driving force behind sentencing Jesus Christ to death.<sup>84</sup> The comparison drew a fierce rebuke from the US embassy and Moheno resigned from the daily, although he

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<sup>82</sup> Rafael Soto Paz, "La Prensa Cubana de 1902 a 1952," *Libro de Cuba: Edición conmemorativa del cincuentenario de la independencia, 1902-1952*, (Havana: n.p., 1954), 679.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 679. Although Longoria was born in Spain, he made his career as a journalist in Mexico and I classify him as Mexican.

<sup>84</sup> Josefina MacGregor, *Antologías: Del porfiriato y la Revolución*, (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2015), 101.



continued publishing articles ounder the pseudonym of Javier de Silva, the name of a maternal relative.<sup>85</sup> Moheno's style augured an anti-imperialist bent that would increasingly characterize editorials in the 1920s and 1930s.

Consequently, this climate of non-conformity, and even revolution, presaged the formation of a second republican generation of Cubans who instinctively challenged, and profoundly criticized state structures and injustices; a revolution driven by the press, which was beginning its republican phase as a fourth power of government.<sup>86</sup> Increasingly alienated by republican governments that seemed motivated by the interests of an array of political elites that vied for, and often alternated, the spoils of power, Cubans turned to the press to voice their frustrations. The abundance of publications, and starting in 1922 the radio, effectively empowered the Cuban citizenry and gave them a voice in criticizing the state and discursive power to elaborate on their own visions of what that state should look like and whom it should serve.

It was no accident, therefore, that the opening salvo of the Cuban cultural war, fired by the second republican generation, was shaped by a young group of Cubans strongly influenced by the journalistic discourse of magazines such as *Social*, whose offices served as meeting places for weekly salons for men like Ruben Martinez Villena, Jorge Manach, Felix Lizaso, Juan Marinello, and Francisco Ichaso to name only a few. In 1923 these men, along with seven others, participated in an unprecedented affront to the political elites; a scene that played out in the grand Aula Magna, or meeting hall, of the University of Havana. When President Zayas' minister of justice Erasmo Regueriferos Boudet stood up to present an award to Uruguayan

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>86</sup> Rosario Rexach, "La segunda generación republicana y sus figuras principales," *Revista Iberoamericana* LVI, número 152-153 (July-December 1990), 1293.

writer Paulina Luisi, Martínez Villena yelled out a denunciation of the Zayas government and proceeded to walk out of the building with twelve others in a shocking event that became known as *La Protesta de los Trece*.<sup>87</sup> The protest signified the eruption of popular discontent with government corruption, malfeasance, and lack of accountability to the Cuban citizenry. As the economic windfall of the Dance of the Millions receded and a crisis within the University of Havana ...Cuban intellectuals became more willing to protest not only political corruption, but also American economic imperialism and lack of economic diversification, social and racial inequalities, and the continued imposition of the Platt Amendment and its corrosive effect on Cuban national sovereignty.<sup>88</sup> The protest ignited an intellectual movement that immediately led to the creation of various organizations that echoed the protest's critical spirit and its aim of renovating Cuba's institutions, the first of which was the curiously named Falange de Acción Cubana, founded in 1923. This organization laid out a set of concrete objectives that were fundamentally based on discursive responses to governmental abuses of power; a framework that would revolutionize public discourse and effectively shift the journalistic objectives of many Cuban publications. *El grupo Minorista* would go on to launch its own mouthpiece, *Revista de Avance* (1927-1930). a set of concrete objectives the public discourse that would relentlessly criticize governmental abuses of power. led to the launch of the group's (which became known as *el grupo Minorista*) own mouthpiece, *Revista de Avance* (1927-1930).

Literary magazines became not only spaces where Cubans could read about the latest exciting trends in literature, poetry, music, architecture, sculpture and other arts, they became the

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<sup>87</sup> Pappademos, *Black Political Activism*, 172.

<sup>88</sup> Yusleidy Pérez Sanchez, *Jorge Mañach, el ABC y el proceso revolucionario del 30 (1920-1935)*, (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2013), 41.

main discursive arena in which Cubans could critically analyze and debate the latest ideological currents of the late 1920s.<sup>89</sup> As the illegitimacy and brutality of Machado's rule began to consume Cubans of all classes beginning in 1928, magazines like *Revista de Avance*, as well as *Carteles* and *Bohemia*, empowered Cubans by voicing that discontent and allowing for a resuscitation of seemingly nobler visions of nationhood that included a majority of Cubans, and not just an ever shrinking segment of political elites. The influence of Marxist philosophy, so crucial to the last successful revolution in Russia, made its way into the press, where the notion of a class system assumed greater significance and increasingly shaped journalistic discourse.<sup>90</sup> After a three-year run, *Revista de Avance's* final issue hit newsstands on September 30, 1930, the day Cubans' struggle with the Machado dictatorship began its most violent phase with the death of university law student Rafael Trejo. As a result of the ensuing uproar over Trejo's death, Machado decided, for the first time, to censor the press; an act *Avance's* editors, Marinello chief among them, chose not to challenge and instead closed the magazine for good.<sup>91</sup>

Jorge Mañach, who had been writing in *Bohemia* and *Diario de la Marina* since 1922 and became best known for his biography of Martí, *Martí, el apóstol* later in the 1930s, perhaps best exemplified the new generation's vision for using journalism to rectify, even revolutionize, the social, economic and political structures of the island. Conscious of the crucial role that a collective sense national identity could play in forging a more democratic and socially just nation, Mañach thundered his way into the Cuban consciousness with seminal essays that explored how and why the ills of the first Cuban republic relegated the island to a neocolonial

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<sup>89</sup> Rosario Rexach, *Los Ensayistas de Avance: Francisco Ichaso*, (New York: Centro Virtual Cervantes), 593.

<sup>90</sup> Pardiñas-Barnes, *Jorge Mañach*, 235.

<sup>91</sup> Rexach, *Los ensayistas*, 593.

status that primarily benefited the US and Cuban political elites.<sup>92</sup> He was the first to christen his group with the name *Minorista* and indeed the first to bring its existence to the Cuban consciousness in his description of the group's weekly lunches in a 1924 article in the weekly magazine *Social*.<sup>93</sup> The choice of the *Minorista* name for the group aligned with Mañach's vision of a powerful civic *minority* endowed with the responsibility to effect structural change through a cultural renovation imbued with socio-political connotations. Journalism would provide the vehicle from which to inform the Cuban citizenry and shape public opinion.

Mañach's social and political thought were first articulated within the context of intellectual and popular dissatisfaction with administrative corruption and his participation in el *Grupo Minorista* that had sprouted out of *la Protesta de los Trece*.<sup>94</sup> Zayas' successor Machado enjoyed a relatively brief honeymoon with the press, which initially viewed his administration as a refreshing change from the excessive American influence and elite corruption that were endemic to the Zayas years. By 1927 however, Machado had altered the constitution in order to rule for an extended second term and the press began to protest the country's turn toward dictatorship. Lisandro Otero and Sergio Carbó led the way in their denunciations of the Machado regime in their respective publications *El País* and *La Semana*, Mañach's writings in *Revista de Avance* would shape journalistic discourse in a way that would help pave the way for the social and political convulsions that began in 1930 and led to the Revolution of 1933. Mañach's ability to incite controversy through his journalistic writings produced the twofold consequence of amplifying his message to a broader audience and heightening his influence across that wider

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 593.

<sup>93</sup> Pérez Sanchez, *Jorge Mañach*, 9. For the original article see Jorge Mañach: "Los minoristas sabáticos escuchan al gran Titta", in *Social*, February 1924.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

spectrum of Cubans.<sup>95</sup> The power of journalism to influence public opinion and inspire institutional change became painfully clear to the Machado regime by the late 1920s. Just as the economic crash rattled global markets and threw capitalism into its deepest crisis, the fourth power of the state became even more influential as it promised to give voice to, and perhaps even validate, popular dissatisfaction with government. Cuban journalists and editors suddenly found themselves endowed with a new set of responsibilities and obligations that were fraught with new burdens as well.

In his pioneering work, Edel Sarmiento Lima documents the press' efforts to report on the deteriorating political situation as well as the constraints placed on them by Machado's repressive measures. Sarmiento Lima's study of the 1930-1933 period examines the relationship between the press and politics by critically analyzing the press' influence in a specific historic moment. He also examines its relation to social and political actors including political elites, the impact of technology on its evolution and development, and the characteristics of its journalistic discourse as well as the interest in the life and works of writers, columnists and reporters.<sup>96</sup> By documenting how editors such as the young Quevedo of *Bohemia* and Carbó of *La Semana* were frequently jailed by the regime, Sarmiento Lima underscores the importance of these two men and their publications as sources of information for the anti-Machado forces in the early 1930s. Machado thus earns the dubious distinction of being the first president of the Republic to regularly use wholesale intimidation and repression to muzzle the press and jail those journalists who did not comply with his regime's dictates. Machado's censorship would prove even more

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<sup>95</sup> Jorge L. Martí, "Mañach y su legado cívico", in *Jorge Mañach (1898-1961): Homenaje de la Nación Cubana*, (Rio Piedras: Editorial San Juan, 1971), 27.

<sup>96</sup> Edel Sarmiento Lima, *La prensa cubana y el machadato (1930-1933): Un acercamiento a la relación prensa-poder*, (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2014), 1.

stringent than that applied by the colonial administration, which would immediately shut down any publication that chose to undermine his regime by using the old method of running a blank column, *the blank page*, over an article suppressed by the censors.<sup>97</sup>

In fact, some of the first red flags that had been raised on his regime had come almost immediately after Machado assumed the presidency in 1925. The editor of the newspaper *El Día*, Armando Andre, ran a cartoon implying that Machado's daughter was a lesbian, a subject that was especially taboo in 1920s Cuba. Thugs soon murdered Andre as he was leaving his house.<sup>98</sup> *Bohemia's* editor himself, Quevedo, would experience *machadista* repression himself by being jailed no less than three times.

As early as the 1920s however, journalists had grown in stature to the point that their influence permeated into political circles, a fact that perhaps made Machado all the more anxious and fueled his repression of the press. After Machado's fall in 1933, the US-imposed presidency of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes was overthrown by a coalition of military sergeants and university students who then formed a commission of five men, known as *la pentarchia* (the pentarchy), to manage Cuba's new revolutionary project. Among those in *la pentarchia* was *La Semana's* Carbó, an appointment that underscores the interdependence that had developed between the press and politics. Only days after Machado fled the country and days before he would assume his position within the governing pentarchy, Carbó wrote the foreword to a book that would chronicle the regime's brutalities by providing the biographies and details of the dictatorship's victims, a task *Bohemia* itself would take on twenty-five years later with Batista's regime in the

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<sup>97</sup> Smorkaloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba*, 42.

<sup>98</sup> Alfredo Jose Estrada, *Havana: Autobiography of a City*, (Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 170.

Liberty Editions of early 1959. Carbó wrote, “This is not just any book, it is a necessary one.”<sup>99</sup>

Written and compiled by Carlos Peraza, *Machado: Crímenes y Horrores de un Régimen* began the dictatorship’s body count chronologically with the details of *El Día’s* Andre, describing how the thugs had greased Andre’s key shaft so he would have trouble opening the door thus giving the snipers across the time ample time to aim and shoot their target dead, which they did shamelessly, and as Peraza notes-cowardly.<sup>100</sup> Peraza goes on to name the publications that protested the murder, and by their absence implicate those that were “servile and cowardly, and remained silent.”<sup>101</sup>

In addition to chronicling the human victims of the regime’s brutality, Peraza provides a detailed account of the repression, noting the frequent silencing of magazines such as *Bohemia* and the arrests of journalists and editors such as Quevedo and Carbo. The book also details how the revolutionary movement of the early 1930s formed but its importance lies in its role as a witness to the totality of the regime’s crimes; a journalistic documentation of one of the first modern Latin American dictatorships, replete with some of the first references to victims as being “disappeared”; a concept that would achieve special notoriety with the Argentine and Chilean dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>102</sup> It began to be circulated in Havana four months after Machado’s fall, on the same day that all of the professors who supported the dictatorship were purged from the University of Havana.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Carlos A. Peraza, *Machado: Crímenes y Horrores de un Regimen: Con un Prologo de Sergio Carbo*, (Havana: Cultural, S.A., 1933), 1.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Lillian Guerra by Richard Denis in Gainesville, FL, February 20, 2016.

<sup>103</sup> Ana Cairo, *Eduardo Chibas: imaginarios*, (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2010), 632.

The politicization of the working class by the 1920s, in fact, would enable the explosive growth of a publication like *Bohemia* in the 1930s and 1940s, when the magazine extended its reach not only across the island but across Latin America by amplifying its coverage of regional political events, which were increasingly subject to the whims of dictatorial governments.

By the 1950s, Cuba's print media was among one of the most developed in Latin America. In a country of roughly six million inhabitants, there existed between sixty and seventy newspapers. By 1956, even ignoring the magazines and weekly newspapers published in Havana alone (not to mention the broadcasting competitors for advertising and circulation) the twenty-one daily newspapers constituted a highly competitive market among themselves.<sup>104</sup> Twenty-eight main newspapers had a circulation of 580,000.<sup>105</sup> Two of Havana's dailies were Chinese-language and two were English-language.<sup>106</sup>

Of the remaining seventeen dailies, there were four that led in circulation, number of pages per edition, number of column inches of advertising, size of physical plant, and number of employees. Founded in 1832, the *Diario de la Marina* passed over to the Rivero family when Nicolás Rivero assumed its direction in 1884.<sup>107</sup> Traditionally tied to the Catholic church and still in the hands of the Rivero family, *Diario de la Marina* towed a conservative line at the same time that it gave voice to a wide range of opinions, including those of the Communists. Founded on the eve of Cuba's inauguration as a republic, *El Mundo* pioneered the notion of a newspaper as a corporate entity, as opposed to an affiliation with an individual/family or political party.

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<sup>104</sup> Havana's population in 1953 was roughly one million. Marvin Alisky, "Havana Havoc: Too Many Dailies," *Nieman Reports* Vol. X, No. 2 (April 1956), 17.

<sup>105</sup> Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 1137.

<sup>106</sup> Havana's Chinese population represented a highly sought after market to various advertisers. See Alisky, "Havana Havoc", 17.

<sup>107</sup> "El Periodismo en la República," *Libro de Cuba*, 690.



Considered Cuba's first "modern" newspaper because it incorporated tactics such as the supplanting of front-page advertising by news, and the notion of a larger extended Sunday edition, by the 1950s it was controlled by the powerful Barletta family, which tended to sympathize with Batista. Originally started in *Diario de la Marina* offices in 1931, the daily *Información* went on to become the largest newspaper in terms of page length. By the early 1950s its daily editions were between 36 and 48 pages and on Sundays the paper was between 90 and 100 pages in length. According to Cuban journalist Gaston Baquero, *Información's* director Santiago Claret was an iron-willed man who spent twenty of the day's twenty-fours at the newspaper's offices.<sup>108</sup> The last of the big four was Sergio Carbó's daily *Prensa Libre*, which proclaimed to defend the principles of liberty and democracy as Carbó has conceived them throughout his journalistic career. Started in 1941 shortly after the establishment of democracy on the island, the daily's motto of "Neither with one, nor with the other, with the Republic!" underscored the publication's overall intention to stake an independent position vis-à-vis the various political tendencies, although it exhibited a left-of-center ideological bent.<sup>109</sup>

Other publications such as *El Pais*, *El Crisol*, and *Excelsior* competed with the more established dailies by using subscription lotteries to boost circulation.<sup>110</sup> *Bohemia's* closest competitor in terms of weekly circulation was the magazine *Carteles* (1919-1960) which by the 1950s featured less political content and instead more cultural content. Although many of the publications in this crowded field were in often in the pocket of the government *du jour*, it is undeniable that Cuba's mass media was one of the most developed in the region. Fidel Castro

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<sup>108</sup> Gaston Baquero, *Ensayos selectos*, (Madrid: Verbum, 2015), 403.

<sup>109</sup> "El Periodismo en la República," *Libro de Cuba*, 693.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 1173.

recalled of the 1950s: “There were in our country great resources of communication...we had developed radio, television and the press...in some cases they were too developed. I think the number of radio stations in the country was 156; the number of newspapers was also high, and there several television stations, among them two national.”<sup>111</sup>

Varying degrees of freedom of the press certainly existed under Batista’s rule. As Kelsey Vidaillet notes, in addition to press censorship, Batista also restricted the domestic circulation of foreign news that contained information about Fidel Castro’s armed insurrection such as *The New York Times* and *The Miami Herald*. As Batista’s rule wore on, censorship and intimidation of the press were increasingly employed as “big stick” tactics that aimed both to muzzle criticism and de-legitimate violent opposition. But the use of the “big carrot” was the preferred choice for a regime that was as corrupt as it was tone deaf to the calls for an acceptable solution that would return Cuba to a *de jure* government. Batista reportedly spent \$450,000 monthly on bribes and subsidies to the press. Even the well-respected daily *El Mundo* received a monthly check for a thousand pesos directly from the Presidential Palace.<sup>112</sup> The fundamental problem for the Cuban press however was, as Juan Orlando argues, “the ideological complicity of the leading publishers and writers with the country’s ruling classes, which had so tremendously failed in guaranteeing institutional continuity, political stability, economic development, social justice and national sovereignty.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Juan Orlando Perez, “The Media in Castro’s Cuba: Every Word Counts,” from *The Media in Latin America*, edited by Jairo Lugo (New York: Open University Press, 2006), 117.

<sup>112</sup> Julio A. Carreras, “La prensa commercial cubana entre 1940 y 1958,” *Revista de la Universidad de Oriente* no 67, (December 1987), 112.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

Amidst the whirl of press corruption, only Carbó of *Prensa Libre* and Quevedo of *Bohemia* steadfastly refused to compromise their journalistic integrity. It is to the story of the latter publication and how it came to identify itself as a publication in the service of the Cuban nation that this work now turns.

CHAPTER 3  
BALUARTE DE LA IDENTIDAD NACIONAL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF BOHEMIA

**Siempre Adelante: Miguel Angel Quevedo Pérez (1908-1926)**

Amid the second US intervention in 1908, an “illustrated weekly” that featured cultural and literary content (in keeping with the tradition of early twentieth century Cuban magazines), was founded by the former editor of the popular magazine *El Figaro*, Miguel Angel Quevedo Pérez. Quevedo Pérez intended to emulate the formula for that magazine’s success by featuring high quality graphic arts and photographs to depict the island’s vibrant social scene and the Republic’s budding arts culture in the sixteen pages of each edition.<sup>1</sup> While the historical context of the second US occupation (1906-1909) is fundamental to understanding the nationalist sentiments that began to stir in the nascent Cuban middle classes (principal among them that any type of home rule was preferable to another US occupation), *Bohemia*’s appearance in the Cuban press did not explicitly engage the country’s swirling political sphere. An inveterate opera lover, Quevedo Perez named his new magazine after his favorite opera, Puccini’s *La Boheme*. Financial troubles hounded Quevedo Perez however and after only a handful of issues, the magazine folded and he returned to *El Figaro*, where he was let go after being denied his request of a five-day leave to attend to the birth of his first child, Miguel Angel Quevedo de la Lastra.<sup>2</sup>

Disappointed at the failure of his *Bohemia*, Quevedo Pérez decided to temporarily forgo his dream of establishing his own magazine alongside the likes of *El Figaro* as one of Cuba’s most important illustrated weeklies. However, true to his own personal motto “Siempre Adelante!” (*Forward Always!*), he decided to remain in journalism and went to work as editor of

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<sup>1</sup> Pedro Pablo Rodriguez, “Biografía de *Bohemia*,” from *Bohemia*, May 5, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Jorge Quintana, “Los Gloriosos Cuarenta y Cinco Anos de *Bohemia*,” from *Bohemia*, May 10, 1953, 139.

*Letras*, (1905-1914; 1918) another important (but now mostly forgotten) bi-weekly magazine that billed itself as “literary, independent, not bound to promoting neither one particular school of art, nor one particular political party.”<sup>3</sup> After two years as its editor Quevedo Perez decided the time was now more propitious, and he a bit wiser, and prepared to relaunch *Bohemia* on May 7, 1910.<sup>4</sup> His experience at *Letras* had instilled in him the hope that it would be that magazine’s independence, its freedom from governmental intrusion that would also become *Bohemia*’s hallmark; foundational principles that would only strengthen with time and guide the magazine through the next tumultuous fifty years. His experiences at both *El Figaro* and *Letras* had provided Quevedo Perez not only with examples of formats and principles that made a magazine both successful and prestigious, but also with valuable contacts that came only from the intimate familiarity and direct contact he had had with the best literary and artistic talent of the young republic.

In the wake of the American withdrawal from Cuba in 1909, the incoming Taft administration recognized that stability (and perhaps more importantly, US interests) in Cuba would be more effectively achieved by unleashing economic as opposed to military forces. This shift in US foreign policy approach, which Taft allegedly coined ‘Dollar Diplomacy’ posited that the US could better guarantee its interests (and ensure its own economic prosperity) by flexing its economic muscle in granting loans to Latin American countries. As Louis Perez notes: “the relationship between economic prosperity in the United States, on the one hand, and economic expansion and stability, in the Caribbean, on the other, was indissolubly linked in the policy

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<sup>3</sup> *Letras*, December 15-30, 1906, 1.

<sup>4</sup> “El director se aleja! Viva el director!” from *Bohemia*, January 2, 1927, 1.

approaches to the region.”<sup>5</sup> The restoration of Cuban sovereignty in 1909, Perez continues, coincided with this new foreign policy approach.<sup>6</sup>

Another consequence of the second occupation was the destruction of the potential for popular nationalist struggle, which sought to broaden politician participation to include popular-class Cubans. In addition to political elites from both the Liberal and Conservative parties, the popular classes also viewed US imperialism as a mechanism for sectoral gain. But US imperialism effectively guaranteed the inaccessibility of political participation for the popular classes and scrapped the idea of the “taking up of any activist agenda altogether.”<sup>7</sup> Lillian Guerra argues that this resulted in the supplanting of hegemonic nation-state by a hegemonic US neo-colony.<sup>8</sup>

When *Bohemia* reappeared on newsstands in 1910 (on the second anniversary of its original launch) it did so in a revamped version that aimed to compete in a market saturated with “illustrated weeklies” such as *El Figaro*, *Letras* and *Revista Bimestre Cubana*. In sticking to the proven format of its predecessors and drawing inspiration from foreign magazines such as *L’Illustration* in Paris and *La Esfera* in Madrid, the re-launched version featured mainly literary and artistic content, as well as the social chronicles of the island’s elite.<sup>9</sup> To promote the magazine and increase its readership, *Bohemia* sponsored events such as poetry and musical talent contests. It was in this way that *Bohemia* began to involve the reader and potential future

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<sup>5</sup> Louis Perez, *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press), 112.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>7</sup> Guerra, *Myth of Martí*, 254.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>9</sup> Quintana, “Los Gloriosos,” 139.

readers in not only the magazine's articles but in the process of contributing to and expanding the nation's cultural institutions.

The Partido Revolucionario Cubano's and (after 1895) the pro-imperialist nationalist-run *Patria* set the original standard in promoting a nationalistic vision for the country's artistic institutions. As Louis Pérez notes, these publications were dedicated to “the proposition of Cuba Libre in all its ideological representations and programmatic manifestations”, not the least of which included a distinctly Cuban form of artistic and literary works.<sup>10</sup>

The nationalist tendencies that intensified after the second US occupation were reflected in civic campaigns by Quevedo Pérez that sought to assert and inspire Cuban agency in the construction of the Republic's civil society. He also combined his love of the arts, especially music, with his zeal to promote a distinct brand of Cuban culture and art that was proudly *criollo*. Within a couple of months Quevedo Pérez began to feature a songsheet of a Cuban song in the pages of *Bohemia*. With names like *La Bayamesa*, the songs were either patriotic hymns or tunes that expressed *criollo* themes. Indeed, from the earliest days, *Bohemia* billed itself as a magazine that promoted a budding cultural vision of Cubanness, known as *Cubanidad*.

The magazine, although it was limited to three thousand copies at first, soon gained recognition for the its promotion of *criollo* culture and arts to inspire nationalistic pride in a republic that was not even a decade old and was still recovering from its second bout with US occupation. Although Quevedo Perez stuck with cultural and literary content, *Bohemia*'s cultivation of a distinctly Cuban lens into the burgeoning national cultural arts attracted the attention of artists and politicians alike who aspired to nationalize Cuba's artistic world.

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<sup>10</sup> Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 44.

At a banquet in 1911 to celebrate the first anniversary of *Bohemia's* re-launch, the guest speaker was a writer and journalist who also happened to be the vice president of the Republic, Alfredo Zayas. In an impassioned speech before an audience that included Quevedo Pérez and various *Bohemia* writers and editors, Zayas stirred nationalist sentiment in the crowd by recalling that he too, like *Bohemia*, had struggled to find a voice in the artistic and literary arena, except that he had done so under colonial repression. He urged fledgling Cuban artists and writers that in that struggle to find their voice they were not only building and strengthening Cuba's by propagating a true sense of *Cubanidad*, they were also helping build a distinctly Cuban nation in the process.<sup>11</sup>

Quevedo Pérez could not agree more. He sought to strengthen Cuba's independent artistic identity by encouraging young Cubans to become more pro-active and assertive in its construction. Contests and campaigns meant to promote the idea of building on a Cuban nationalist cultural identity encouraged the young and inexperienced artists of all disciplines to showcase their talents in competitions such as the one held at the Gran Teatro Politeama less than a year after the anniversary banquet. The gala, which honored a juvenile poetry contest aimed at inspiring and discovering young talent, once again featured the eloquent words of Vice President Zayas, who seemed to revel in the presence of such a wealth of Cuban talent and waxed poetic on the importance of strengthening the sense of *Cubanidad* in Cuba's burgeoning arts scene. The vice president and erstwhile poet applauded *Bohemia's* decision to limit the contest to the young and amateur to provide a fair platform for Cuba's younger generation to compete:

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<sup>11</sup> Alfredo Zayas, "En el primer aniversario de la revista 'Bohemia': Discurso pronunciado el 28 de mayo de 1911, from *Obras Completas Vol. III: Discursos y Conferencias, Segundo Tomo*, (Havana: Molina y Compañía, 1942), 34-35.



La revista Bohemia, cuyos esfuerzos laudables en pro de nuestra cultura son evidentes y constants, ha querido formular este llamamiento limitandolo a determinados individuos de nuestra sociedad, y pensando que el que comienza a recorrerla senda de la vida...el joven...es el que debe ser objeto...de los alientos de los amantes del progreso y de la cultura, para estimularlo a que produzca honrando la patria...que pueda legar el porvenir un nombre mas que sea timbre glorioso en la historia de su pais.<sup>12</sup>

Less than two years after it reappeared on newsstands, the nation's highest public officials already recognized the power a magazine like *Bohemia* wielded, and in Zayas' case, both celebrated and courted that power.

Quevedo Pérez also effectively began to wed *Bohemia* to social causes that drove civic action and inspired the politicization of Cubans. On Three Kings Day of 1913, a massive festival took place to collect and distribute toys of every kind to poor Cuban children.<sup>13</sup> In what would be the first initiative of its kind, large colorful banners lined Havana's central boulevard the Prado, emblazoned with the words "Festival Infantil de Bohemia 1913" and row upon row of wooden carts packed with children's toys filled the walkway. Lines of people filed underneath canopies decorated with hundreds of Cuban flags. Most were parents holding on to their excited children, the first generation born free from colonial dominion, some of them undoubtedly anxious to grab hold of the first Three Kings Day toy they had ever received. The toys were donated by Havana's more prosperous classes who got the opportunity to contribute directly to their fellow Cubans. Through acts like these, Cuban people began to view *Bohemia* as more than just a magazine. Quevedo Pérez consciously molded his young publication into an institution willing and capable to engage in what he soon equated with as a sense of civic duty. Through *Bohemia*, Quevedo Pérez not only encouraged citizen participation, he rewarded it. *Bohemia's* exceptionality is

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<sup>12</sup> Alfredo Zayas, "En pro de la cultura nacional: Discurso pronunciado, en el 'Gran Teatro Politeama', de la Habana, el 30 de marzo de 1912, en una velada artistica organizada por la revista literaria 'Bohemia'," from *Obras Completas Vol. III: Discursos y Conferencias, Segundo Tomo*, (Havana: Molina y Compania, 1942), 48.

<sup>13</sup> Jorge Quintana, "Los Gloriosos," 140.

rooted in both the influence it could exert on Cuban public opinion and its ability to involve the reader in discovering and interpreting both historic and current events. To many Cubans, *Bohemia* was itself an institution within the institution of the press.

Quevedo Perez's nationalistic zeal also prompted him to help build and strengthen the young Republic's civic institutions, independent from governmental interference. Louis A. Perez's examination of the influence of US imperialism on Cuban national identity, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* contends that the larger significance of civic and fraternal organizations was the extent "to which drew Cubans into the moral universe of North America."<sup>14</sup> Perez's contention that Cubans developed a familiarity and a fondness for US customs through service clubs and social organizations is undeniably true, however he is often wont to dismiss Cuban agency in the construction of Cuban identity, nationality and in this case its institutions and emphasize US imperialism. The Boy Scout movement started in England in 1908 and influenced the creation of a chapter in the US in 1910. By 1913 at least fifteen countries had established scout movements. Quevedo Perez had closely followed the movement as it spread from England, the US, and Canada to countries as far as India and Thailand. Impressed with the worldwide phenomenon, in early 1914 Quevedo Perez directed *Bohemia* to lead the campaign to establish a chapter of the Boy Scout movement in Cuba and began publishing articles with detailed illustrations that touted the advantages of the world-wide movement.<sup>15</sup>

In its February 1 edition *Bohemia* invited all Cubans interested in the movement, known as *los jovenes exploradores*, to gather in the Salon de Conferencias in its offices on calle Habana

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<sup>14</sup> Perez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 396-397.

<sup>15</sup> "Boy Scouts or 'Jovenes Exploradores' of Cuba" from *Pan American Bulletin Vol. 47*, Nov.-Dec. 1918, 395.

80.<sup>16</sup> Two weeks later *Bohemia's* offices were swarmed with Cubans of all classes, including various notable personalities who had become interested in the movement after reading *Bohemia's* coverage. Quevedo Perez himself helped write the statutes and began scouting activities. Only three months later *los jovenes exploradores* were a reality as troops of Cuban boys marched through Havana's streets to the applause of admiring friends and citizens.<sup>17</sup> In 1927, *los jovenes exploradores* would become the Asociacion de Scouts de Cuba (ASC) and declared a national institution. Quevedo Perez's interest in developing the movement would continue and the Cuban boy scouts would have offices in the *Bohemia* building for many years.<sup>18</sup>

The year 1914 would prove to be a pivotal year for *Bohemia* for the magazine had finally begun to make a profit. Making a move that reflected its new prestige and prosperity, *Bohemia's* offices moved from their small quarters on Habana 80 in Old Havana to their own building on Trocadero 89, 91, and 93, near the main shopping street on Galiano. Three separate addresses were now needed to accommodate the publication's growing business as well as new technologies. The spatial move from old Havana to the more modern Centro was emblematic of *Bohemia's* budding role as a pioneer in Latin American journalism; a role it embraced through changes to its format and use of printing technologies. The fruits of the magazine's booming business and growing popularity allowed the magazine to expand to forty pages and even though it was still only distributed in Havana, its weekly circulation had doubled to ten thousand.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Quintana, "Los Gloriosos," 139

<sup>17</sup> "Boy Scouts," 395.

<sup>18</sup> Quintana, "Los Gloriosos," 139.

<sup>19</sup> Manuel F. Alonso, *Cuba Before the World: A Comprehensive and Descriptive Account of the Republic of Cuba From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, (Havana: The Souvenir Guide of Cuba Co., 1915), 169.

*Bohemia* also became the first press organ in Latin America to use process color separation, a technology that helped reproduce optimal color images.<sup>20</sup>

The magazine's heady days began to dovetail with the economic prosperity flooding the island during the World War I years when Cuba's market for sugar expanded exponentially as it became the main supplier to Europe's allied nations. As *Bohemia's* circulation increased and its reputation for publishing high-quality literary and artistic content grew more prestigious Quevedo Perez ventured into featuring political content by deciding to include allegorical illustrations of European wartime events on the magazine's covers.<sup>21</sup> A new section named "Art and War" was featured and the regular comic section 'Pepito y Rocamora' had its protagonists visit soldiers on the war front. Through this characteristic form of *criollo* humor, readers were introduced to the First World War through visual representations created by *Bohemia*.<sup>22</sup>

Not content to influence Cubans through visual images, Quevedo Perez decided to take a more pro-active role in supporting the Allied cause, which Cuba officially joined when Cuba declared war on Germany on April 7, 1917, the same day the US did. In its May 18, 1918 edition, as German submarines lurked in Atlantic waters and threatened to sink Allied or neutral ships, *Bohemia* began its campaign to raise money to purchase six submarines, each of which would be named after one of Cuba's six provinces.<sup>23</sup> General Emilio Nunez, who would be assuming the vice presidency after a contested election that almost invited another US occupation, instantly supported the idea, and was appointed to head a commission of

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<sup>20</sup> Rodriguez, "Biografía," 5.

<sup>21</sup> Claudia Ortiz Ginoria, "Repercusión de la primera guerra mundial en Cuba. Una Mirada desde la prensa," *Revista Goliardos Año 21*, número XVIII, (2014), 37.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Quintana, "Los Gloriosos," 139.

distinguished Cubans which included Quevedo Perez as a member. President Mario Garcia Menocal immediately donated \$1,200 to *Bohemia's* campaign, which aggressively promoted the idea in its pages and helped raise money by helping to sponsor poster and poetry contests. Cuba's premier music composer Ernesto Lecuona, in collaboration with the National Conservatory, organized a concert to help support and raise funds for *Bohemia's* cause.<sup>24</sup> *Bohemia's* prestige was such that Cuban elites rallied to support missions such as the purchase of the submarines, which Quevedo Perez viewed as the magazine's civic duty and service to the nation.

That civic duty was often wedded to Quevedo Pérez's economic interests. Quevedo Pérez found that in responding to the needs of *Bohemia's* readers, which in the 1910s and early 1920s still mostly comprised of the middle and upper classes, he could make a profit. As Louis Perez notes, the placement of Cuban students in North American schools itself became a lucrative business and in 1920 Quevedo Pérez established an office in New York to answer the many inquiries about US colleges and universities.<sup>25</sup>

By the 1920s however, Cuba's sugar prosperity bubble burst and the end of so-called Dance of the Millions led to a severe economic crisis. Political protests against administrative corruption augured the increased politicization of Cubans and thus interest in the type of content *Bohemia* was known for waned. New competition also cut into *Bohemia's* audience share. Conrado Massaguer's *Social* and *Carteles* had established themselves as magazines known for the brilliance of their graphic arts and *Carteles* expanded in 1924 from a monthly to a weekly

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>25</sup> Perez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban*, 406

and began to feature editorial content.<sup>26</sup> Along with its content, its lower subscription price increased its appeal to the popular classes who by the mid 1920s were increasingly interested in reading about the news as well as the more frivolous content for which magazines of general interest were known for at the time. for the Circulation fell precipitously and by 1926 *Bohemia* was selling only four thousand copies a week, almost what it had sold when it began its distribution in earnest in 1910. Economic hardship and the increasing irrelevance of its content forced Quevedo Perez to re-evaluate *Bohemia's* viability in the fall of 1926. Depressed and struck with a heart lesion that physically exhausted him, Quevedo Perez made the heart-wrenching decision to cease publishing *Bohemia* by the beginning of the following year.

#### **Nuestro Director: Quevedo the Son Takes Over (1927-1952)**

It was on a walk to the post office one brisk December morning in 1926, that Quevedo Pérez decided to break the news of *Bohemia's* impending shutdown to his eighteen-year old son Miguel Angel, known as *Miguelito*. Financial troubles and exhaustion from his illness, he reasoned with the younger Quevedo, were forcing him to shut down the magazine within a few weeks. The son then pleaded with his father to reconsider and if not, to give him a chance to run the publication and turn a profit again. Quevedo Perez demurred but then found himself saying, "I will finance the magazine for one year and that's it! You have one year."<sup>27</sup> Only eighteen years old, the precocious young Quevedo was anxious to leave his imprimatur on a magazine that had billed itself at the most influential voice in Cuban culture for almost twenty years; the

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<sup>26</sup> Wendy M. Martinez Zuferrri, *Palos para el asno: discurso periodístico de la oposición antimachadista en los editoriales de la revista Carteles (noviembre 1924-abril 1930)*, (Havana: University of Havana, 2012), 61.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

vehicle that championed the best of Cuban literature and art.<sup>28</sup> It would not take long for him to have the opportunity to do so.

The handing over of *Bohemia* from father to son became official on January 1, 1927 and, in Cuban fashion, that week's edition likened the generational passing of the torch to that of a king abdicating in favor of his son the prince. Framed as "the inevitable process of renovation", the first page's headline set the hyperbolic tone for that week's editorial when it proclaimed: "EL DIRECTOR SE ALEJA! VIVA EL DIRECTOR!" As if the teenager did not face enough pressure to ensure the magazine's continued excellence and make it financially solvent, the editorial threw down a gauntlet, wedding *Bohemia* to a larger and more grandiloquent cause, the patrimony of the nation:

El hijo posee la misma hidalguia que el padre, el mismo amor a lo bello, a lo spiritual. Hay en su retoño, las mismas ansias de laborar por la cultura patria que alentaron a Quevedo hace 18 años, a fundar esta Revista. El cambio, pues, de Direccion no es mas que un mero formulismo...no es el cambio de un hombre por otro. Se trata simplemente de una renovacion...<sup>29</sup>

Having established the succession as a mere cosmetic change, an update of the model that had made *Bohemia* successful in the first place, Quevedo the son continued his studies at the University of Havana as he set out to live up to his father's, and the Cuban people's, expectations for the continuation of *Bohemia*. The social, political, and economic climate could not have been more propitious.

Quevedo's first years as editor coincided with the years of the Machado dictatorship and a marked shift in the political climate as the mass mobilization of the popular classes and Cuba's intellectual elite challenged Machado's rule. The young Quevedo brought a youthful new vigor

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<sup>28</sup> "El director se aleja! Viva el director!", from *Bohemia*, January 2, 1927, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

to the content and style of the magazine and immediately began instituting significant changes that represented a departure from his father's style. Thinly veiled jabs at the re-eleccionista fever then sweeping around Machado's two-year old rule began popping up in satirical cartoons that lambasted the President's growing authoritarianism.<sup>30</sup> Editorials with the heading of "Glosarios de la Actualidad" began to criticize the government's engineering of the constitution to allow Machado, who had run on the campaign promise of a single term, to run for another (even longer) term. Editorials also began to delve head first into the country's deepening economic crisis. Only two months after taking over from his father the younger Quevedo authorized an editorial that accused the Machado government of becoming more interested in cabarets than in the grave economic woes faced by Cuban industries thanks to a lack of legislative protection. *Bohemia* also began to preview an anti-imperialist stance that would solidify its credentials as a publication in the service of patria and call into question the inherent injustices that pervaded in neocolonial Cuba: "Cuba, en veinte y tanto anos de Gobierno propio, solo ha celebrado un tratado de reciprocidad commercial: el que tenemos en vigor con los Estados Unidos."<sup>31</sup>

As economic and political crises convulsed the nation, *Bohemia* also began to appropriate the legacies of historical figures by tying its own historic mission to the sacrifices of foundational heroes such as José Martí, Antonio Maceo and Máximo Gómez. These heroes became regular fixtures on covers and the historical events in which they were protagonists were regularly interpreted in articles by journalists and in editorials. This attempt at recovering historical memory in order to lend meaning to current events was a formula that *Bohemia* would

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<sup>30</sup> The terms of Machado's 1924 election contained a prohibition on his re-election.

<sup>31</sup> "Glosario de la Actualidad: El pan espiritual de la moral y el pan nuestro de cada día," *Bohemia*, March 20, 1927, 1.



continue to use into the 1940s and 1950s and employ continuously in confronting Batista through its editorial line.

Looming in Quevedo's shadow was of course the specter of his father's worsening illness, a heart lesion that had been diagnosed as terminal. On November 19, 1929, the end finally came for the founder of *Bohemia*, who had decided to end his own sickness and suffering by committing suicide, an act that was still taboo, if pervasive, in the Cuban society of the 1920s. As Lillian Guerra notes, there existed a Cuban national obsession with martyrdom as the most genuine proof of nationalism, which may have been what Quevedo Perez had envisioned as his final act in defense of *la patria*.<sup>32</sup>

Louis A. Perez Jr.'s absorbing study on the topic *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society*, explores the distinction between the various modes of self-destruction and their relation to Cuba's societal and cultural norms. Perez argues: "the pursuit of patria was sustained by a combination of appeals both to self-interest and selfless impulse, but most of all through the invocation of sacrifice as the ethical imperative of being Cuban."<sup>33</sup> Cuba had the dubious distinction of possessing the highest suicide rate in Latin America; a rate that peaked in the years between 1928 and 1933, a fact that can be attributed to the extreme economic convulsions the island was experiencing after the bust of the sugar boom.<sup>34</sup> Public suicides in the name of *patria* were worthy of respect and even veneration as the statement from Colonel Avelino Sanjenis upon hearing of his soldier's death demonstrates: "His death was an example for us. To die for

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<sup>32</sup> Guerra, *Myth of Martí*,

<sup>33</sup> Louis A. Perez, Jr. *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society*, (Chapel Hill & London, 2005), 81.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*,

Cuba was our duty.”<sup>35</sup> But the subject was still taboo enough regarding the notion of private suicides, when the ending of one’s own life was considered more selfish. Countless advertisements warning against suicide were even featured in *Bohemia’s* pages throughout the 1920s.<sup>36</sup> Perez elaborates, however, that old age for men was often accompanied by withdrawal from participation in the world of work and signified “an abrupt halt to an activity that had served as an overriding facet of adulthood.”<sup>37</sup> Men, Pérez continues, were especially susceptible to the despair and demoralization that accompanied the onset of afflictions and infirmities associated with aging.<sup>38</sup> Quevedo Pérez had left *Bohemia* in his son’s hands almost three years prior because the illness had been rendered terminal, yet he continued to suffer for years as he was forced to remain on the sidelines of Cuba’s slide into economic and political turmoil. Whatever Quevedo Pérez’s true motivations were, his son’s shame was great enough that absolutely no mention of suicide was ever made in the countless tributes to its founder in *Bohemia’s* pages. But the younger Quevedo was nevertheless motivated to continue and build on the sense of duty and sacrifice his father had instilled in him and became convinced that *Bohemia’s* service in defense of *la patria* was needed more than ever.

The last three years of the Machado dictatorship would serve as Quevedo’s political education. Quevedo took over the reins of *Bohemia* amid a wide-ranging debate, especially among a new generation of Cubans, about the cultural and political crisis of Cuban and Latin

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 250-252.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 152.

American modernity.<sup>39</sup> As the young head of *Bohemia*, Quevedo found himself with a powerful vehicle in which to shape political discourse and incorporate the masses as social, political, and economic forces. *Bohemia's* first editorial under the younger Quevedo's direction dove head first into the emerging constitutional crisis that would explode into a full-fledged social revolution six years later.

Just as Cubans began to politicize themselves, Quevedo politicized *Bohemia*. An article deemed incendiary by the dictatorship landed Quevedo in the notorious Principe jail in December of 1930, the first of three arrests perpetrated by the regime. These repressive measures were pivotal in forming Quevedo's political consciousness and provide the formative political experiences that would shape *Bohemia's* political content, editorial line and crystallize the magazine's fundamental principles.

*Bohemia's* groundbreaking coverage of Machado's brutal repression of an incipient armed insurrection in the town of Gibara in 1931 (which gained notoriety for being the first and only town which was simultaneously bombarded from land, air and sea by the Cuban armed forces) included graphic testimonies from Gibara residents, the first time a publication had printed such documentary evidence from the victims themselves.<sup>40</sup> Extensive coverage of Machado's ouster in 1933 expanded the magazine's pages and included testimonies from Cubans who had been victims of the dictatorship. A politicized Cuban public was reading and subscribing to *Bohemia* in greater numbers than ever before.

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Whitney, *State and Revolution, Mass Mobilization and Political Change, 1920-1940*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 14.

<sup>40</sup> Taped interview with Ciro Bianchi Ross by Richard Denis in Havana, Cuba, June 25, 2015. See also Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Fight for Freedom*,

## **Bohemia Confronts Batista: The Revolution's Pyrric Victory (1934-1940)**

*Bohemia's* exceptionalism was often rooted in its ability to wed social causes to Cuba's nationalistic aspirations. Nationalism thus became the umbrella under which the social and political possibilities for the nation resided.<sup>41</sup> In April 1930, Quevedo decided to commit more vociferously to the feminist cause by launching what *Bohemia* called the "Feminist Campaign". The women's movement had held its first national congress in 1923 just as national unrest began to erupt and new social attitudes about women's public roles were forming.<sup>42</sup> Politically diverse women's organizations thus began to voice their views regarding issues that affected individual, family, social, and national matters. Within the span of a few years feminists had established themselves as political leaders with an agenda focused on "political equality for women, social reform, and institutionalizing their programs to aid and represent women."<sup>43</sup>

Aurelia Castillo de Gonzalez's tribute to Camagüey and Ignacio Agramonte in 1912 was certainly not the first time a woman had written for *Bohemia*. Before *Bohemia's* first ill-fated launch in May 1908, Quevedo Perez had decided to tap Avelina Correa, widely considered to be the first professional female journalist in Cuba, to write for the magazine, which she did until 1918.<sup>44</sup> Her writings on pioneering female writers of the eighteenth century became veritable history lessons of feminine journalism at a time when feminism and the women's movement for legal reform began in earnest in patriarchal Cuba.

As Cuban women contested suffrage rights in the late 1920s, *Bohemia* made a move that

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<sup>41</sup> Emilio Bejel, *Gay Cuban Nation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 65.

<sup>42</sup> K. Lynn Stoner, *From the House to the Streets: The Cuban Woman's Movement for Legal Reform, 1898-1940*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), 59.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>44</sup> Nuñez Machín, *Mujeres en el Periodismo Cubano*, 43.

was unprecedented in the mainstream press: it committed itself not just to the notion of feminism, but radical feminism, by employing the radical Ofelia Rodriguez Acosta as its leading voice on the cause. One of the most important (and prolific) literary figures of her day, but often forgotten in contemporary Cuba, Rodriguez Acosta's literary work, articles, and interviews expressed "ideological positions and political insights on the state of society that were perhaps unsurpassed in her country at that time."<sup>45</sup> A member of the group that shaped the political and cultural discourse of the island between 1923 and 1933, the storied *segunda generacion republicana*, Rodriguez Acosta was not merely content to campaign for suffrage, she in fact fearlessly proposed such then radical notions such as free love, homosexuality, political honesty, class equity, women's liberation from machismo, a re-interpretation of the traditional family and a rejection of the utilitarianism of the modern world.<sup>46</sup> She had also been one of the first to independently decry the Machado regime's atrocities from the beginning in her published protest of the murder of its first victim, *El Dia*'s Armando Andre in 1925.<sup>47</sup>

In an editorial the week of April 6, 1930 *Bohemia* explained the importance of its cause.

El feminismo es una de las cuestiones mas trascendentales de nuestra epoca. Su triple accion politica, social e intelectual se intensifica y se expande mas cada dia. BOHEMIA ha concedido siempre una atencion especial a los derechos de la mujer, aunque de una manera intermitente. Nuestra entusiasta acogida a la campana feminist, ha de tener desde ahora una eficacia mas sistematizada...<sup>48</sup>

Quevedo had previously featured articles such as "mujer" but now the magazine's attention to women's rights would feature a weekly article by one of Cuba's most radical feminists, whom

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>47</sup> Peraza, *Machado: Crimenes y Horrores*, 10.

<sup>48</sup> *Bohemia*, April 6, 1930, 25.

the editorial praised as one of the country's greatest intellectuals.

In her first article of *Bohemia's* "Campaign", Rodriguez Acosta featured an allegorical tale that shone a feminist perspective on Buddhism. By attacking patriarchal societies and religious injustices against women, Rodriguez Acosta challenged norms imposed by organized religion. "No son pocas las cosas qu ha ido a remover la mujer con su rebeldia: no es nueva ni superficial su esclavitud. Ni es nada honrosa para el hombre sea un Juan de los Palotes, sea el mismo Buda."<sup>49</sup> Men, whether religious deities or not, were neither holy nor honorable if they persisted in subjugating women. The lesson was one Rodriguez Acosta would demonstrate in her own opposition to Machado's dictatorship.

For the next two years, Rodriguez Acosta would use her weekly column as a platform from which to urge political action on women's issues. She embraced the radical notion that "only free love would liberate women from limitations imposed by the Catholic Church and men's repressive instincts."<sup>50</sup>

As the economic and political crises deepened and Machado's repression increased, Rodriguez Acosta's articles began to link her feminism to the political unrest. In September of 1930 Rodriguez Acosta, along with other leading feminists, led the funeral procession of Cuba's first martyr of the regime's brutality, Rafael Trejo. In that week's column, she wrote that the presence of the Cuban woman at Trejo's funeral demonstrated her inalienable right to participate and even become a protagonist in Cuban public life. With this attitude, Cuban women, Rodriguez Acosta argued, had run the same risks as men did and in the process had conquered

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<sup>49</sup> Ofelia Rodriguez Acosta, "Buda visto con los lentes de una feminist," *Bohemia*, April 13, 1930, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Stoner, *From the House to the Streets*, 99.

her liberty, independence and right to full citizenship.<sup>51</sup> Quevedo's commitment to providing the space for radical feminists such as Rodriguez Acosta underscored *Bohemia's* evolving role as a vehicle for national dialogue on social causes such as feminism with the hopes of facilitating women's participation in the political, social and cultural world of 1930s Cuba.<sup>52</sup>

Just as *Bohemia's* founder had embraced nationalistic art forms, the younger Quevedo embarked on a campaign to promote alternative forms of what could and should be considered a Cuban art form. White Cuban intellectuals had begun embracing the significance of Afro-Cuban culture in a movement that emerged in the 1930s known as *afrocubanismo*. To not only validate African-based culture but explain their importance to Cuban culture to readers, *Bohemia* featured myriad articles and stories written by renowned intellectuals such as Fernando Ortiz and Gerardo del Valle who were white and Manuel Cuellar Vizcaino who was black.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s *Bohemia* explored and even celebrated the new Cuban nationalism by presenting Afro-Cuban religions as a concrete syncretic relationship between saints and African deities (oricha), an approach that illustrated its "outright disdain for the enduring persecution of Afro-Cuban practitioners."<sup>53</sup> While *Bohemia* was in a sense responding to white intellectual fascination with the African components of Cubanidad, it was one of the relatively few publications in the mainstream press that reported on and even romanticized Afro-Cuban religions at that time. As Melina Pappademos shows, black intellectual and civic activist willingness to see politics through a racial lens with a new concern for all things black stretched

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<sup>51</sup> Ofelia Rodriguez Acosta, "La mujer cubana y la hora actual", from *Bohemia*, October 12, 1930.

<sup>52</sup> Elena M. Jongh, "Feminismo y periodismo en la Cuba republicana: Ofelia Rodriguez Acosta y la campana feminist de Bohemia (1930-1932), from *Confluencia*, Fall 1995-Spring 1996/10.

<sup>53</sup> Kristine Juncker, *Afro-Cuban Religious Arts: Popular Expressions of Cultural Inheritance in Espiritismo and Santeria*, (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2014), 32.

back to the 1920s, as did the tendency of black intellectuals and leaders to celebrate “*lo Africano*” in Cuban national culture. <sup>54</sup>

In 1949 Quevedo decided to celebrate this nationalistic movement by featuring an image of Our Lady of Charity of the Church of El Cobre, transforming this saint, one of Cuba’s renditions of the Virgin Mary, into “a popular cover girl.”<sup>55</sup> *Bohemia*’s prestige was such that gracing the cover could be considered the ultimate validation for any subject. Articles on popular Cuban saints underscored how these images reflected Cuba’s multiple cultural histories to draw different spirits of the dead as well as revealing the pervasiveness, even ubiquity of Spiritist practices in 1950 Cuba. <sup>56</sup> In addition to these various articles on Afro-Cuban religious practices *Bohemia* published short fiction on Afro-Cuban religions, pointedly calling each one a *cuento cubano*. Thus, *Bohemia* continued its tradition of promoting the notion that Cuban literature and Cuban religious arts were representative of national culture. <sup>57</sup>

*Bohemia* also became the leading voice in the Latin American press against dictatorial governments that began to crop up in the region in a first reverse wave of democratization beginning in the 1930s. Quevedo’s opposition to what the magazine termed *las dictaduras caudillescas* was respected and feared by many Latin American governments. Dictators like Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua (1936-1956), Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic (1930-1961), Marcos Pérez Jiménez of Venezuela (1952-1958), and Jorge Ubico of Guatemala (1931-1944) became regular features in editorials and stories that exposed the brutality of their rule and

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<sup>54</sup> Pappademos, *Black Activism*, 181.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.



championed democratic transition. After the fall of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, the new Castillo Armas regime was so incensed by what it perceived to be incendiary articles maligning the new junta government that the regime's spokesman felt compelled to defend and justify the CIA-led coup that toppled the democratically elected president.<sup>58</sup> In an open letter addressed to Quevedo, the new Guatemalan Minister of Information Enrique Salazar-Liekens played on Quevedo's commitment to presenting diverse points of view while stating the regime's reason for such a letter:

Es ya proverbial en el continente americano que BOHEMIA tiene por norma dar cabida al anverso y reverso de la medalla, para que sus miles de lectores de habla hispana conoscan todos los puntos de vista y se forman un concepto exacto de los acontecimientos que les interesan.<sup>59</sup>

By praising *Bohemia* for its journalistic integrity, the Guatemalan dictatorship was pinning Quevedo against a wall. If he didn't publish the rebuttal then it would be *Bohemia's* credibility on the line. If he did, then the regime would get its chance to publicly air its propagandistic defense.

Debo manifestarle que en Guatemala interesan mucho los comentarios e informaciones de una revista de la categoria moral y periodistica de BOHEMIA, que sin ninguna duda determina una fuerte corriente de opinion en America Latina. Por esta razón he creído útil para la difusion de la verdad enviarle esta carta con informaciones inéditas y

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<sup>58</sup> In the last two years of the Guatemalan Revolution and in the immediate aftermath of the coup that deposed the democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz (1952-1954), *Bohemia* amplified and diversified its coverage of the unfolding events surrounding revolution and reaction in the small Central American country. That emphatic coverage included interviews with former president Juan Jose Arevalo as well as an exclusive with the newly deposed Arbenz by renowned journalist Raul Roa; articles on the intrigue surrounding mediation efforts by then Cuban president Carlos Prío Socarras to help bridge the increasing divide between Guatemala and Washington; and a sweeping two-part feature on the aims and accomplishments of the Guatemalan Revolution spread out over the course of two weeks. The latter feature so incensed Castillo Armas that it he had his iminister of communication pen a biting rebuttal which Quevedo decided to print.

<sup>59</sup> Miguel Ángel Quevedo, "La Versión Oficial Sobre los Acontecimientos de Guatemala: De la 'democracia de Arbenz a la 'dictadura' de Castillo Armas," *Bohemia* August 29, 1954, 52.

exclusivas...<sup>60</sup>

Rebuttals to perceived negative coverage were common and Quevedo, like he did to Salazar Liekens' letter, often reminded readers of his reasons for allowing the viewpoints of seemingly disreputable figures such as the spokesperson for the new Guatemalan junta: "BOHEMIA, que ha abierto sus páginas a criterios contrapuestos, no cumpliría su cometido de tribuna democrática si las cerrara a la opinión de quiénes tienen hoy la responsabilidad de conducir su nación en medio de una de las más recias tormentas de su historia."<sup>61</sup>

While *Bohemia's* article and investigative reports garnered the interest of millions of both Cuban and foreign readers it is important to note that the magazine did not just print news stories on the events that swept Cuban history in the twentieth century. It was often a *protagonist* in those events, a willing key participant that often led the charge in voicing, even demanding social and political change. Cuban (and even Latin American) governments often felt compelled to respond to perceived slights or negative coverage. If it printed in *Bohemia*, most Cubans would know about it. President-elect Ramón Grau San Martín was once so offended by an investigative report on an embarrassing incident at his house that he challenged Quevedo to a duel (anachronistic even in 1944) to defend his integrity and honor (Quevedo politely ignored the challenge).

Sometimes the repercussions resulting from unflattering coverage were more extreme and brutal. A critical article on one of Batista's puppet governments a decade earlier so threatened the strongman that he ordered his henchmen to invade Quevedo's Vedado home one night, rouse

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<sup>60</sup> Enrique Salazar Liekens, "La Versión Oficial Sobre los Acontecimientos de Guatemala: De la 'democracia de Arbenz a la 'dictadura' de Castillo Armas," *Bohemia*, August 29, 1954, 52.

<sup>61</sup> Quevedo, "La Versión Oficial," 52.

him out of bed and take him to the infamous “lagüito”, an area near Havana where Batista’s henchmen tortured his political enemies. The punishment was straight out of Mussolini’s playbook: the drinking of a one-liter bottle of castor oil, which Cubans called *palmacristi*. Known as a *palmacristazo*, recipients would often end up in the hospital with severe stomach discomfort. Indeed, Quevedo was afflicted with stomach ailments the rest of his life.<sup>62</sup>

While *Bohemia*’s political coverage came into its own in the context of the vicissitudes of the struggles against first Machado and then Batista, its political journalistic bona fides were strengthened further in 1943 with the introduction of its groundbreaking section *En Cuba*, which pioneered a new style of investigative reporting that soon made the section the most widely read section in Cuban journalism.

The brainchild of journalists Enrique de la Osa and Carlos Lechuga, the section became known for its scathing critiques of the corruption and violence that plagued Cuba during the administrations of Ramón Grau and Carlos Prío in the 1940s and 50s. Cuban journalist Marta Rojas, a regular contributor to the section in the 1950s, has rooted this style of investigative reporting, with its emphasis on bringing the reader directly to the scene of the news by offering a detailed description of place (including who said what as they stood next to whom) as having started not in the United States, but in Cuba and with the *En Cuba* section. It quickly rose to one of the most read sections of not just *Bohemia*, but of any publication in the country, and helped solidify *Bohemia*’s status as a continental power in the Latin American media. *Bohemia* offices soon opened up in New York and its circulation doubled within the span of six years.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Taped Interview with Pedro Yanes by Richard Denis in Miami, FL, May 29, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Marta Rojas, “Testimonio sobre Enrique de la Osa, from *Escritores Olvidados de la Republica*, (Havana: Ediciones Union, 2012), 262.

By enlisting waiters, valet parkers, maids and other working class Cubans as informants, *En Cuba* was also responsible for popularizing the reporting of news events and encouraging the agency of ordinary Cubans. Rojas recalls seeing waiters and shoe-shining men pointing to the published section and beaming proudly, “Salio lo mio publicado.”<sup>64</sup> Cubans thus were able to feel that they were collaborators in the process of exposing the real political situation and circumstances to their countrymen and women. Many of them even felt they were a part of Cuban history.

Pedro Pablo Rodriguez, a writer for *Bohemia* in the 1970s and 1980s recounted in 1978: “El punto culminante en el tratamiento de la temática nacional sera la sección “En Cuba”..que fue en poco tiempo una de las más leídas en el periodismo cubano.”<sup>65</sup> The avid readership of the section and of the whole magazine underscores the point that public opinion before 1952 should not be regarded as a tabula rasa. In fact, as Lillian Guerra notes, the Cuban literacy rate was, at 76.4% (Havana’s was 92.6%), one of the highest in Latin America.<sup>66</sup> By the 1940s, Cuba’s weekly circulation was 125,000 copies and on the eve of Batista’s coup it stood at 250,000 (100,000) of which were exported abroad.<sup>67</sup> Its estimated readership, which includes not just copies but how many people read the magazine, was an unprecedented two million. The audience then, for *Bohemia*’s coverage of 1950s national crisis and subsequent insurrection and revolution was one that was significantly literate and politicized.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>65</sup> Rodriguez, “Biografía,” 7.

<sup>66</sup> Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 43.

<sup>67</sup> “Bohemia duplica su circulacion en solo 6 anos,” *Bohemia*, May 10, 1953, 85.

With the end of Batista's eleven-year rule in the mid 1940s, *En Cuba* proved crucial to the politicization of Cubans at a time when the island entered its brief albeit colorful democratic phase, when democratically elected governments would squander the hopes that Cubans had for political and social democracy. *En Cuba's* niche was mirrored in the rise of Eddy Chibás, who became perhaps the most successful Cuban journalist and politician to take on that same corruption and violence that *En Cuba* exposed on a weekly basis. Chibás used his articles in publications like *Bohemia* and his radio show to protest the corruption of the Autentico administrations and call for a sweeping change to the country's political, economic and social structures.

Of all of the journalists and politicians that wrote in *Bohemia*, there was perhaps no better personification of the type of journalistic integrity that *Bohemia* claimed than Chibás, who was a personal childhood friend of Quevedo since the days both attended Belen Jesuit School as young boys in Havana. Chibás' ability to inspire Cubans to demand an honest and accountable government that worked for the country's best interests was mirrored in his myriad articles and polemics published in *Bohemia*. The strength of the relationship between Chibás and Quevedo (and by extension *Bohemia*) was reflected in the esteem in which he held the magazine.

Quevedo even made sure Chibás could peruse an advance copy of *Bohemia*; a treat Chibás relished with the giddy enthusiasm of a child receiving an early holiday gift. His longtime secretary Conchita Fernandez described Chibás' weekly arrival to the the *Bohemia* offices on Trocadero Street on Thursdays, the day the magazine went to print and a full day before it hit newsstands:

El llegaba al taller, se sentaba sobre las resmas de papel o en un taburete viejo manchado de tinta que había allí y se ponía a leer los pliegos. Si algo le interesaba, hacía como los niños: escondía el pliego en el elastico de las medias, debajo del pantalón o se lo metía en el cinto, debajo de la guayabera para llevarselo, creía que lo hacíse hacian

a a escondidas de Quevedo y de los operarios de la imprenta, que se hacían los de la vista gorda. En definitiva, *Bohemia* había sido siempre una de sus principales tribunas...<sup>68</sup>

Chibás' was well aware of the role *Bohemia* had played in his own rise as Cuba's most popular politician, and his excitement to read the week's edition knew no bounds. Even on his deathbed, as anxious as ever to read what was written about him, Chibás' could not wait to scan his advance copy of the August 12, 1951 edition that covered Cuba's reaction to his self-inflicted (and ultimately fatal) gunshot wound.<sup>69</sup>

The saga of Chibás' slow death was covered extensively in three editions of *Bohemia* in August and September of 1951. Quevedo's personal and professional loyalty to Chibás was such that *Bohemia* would continue to espouse the Ortodoxo leader Chibás' political ideology both in its coverage and most importantly in its editorial line. Quevedo's devotion to his friend of almost forty years inspired him to propose that a monument to him be built in a passionate editorial in the first edition after Chibás' death. Drawing on personal memories of his longtime friend, Quevedo evokes a history of shared struggle between himself and his friend:

Hondos lazos de verdadero afecto y amistad nos unían desde nuestros tiempos estudiantiles...Juntos hicimos la segunda enseñanza y juntos ingresamos en la Universidad. En las horas de la adversidad, juntos sufrimos injusticias y miserias, y juntos estuvimos en la hora de la bonanza y alegría.<sup>70</sup>

Both members of the vaunted Generation of 1930, both Quevedo and Chibás had suffered and been imprisoned in their youth at the hands of the Machado dictatorship, seminal experiences that bonded the two for life.

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<sup>68</sup> Pedro Prada, *La secretaria de la República*, (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2001), 120.

<sup>69</sup> Ilan Ehrlich, *Eduardo Chibás: The Incurable Man of Cuban Politics*, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 235.

<sup>70</sup> Miguel Ángel Quevedo, "Un monument para Eduardo Chibás," *Bohemia*, August 19, 1951, 93.

Having described his own relationship with Chibas, Quevedo goes on to encapsulate the unique relationship between Chibás and *Bohemia*:

En BOHEMIA se hizo Chibás y BOHEMIA fué para él como su propia casa, en todos los tiempos. En BOHEMIA encuentran cabida, siempre, sus inquietudes y sus empeños de adecentar la política nacional. Y en BOHEMIA sin ser órgano de su partido ni de ningún otro-encontró “Eddy” el aliento confortador, el gesto comprensivo y la ayuda desinteresada para proseguir su lucha tesora y valiente contra la desvergüenza y la politiquería. En BOHEMIA aparecieron sus mejores artículos, por no decir todos.<sup>71</sup>

Quevedo uses the characteristic Cuban sensibility in his choice of words by citing Chibás’ campaign against *desvergüenza*, a word that translates to mean roughly shame but is viewed by many Cubans as something egregiously disgraceful. His use of the idiom *por no decir todos* implies boastfully that indeed *all* of Chibás’ best articles were published in *Bohemia*.

In just one week, *Bohemia*’s offices were flooded with letters asking for more details on the proposed monument and others with actual monetary donations; a response that surpassed even Quevedo’s expectations and underscored the magazine’s continued ability to energize citizen participation by tying those efforts to a sense of patriotic duty. Quevedo proposed a commission to organize the magazine’s efforts and collect, administer, and distribute the funds accordingly so that the monument would become a reality; a nationalist undertaking much like Martí’s tomb: “Chibás tendrá un monumento en la capital de la República que vendrá a ser una exaltación, de la vergüenza y dignidad nacionales.”<sup>72</sup> The use of *vergüenza*, which translates roughly to a sense of shame, was an appropriation of Chibas’ famous slogan “vergüenza contra dinero”, a phrase that exalted Cubans’ sense of honor over money.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>72</sup> “El Monumento a Chibás,” *Bohemia*, August 26, 1951, 77.

With its characteristic investigative sense of immediacy, *Bohemia's En Cuba* section described the moment when the manager of *Bohemia's* printing press and an old friend of Chibás' and fellow Ortodoxo, Enrique del Porto, walked into the Aula Magna in the University of Havana, where Chibás' body was lying in an open coffin. At Quevedo's behest, Del Porto solemnly walked into the stately ceremonial hall to deliver Chibás' last copy of *Bohemia*, which had yet to hit newstands. *En Cuba* described the scene and its significance:

Durante años Porto había visto al líder máximo de su partido leer la Revista a hurtadillas, y le había entregado los últimos pliegos impresos un día antes de salir ésta a la calle. El pasado Viernes, como cumpliendo una cariñosa obligación, fué a llevarle por última vez su número de BOHEMIA; todavía sin encuadernar, tal como Chibás acostumbraba a leerla. Se abrió la caja para dar cumplimiento a este postrer tribute sentimental. Luego la tapa volvió a cerrarse sobre el rostro sereno y tranquilo-como si estuviera durmiendo-de Eduardo R. Chibás.<sup>73</sup>

Porto's poignant act underscores both the reverence in which Chibás was held by Quevedo, who had always made sure Chibás had his advanced copy of the magazine, and symbolized the reverence Chibás held for *Bohemia*. The edition covering Chibás' funeral broke records as the largest weekly circulation of a publication Latin America had ever seen. 315,000 copies were sold in less than an hour.<sup>74</sup>

Two years after Chibás' death in 1953, the US State Department had classified *Bohemia* magazine as the most influential periodical in the country, calling it "the sounding board by politicians and intellectuals" that was read by government officials as well as the masses and had the most diversified circulation of any Cuban publication. It had the reputation, the memorandum continued, of being one of the best magazines in Latin America. At the end of the description of

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<sup>73</sup> "Con el ultimo ejemplar de *Bohemia*," *En Cuba* section, in *Bohemia*, August 26, 1951, 69.

<sup>74</sup> Editorial: "Espíritu de la Portada," *Bohemia*, August 26, 1951.



*Bohemia's* statistics, the paper added: "It presently is severely anti-Batista."<sup>75</sup>

The Italian social theorist Antonio Gramsci, a contemporary of Cuba's Generation of 1930 and the country's struggles against authoritarianism in the 1920s and 1930s, once assigned media and journalists a significant role in social change when he wrote: "revolution...was not the moment of taking power but a process that began before that moment and continued afterward."

<sup>76</sup> *Bohemia's* prominence and popularity with the Cuban people fits in with the Gramscian dictum of the importance of media support before the moment of taking power and confirms that the vehicle to build a consensus around the notion of revolution existed and was functional.

Pedro Pablo Rodriguez makes a point of noting that *Bohemia* not only opposed Batista's coup but was the only publication that printed articles by none other than Fidel Castro, who protested his incarceration after his failed attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953. He writes that *Bohemia* also distinguished itself as the only publication that printed graphic images and testimonies of Batista's "barbarous and criminal regime."<sup>77</sup> These images, along with the iconic covers that emulated the aesthetic properties of the artistic movements of the day and appropriated from Cuban history (especially the foundational discourse of independence heroes like José Martí) were central to the construction of a revolutionary narrative predicated on the notions of liberation, redemption, social justice and national sovereignty.

Events such as Chibás' funeral, the largest gathering of its kind in Cuban history, and the historic role played by *Bohemia* in reporting and analyzing public sentiment on the power of Chibás' hold on the Cuban people were important lessons for a young Fidel Castro, who was

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<sup>75</sup> US State Department, Foreign Service Dispatch, *Data Regarding Most Influential Cuban Periodicals*, 1953, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Darling, *Latin America, Media, and Revolution*, 7.

<sup>77</sup> Rodriguez, "Biografía de *Bohemia*", 8.

preparing to run for office under Chibás' party the following year, elections that would never take place. Castro would however obtain something far more powerful than the mantle of the Ortodoxo party. As he watched the throngs of masses that mourned and cried for Chibá, Castro must have wondered if the power of the people and mass movements such as these, aided by a media led by *Bohemia*, would provide a far more effective path to arrive at a revolutionary Cuba.

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Quevedo's proposal for a statue to Chibás would not be realized until many years later, under very different circumstances. In the meantime, Quevedo would be forced to contend with another, even more brutal Batista dictatorship. It is to *Bohemia's* coverage of the 1950s political crises and the many challenges presented by the Batista regime that the next chapter will turn. The 1950s were the zenith of *Bohemia's* power and prestige and regular circulation would hover at close to half a million by 1958. Quevedo would purchase his closest competitors, *Carteles* and *Vanidades*, outright in 1953; dominating the Cuban media market like no other Cuban had done before.

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<sup>78</sup> Prada, *La Secretaria de la República*, 120.

CHAPTER 4  
CAÍDA SIN GLORIA: BATISTA'S MADRUGONAZO AND THE END OF  
CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY IN CUBA, MARCH 1952

In the midnight hours of March 10, 1952 Fulgencio Batista and his supporters from the army drove through post 4 of the Camp Columbia barracks and staged a coup against the democratically elected government of Carlos Prío. Few of the men at Columbia were aware that a small group of conspirators had arranged to facilitate an easy control of the camp. <sup>1</sup> Before dawn, all of Cuba was under the military's control and by day's end, Prío, along with his family and close associates, sought asylum at the Mexican embassy and left Cuba shortly thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

Most Cubans viewed politicians with cynicism and even disgust, but many were not yet prepared to give up on the country's twelve-year democratic experiment and they were surprised by the inertia of Prío's government-in spite of countless warnings by both friends and enemies. <sup>3</sup> Out of twenty Latin American countries, Cuba had shone as a democratic beacon for the rest of the region, especially those plagued with the *dictaduras caudillescas*. Rumors about a military coup had been circulating in the press, however, for months. In early January journalist Mario Kuchilán wrote in his column for *Prensa Libre*: "We have just received a report verified through a second channel, that a conspiracy is brewing between army officers and former military men in plain clothes, and that the date to act would be May 1<sup>st</sup>." <sup>4</sup> The idea for the coup was likely born out of Batista's calculation that he and the military could capitalize on Cuban dissatisfaction with the corruption and graft that had characterized the recent Auténtico

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<sup>1</sup> Raul Eduardo Chao, *Three Days in March*, Washington DC: Dupont Circle Editions, 2013, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 50.

<sup>3</sup> Chao, *Three Days in March*, 179.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

administrations of Ramón Grau and Carlos Prío. In addition, Batista likely surmised that the violence between criminals and gangsters, which euphemistically termed 'grupos de acción', had further discredited these elected governments, paving the way for a “strict” military regime.<sup>5</sup>

Corruption and violence notwithstanding, Cuba had slowly but steadily begun the long path of consolidating a representative democracy that had made it one of the few representative Latin American political systems of the last twelve years. The two top contenders for the presidency that year, Roberto Agramonte from the Ortodoxo party and Carlos Hevia for the Autenticos, were two relatively honest, if colorless, candidates in an election (which also featured Batista as a third party candidate) that perhaps could have steered the country in a more dignified direction. For many, Batista’s latest coup had made Cuba into just one more Latin American country subject to the whims of another *dictadura caudillesca*. From Batista’s point of view (and his later public announcements) his regime represented a “cleansing” of sorts that put Cuba back on the path to peace and progress. Having appropriated his own legacy as the transitional figure after the downfall of the Gerardo Machado’s dictatorial regime in what was termed “The Sargents Revolution” of 1933, Batista legitimated his 1952 midnight coup, *el madrugonzao*, by pretending to represent the transitional figure who would once again save the Republic from itself.<sup>6</sup>

As Yeidy Rivero has documented, the police had occupied all the radio and television

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<sup>5</sup> The so-called *grupos de acción* of the 1940s and 1950s were remnants of the student groups of the 1930s that had formed in opposition to Machado and to bring the repressive *machadistas*, which were not brought before the courts, to justice. By the 1940s these groups had essentially degenerated into gangs that sought to defend their turfs, exhorted money, and settled scores. See Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution...*, 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> The March 10 coup is known by many names: *el cuartelazo*, *el golpe del 10 de marzo*, *el madrugonazo*, *el marzato*, and *el golpe de la zunzundamba*. The latter less-known epithet refers to a popular jingle at the time that defined the Afro-Cuban word *zunzundamba* as *el pajarito lindo de la madrugada*, or the beautiful midnight bird; a reference to the fabled midnight hours in which the coup took place. See José Luis Padron and Luia Adrián Betancourt, *Batista: el Golpe*, (Havana, Ediciones Unión, 2013), 60.

stations, Cuba's two television stations cancelled all its programming. The day after the coup, the minister of information met with all radio and television owners to let them know that they were free to express their opinions if they did not allow private individuals to take to the microphone.

<sup>7</sup>Commercial television would resume its regular flow of programs, advertisements, and schedules, but as Rivero has argued, "government censorship would frame a new style of television production."<sup>8</sup> The day after the coup however, the opinions of the journalists of the printing press, were swiftly, if cautiously, expressed. Contrary to what Raul Eduardo Chao the self-proclaimed 'dean of the Cuban press', the nation's oldest and most conservative daily newspaper, *Diario de la Marina* condemned the coup by offering a somewhat mild rebuke. The influential daily called on Batista to do a great service to Cuba by preserving "the glories of its social and political existence, which are its freedoms: freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom for political gatherings, freedom of enterprise and freedom of movement for all citizens."<sup>9</sup> While it implored Batista to honor Cuba's civil liberties it also explicitly justified the coup:

We must accept that there were extreme and grave conditions known to the military but not to public opinion and the press. They must have posed a terrible and imminent threat to the Republic and we believe the Cuban army had to proceed fast and silently apply this radical remedy that stops the progress of 20 years of Cuban political life. In short, the putsch against the extant government was justified: any other action could not have been expected.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of its exhortation to the new *de facto* government to respect Cuba's freedoms and restore

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<sup>7</sup> Yeidy Rivero, *Broadcasting Modernity: Cuban Commercial Television 1950-1960*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 65-66.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>9</sup> "El cambio de gobierno; Cuba no debe retroceder en su historia de libertades y democracia," *Diario de la Marina*, March 11, 1952, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Chao, *Three Days in March*, 180.

the country back to constitutional order as soon as possible, *Diario de la Marina*, as it had done in the past with its controversial pronouncements on the deaths of José Martí and Antonio Maceo, ignored its self-proclaimed motto of “120 years of service to the general and permanent interests to the nation.”<sup>11</sup>

Over on Trocadero street in Central Havana, Quevedo found himself in a quandary the morning of the coup as he faced the unique set of challenges that weeklies faced when presented with major news events after the stories have been written and turned in. The week’s edition of *Bohemia* had been edited and set to hit the printing presses by the end of the day. *Bohemia*’s editors and writers would have to move fast in order to include news on the *madrugonazo*.<sup>12</sup> Quevedo immediately sent his reporters to investigate the happenings at the Camp Columbia barracks and the Presidential Palace and then began to coordinate and organize *Bohemia*’s response in an editorial aptly titled ‘Ante el hecho consumado.’<sup>13</sup> Quevedo’s long-standing opposition to dictatorships and his fervent championing of democratic and nationalistic principles instinctly drove him to prepare for *Bohemia* what many would consider the loudest protest of Batista’s maneuver in the press. That morning, it also occurred to him that Batista’s angst and his decision to seize control of the government might have been fueled by the results of a recent *Bohemia* survey that had placed him dead last in the polls for the coming presidential elections.<sup>14</sup> The elections had been only eighty days away.

Quevedo’s reaction to Batista’s coup was metaphoric of a pattern in his life; a

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>12</sup> Taped interview with Pedro Yanes by Richard Denis in Miami, Florida, May 30, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Taped Interview with Oscar Zangroniz by Richard Denis in Miami, Florida, June 7, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 773.

professional and personal messianic understanding of *Bohemia's* role in serving the interests of the Cuban people by reflecting popular sentiment and staunchly defending the causes of liberty, social justice, and democracy. Moreover, this tradition had been nourished by *Bohemia's* myriad campaigns and contests throughout its forty-five-year existence that sought to promote social causes by engaging and involving a broad range of multi-class Cubans to participate in various forms of civic activism. *Bohemia's* role in helping build and strengthen civil society in turn helped fortify the magazine's democratic tradition and solidified its status as Cuba's most popular print publication. The relationship between *Bohemia's* democratic tradition and its commitment to involving readers by encouraging them to become a part of the island's civil society also helped sell more magazines. These traditions reflected Quevedo's understanding of both his own role as a political missionary and the purpose of journalism as a vehicle in which to agitate for political change, which in the context of the early 1950s included revolution.

In taking a stand against *el madrugonazo's* usurpation of democracy, Quevedo tapped into instincts honed throughout years of opposing authoritarian regimes around the world. Although his frequent stomach ailments were a painful physical reminder of Batista's repressive tactics, little did Quevedo know that directing the editorial for that week, titled "Ante el Hecho Consumado", was only the beginning of the magazine's longest and most arduous struggle against a leader that would become one of the most vilified in Cuba's history.

### **Confronting el *Madrugonazo* and the Post-Moncada World (1952-1958)**

Quevedo's dilemma on the morning of Monday March 10, 1952 had forced him to revamp that week's edition, which included scrapping the planned cover and holding the printing presses for his reporter's stories on the unfolding events and that week's editorial. As *Diario de la Marina's* tepid response to the *madrugonazo* underscores, few press outlets openly

condemned Batista's coup.<sup>15</sup> That relative silence would be shattered on Thursday when *Bohemia's* latest edition hit Havana's newsstands.

The cover featured a red banner against a white background with the words 'Con los Ultimos Aconcetimientos'. In his editorial, Quevedo invoked *Bohemia's* historic role in the promotion of democracy and repudiation of dictatorships throughout the continent. By evoking the magazine's support for those fundamental principles, Quevedo was able to frame *Bohemia's* condemnation as its duty and civic responsibility.

BOHEMIA tiene una tradición de lucha por las instituciones democráticas, que no abandonará jamás. En todo momento hemos alzado nuestra voz sin apostasies ni temores, contra los regimenes de fuerza que constituyen un baldón del continete. Vivíamos orgullosos de Cuba fuese una de las pocas naciones de América en que la democracia se practicaba a plenitude. De ahora en adelante ese orgullo será sustituido por un gran abatimiento, por una honda congoja. Tambien esta patria acaba de ingresar en la serie fatidica de las republicas americanas donde los gobiernos permanecen o se suceden uno a otros sin que el pueblo intervenga en las alternativas del Poder...

*Bohemia's* years as a refuge for Latin American revolutionaries and Cuba's own recent history as a supporter of democratic revolutions in fellow Latin American countries (such as 1947's ill-fated attempt to overthrow the Dominican Republic's dictator Rafael Trujillo in an operation supported by then President Grau known as Cayo Confites) were evoked to highlight the shame that had suddenly befallen the former beacon of democracy.

The editorial then went on to outline a way out of the morass Batista had suddenly subjected the country to while calling on *Bohemia's* historic support of civil liberties and democratic principles:

BOHEMIA reafirma su adhesión a los principios civiles y democráticos que bunden sus raices en la gesta emancipadora... Creemos... que el golpe de estado del 10 de marzo ha

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<sup>15</sup> For a selective view of how different publications responded to the coup see Chao, *Three Days in March*, 179-184. I take issue with Chao's interpretation of the press' response based on my own readings of the various editorials in their entire context.



sido un grave error, que ha frenado en seco las esperanzas de todo un pueblo para superarse a si mismo... Creemos que sólo bajo el imperio de la Ley y dentro de los límites de la Constitución pueden desarrollarse los pueblos hacia la libertad, la igualdad y la fraternidad.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the editorial warned, Batista's usurpation of democracy would cast a pall on the long-anticipated celebrations of Cuba's upcoming Golden Jubilee. In recalling the dashed hopes of the nation, *Bohemia* was offering its condolences to democracy on Cuba's behalf. The editorial does not offer a solution to the crisis but instead calls on Batista to do the right thing and return the country to constitutional rule.

In the first two months after the coup, Batista relied on subtle forms of censorship such as coercive phone calls from Ernesto de la Fe, a little-known journalist turned Batista's Minister of Propaganda, who led the newly established office.<sup>17</sup> De la Fe would request that a certain news item be published or not, and many editors complied out of fear.

Within two months of taking power, Batista resorted to bribing the press and used lottery proceeds to buy the complicity of the press. One of those who was neither afraid nor bought was Quevedo, whose *Bohemia* continued to relentlessly criticize the de facto nature of the government and press for a solution to the national crisis. Perhaps as a result, between August of 1952 and July of 1953 there was relatively little censorship in Cuba.<sup>18</sup> Undoubtedly, *Bohemia's* fearless coverage of the opposition's rebuke and, whenever possible, Batista's overt repression, gave civic activism a boost and public platform.

Weeks later, this editorial inspired an array of manifestos from students at the University

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<sup>16</sup> Miguel Angel Quevedo, "Ante el hecho consumado," *Bohemia*, March 16, 1952, 51.

<sup>17</sup> Kelsey Vidaillet, "Violations of the Press in Cuba: 1952-1969," Paper presented at conference on Cuba in Transition, Miami, Florida, August 2006, 286.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

of Havana and more incisive editorials from Quevedo as well as some of Cuba's most renowned intellectuals such as Jorge Manach. The student directorate of the University of Havana had their manifesto featured prominently with a quote from José Martí that likened students to freedom's most powerful army. The declaration published in *Bohemia* was significant in that it placed the university students on the frontline of the opposition to Batista from day one. Indeed, through its many editorials that called for the restoration of democracy and civil liberties and the publishing of documents that took a stand against the Batista dictatorship, Quevedo had also placed *Bohemia* firmly and squarely on the front line of the media opposition to Batista. Within sixteen months, that resolve would be severely tested.

### **Con Censura: Moncada and the Silencing of the Press (1953)**

Amid the revelry of Santiago de Cuba's Santa Ana carnival celebrations on July 26, 1953, Batista's regime received the most coordinated armed attack against it since the coup. Several conspiracies and plots against Batista's regime had been uncovered in early 1953 but even though they lacked coherence and were all stunted, Batista felt threatened enough to postpone elections he had scheduled for that November until June of 1954. Just before dawn on that mid-summer night in July, Fidel Castro led a band of 135 men and women to storm the country's second largest military barracks. By day's end the rebels were either dead, imprisoned, or (like Castro) on the run.<sup>19</sup>

Young reporter Marta Rojas, who happened to be in Santiago taking photographs for an assignment heard what sounded like firecrackers just after midnight. Her companion, *Bohemia* photographer Francisco Cano said to her "It looks like we won't be able to take anymore

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<sup>19</sup> Antonio de la Cova, *The Moncada Attack: Birth of the Cuban Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 119, 250.

photographs, those were gunshots.”<sup>20</sup> At Quevedo’s behest, Rojas arrived in Havana the next day and met the editor for the first time, who decided to pay her handsomely for her report and photos and asked her to work for *Bohemia*. “He was flabbergasted at the photos. He was convinced they had to be published in the very next edition.”<sup>21</sup>

Although the attacks ended in spectacular failure they were the most potent threats to the regime thus far and a shaken Batista wasted no time in suspending constitutional guarantees and letting Cubans know this type of dissent would no longer be tolerated: “Nuestra tolerancia ha sido mal interpretada; pero eso ha terminado-seremos justos pero enérgicos.”<sup>22</sup> To his point he began to enforce the Law of Public Order, which, among other repressive measures, imposed censorship of the press.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, Quevedo decided to get around the censor by simply printing the photo montage of the attack and the consequences of the crackdown using the official version of the events that Rojas had obtained at the press conference by the authorities in Santiago following the attack as the text. It was a brilliant tactical move that allowed the graphic images to pass the censors.<sup>23</sup> The bloody corpses of the dead and tortured needed no interpretation. The brutal crackdown shocked the sensibilities of many Cubans. As other newspapers began to print photographs of the events, Batista applied an even stricter form of censorship and even published the name of *Bohemia's* censor, which did not allow the magazine to discuss the Moncada attack until guarantees were restored three months later.

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<sup>20</sup> Taped interview with Marta Rojas by Richard Denis, Havana, Cuba, June 18, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Jorge Eduardo Gutierrez Bourricaudy, *Los caminos del Moncada*, (Havana: Editoria Historia, 2013), 173.

<sup>23</sup> Taped interview with Marta Rojas by Richard Denis, Havana, June 18, 2015.

*Bohemia's* first editorial on the events surrounding the attack was published in the November 1, 1953 edition. Quevedo once again evoked the centrality of *Bohemia's* role in the history of the Cuban Republic:

La censura de prensa es algo que molesta a lo más íntimo y noble de la conciencia cubana. Por tradición, por temperamento, por lealtad a la fe de nuestros mayores, el cubano siente la libertad como un bien sin el cual no vale la pena vivir la vida. Lo hemos demostrado todo a largo de nuestra historia. Medio siglo de luchas-de sangre, sudor y lágrimas-nos costó conquistar una libertad política, que nada vale si esta limitada por restricciones como las que acabamos de padecer. El cubano está dispuesto a hacer dejación de muchas cosas...Pero a lo que no está dispuesto a renunciar, por nada de este mundo, es a pensar en alta voz y sin hipocresías, como quería Martí.<sup>24</sup>

Foundational heroes like Martí were once again summoned as the paragons of the most dignified form of *cubanidad* that Cubans should feel proud to emulate in their struggle against dictatorship. *Bohemia* and its principles were themselves essential components of that *cubanidad*. Democratic principles were not only the legacy of the foundational heroes they were also norms that comprised any civilized society.

BOHEMIA quiere reafirmar una vez más sus principios de siempre, que son, a fin de cuentas, la razón de ser nuestra nacionalidad, el legado que nos transmitieron nuestros libertadores y las normas de vida de toda sociedad civilizada.<sup>25</sup>

Taking on the most draconian policy of the regime so far, Quevedo was no less equivocal in his reaction to the hated Law Decree 997: “Esa Ley-Decreto 997 constituye uno de los esperperpentos jurídicos más extraordinarios que se hayan perpetrado jamás contra el derecho y la civilidad en nuestra patria.”<sup>26</sup> Quevedo once again thrust *Bohemia* head first into its role as the media’s primary arbiter of what was considered just and in the service of the magazine’s

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<sup>24</sup> Miguel Angel Quevedo, “Nuestra Palabra,” *Bohemia*, November 1, 1953, 69.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

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Buttressing his political independence was the economic windfall that resulted from the magazine's popularity with advertisers and its rising circulation numbers. Toward the end of 1953 (with Batista still firmly in control of Cuba), Quevedo, never one content to rest on his laurels, decided to purchase *Bohemia's* two closest competitors outright, *Carteles* and *Vanidades*, which he promised would also be at the service of the Cuban nation.

Outgoing editor Alfredo Quilez's farewell editorial spoke to the confidence and esteem in which he held both Quevedo and *Bohemia*, but it also presented the *Bohemia* editor with somewhat of a challenge:

Miguel Ángel Quevedo ha demostrado su gran habilidad periodística con el éxito insuperable alcanzado por nuestro querido colega "Bohemia" sin precedente en la historia de nuestra prensa. Y el nos ha asegurado que Habra de velar con celo infatigable por mantener la tonica y proyecciones constructivas que han caracterizado a CARTELES. El lo puede hacer y abrigamos la absoluta confianza de que EL ASI LO HARA.<sup>27</sup>

While he expressed his confidence, Quilez also decided to publicly declare his hope that Quevedo would continue to keep up the quality that had made *Carteles* the second most popular magazine in Cuba, a challenge that Quevedo met by delegating the direction of his new venture to the able hands of his trusted associate and *Bohemia* journalist Antonio Ortega. Both magazines updated to splashy new formats in February of 1954, but Quevedo's heart and soul remained at *Bohemia*, a sentiment that is evidenced by the fact that he expressed so little interest in his new ventures he never once set foot in their offices.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Alfredo Quilez, "Nuestra despedida", *Carteles*, January 10, 1954, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Taped interview with Oscar Zangróniz by Richard Denis in Miami, Florida, June 10, 2015.

## ***El Problema Cubano: Dreaming of Democracy and the 1954 Elections***

With Castro and the “muchachos del Moncada” safely away in jail, Batista, conscious of his self-image and painfully aware of the provisional nature of his rule, sought to bring a veneer of legitimacy to his regime while he sought to quell the clamor for elections by scheduling them for November 1, 1954. The viability of the Cuban political party system however was shaky. Cuba’s two main political parties, the Auténticos and the Ortodoxos, were beset by internecine feuds that fractured and put their competitiveness in the future elections on questionable ground.

Quevedo, who was Ortodoxo party founder Chibás’ close friend for over thirty years, was a fervent Ortodoxo. Although the party had been the strong favorite to win the aborted 1952 elections under the candidacy of Roberto Agramonte, the party had steadily lost its luster since Chibás’ death, and Agramonte’s uninspiring figure was unable to project the leadership qualities that were demanded of an opposition party that aimed to reinstate Cuba’s democratic institutions. In January of 1954, Auténtico former President Grau, announced his desire to be that party’s candidate just as Auténtico former President Prío decided to abstain from the elections. Even though the Auténticos were split, with Prío firmly in the *abstencionista* camp, Grau was their undisputed leader. But the Ortodoxos were a different story altogether. Not only could they not agree on who should be their leader, they could not agree on whether they should take the path of civic resistance or join Prío’s Auténticos in advocating an armed solution to the crisis. Anxious to see the party of Chibás not lose an opportunity to capitalize on an electoral formula that could dislodge Batista, Quevedo decided to hold a conference at his ranch, Buenavista, to bring all the party’s factions together and make the dream of *la unidad Ortodoxa* a reality. Quevedo, who had always sworn he was not now or ever interested in political office nonetheless saw his intervention as not only a necessity but indeed an *obligation*.

On February 28, 1954, the week after the Buenavista conference, in which the Ortodoxo

factions reached a tenuous agreement to unify under the presidency of Raul Chibas (Eddy Chibas' brother), *Bohemia* printed a photo montage of the historic conference and Quevedo himself penned a rare editorial placing himself (and not explicitly *Bohemia*) at the center of and as the arbiter of Cuba's political maelstrom. He evoked the self-martyred Chibas, waxing poetic about his duty to his friend and the country, in explaining his role to readers.

En días anteriores, al demandarse mi concurso a los efectos generosos y pulcros de lograr la unidad en una Ortodoxia fragmentada, no podía incurrir en esquividad o en omisión. Estuve unido a Eduardo R. Chibas, fundador del Partido...por una amistad entrañable. Lo menos que podía hacer, en recuerdo devotísimo del Gran Inmolado, era allanar los caminos para que la obra que brotara de su espíritu luminoso...no se dispersara o se quebrantara, especialmente en una hora aciaga de nuestra historia republicana, cuando se requiere, en defensa de nuestra democracia, la presencia de partidos homogéneos y fuertes, con densidad de ideales ennoblecidos en su seno y no con la mera acumulación de apetitos y avideces en su estructura.<sup>29</sup>

While Quevedo's "intervention" in his call for party unity did not ultimately have a lasting effect on Ortodoxo party unity, it nonetheless demonstrated that even though he did not consider himself a politician, he was certainly not above using his influence as *Bohemia's* editor to intervene to help the political party he most sympathized with. In this way, Quevedo himself became the protagonist in the Cuban political machinations that sought a way out of the national crisis.

Solving *el problema cubano* became a constant theme not just in *Bohemia's* political coverage, but also in its celebration of holidays such as Christmas and New Year's Eve. Even a seemingly routine occasion such as Father's Day would also afford Quevedo an opportunity to interpret a father's responsibility to his child as a metaphor for *el problema cubano* and reiterate *Bohemia's* commitment to its readers and Cuba in the process. The centrality of *Bohemia's* role in helping to shape the Cuban consciousness was never far from his mind, or *Bohemia's* pages:

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<sup>29</sup> Miguel Ángel Quevedo, "Informe sobre una gestión," *Bohemia*, February 28, 1954, 73.

Lo que ha querido esta revista, siempre preocupada por su condición representativa de la opinión nacional, es fijar en una dimensión mayor, de suprema importancia humana, el homenaje anual a la paternidad. Ojalá nuestro país, por acción y obra de todas las generaciones de diversas edades, se haga capaz de brindar mana a sus juventudes lo único que ellas ansian de versa: una patria más justa y mayor, como sus fundadores la soñaron.<sup>30</sup>

In evoking the founding fathers and the myth of their “dream” for Cuba, Quevedo was also enshrining Bohemia’s own historic role in not only helping forge Cubans’ perception of their responsibilities in helping construct a more socially just Cuba, but in the creation of the myth itself. *Bohemia*’s cover on the fourth week of January of any given year invariably featured the apostle of the nation himself, Jose Martí, whose birthday was on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The first week of December often featured revolutionary war hero Antonio Maceo, who died on December 7. These associations helped construct perceptions of morality, duty and dignity that *Bohemia* would call upon and encourage Cubans to emulate in the search for the elusive solution to *el problema cubano*.

### ***El Régimen de las Bolas: Civil War and Censorship (1956-1957)***

Although the result of outright fraud, Batista’s landslide “victory” in 1954 left him feeling confident about his power and less threatened by the Moncada insurgents and, along with the Congress, passed an amnesty bill that guaranteed the freedom of all political prisoners including Fidel Castro, who within weeks was in Mexico planning for armed insurrection. On December 2, 1956 Fidel Castro and 81 rebels landed in Cuba to begin their armed struggle against Batista, who “proclaimed a state of siege” and once again imposed censorship.<sup>31</sup> For the next two years until Batista’s fall, press censorship was more the norm rather than the exception. Out of the 104

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<sup>30</sup> Miguel Angel Quevedo, “El día de los padres,” *Bohemia*, June 13, 1954, 59.

<sup>31</sup> Vidaillet, 289.



*Bohemia* issues in between December 1956 and December 1958, only thirty featured news or opinion on the insurrection; the result of Quevedo's decision to not print any editorial comments at all during times of censorship. An editorial from March 3, 1957 explained his decision.<sup>32</sup>

BOHEMIA, de acuerdo con sus normas editoriales ya conocidas, ha dejado de publicar todo editorial, todo juicio, todo comentario sobre la actualidad durante el periodo de censura. Esta inhibición significaba no sólo nuestra protesta contra esa medida, sino que era la única respuesta digna a ella. No se puede decorosamente opinar cuando no hay libertad para opinar. Y si no hay libertad para opinar sobre cuestiones políticas, lo natural es que no la haya tampoco para opinar sobre las cuestiones sociales, económicas o culturales.

Por eso, para no caer en discriminaciones que, además de sutiles serian absurdas, BOHEMIA suprimió su sección "En Cuba", sus editoriales y todas aquellas otras columnas desde las cuales se enjuiciaban de una manera independiente e imparcial todos los aspectos de la vida cubana.<sup>33</sup>

By choosing to scrap social, economic, or cultural commentary, Quevedo elevated *Bohemia's* principled stance above other publications, which did allow for opinionated comments on non-political issues.

This unequivocal attitude, which could have potentially damaged the magazine's readership numbers and economically hurt *Bohemia* resulted in a groundswell of interest when the rare uncensored editions did publish between December 1956 and December 1958, resulting in mammoth-sized editions and an even greater circulation. This stance also further enhanced the magazine, and Quevedo's prestige both domestically and internationally, as evidenced by his winning of two of journalism's most prestigious awards that year: Colombia University's Maria Moors Cabot Prize and the Inter American Press Association's Mergenthaler Award.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Patricia Calvo Gonzalez, *Visiones desde dentro. La insurrección cubana a través del Diario de la Marina y Bohemia (1956-1958)*, (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2014), 363.

<sup>33</sup> Miguel Angel Quevedo, "Nuestra invariable actitud", *Bohemia* March 3, 1957, 71.

<sup>34</sup> "En el Cincuentenario de BOHEMIA," *Carteles*, May 18, 1958, 90.

By lifting censorship of the press a week early on February 26, 1957 Batista could shroud his draconian repression of freedom of the press in noble terms. “The lifting of censorship,” the Minister of the Interior said, was “evidence of the feelings and desires of the Chief of State (President Fulgencio Batista) and his severe devotion to the liberty of the press and freedom of expression.”<sup>35</sup>

*Bohemia*'s first uncensored edition since the beginning of the armed insurrection in the Sierra Maestra mountains was significant for several reasons. *The New York Times* had just published Herbert Matthews' story on Fidel Castro. *Bohemia* was now following suit and would be the first Cuban press outlet to print the story in its entirety. The editorial went on to explain *Bohemia*'s modus operandi in dealing with the periodic shutting down and lifting of constitutional guarantees and accused the regime of suspending civil liberties whenever it perceived it was threatened, a burden shouldered disproportionately by a muzzled press.

Por que ese empeño en hacer recaer sobre los periodicos culpas que en manera alguna los conciernan?

Pero no podíamos aceptar salir a la calle con un criterio dirigido. O expresamos nuestro pensamiento sobre todo con toda libertad, o callamos nuestro pensamiento para cuando vengan tiempos mejores y sea posible sacarlo a la luz sin trabas ni disimulos. Esta es nuestra consigna. A ella nos debemos y queremos creer que ella es la máxima garantía de nuestros cientos de miles de lectores. Terminada la etapa de censura, BOHEMIA vuelve a ser lo que siempre ha sido: una publicación independiente, libre de todo partidismo político, amante y defensora apasionada de la libertad, firme en su doctrina y en su fe democráticas y cuidadosa de que en Cuba se respeta la voluntad mayoritaria del pueblo y se rinda culto a los derechos humanos.<sup>36</sup>

Quevedo's stinging indictment of Batista's censorship put *Bohemia* at the forefront of the media opposition to the regime by reasserting the magazine's unflagging independence; a virtue that harkened back to the earliest days of the publication's existence. Through this means and others,

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<sup>35</sup> Vidaillet, 290.

<sup>36</sup> Quevedo, “Nuestra invariable actitud,” 71.

Quevedo turned the logic for censorship on its head by explaining that a public without access to information is likely to engage in rumor mongering and falsehoods, what Cubans called *bolas*, making it worse for the regime.

Quevedo's characterization of Batista's regime as *el regimen de las bolas* accomplished two things. It belittled the government as one whose tight control on the media encouraged the dangerous spread of rumors that could in turn destabilize the country; and it allowed for Bohemia to present itself as truly Cuban, as wedded to promoting *Cubanidad* even in the face of a regime that had so egregiously violated the constitutionality of the Republic:

La censura periodística, lejos de beneficiar al gobierno que comete el error de dictarla, le causa un perjuicio mucho mayor que el que pudiera evitarse con el silenciamento de ciertas noticias y opiniones. Cuando la verdad de todos los días deja de ventilarse libremente en los periódicos, surgen las falsas especies, los infundios, los rumores alarmantes, todo eso que en criollo se denomina con el generico de 'bolas'. En el régimen de las 'bolas' hemos vivido durante estos oscuros días en que la prensa ha estado censurada.<sup>37</sup>

The regime was directly responsible both for the censorship of the press and for whatever forces would be unleashed because of Cubans' speculation of events on the island.

Quevedo then once again addressed the violations against the press by depicting *Bohemia* as the perennial watch-guard of all freedoms on the island. And lest the regime think it had done the Cuban people a favor by lifting censorship early, Quevedo offered the regime a civic lesson:

No basta con que se haya levantado la censura a la prensa. Hay que restituir plenamente las garantías constitucionales. Hay que respetar en la letra y en el espíritu las libertades públicas. Hay que poner en movimiento la política; pero no esa chabacana política de toma y daca que se ha practicado ultimamente, sino una política seria, honda, preocupada

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 71.

que indague en las causas de la crisis y busque el modo honrado de ponerle remedio.<sup>38</sup> By attacking the regime's tit-for-tat reactionary nature Quevedo offered a more effective way of dealing with the national crisis: an honest appraisal of the roots of the country's problems and the imposition of an honorable solution.

The editorial was both an indictment on the regime's abuses and a swipe at the ineffectual political system that had dominated Cuba for years. In agitating for a skeptical and disillusioned Cuban people, Quevedo once again placed *Bohemia* at the vanguard of the resistance against Batista. The magazine's political independence undoubtedly stemmed from the ideals of its founder, Quevedo Perez, and his determination to emulate the best of the publications he had worked for and learned from, both *El Figaro* and the fiercely independent *Letras*.

No less critical to *Bohemia's* ability to maintain its independent line was the fact that it was so economically successful. This financial success was predicated on several factors: the swell of interest from businesses to advertise in Cuba's most popular and widely read publication; its mushrooming circulation; and Quevedo's earlier acquisitions of *Bohemia's* closest competitors. Most other Cuban publications, with the possible exception of Sergio Carbó's *Prensa Libre*, had at some point not only benefited, but relied on government sinecures to remain afloat. Because many lagged in advertising and subscription sales they could not pay their journalists well; an issue that government ministries and public offices were keen on exploiting. Cuban revolutionary journalist Carlos Franqui recalled those heady days of the pre-revolutionary press: "El mayor problema de las empresas periodísticas cubanas era que, casi sin excepcion, carecian de independencia economica...habia una minoria de empresas, como

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 71.

Bohemia...que eran autosuficientes, lo que les permitia una mayor libertad informativa.”<sup>39</sup>

Only two weeks later, the March 17, 1957 edition covered an attack on the Presidential Palace meant to decapitate Batista’s regime by assassination. The attack, led by the leader of the Student Directorate Jose Antonio Echevarria ended in a bloodbath for the attackers, killing Echevarria and effectively terminating the leading role the student directorate had played in its opposition to the regime. In what seemed like a turning point in the conflict, Bohemia painfully concluded that violence might be the only solution to Cuba’s budding civil war. Quevedo, who opposed violence as a form of resistance, lamented the fact that, given Echevarria’s death, armed insurrection might present a legitimate path out of the national crisis. Conscious of the historic nature of *Bohemia’s* stand, the editorial explained the magazine’s coverage of the armed insurrection:

Durante cinco años BOHEMIA ha venido propugnando formulas que permitieran un entendimiento nacional. Lo hemos repetido incansablemente: precise arribar a una solucion politica que prevena el desgarramiento de una guerra civil. Desdichadamente esa Guerra civil esta ahi y a nadie le es dado ocultarla...”<sup>40</sup> =

*Bohemia* also found more subversive ways to oppose the regime. Beginning with the March 17, 1957, in recognition of the fact the 26 of July Movement now became the country’s best hope to dislodge the regime, Quevedo decided to show *Bohemia’s* support by shrouding every twenty-sixth page of the magazine in red and black, the colors of the rebel movement. Every week from then until the rebel army’s victory, even in times of strict censorship, Quevedo made sure that every page twenty-six included the colors red and black, usually coloring graphic illustrations of a short story. Through these acts, *Bohemia* skirted the censors and voiced its

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<sup>39</sup> Carlos Franqui, *Cuba, la Revolucion: Mito o realidad?; memorias de un fantasma socialista*, (Barcelona: Ediciones Peninsula, 2006), 265.

<sup>40</sup> “Documentos Gráficos Para la Historia,” *Bohemia*, March 17, 1957, 69.

support for the movement led by Fidel Castro.

After a brief seven-week period of press freedom in early 1958, Batista re-imposed censorship in March of 1958, a measure that was still effective when he fled Cuba in the early morning hours of January 1, 1959. Most Cubans rejoiced at the rebel victory and Bohemia prepared to celebrate the country's new freedom by publishing a mammoth edition dedicated to the very notion of liberty. The future for the freedom of the press looked bright.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The “illustrated weekly” that first appeared as *Bohemia* in 1908 barely resembled the format that Cubans grew accustomed to during the magazine’s zenith in the 1950s. What began as a space to display national literary and artistic talent, *Bohemia* grew into a press organ that questioned and challenged the country’s political, economic and status quo. Early demonstrations of civic activism and nation building called on Cubans to become participants, and not just spectators, in the construction of a sovereign and independent nation. While competing visions of nationhood undoubtedly framed the tensions and machinations for power in the early Republic, *Bohemia* strove to present a diverse array of voices that despite that diversity, all clamored for a Cuba that was for Cubans. In the process, *Bohemia* itself became a protagonist in the seminal events and issues that characterized republican Cuba. The magazine’s early independent stance not only distinguished it from other publications that accepted money from governments, it established a tradition of independence that would grow its prestige and position the magazine as the leading voice of opposition to the ills of Cuba’s state structures. *Bohemia* was emblematic of the evolution of journalism sometimes a driver of that evolution, sometimes a supporter, but always a significant player in shaping a journalistic discourse that resonated with Cubans hopes and frustrations in the nation-building project. *Bohemia*’s early mission of restoring the nationalist visions of the great nineteenth century journalists, became an attempt to shape the republican nation per ideals that included a sovereign and fair Cuba.

Under the younger Quevedo's stewardship *Bohemia* underwent a democratization of its contents and *Bohemia*’s early appeal to the upper classes was slowly replaced by coverage of the political, economic and social vicissitudes that the country endured in the turbulent 1920s and 1930s that appealed to a wider multiclass audience. As the magazine confronted the Machado

dictatorship Quevedo's ideological evolution was mirrored in *Bohemia's* editorial line and the magazine became known for its embrace of liberal democratic and nationalist principles. These philosophical convictions set *Bohemia* on a collision course with Batista's regime in the 1950s, a decade that saw the magazine at the vanguard of the opposition in the press to the dictatorship.

Contrary to some scholarly belief, *Bohemia's* editorial and news coverage did not solely embrace an armed solution to the conflict of the 1950s as led by Fidel Castro, but instead featured coverage that opposed dictatorship through civic action, unarmed confrontation, and propounded myriad political solutions to the crisis by Cuba's most renowned intellectuals and politicians. As the impasse entered the stage of civil war in late 1956, *Bohemia's* line shifted to an open embrace of the rebels. *Bohemia*, as led by Quevedo, sought ways to counter Batista's censorship and take advantage of periods when constitutional guarantees had been restored to print information that had been forbidden under Batista's censors. Its own commentary on censorship placed *Bohemia* at the center of the confrontation between the press and the government, and played an important role in shaping public discourse.

Further study should focus on other variables that served as the regime's responses to *Bohemia's* coverage. Articles that aimed to cast Batista in a more favorable light, as well as editorials by the regime's spokesperson Ernesto de la Fe, were also published by *Bohemia* and merit analysis, as do Quevedo's reasons for doing so. The relationship between *Bohemia* and the eventual victor in the Cuban civil war, Fidel Castro, should also be further explored to gain insight into how the rebel leader used and manipulated the press, particularly *Bohemia*, in constructing his own image and presenting his political, economic and social programs for the country. Many Cubans have argued that *Bohemia* was indispensable to the rebel victory and that without it, Castro and his forces may not have triumphed. This analysis is certainly deserving of



further investigation.

*Bohemia's* (and Miguel Angel Quevedo's) historical legacy on the political life of the nation and in contributing to the construction of Cuban national identity is undeniable. Cuban media scholars would be remiss to overlook the magazine's unique place in Cuban history as they would be to malign or dismiss Quevedo without critically examining his impact on twentieth century Cuban journalism.

Since *Bohemia's* first edition in 1908, its editors envisioned themselves as more than just a magazine or a historical chronicle of the Cuban Republic in all its glory and/or infamy. In time, it evolved from a magazine bent primarily toward providing literary and artistic content with an emphasis on the Cuban elite's social world to one that stood firm against tyranny and for liberty and social justice. Throughout, it never recoiled from insisting that it was a publication with a much greater purpose than selling copies, although it was also certainly that. Whether it was under the direction of its brainchild and founder Miguel Ángel Quevedo Perez or his son and namesake Miguel Angel Quevedo de la Lastra, *Bohemia* challenged itself to fulfill the nationalistic hopes of the country's founders. Its frequent allusions to the hardships and struggles of the nation's foundational heroes such as Jose Marti, Antonio Maceo, and Maximo Gomez reflected *Bohemia's* vision for itself as the journalistic representation of the men and women that had sacrificed for *la patria*, or the fatherland. Whether it was through its support for nationalistic art forms, the building of the country's civic institutions or its stand against exploitation of Cubans from corporate greed or dictatorship, *Bohemia* sought to present itself as a journalistic institution at the service of *la patria*.

While he had undoubtedly inherited his father's sharp business acumen, Quevedo was nevertheless able to use his editorial line to opine on the political, social and economic

convulsions that gripped Cuba beginning in the early 1930s. The Cuban press during this time, as it often did during social conflict, played an important role in defeating the Machado regime. By conveying information and opinions it also created the context within which opinions were formed. <sup>1</sup> It saw itself as faithful to its principles and its readers, who remained faithful to *Bohemia*, increasing its circulation and readership to ever larger numbers, from its debut of 4,000 in 1908 to its apex of an unprecedented 1,000,000 in 1959, only a year after the US's Time magazine hit that record itself. <sup>2</sup>

Quevedo's contribution to Cuban history is often acknowledged but minimized by the qualification that he was more impresario and less a writer. He is also a victim of the intense political polarization between Cubans and Cuban exiles. Vilified by some exiles as Castro's Frankenstein because of the immense support *Bohemia* extended for the rebel leader and maligned by Cuban officialdom's tendency to view anyone who fled the island as a traitor, Quevedo's legacy remains distorted and mostly unexplored. Further studies on *Bohemia* should critically examine the relationship between Quevedo's commercial interests in his ventures and his commitment to the fundamental principles he continuously claimed guided his stewardship of the magazine for over thirty years. Once viewed as one of Cuba's most powerful and influential men who declined calls to run for political office because he saw himself as having more power than the president, his role in Cuban history is emblematic of the power journalists wielded in

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Leslie, *Mass Media in Revolutionary Societies: A Case Study of El Universal of Mexico during the Oil Expropriation Crisis of 1938*, (University of Washington, 1983), vi.

<sup>2</sup> The circulation is even more impressive when comparing the respective populations of Cuba and the US. In 1958, Cuba's population was roughly 6.7 million,000 and the US population stood roughly at 175 million.

almost every aspect of the nation. Cuban journalism's relationship with politics, and roles of the owners and editors of the hundreds of republican publications that chronicled life on the island merit a much-needed investigation.

## CHAPTER 6 EPILOGUE

### **Editing the Past in Order to Form a More Perfect Union: La Edición de la Libertad (January 1959)**

Fidel Castro's portrait on *Bohemia* magazine's first cover after the triumph of the Revolution presented a bearded, mystical, and romantic Christ-like figure, with his eyes to the sky, ready to take Cuba, as *Bohemia* had put it in a previous edition, "from the darkness into the light."<sup>1</sup> Castro's neck glittered with the subheading "Honor and Glory to the National Hero". The messianic image of the rebel leader and the words 'National Hero' were the beginning of dialectic between word and image that helped to solidify the Revolution and began the process of editing a past that could best support the hard-fought rebel victory; a reputation that Fidel Castro had acknowledged when he called *Bohemia* "nuestro mas firme baluarte."<sup>2</sup> It was the first time he was called a hero in any Cuban print media, but the consensus building to galvanize support around his revolutionary cause by the magazine's editor and journalists had begun years before.

The first of the three "Ediciones de la Libertad", published on January 11, 1959, represented the apotheosis of *Bohemia's* support for Fidel Castro's movement and the insurrection against Fulgencio Batista. Quevedo decided to print an unprecedented one million copies to meet the expected demand. Cubans knew to expect extensive coverage of the revolutionary victory and many likely figured that *Bohemia's* edition would serve as the definitive journalistic account of the Revolution's triumph. Indeed, the record 210-page edition, packed with all of the domestic political news the magazine had been forbidden to print for the last ten months, seemed an auspicious beginning for press freedom under the Revolution.

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<sup>1</sup> Damian J. Fernandez, *Cuba and the Politics of Passion*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 71.

<sup>2</sup>

Castro's appearance on the cover is almost Christ-like and is at once self-assuredly calm and humble. It almost appears as if he is seeing something that no one else can, perhaps at another era in time; a nod maybe to those like independence heroes Marti and Antonio Maceo, who were struck down before they could achieve victory. Or perhaps he is glancing at the future; a nobler vision for the Cuban Republic. His calmness, however, belies the strained vehemence of the gun-toting soldier just off to his side, with his violent and intense grimace shrouded in darker hues; his Munch-esque scream adding a touch of expressionism to an otherwise realistic portrait of Castro. The soldier's grip on the rifle is at once victorious and fatalistic; celebratory and tragic. Bathed in light and darkness, the soldier is the quintessential Cuban; an inherently contradictory figure representing both the promise and hopelessness of the Cuban nation. Awash in an incandescent light that escapes the soldier, Castro appears as the only figure capable of uniting Cuba so that it may reap its promise of redemption and achieve true independence. He is the Messiah.

Damian J. Fernandez notes: "diverse religious perceptions on the island converged in 1959 to create a single perception of Fidel."<sup>3</sup> Castro was seen by many Cubans as the providential Christ figure that had been sent by a higher power to deliver the Cuban people from evil. Visual images such as *Bohemia's* cover were instrumental in enshrining that perception. It is not by accident that, once the page is turned on Castro's portrait, a photograph of Jose Antonio Echeverria's bloody and lifeless body (taken in 1957) greets the reader to what is the first story of the magazine. In fact, the dead constitute a common theme throughout the first edition.

Echeverria, the charismatic student leader who led an attack on the Presidential Palace in hopes of assassinating Batista and inspiring the Cuban people to revolt against the regime is

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<sup>3</sup> Fernandez, *Cuba and the Politics of Passion*, 72.

pictured slumped over on his side, his suit jacket open enough to reveal a bloody button down shirt. <sup>4</sup>His eyes closed and his face and hands bloody, Echeverria's corpse lays above the headline "Los Muertos Mandan". The small article below is more of a calling to the Cuban people and sets the morbid tone for the rest of the edition.

La primera palabra de Bohemia solo puede ser para los mártires.... Tenemos una solemne deuda con los muertos, y debemos empezar a saldarla con un saludo nacido de nuestro corazón que siente y de la conciencia que piensa. Nuestro tributo a los caídos meramente comienza ahora. <sup>5</sup>

The juxtaposition of word and image in this feature, punctuated by the *Bohemia* logo and the date of the edition just below Echeverria's head, while not fused as extremely as typographic art, nonetheless conspires to present a sensationalistic style that became crucial to *Bohemia's* efforts in editing a past its editors also had to reconcile with for themselves. Even though the words of Cuba's top intellectuals had graced its pages in the previous fifty years of its existence, the intriguing combination of the magazine's graphic images and compelling and pithy headlines were instrumental in radicalizing readers and enshrining the Revolution as a the culmination of all of their struggles. Lillian Guerra argues that in doing so, "*Bohemia* also claimed a stake in Fidel's victory by informing readers of its journalists' own secret, heroic crusade to document the actions of a regime that most other media had helped cover up." <sup>6</sup> The gallery of cadavers and tortured victims that followed in that first edition's pages stood as a testament to the stories that *Bohemia* could not publish under censorship but whose journalists nevertheless sought out to cover at their own personal risk. Quevedo and many Cuban journalists felt justified in editing the

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<sup>4</sup> Julio Fernández Leon, *Jose Antonio Echeverria: Vigencia y Presencia: Ante el cincuenta aniversario de su hoocausto*, (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2007), 466.

<sup>5</sup> "Los Muertos Mandan", *Bohemia*, January 11, 1959, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 42-43.

recent past in order to unite the country around a victory they perceived as not only Fidel Castro's or the 26 of July movement, but as their own.

Quevedo had, by this point however, inextricably tied himself, and *Bohemia*, to Castro and the Revolution. The edition featured photograph after photograph of Quevedo, in his trademark sunglasses, posing with the bedraggled but joyous rebels whose first order of business it seemed was to visit the magazine's offices. In one he stood with Conrado Bequer, a rebel leader from Castro's 26<sup>th</sup> of July movement. Bearded and draped in olive fatigues, the smiling Bequer looks almost dapper next to the shorter, taciturn and bespectacled Quevedo. In another, members of the student directorate that Echeverria had once led, who also served in the rebel army's Second Front in the Escambray mountains, surround Quevedo (who looks almost like a mobster in his sunglasses and with his arms crossed), in what appears to be his office. These images serve to underscore Quevedo's pride in having stood as the Revolution's "greatest bulwark" in the face of the regime's aggression. But perhaps the benefit of hindsight allows the contemporary reader to read the subtext and see the tragedy that seems to lurk in the photographs. For such an accomplished and powerful man, Quevedo appears almost lost, detached; overwhelmed by the multitude of forces that seem to have found their voice and place at last in a new Cuba. Quevedo could not know that in eighteen months he would be seeking asylum in the Venezuelan embassy after his hopes for a liberal-democratic revolution were all but shattered, but a close reading of the images and the man in them, reveals a sense of uncertainty that belies the other wise celebratory mood of the rebels.

The last thirty pages or so of the edition are dedicated to displaying a visual and textual chronology of the victims who fell in the last seven years of the regime—a chronology, quite simply, of the dead. Several hundred names were listed, accompanied by the gory photographs of

thirty-five male cadavers and one tortured female survivor. The headline on the first page reads in large bold type: “Mas de Venite Mil Muertos Arroja el Tragico Balance del Regimen de Batista.” Directly underneath is a photo of auto mechanic Ninive Broost’s body, eyes open, blood dripping from the ten bullets he received from Batista’s secret police in Santiago; one of the bullets seems to have punctured his throat and a long stream of blood drips down from his neck down past his chest. Visible on his right hand is a wedding ring. The ground he is lying on is drenched with blood, probably emanating from a wound on the back of his head. Underneath the photo is the subtitle “Era una victima más del Oriente heroico.”<sup>7</sup> The list of names and a brief description of the victim’s death begins on the top of the left page with the year 1952 and the month of March, the month of Batista’s coup.

This macabre chronology of the dead, as exceptionally horrible as it seems, is not what has had a lasting impact. It is the 20,000 body count that continues to draw controversy. While some scholars have debunked the figure as a myth created by Quevedo and his co-editor Enrique de la Osa, and an apocryphal suicide letter by Quevedo in 1969 purports to having made the figure up, Cuban scholar Maria del Pilar Díaz Castañón is nonetheless adamant:

*Bohemia* no ha inventado nada: se ha limitado a compilar las informaciones que día a día fueron publicados en-o comunicados a, que no es lo mismo-la prensa por las autoridades oficiales del batistato...*Bohemia* no afirma al publicar la lista de ‘20 mil muertos revolucionarios’, sino de más de veinte mil como saldo del violento regimen de Batista.<sup>8</sup>

Díaz-Castañón’s defense however is problematic. For one, only several hundred of the names were printed. Moreover, the dead were the victims of the terror emanating from both the Batista regime and the revolutionaries.

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<sup>7</sup> “Mas de Veinte Mil Muertos Arroja el Tragico Balance del Regimen de Batista,” *Bohemia*, January 11, 1959, 180.

<sup>8</sup> Díaz Castañón, *Prensa y Revolución: La magia del cambio*, , 299.



The little-known truth of the 20,000 dead has a somewhat less spectacular origin. As Max Lesnik recounted to me in an August 2015 interview: in the late 1950s former president Ramon Grau gave an interview for the *New York Times*, where he was asked about Batista's regime and its repressive tactics. In typical Grau fashion, which resembled the hyperbolic criollo storytelling mode he said with an exaggerated wave of his hand: "There must be about 20,000 dead!" The unproven claim was later picked up by Enrique de la Osa in order to give the first Liberty edition punch as *Bohemia* began the task of editing the last seven years of Batista's dictatorship. Even though there was no proof, and only about a thousand names could be verified, Quevedo did not contest de la Osa's claim and instead supported the sensationalistic headline.<sup>9</sup>

The veracity of the 20,000 dead notwithstanding, the images in *Bohemia's* chronology of the dead became iconic precisely because they were so persuasive. Lillian Guerra acknowledges the importance of this type of imagery in defining the grand narrative of the Revolution that would prove crucial to its consolidation. Images like those of Broost and Hernandez and the horrors they bespoke, as well as those of the jubilant crowds and victorious rebels played such a pivotal role "in placing Cubans outside the mundane circumstances of their daily lives and into the 'hyper-reality' of the revolution, that is, a utopia caught in the process of becoming."<sup>10</sup>

Ronald Jacobs has argued that "narrativity" is the central factor structuring news-work. Under this tradition, he argues, "news becomes a symbolic system in which the informational content of particular 'stories' become less important than the rehearsal of mythic 'truths' embodied within the story from itself..."<sup>11</sup> While *Bohemia's* news coverage of regime atrocities

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Max Lesnik by Richard Denis. August 17, 2015, Miami, FL.

<sup>10</sup> Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 29-30.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Cottle, *News, Public Relations and Power*, (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 15.

awakened many Cubans to the brutality of the Batista dictatorship, if sometimes did so using a narrative paradigm bordering on tabloid journalism. In a chapter published in 1988, Elizabeth Bird and Robert Dardenne argued that the news is not always objective reporting of fact but in fact a form of storytelling that functions in a mythological way.<sup>12</sup>

Castro and the press repeated this number and it became inscribed in official histories promoted by the state.<sup>13</sup> True to Jacobs' definition of "narrativity", the memory of the 20,000 became so embedded in the Cuban psyche that rightwing counterrevolutionaries and dissident former members of Castro's movement often cited the 20,000 number as fact.<sup>14</sup> Guerra writes:

The likely total was probably closer to three to four thousand. Nonetheless, the survival of the '20,000 martyrs' as a form of revolutionary shorthand for the cost of the war speaks to the power of *Bohemia's* first editions to shape public perceptions in foundational ways. The figure of the 20,000 dead became a key building block in the emerging grand narrative through which so many Cubans embedded their faith in Fidel.<sup>15</sup>

While the sensationalistic tone of the first Liberty edition reflected the euphoric atmosphere that underwrote the first four or so months of 1959, they also represented a break with the encyclopedic news coverage that had served to inform Cubans in the midst of a censorship that aimed to whitewash the regime's repression and undermine the armed rebellion in the Sierra Maestra and tits underground counterpoint in the cities. While the friction between the rebel forces was downplayed in the larger quest for resolve and unity, *Bohemia* had nevertheless given

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<sup>12</sup> Linda Daniele, "Myth, Chronicle and Story: Exploring the Narrative Qualities of News: Bird and Dardenne", *Adventures in Writing*, May 8, 2010.

<https://lindadaniele.wordpress.com/2010/09/08/news-as-narrative-myth-chronicle-and-story-bird-and-dardenne/>, Retrieved April 24, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 43.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

voice to the diversity of opinion and tactics that existed within the opposition to Batista. In the name of forging a unity that could solidify what was seen by Quevedo and other journalists as a victory that liberated the press, Quevedo chose to commit himself and his magazine to the revolutionary project wholeheartedly. The first journalistic task that he saw as indispensable to *Bohemia's* role as *la mas firme baluarte* was its editing of the recent past so as to legitimate not only journalists but also the Cuban people's sacrifices over the last seven years. To that point, the narrative of the 20,000 dead served the purpose of relegating Batista to the dustbin of history alongside the likes of Machado, whose own crimes had been documented in sources such as Peraza's *Crimenes y Horrores de un Régimen* and *Bohemia* itself. The task of editing the country's *machadista* past in the 1930s was cast aside in the interest of covering Batista's nascent military dictatorship in 1934, which would contribute directly to Quevedo's own physical suffering at the hands of Batista's henchmen and their fascist tactics such as the *palmacristazo*.

Irrespective of the origin of the notion of the 20,000 dead, the myth-creating impact of *Bohemia's* journalism coupled with its broad reach subscribes to Bird and Dardenne's argument that journalists sometimes operate like storytellers by using conventional structures to shape events into story. *Bohemia's* images and stories defined both the Batista regime and Castro's revolution in ways that reflected and reinforced Cubans' notions of reality. Bird and Dardenne's pithy adage succinctly expresses this argument: "News stories, like myths, do not 'tell it like it is', but rather, 'tell it like it means.'" <sup>16</sup>

The words and images in the first edition of *Bohemia* after the triumph of the Revolution are awash in metaphor and symbolism. As editor, Quevedo aimed to fuse a symbolic break with

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<sup>16</sup> Cottle, *News, Public Relations and Power*, 15.

the past by acknowledging its horrors with the need to look forward to a Cuba that could simultaneously embrace democratic ideals, national sovereignty and social justice. By reckoning with Cuba's past, and through its unfettered coverage of the unfolding events of 1959, *Bohemia* sought to catalyze Cubans around the virtuous ideas of mutual self-sacrifice and civic duty that would be required for, as Fidel Castro said, the arduous tasks that lay ahead in the construction of a new, more just Cuba.

### **Revolución Pero No Tanta-The End of Quevedo's *Bohemia***

That these endeavors would ultimately lead to the silencing of many Cuban voices that contested Fidel Castro's vision of the new Cuba was a tragic irony. In November 1959 Quevedo was present at a meeting with Che Guevara in which it was announced that after a cabinet shakeup in the revolutionary government, Guevara had been named president of the National Bank of Cuba.<sup>17</sup> *Bohemia* employee and Quevedo's friend Leonardo Cuesta remembers the moment when his boss told him the news of Guevara's appointment. "He was in shock. It was when he finally realized that the magazine could no longer be run as the capitalistic enterprise it had been for more than fifty years. Everyone knew that Che was a Communist and *Bohemia* depended on advertising sales to survive. Quevedo knew that selling advertising space would become more challenging given the economic structure the country seemed to be embracing under the increased sway of members of the PSP. Still, as Lillian Guerra notes, revolutionaries bristled at the suggestion that the Revolution itself was turning Communist and beginning in December 1959 a spate of unprecedented attacks on national newspapers swept the island.<sup>18</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> Cristina Saralegui, *Cristina: My Life as a Blonde*, (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 36.

<sup>18</sup> Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 107.

reason was the Cuban press' reprinting of articles from the Associated Press and other wire services in which U.S officials characterized the Revolution as Communist. <sup>19</sup>

That same month Quevedo authorized a secret fact finding mission to the eastern stretches of the island by *Bohemia's* young bright journalist Carlos Castañeda and his equally well known photographer, Eduardo Hernandez, who was simply known as Guayo. The ostensible reason for the tour of the island was to glean an impression of how the Agrarian Reform had affected Cubans in the six months since its implementation. Castañeda's widow Lillian, who accompanied the men on one of the missions, remembers the secrecy that shrouded these operations. <sup>20</sup> The trio's findings were nothing short of astounding: many municipal boards and public offices were being filled with members of the PSP. One literacy school Castañeda visited in Oriente province was using Marxist doctrine to teach students how to read. Castañeda recounts how her group wondered if Castro was aware of this infiltration by a group that had not directly participated in the revolutionary struggle. Carlos Castañeda had even interviewed Castro on the political television show *Ante la Prensa* only months earlier and the leader had famously quipped that the Revolution was not red but green like the palms of Cuba. Was he aware that the Communists were aiming to usurp Cubans' hard earned triumph, Castañeda remembers her group asking Quevedo. <sup>21</sup>

Other developments soon began to make the matter clearer for Quevedo. By February 1960, *Bohemia's* editor realized that the airing of dirty laundry, a hallmark of *Bohemia's* political coverage since the 1930s, would not be tolerated by Castro. This conundrum undoubtedly forced

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Leonardo Cuesta by Richard Denis in Havana, Cuba on July 9, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Lillian Castañeda by Richard Denis in Miami, FL. On June 9, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Quevedo to make the ultimate sacrifice and abandon the magazine that his father had started two months before he was born and had lasted for more than fifty years. Although *Bohemia's* role in helping to further legitimate and solidify the Revolution throughout 1959 and into 1960 while Quevedo still controlled the magazine lie outside the scope of this work, it is almost necessary to end this work by delving deep into the mind of the man that had contributed so much to the evolution of journalism throughout Cuba's republican period.

By July of 1960 Quevedo suddenly found himself, and his *patria*, without the critical voice that had provided a sense of comfort to Cubans who looked to the press, and particularly *Bohemia*, as that fourth power that validated their hopes and frustrations and legitimated their alternative visions of nation in opposition to the hegemonic visions propagandized by the state under the revolutionary leadership. While he had methodically planned to seek asylum in the Venezuelan embassy for months, when Quevedo suddenly found himself trapped in a space without a voice for the first time in his life, he decided to vent his hopes and frustrations to the one of *Bohemia's* young bright journalists, Carlos Castañeda, whose groundbreaking interviews with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara had caused consternation with some Cubans who had begun to question the shifting nature of the Revolution. Already in the forefront of Quevedo and Castañeda's minds, were the plans to revive *Bohemia* in the United States as *Bohemia Libre*. Already in New York with a group of other exiled *Bohemia* journalists, the young Castañeda was anxious to start the new venture from which he could begin criticizing the Revolution's turn toward communism and the Soviet Union. Quevedo implores Castañeda and his group to wait until he has safely left the island.

*Mi querido Castañeda: Hoy sabado día 6, acabo de recibir tus memorandums y la carta de Jorge (Saralegui). Todo ello con fecha 31 de julio (dia de mi cumpleaños). Las mismas me han llenado de satisfacción y gran alegría; no se pueden ustedes imaginar, que momentos mas tristes he pasado, siendo dia de la soledad, de mi*

*asilo, tantas traiciones y tanta miseria. A las dos horas de haberme asilado o sea el lunes 18 a las 10 de la mañana, ya me habían despojado de todo lo mío. Le incautaron y saquearon la finca y Varadero, el yate lo tienen dando viajes de alquiler y de mi casa del Vedado se llevaron hasta los clavos. Como si yo fuera un criminal de guerra o un ladrón cualquiera. Pero no me importa tenemos que seguir adelante y demostrarle a tanto hijo de mala madre, ahora más que nunca de todo lo que somos capaces de hacer.*

*Desde la fecha de las cartas hasta hoy sábado, han ocurrido muchas cosas. El exilio de Raul Chibás, los discursos terribles de Raul Castro y la ley de violentaron de los impuestos, que acaba ya por liquidar a las personas o empresas que todavía tuvieron un poco de bienestar económico. Esta noche está anunciando un discurso de Fidel como resumen al congreso de juventud que dicen va a ser sensacional. Veremos a ver que nueva salvajada se le ocurre a estos demagogos rusos. El memorándum con tus ideas sobre la edición de Bohemia Libre me pareció estupendo. Tenemos además otras personas a quienes podemos utilizar, como Ortega, Vierita, etc.*

*De todas maneras, me parece que nada se debe hacer hasta que yo este en libertad porque no sería lo mismo con el orden del impacto continental sacar Bohemia conmigo asilado y además que ello podía provocar que estos descarados demoraran entonces aun más mi salida.*

*Tengo noticias de que ya el miserable Delahozza, está en dificultades, que han querido ponerle un interventor y que tuvo que dar una gran batalla para evitarlo. En definitiva se lo pondrán y lo vejearán en todas las formas imaginables. Con los traidores después que se utilizan nadie tiene compasión. Procuren moverse lo más posible para lograr el salvoconducto de Rose y mío. Yo desde ayer nada puedo hacer. El Embajador su Excelencia Nucete Sardi es una magnífica persona a quien le estoy profundamente agradecido, pero lleva al asilo con toda la rigidez máxima y no vemos a nadie. Ya llevamos 20 días en esta situación.*

*Estoy profundamente esperanzado de que esto va a cambiar muy pronto y también muy entusiasmado con la idea de Bohemia Libre, a quienes estos miserables le tienen un terror pánico. Nos vamos a dar gusto haciendo una gran revista y amargándoles todas las horas del día de este...H de P.*

*Tengo informes también que Bohemia bajado más de doscientos mil ejemplares y que tienen el propósito de sacarla dos veces al mes. Así como a Vanidades una vez al mes. Ya Carteles dejado de publicar.*

*Resumiendo: De acuerdo totalmente con tu memorándum sobre Bohemia Libre. Fecha de salida, a, acordar cuando yo llegue a esa. Seguimos trabajando en la preparación de todo para poder arrancar lo más rápido después de mi llegada. Procurar gestiones salvoconducto, ver a Mathews lo pide etc.*

*Recuerdo a todos, un abrazo bien fuerte.*

*Miguelito*

*P.D. Que te parece lo mal que se a portado Roa conmigo? Que le vamos a hacer ...?*

*Otro P.D. Este viernes casi ni se pregonó Bohemia, y parece además que el señor Fidel Castro no está nada conforme con las ediciones salidas bajo la "dirección" del Delahozza (ahora se llama de la Osa). Que tipo de rufián más miserable este de la Osa.*

*Enseñarle esta carta a Jorge (Saralegui), al que supongo regreso de España después de haber visitado al viejo (Saralegui). Hay que buscar una relación de los agentes de Bohemia en el extranjero para pedirle que no reciban la Bohemia apócrifa y que nos paguen a nosotros. De lo contrario buscar fórmulas legales para establecer pleitos en cada país a los agentes de Bohemia cobrándoles los ejemplares recibidos después de la encantación de las mismas. Perdona el papel, la syntax y todo pues tengo el cerebro "fuera de foco" y aquí no tengo papel ni sobre. M*

*Otra P.D. Ustedes sabían que Fidel tuvo que hablar el mismo lunes que me asile, porque la conmoción en Cuba resultó de película. El muy degenerado no pudo decirme nada malo, solamente se pasó hora y media diciendo mentiras y tratando de explicar lo inexplicable reconociendo el comienzo de esa comparecencia, que lo mío había sido el golpe más duro que había recibido la revolución. Otro de los traidores que nunca creí posible resultó ser Luis Suárez, a quien lo único que hice fue salvarle la vida, cuando se enfermó de los pulmones y que como un hijo mantiene año y medio en el sanatorio con todo lo que necesito y con los mejores médicos. Ese sí me ha dolido.*

*De Raúl Chibás están diciendo los peores horrores, pero esta gente ya no destruyó a nadie al contrario. M<sup>22</sup>*

Quevedo's sense of betrayal by his long-time colleagues and by the Revolution that *Bohemia* had done so much to support reveals a deep resentment and a new mission: that of continuing *Bohemia*'s historic legacy in defense of democracy by launching a version unhindered by the absolutist attitudes that he had perceived in the last six months of his time in Cuba, this time

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from Miguel Angel Quevedo to Carlos Castañeda, donated by Lillian Castañeda.



from the very city in which José Martí spent a good deal of his time in the United States, New York. Even during the Cold War, Quevedo had no way of knowing that another set of powerful interests would be waiting with Castañeda and his other colleagues to begin planning *Bohemia Libre* and appropriate *Bohemia's* legacy. American imperialism may have been expelled from Cuba, but U.S. officials' interest in appropriating the vestiges of the journalism of the Cuban republican period for their own interests was alive and well. As the summer of 1960 wound down and the last independent newspaper, *Información*, closed its doors, the Cuban press entered a new era where the vaunted fourth power had now been subsumed and made into an extension of the state itself. *Bohemia*, Cuba's critical voice for more than fifty years, had been definitively silenced.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Richard Denis was born in New Jersey to Cuban exiles. Raised in Miami, Florida, Denis graduated Summa Cum Laude with his Bachelor of Arts at Florida International University in 2013, where he majored in international relations and minored in political science. In 2012 he won the Jose Antonio Echverria Scholarship for his essay on the Cuban student leader and independence fighter. His life-long love of history motivated him to research his own roots and studying Cuban history became his passion.

In 2014 he began a Master of Arts at the University of Florida in the Latin American Studies program with a focus on Cuba. He presented several papers at various academic conferences and spent the summer of 2015 conducting research for his master's thesis at the auspices of Havana's *Instituto de Historia de Cuba*. In October 2015, he became one of the first Cuban-Americans to present his work at a conference on the Cuban Revolution in Havana's Palacio de las Convenciones.

Denis's thesis, a study of the role of the Cuban press before the revolution, focuses on the impact of Cuba's *Bohemia* magazine, which once had the largest circulation in all Latin America. Denis hopes to expand his thesis into a doctoral dissertation that takes a broader view of Cuba's press and its impact in Latin America and the Caribbean.