The Cultural Politics of Sex, Race, Tourism, and Revolution in Cold War Cuban Anarchism, 1950-1961

Kirwin R. Shaffer*

Introduction

Anarchist cultural politics work as a two-way street. In one direction, culture shapes and reflects economic, political, and social lives. In the other direction, culture is an arena where political values and meanings are contested. We can thus explore what is cultural about politics and what is political about culture. This essay takes to heart Jesse Cohn's notions of "anarchist resistance culture" as the "ways in which anarchist politics have historically found aesthetic expression in the form of a 'culture of resistance.'" As Cohn notes, this culture of resistance targets "not only one particular oppressive regime" (in this case the Batista dictatorship and the immediate years surrounding it) but also "all forms of domination and hierarchy." Ultimately, anarchist culture had to be purposeful: "If anarchism is 'prefigurative politics,' striving to make the desired future visible in and through one's actions in the present," writes Cohn, "then anarchist resistance culture had to somehow prefigure a world of freedom and equality."[1]

Following its height in the first decades of the twentieth century, anarchism declined in importance in Cuba in the late 1920s and 1930s activists left the movement, fled into exile, or were killed by the government. However, immediately following WWII, anarchism rose again on the island. In 1950 alone, there were three anarchist publications, including one devoted strictly to the arts and culture. Another publication focused on the anarchist labor union of workers in hotels, restaurants, cafés, and cabarets, i.e., the heart of Cuban tourist culture. In the 1950s, the dictator Fulgencio Batista gained control over Cuba only to see a broad-based, multi-class revolutionary movement emerge in the countryside and the cities. It was during this time that

*Dr. Kirwin Shaffer is professor of Latin American Studies at The Pennsylvania State University—Berks College in Reading, Pennsylvania and a Penn State Alumni Association Teaching Fellow.

a revitalized anarchist movement re-emerged. Anarchists returned to their historic use countercultural weapons to critique sexuality, racial politics, tourism, and other features of Cold War-era Cuba. Upon the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in January 1959, anarchists continued to use culture to celebrate the Revolution and promote their unique radical leftist agenda—an agenda that soon ran afoul of a growing Marxist, centralized state apparatus.

This study explores how anarchists in Cuba used their publications to challenge existing forms of repression in Cuban culture around sex, race and gender, and how they celebrated their roles in the public and private spheres during both the Batista dictatorship and the early years of the Cuban Revolution. The paper investigates the intratextual iconicity of photos and words in these newspapers and their messaging. As such, we can see how words and pictures in the same text convey and reinforce the same message, each as an icon of the other. This was an important development over anarchist newspapers in the early twentieth century as photographs were not included until the early 1920s. During that earlier era, line drawings and other graphics served this function but now the photographs gave a "realistic" reinforcement to the words, including photos of real-life anarchists working, agitating, and recreating.

Through articles on cultural practices both globally and in Cuba specifically, anarchists explored sexuality (especially childhood sexuality) that needed to be liberated from "backward" ideas and prohibitions. Through articles and photography, they explored nudity, but this could also lead to questionable uses of nude photography in their newspapers that had racial (racist?) overtones while at the same time using articles and photographs to highlight racism and anarchist efforts to attack racism globally and in Cuba. Their articles and photographs explored the dark side of tourism and prostitution under Batista. At the same time, these cultural sources celebrated the roles of anarchist-influenced labor unions in building Cuban tourism that provided jobs. They also promoted working-class tourism whereby workers could relax or travel abroad and forge internationalist alliances. Finally, their writings and photographs portrayed anarchist support for the revolutionary struggle, its militarist activism to

protect the revolution, and goals for rural reform that they modeled in part on praise for the Israeli kibbutz. Thus, anarchist resistance culture in Cold War Cuba reflected Cohn's points: attacking the numerous forms of domination and hierarchy while showcasing what a future Cuba could be like—egalitarian, free from exploitation, led by workers, rooted in nature, and privileging the local over the national/ the decentralized over the centralized.

Anarchism and Cuban Culture

For decades, anarchists ascribed an important role to cultural politics. They viewed novels, plays, poetry, short stories, social gatherings, and excursions as both entertainment and educational tools. By the Cold War, Cuban anarchist literary greats like Antonio Penichet and Adrián del Valle had stopped publishing. Del Valle died in 1945, and Penichet began distancing himself from anarchism. However, Marcelo Salinas—active in anarchism since 1910—continued as an important anarchist cultural ambassador and served as the *Asociación Libertaria de Cuba's* (Libertarian Association of Cuba—ALC) Secretary of Culture.

In Havana during 1950, anarchists created the arts and culture magazine *Estudios: Mensuario de cultura* (edited initially by Salinas) to accompany the propaganda newspaper *El Libertario* and the union newspaper *Solidaridad Gastronómica*—nicknamed *Soli*.[2] *Estudios* was unique in Cuban anarchist publications—of which there were nearly forty since the 1880s. This culture magazine never officially proclaimed itself to be "anarchist," but anarchists controlled the board of directors and wrote most of the content. The format, discussion of the arts, publication of nudity and addressing issues of sexuality and sexual morality reflected topics published in an earlier journal—*Estudios. Revista Ecléctica* printed in Valencia, Spain from December 1928 to June 1937. For obvious reasons, the 1930s editions of the Spanish magazine focused heavily on politics, especially fascism. Earlier foci on the arts remained, but clearly took a back seat to discussions of fascism, capitalism, and especially sex. The Valencia journal was an anarchist and anarcho-naturist mass publication with 25,000 to 70,000 copies of each issue printed. The maga-

zine was widely disseminated in the Americas, including Cuba where at least one correspondent was based in the central Cuban region of Camagüey.[3] The journal ceased publication during the Spanish Civil War.

Following the civil war, Cuba- and Spain-born Republicans and anarchists who had fought in Spain migrated to Cuba. One of those Cuban anarchist war veterans was Abelardo Iglesias. Upon returning to Cuba following Franco's Fascist victory, Iglesias continued working for anarchist and anti-fascist causes.[4] In 1950, he was a founding member of Havana's *Estudios: Mensuario de cultura*.[5] Yet, there appears little overlap of people between the 1950 Havana and the 1930s Valencia publications. Granted, thirteen years had passed between the end of the first and the beginning of the second journal. No authors from the Spanish version appeared in the Cuban version except for a column published by Dr. Juan Lazarte in the second edition of the Havana journal. Lazarte was a frequent writer for the Valencia journal in the mid-1930s; however, the Cuban column ("La crisis final del Estado Moderno") appears to be a reprint and not something that Lazarte wrote for the Cuban journal explicitly—and probably not from a Cuban residence.[6]

The Cuban *Estudios* had a much higher orientation toward culture than its Spanish forebear, though like the Valencia journal, the Havana journal published extensively on sex and sexuality both from biological and artistic realms—as noted below. Editors filled Havana's *Estudios* (and the other newspapers) with book reviews, biographies of authors like George Orwell and Federico García Lorca, and art criticism. The Havana magazine focused heavily on Cuban culture and political culture, including columns on Cuban artist Wilfredo Lam, Cuban sculptor and artist Eugenio Rodríguez, the future of "serious music" in Cuba, and critiques of Cuban baseball that compared it to politics—highly popular, but through their supposed weight of importance and the noise they generated, they distracted from real problems.[7]

Meanwhile, Jorge Gallart (one of Salinas's noms de plume) attacked mainstream Cuban magazines for filling their pages with articles

about intellectuals like Cubans Raúl Roa or Jorge Mañach while ignoring anarchist intellectuals. "Never have we seen our intellectuals cited," wrote Gallart. If these magazines mentioned anarchists, they and their ideas were "disfigured." If an anarchist intellectual visited the island, no magazine mentioned it but fell all over themselves when some "Stalinist fellow-traveler arrives on our shores."[8] Anarchists set out to correct this with columns published by Cuban-based anarchists like Salinas, Abelardo Iglesias Saavedra, Roberto Bretau, Antonio Landrián, Casto Moscú, Rafael Serra, and others.

Anarchist cultural politics on the island addressed a plethora of issues via newspaper columns, art reviews, and photography. The triumph of the revolution in January 1959 temporarily allowed anarchists more press freedom to highlight anarchist ideas for creating a new revolutionary culture and society. However, by 1961, the increasingly centralized and Communist-influenced state apparatus of the new regime saw anarchists as counter-revolutionary, leading to the closure of the anarchist press and exile for many activists. The following sections explore how Cuban anarchists centrally located in Havana navigated the last decade of Republican-era Cuba by focusing on Cuban anarchist cultural politics about sex, race, tourism, and revolution as explored through the cultural lenses of text and photography in the anarchist press of the era.

Anarchist Cultural Explorations of Sexuality, Sex Education, and the Family

Anarchists believed families would play a key role in human emancipation. Earlier in the twentieth century, they used cultural productions like novellas, serialized novels in newspapers, plays, and weekly gatherings to reach union halls and households.[9] In 1950, Salinas reprinted Adrián del Valle's essay "La crisis de la familia" to contrast anarchist and bourgeois notions of family. Del Valle wrote that if a crisis affects marriage and leads to divorce that does not mean it affects the family because family was "biological" while marriage and divorce—following longtime free love notions—were artificial creations. So, when elites called for increased Church or state intervention to protect families by promoting marriage and attacking divorce,

they were only protecting these artificial constructs, not the natural family.[10] The anarchist focus on family as natural and biological illustrated what Penichet and Del Valle earlier had emphasized: families were natural seeds for mutual aid and decentralized organization of a future anarchist society free from unnatural state and religious constructs. Anarchists should focus on families—as much as workplaces—to help people live a prefigurative state of anarchism in the present and until the social revolution triumphed.[11]

Anarchists also rejected governmental and religious efforts to shape children. For instance, anarchists stressed the decentralized family's dominant role in childrearing, particularly guiding children's understanding of sexuality. Children should be taught openly and honestly about sexuality, especially their own. One should not want the government or the Catholic Church to be involved in this delicate matter. To this end, Dr. Santiago Velasco—the anarchist manager of *Estudios*—advised parents who might be ignorant of their children's sexual impulses. Reflecting common prejudices, Velasco warned that masturbation—"one of a child's first vices"—was not an illness but children should limit it. While girls and boys masturbated before and during puberty, parents needed to control this through a low salt diet, promote regular bowel movements, and encourage exercise so youth were less inclined to think about touching themselves. Velasco also urged parents to be upfront with children about menstruation, the normality of nocturnal emissions, and boys' erections. He additionally warned parents about "perverts" who sexually desired children. Parents had to educate themselves so they could teach their children what was natural, what was dangerous, and how to control usual childhood sexual curiosity. Finally, Velasco advised parents to treat and educate sons and daughters equally.[12]

For anarchists, sex was "natural" and should not be co-opted by authoritarian institutions that would impose artificial restrictions, prohibitions, and feelings of "sinful" behavior. The focus on "the natural" influenced other aspects of anarchism. For instance, anarchists in Spain and Cuba had a long historical involvement with *naturismo*, actively working with naturists in the 1910s and 1920s. In Spain, one found this link particularly strong in *Estudios* and in Cuba in the

journal *Pro-Vida*. *Naturismo* promoted living one's life in harmony with nature. Realizing the difficulty of this in urban environments, naturists advocated vegetarian diets, the recuperative powers of solar and steam baths, and even nudity.[13] In a magazine promoting health advice, culture and the arts, anarchists merged the three by regularly publishing nude photos in *Estudios*—a first in Cuban anarchist publishing history. Two-page spreads across the publication fold showcased primarily nude women models, but never revealing genitalia. These were rarely captioned, but instead they were for curious and appreciative eyes. A couple of things stand out. The photos celebrated physically healthy women. This continued a practice from earlier decades when anarchist newspapers often published drawings of vibrant, topless or nude women leading humanity to a new society away from debilitating societal structures that undermined humanity, as seen in the masthead from the anarchist newspaper *¡Tierra!* from 1903.[14] One can think of *Estudios*' nudes in the same way besides just being appreciated as works of art (Figure 1).

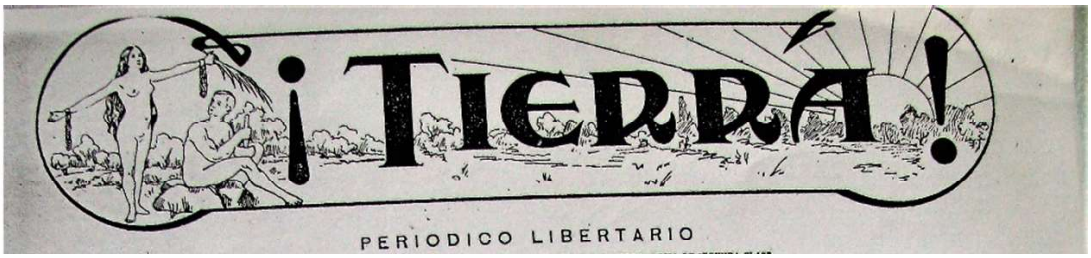


Figure 1

In their penultimate issue, *Estudios*' editors published a photo series of nude men and women from 1910 (again with covered genitalia) and offered their opinion on nudity (Figure 2). The editors suggested that "the problem of human nudity had been a controversial theme since the Middle Ages when society "began its prudishness" with men and women being covered from "the ankle to the nape." Anything exposed was horrible and led to crazy things like not bathing to avoid being seen in the nude. Today, though, "what is immoral is not in the nudity itself but in the viewer." By publishing nudes, they hoped "to popularize the nude" and strip away notions of perversion linked to nudity.[15] Historian Javier Navarro Navarro's conclusion about the Spain-based Estudios seems appropriate for the Cuban journal too: such "photos were no doubt a good allegory of the

Figure 2

naturist and regenerationist ideas of the magazine that also helped, on the other hand, to attract readers and become close to the erotic and pornographic publications as in many books and leaflets of the that time."[16] Beyond this, though, one must consider the revolutionary dynamics of publishing and promoting nudity. Nudity among late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century free love advocates was always a revolutionary cultural act, whether one published it or lived in the nude alone or with others. This revolutionary act challenged religious and cultural puritanical notions. Nudity, like open discussions of sexuality, were open revolutionary challenges of love, eroticism, and natural/biological functions that cultural elites who created and enforced cultural norms saw as perverse.

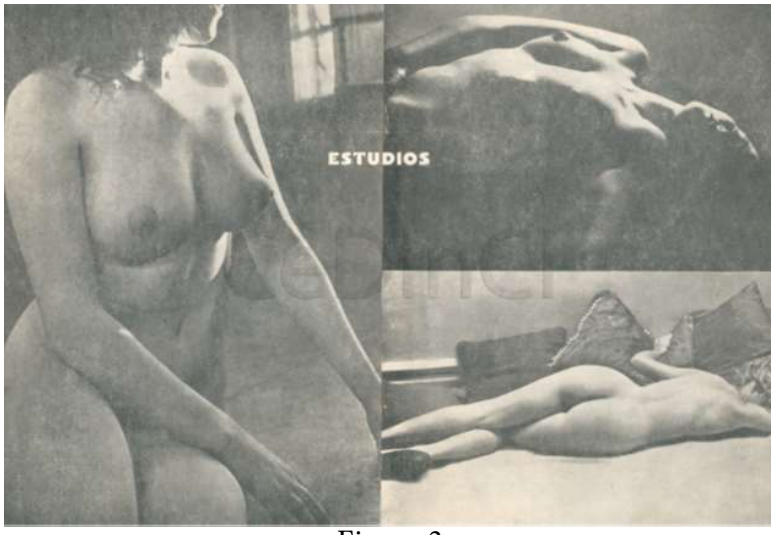


Figure 3

Anarchist Cultural Explorations of Race and Racial Injustice in Cuba and Globally

Yet, something else about the nudes stands out: the models' races. The first issues showcased only white women, such as these from the first volume of *Estudios* in February 1950 (Figure 3). Where were Afro Cubans? Women of African descent appeared in later editions, but in different ways than white nudes. The first appearance shows an Afro Cuban woman in front of a painting of a baroque-era Spanish man on his horse looking shockingly with mouth agape at this real Afro Cuban (Figure 4). For the first time a caption appears. "Her beauty is bestial, in the noblest sense." Then the caption writer refer-

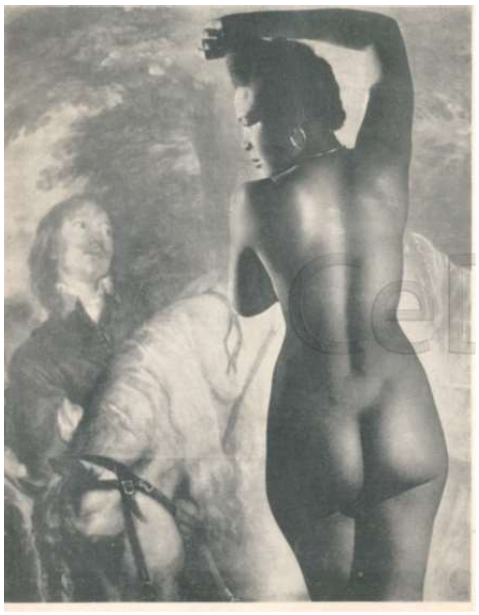


Figure 4

ences ethnologist Leo Frobenius's idea of African culture and "primitive peoples who settled with their cultural heritage" that influenced Europe. *Estudios'* editors concluded by reference to nude forms on their pages that "these lines have more than just the boldness of their nudity.…They correspond exclusively to a people, to a history, to a part of the world."[17] While one might find an element of exoticism here—though the caption writer argued that "her exoticism is pure invention"—one could also see this as an attempt to portray women of all colors equally beautiful and worthy of celebration. This conclusion can be somewhat questioned though when one turns to the

magazine's final issue only to see the first full-frontal image of a nude (though with hands strategically covering her genitalia): the woman is Afro Cuban (Figure 5). Unlike the Spanish version of the journal where nudes were always of white women, the Havana journal reflected a greater racial diversity in its subject matter that clearly related to Cuban racial diversity. Yet, why was the only artistic nude fully facing the viewer an Afro-Cuban woman? Was there an element of the exotic and the erotic here that motivated the editors? Were editors internalizing long-standing tropes of sexualized Afro-Cuban women in Cuban culture? One cannot say definitively, but the questions linger.[18]

Figure 5

The nudes in *Estudios* raise the question of race and anarchism on the island. Did early exclusive focus on white women signal a subtle racism? Did the full-frontal Afro-Cuban woman reinforce a form of exoticism and eroticism? Anarchists rarely addressed racial issues early in the movement's history, but in the 1950s, they increasingly did.

Since the 1920s, Afro-Cuban Rafael Serra had agitated for anarchism. In a photograph of the ALC published in the magazine *Bohemia* in 1947, Serra is prominent among members.[19] While mainly a rank-and-file activist early on, by the 1950s Serra began publishing columns—many tackling racial issues. In one, he described an anarchist excursion to the port city of Mariel in April 1953. A store employee refused to wait on an Afro-Cuban member (most likely

Serra). Ironically, the store was located next to a bust of Afro-Cuban independence hero Antonio Maceo. In the 1950s, Afro Cubans still faced daily discrimination and being barred from stores, restaurants, hotels, and the like. In concluding the story, the author called for the "need to fight racial discrimination, now and as long as it exists."[20] In a 1957 column in the labor newspaper *Solidaridad Gastrónomica,* Serra suggested that while racial discrimination existed in Cuba, it was "not a profound part of our national coexistence." Yet, it still needed to be addressed. Serra stressed that one should think about discrimination, not in terms of racial injustice, but in terms of "social justice" and violations of "human rights." One should be wary of politicians offering simple anti-racism declarations and avoid "any antidiscrimination movement where political interests penetrate." True to his anarchist beliefs, he had no faith in solutions pursued by political parties or the government. Racism could only be overcome by "creating a collective conscience" where all believed in the sanctity of human rights.[21]

The Mariel incident also gave anarchists an opportunity to talk about race and teach a lesson about Maceo. Anarchists regularly reflected on the independence war era of the 1890s, whether praising Maceo's spirit of rebellion or approving of José Martí's call for an egalitarian republic. Anarchist Humberto Lezcano recalled the Afro-Cuban heroes of the war who endeavored to create Martí's republic "of all and for the good of all." He agreed with Serra that racism was just one of many problems in a larger quilt of social injustice. While racial discrimination persisted in Cuba, people of all races "are discriminated against, besieged by social inequality." He called for "a new integrationist movement" to fight for social justice for all.[22]

These critiques of racist practices as part of larger concerns related to social justice and human rights needs to be put in a larger global context. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in December 1948. While such rights have often been characterized as tools used by the West to criticize governments in emerging and developing countries, the declaration itself was spurred on in the 1940s by lesser-developed countries and representatives of colonized nations who sought to create enforce-

able standards by which rich countries and colonial powers could be forced to respect poor and non-white people around the world.[23] It is useful to think of Lezcano and Serra's critiques of racism in Cuba in this light. Human rights reflected a larger framework of anarchist intersectionality that in this case emanated from Cuba—a developing, neocolonial country in the 1950s—that opposed discrimination and oppression of peoples based on class, race, and gender. These were fully "human rights" and thus they saw racism as an attack upon those rights.

Beyond the issue of human rights and racial discrimination in Cuba, anarchists also deployed their newspapers to address global racial concerns. For instance, in late 1952, Cuban anarchists praised Mau Mau guerrillas rebelling against British rule in Kenya. Despite British troop reinforcements, anarchists predicted the Mau Mau would fight until they had won "political and economic independence." At an ALC social gathering in Havana, Salinas spoke supportively of Jomo Kenyatta and the Mau Mau.[24] Anarchists also looked closer to home. In August 1955, white vigilantes lynched fourteen-year-old African American Emmett Till in the US state of Mississippi. Anarchists published a column on the lynching and subsequent acquittal of the murderers. The column highlighted the hypocrisy of US democracy and how the supposedly equitable US justice system showed its true colors on how justice is meted out in Mississippi if you lacked "white skin, blue eyes, and blond hair."[25]

Racial issues cut close to home for anarchists like Serra, but also for Salinas for whom anarchist discussions of family, childrearing, and race converged. Facing stark repression under the Machado dictatorship of the late 1920s, Salinas dropped out of active anarchist organizing, returning to his home in Santiago de las Vegas where he wrote plays and novels while working as a librarian. There, Salinas and his wife Luisa lived in a small house where they raised their adopted, Afro-Cuban daughter Picola. For someone like Salinas, race might not be a dominant topic and he—like other anarchists—might see racism more broadly as one of many kinds of human rights violations, but it was a significant enough issue to address in the ALC's *Diálogos libertarios de actualidad,* published toward the end of the Revolution's first

year in November 1959. In a fictional dialogue, Salinas argues that all peoples are essentially equal. Thousands of years of racial mixing meant that "today it is impossible to determine the precise type of this or that individual: one finds equal traits, equal cranium sizes in places as diverse as Denmark and Senegambia." If one could not find racial equality in the sciences and arts, "it is because you don't want to see it." Salinas' fictitious debater claims that by saying these things, anarchists just wanted to justify interracial relationships whereby "white women marry blacks, or Indians, or Chinese." Salinas denies any anarchist interracial marriage plan and argues that all people are free to be with whomever they wish. Look around, he concluded: white men liked women of African descent, so why shouldn't white women like Afro-Cuban men?[26] No radical plan; just free humans following their desires.

The Intratextual Aperture of Revolutionary Struggle: Land, Nature, and Tourism

By the 1950s, photographs had become important components of the anarchist press, serving multiple agendas. The previous discussion on race illustrates how photographs supplemented articles while offering visual commentary on those subjects. This continued and expanded as anarchists turned their attention to revolutionary topics in the 1950s. Group photos at anarchist meetings, talks held at the ALC *Estudios Sociales*, and meetings recognizing Spanish-exiles in Cuba acknowledged participants while also visually reflecting the large participation of men, women, and Cubans of all colors. Anarchists cut across all races and colors in Cuba. One sees this in photographs of multiple anarchist social gatherings published in newspapers where men and women of all ages and colors sit together drinking beer, picnicking, and listening to speakers, as seen in this August 1959 ALC social gathering photo from *El Libertario* (Figure 6).[27] Cuban anarchists were not race- or color-blind and were not all white. Group photos at anarchist cultural events let others know that anarchists came from across Cuban society. Beyond this, the plethora of group photos after January 1959 reveals that rank-and-file anarchists in the movement felt much freer to publicly identify themselves once Batista's dictatorial terror campaign ended.

In addition, the group photos reflect people who seemed to enjoy consuming large bottles of beer. In the early twentieth century,

Figure 6

anarchists often campaigned for workers to avoid wasting their hard-earned low wages on alcohol. The money could be better spent to educate oneself, while the anarchist meeting hall or Sunday *velada* (social gathering) was deemed a more dignified way to pass time rather than in pool halls or bars. Yet, in the 1900s and 1910s, anarcho-syndicalist dependientes in the Cuban hotel and culinary industry played important roles in the anarchist movement. Their newspapers then, as in the 1950s, regularly ran advertising for alcoholic beverages. In fact, we can deduce that alcohol advertising helped to bankroll the anarcho-syndicalist press both circa 1910 and in the 1950s.[28]

Despite the alcohol promotions and socially recreational beer drinking, *dependientes* always had been proponents of healthier living. As noted earlier, they had supported the *naturismo* movement's calls for simple living in touch with nature to purify the individual, the family, and society. The *Pro-Vida* organization in the early 1910s published an anarchist-supported naturist newspaper with strong support from several leading anarchists of the time, including the most influential, Adrián del Valle. In the late 1920s during the first years of the Machado dictatorship, the paper continued publishing and worked with José María Blázquez de Pedro who was living in exile in Havana after being deported from Panama in 1925.

The group running the organization that published the newspaper remained active over the decades to the extent that in the first years of the revolution they had their own *Pro-Vida finca* (rural estate) outside Havana in Guanabacoa. Photos that accompanied columns about the *finca* illustrate how Cold War gastronomical anarchists continued the anarcho-naturist activism from decades earlier. In late 1960, almost two years after the Revolution's triumph, anarchists published a column titled "As the Human Being Moves Away from Nature, He Moves Away from Life." Accompanying photos portray a quaint rural environment where shirtless men enjoy a talk on vegetarianism and others a game of volleyball (Figures 7 and 8). For anarchists, the finca symbolized the importance of the countryside

Grupos de atentos naturistas escuchando al conferencistas y visitante señor Cheatham.

Figure 7

and the equally important decentralized management of the land beyond the growing tentacles of a rapidly centralizing Communist-controlled state apparatus where people could live and recreate in the rejuvenating spirit of the land. In fact, Casto Moscú, who wrote the column, ended with an appeal to the new revolutionary government, which claimed to seek a healthier population: we want to call "on the revolution's organisms [that] express their concern for the welfare and health of our people so that they will look a little more closely at our food and living systems. It would be good if they would visit our *finca*."[29]

But the *Pro-Vida* rural estate had larger historical and political associations. The photos and column emerged just as anarchists joined in


Uno de los espaciosos campos de deportes de la finca Naturita.

Figure 8

nationwide debates surrounding land reform. Cold War-era anarchists had promoted agrarian reform before the revolution. In two editions of *Estudios* in April and May 1950, they looked to the Jewish kibbutz system in pre-Israel Palestine as a guiding model inspired by libertarian principles whereby cooperatives were constructed "without a state, without violence, and without supreme authority." There, one found absolute freedom, sexual equality, everyone working the land together, and a democratic general assembly deciding issues (Figures 9 and 10).


... Las comunidades libres están basadas en la libertad real.

Figure 9

Following the advent of the Israeli state in 1948, anarchists urged those people living and working in the kibbutz needed to preserve the communes' decentralized character, resist state interference, and avoid becoming a state tool. As one anarchist concluded, "without the Kibbutz and without the spirit of free association, Israel would not exist. Israel would continue to be a desert."

...la labor realizada en los últimos setenta y dos años de construcción comunalista en Palestina fué llevada a cabo sin la intervención de ningún Estado...

Figure 10

The above images are from April 1950, with the captions, "The free communities are based on real freedom" and "the work realized over the past 72 years of communalist construction in Palestine was achieved without any State intervention." [30] Anarchists saw the kibbutz as decentralized, autonomous forms of community organizing where people worked in harmony on the land to grow their own bounty. Columns and photos illustrated harmonious living and cooperative labor in a decentered socialist environment.

But the Guanabacoa *finca* had another purpose. The *finca* exemplified a way for working people to enjoy a form of short-term tourism. In rural Cuba, the working class could escape for a brief respite from urban, capitalist chaos and pollution. Issues surrounding rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation could influence anarchist discussions of tourism more broadly. Bars, restaurants, hotels, and cafés were central to the thriving tourist economy. Cuba's anarchists benefited from tourism as much of their support came from workers in that industry. At the same time, *Solidaridad Gastronómica* advocated for what one author called "social tourism." In a 1953 column, José Mar-

cos Mandado argued that in the modern industrial world "turismo social" was "a necessary imperative of current life" for the working masses. Industrialism created an unhealthy environment with bad air, little sunlight, and alienation. The waterfalls at Hanabanilla, Cuba—the highest on the island—could bring beauty to a visitor as well as love…if one believed a local legend (Figure 11).

Figure 11

The author argued that travel and vacations were almost "an obligatory social service." But working-class tourism could do more than regenerate workers' bodies and health. Travel around the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea was increasingly affordable, offering Cubans of even modest means the chance to explore the region and fuel the "currents of American solidarity." Such tourism would avoid "the negative aspects of tourism, the deformation of national customs" and would instead "be an inter-American instrument that promotes social and political development in the peoples of America" so that such transcontinental progress would "make in the New World a new world based on social justice."[31]

However, tourism—especially as it impacted *gastronómicos* in Cuba—had mixed effects. Some photos published in the Cold War anarchist press illustrated a seemingly contradictory anarchist critique of the Batista era and the role of the tourism and culinary industries. Though the anarchist press never directly attacked Batista during his reign, it did publish columns and photos that clearly condemned the increasing violence under the regime. For instance,

in 1957, *Soli* denounced the conditions in which many poor, working-class women found themselves. While culinary workers labored across the hospitality industry, young waitresses in bars were employed outside of the culinary union's orbit and suffered in ways that unionized culinary workers did not.

In the late 1950s, anarchists turned their attention to the plight of these *meseras*. Anarchists claimed bar owners exploited young waitresses through low pay, ten-to-twelve-hour shifts, and with no labor protections afforded unionized culinary workers like disability pay, maternity leave, pensions, or vacation pay. "They are true slaves," declared one anarchist. Anarchists further claimed owners forced young meseras to augment low pay with prostitution since bar owners were linked to the "white slave trade." "Each bar is a brothel and each woman working there is a victim of prostitution." These were women beyond the estimated 12,000 in Havana's nearly 300 brothels by 1958. These young women frequently ended up with violent customers. Too often they were killed, as anarchist wrote in their newspaper coverage and analysis (Figure 12).

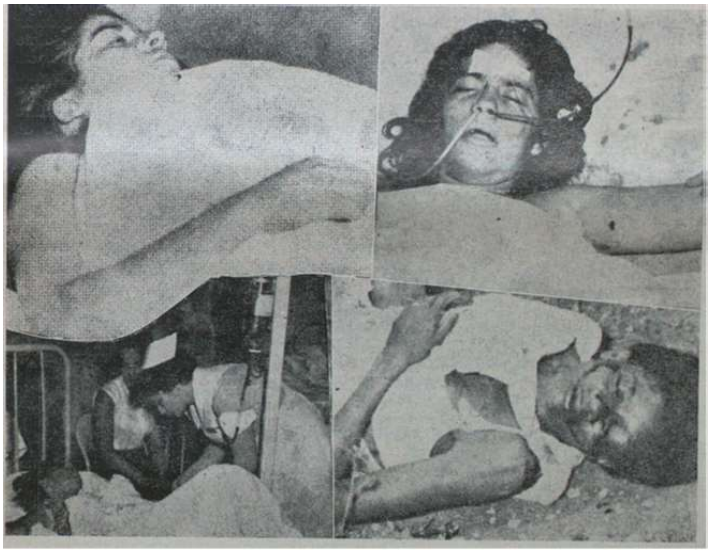
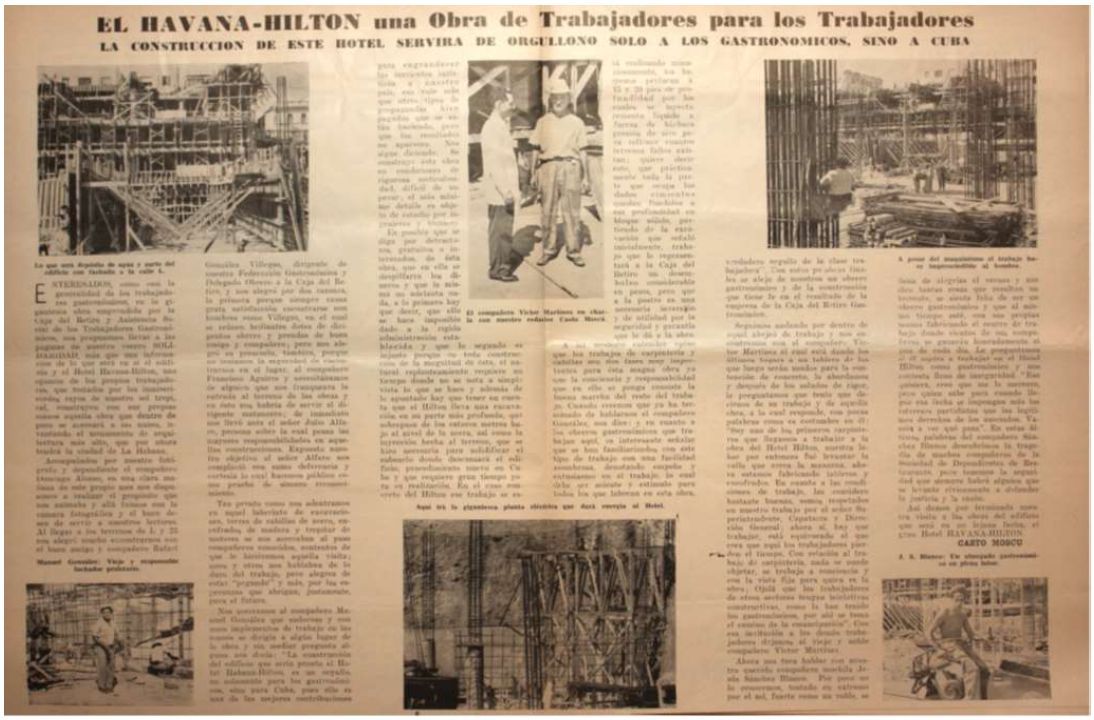


Figure 12

The photos accompanying such analyses do not shy away from revealing the full-facial identity of the women who fell to this bar-related violence. While one can fault the possible anarchist exploitation of these images, they illustrated two things: the brutality of Batista's corrupt Havana and the need for the union to reach out to

these women. While it is impossible to know if any or all these young women were in fact sex workers, anarchists thought so and used this possibility to again attack Cuban capitalists. Believing neither the government nor owners were interested in eliminating this mistreatment, *Solidaridad Gastronómica* urged young women to avoid work in bars. Anarchists were mildly pleased that the island's main labor organization—the *Confederación de Trabajadores Cubanos* (Confederation of Cuban Workers—CTC)—responded to their observations and formed a commission to investigate. However, anarchists declared the problem ultimately had to be addressed at the root: capitalist exploitation. Would a commission really do much good? They never found out. The commission was formed in November 1958. In two months, the Revolution came to power. In 1961, the government banned pimping and used the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* to reform prostitutes.[32]

While anarchists portrayed the seamy underside of Batista-era tourism, they also celebrated their roles in what was one of Batista's crowning construction projects: the building of the Hotel Habana Hilton. Hotel construction began in 1955 under Batista's initiative. Yet a major financial investment came from the Culinary Workers Retirement and Social Assistance Fund. While anarchist culinary workers might have disliked the relationship between the fund and Batista, they nevertheless hoped the investment would generate new jobs in construction and the food service industry manning the completed hotel—employment sectors with a strong anarchist presence (Figure 13). *Solidaridad Gastronómica* reported on the project, including interviews with anarchist construction workers and across-the-fold spreads of photographs showing construction progress until it opened in March 1958 as the tallest and largest hotel in Latin America.[33] Upon opening, anarchists congratulated themselves with a bold banner headline in red ink in *Solidaridad Gastronómica* reading "SE INAUGURA EL HOTEL HABANA-HILTON POR ESFUERZO DE LOS GASTRONOMICOS" [The Havana Hilton Hotel Opens Thanks to the Efforts of the Gastronomy Workers]. The newspaper asserted that "the culinary class of workers had a very high concept of what tourism represents for our country" and were pleased to contribute to a project that served and "represented the economy of



EL HAVANA-HILTON una Obra de Trabajadores para los Trabajadores

LA CONSTRUCCION DE ESTE HOTEL SERVIRA DE ORGULLO NO SOLO A LOS GASTRONOMICOS, SINO A CUBA

Figure 13

our nation." They did not dwell on the fact that Batista oversaw the project or that a hotel with 630 guestrooms could flood the city with tourists seeking fulfillment of prurient interests. Rather, they praised the hotel as "one of the greatest works realized by workers" and a testament to "Cuban *gastronómicos*."[34]

The Intratextual Aperture of Revolutionary Struggle: Anti-Batista, Anti-Communism

Despite this strategic association with Batista, the anarchist press celebrated the fall of Batista and the dawning of a new revolutionary era in January 1959. The ALC began re-publishing *El Libertario* (which they had printed until Batista closed it in 1952). Now two anarchist monthly newspapers joined their voices, hoping to shape the revolution along anarchist principles. In these newspapers in the early years of the new revolutionary society, anarchists revealed their secret support for the armed struggle in the 1950s, celebrated the rebel army and militias, noted their early approval of Fidel Castro, and lamented the late-1959 death of revolutionary leader Camilo Cienfuegos.

During the Batista dictatorship, prominent anarchists did not shy away from saying or showing who they were, including this two-page spread of anarchists in Cuba in December 1955 (Figure 14).[35]

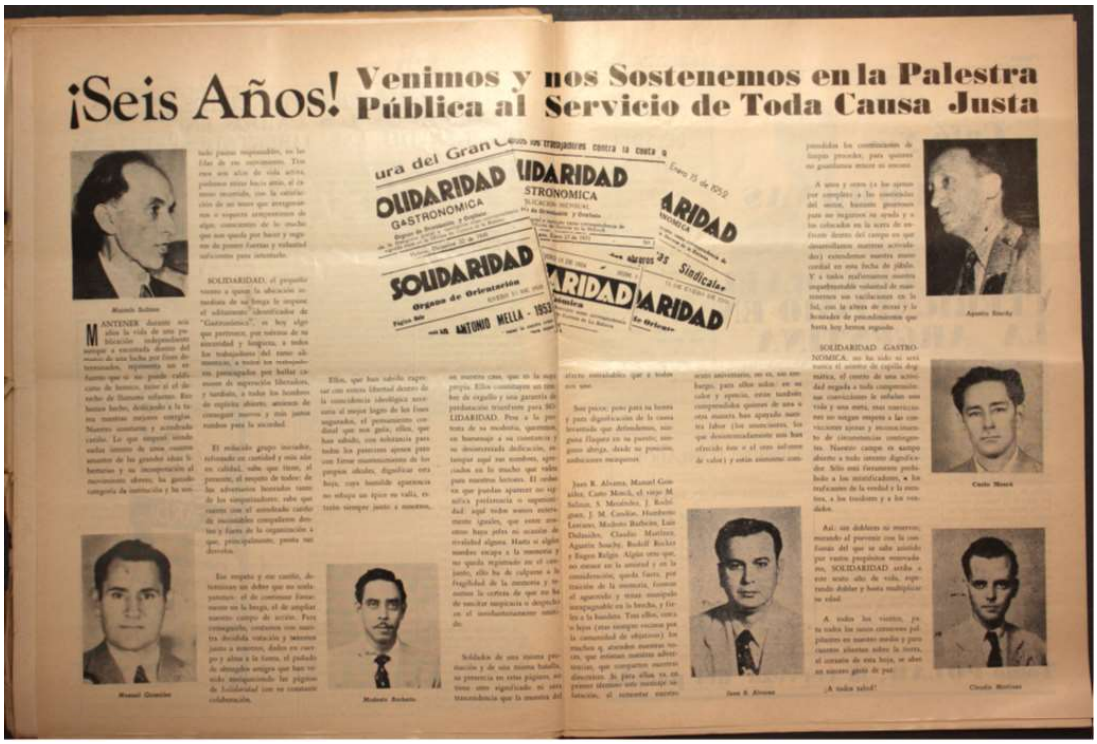


Figure 14

However, during Batista's reign, anarchists never mentioned their roles in both the urban and rural armed struggles against Batista. With a feeling of greater press freedom in early 1959, anarchists now openly discussed their roles in the armed revolt and anarchist victims of the dictatorship. Rafael Serra—mentioned earlier and one of the longest-active anarchists on the island since the 1920s—became a fixture in the press during this transitory time. Multiple portraits of Serra accompanied a multi-page story on him in December 1958—just days before Batista fled from power. With the new press freedom in January 1959, the ALC's *El Libertario* published another photo essay on Serra, who Batista's regime brutally tortured (Figure 15).[36]

These columns and photos revealed publicly what had long happened underground during the revolutionary struggle: anarchists might have funded Batista's Habana Hilton, but now the public saw the faces of anarchists who had worked underground to topple the dictator.

Figure 15

During the euphoria that accompanied the first year of revolution, the anarchist press published photos to accompany columns celebrating the militaristic aspects of the revolution and especially the men and women *milicianos* who fought for and now defended the revolution. This began with the first issue of the revised *El Libertario* just a week after the revolution came to power. The new editors published on page 1, just below the banner the following photograph (Figure 16):[37]

Figure 16

Traditional anarchist anti-militarism had been suppressed and the militarist dimensions of the armed revolutionary struggle were now celebrated. This anarchist (or at least revolutionary) militarism continued throughout 1959. In May 1959 as revolutionaries celebrated the first revolutionary-era May Day, both *Soli* and *El Libertario* praised the armed militias protecting the revolution from imperial assault. Such praise was accompanied by photos of uniformed, armed men and women celebrating the revolutionary struggle and the need for continued armed militancy to defend the revolution (Figures 17 and 18).[38]

Figure 17

By publishing the photographs, anarchists related their support for leftist armed militancy and portrayed themselves as solid revolutionaries every bit as committed to radical structural change as the better-known revolutionary leadership of Fidel, Che, Raul, and Camilo. Though we don't know for sure, it is possible and maybe even likely that these photos included men and women anarchists within the armed militias.

Figure 18

Anarchists also believed that the militias could be used internationally. With the fall of authoritarian presidents Perón in Argentina, Somoza in Nicaragua, Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela, and now Batista in just a little over three years, anarchists believed the end was near for the rest of Latin America's dictators. Riding a wave of myopia in the first months of the Cuban Revolution, anarchists called for turning up the heat on all remaining dictators. Omar Diéguez García suggested if the Cuban Rebel Army were to storm the Dominican Republic, the dictator Rafael Trujillo "would not last fifteen days."[39]

Throughout 1959, anarchists illustrated their links to the new revolutionary leadership. That summer, just six months after the fall of Batista's dictatorship, the Havana anarchist Eliseo "El Campesino" Morejón sat in the kitchen of the Havana Libre (formerly Havana Hilton) Hotel with Fidel Castro. Castro had made the hotel the revolutionary headquarters, but the hotel also was a center of anarchist labor organizing and had been since the beginning of construction in 1955 to its opening in 1958. In 1959, the hotel symbolized the broad spectrum of Cuba's revolutionary left literally and figuratively from top to bottom: the *fidelistas* on the twenty-fourth floor of the twenty-five-floor hotel; the anarchist culinary workers in the lower bars, restaurants, and kitchens.

El compañero Morejón, autor del presente escrito, en amena charla con el doctor Fidel Castro. Rodeado de compañeros de trabajo en la cocina del Hotel Hilton.

Figure 19

Early in the revolution, many anarchists seemed to like Fidel. Morejón and Fidel sat together for photos, and in a column published in *Solidaridad Gastronómica, Morejón* "concluded that Fidel is gifted with the virtues that make men great" (Figure 19).[40] He found Fidel open to new ideas like decentralized agrarian cooperatives. He liked how Fidel walked around without bodyguards and talked with the hotel's culinary workers. "I see in Dr. Fidel Castro the revolutionary who wants to make a socially transformative revolution in our country."[41]

By late 1959, though, anarchist euphoria increasingly turned to anarchist disillusionment. On October 28, 1959, a plane carrying one of the Revolution's heroes—Camilo Cienfuegos—disappeared from radar over the Florida Straits. Authorities searched for wreckage but called off the search in mid-November. The disappearance struck a chord with anarchists. Rumors circulated around Cuba that Cienfuegos had grown disheartened with the state-centered, top-down control of the Revolution. Anarchists considered him one of their own (Figure 20). Though Cienfuegos was not known to have worked in anarchist organizations nor to speak publicly about anarchism, that did not matter to Cuba's anarchists. His growing disillusionment

Figure 20

matched theirs. Plus, his father was an anarchist tailor who had immigrated to Cuba from Spain. While holding out hope for his recov-

ery, the editors of *Solidaridad Gastronómica* praised him as "C. Cienfuegos: El valiente guerrillero de la libertad" (Camilo Cienfuegos: The Valient Guerrilla Warrior for Freedom) and published the above photograph of Camilo with anarchist hotel workers. After the search ended without finding Camilo's body, *El Libertario* offered sympathy to his anarchist father Ramón.[42] A year later, with government persecution of anarchists increasing, one of the ALC's last public acts was to hold a memorial service for Cienfuegos. Anarchists walked to Havana's Malecon sea wall. Antonio Landrián praised Cienfuegos as a revolutionary brother. Then, attendees dropped a wreath over the wall and into the sea. It was a fitting symbolic end to Cuban anarchism too.[43]

Anarchists despised the mounting Communist takeover of the revolution and the government's growing centralization of labor, education, and agrarian reform. In July 1960, the government closed *El Libertario—Solidaridad Gastronómica* would only last until 1961. In *El Libertario's* last edition, editors published photos and graphics of revolutionary Spain and historical Cuban anarchists. The photos seem to ask readers to remember the long anarchist struggle for decentralized control, individual freedom, and social equality. The current Communist-linked leadership was leading the revolution on a path that would undermine those goals just as the Franco fascist dictatorship had done in Spain after 1939. The revolution in Cuba—like in Spain—was following to totalitarianism.

Conclusion

This essay has explored anarchist cultural politics from 1950 to 1961—a time when Cuba transitioned from a republican democracy to an authoritarian dictatorship, which was then toppled by armed revolution—only to then be dominated by a Communist authoritarian government. Though anarchism declined in importance in the cultural, labor, and political struggles in Cuba after the 1920s, anarchists remained a critical voice on the Cuban Left. They had supported the Spanish Revolution in the late 1930s. Then after World War II, anarchists re-emerged to challenge the state—whether democratic or authoritarian.

Anarchists focused their cultural politics on an array of issues. Sexuality, race, harmonious living with nature, tourism, and revolutionary activism were key themes explored via articles and editorials published in anarchist newspapers from 1950 to 1961. Photographs reinforced articles, analyses, and editorials. Anarchists used this intratextual iconicity in their publications to promote an anarchist understanding and interpretation of Cuban culture during the pre-revolutionary days of the Cold War. While anarchists printed a journal devoted explicitly to culture (*Estudios* in 1950), their other newspapers replicated the roles of resistance culture that anarchist newspapers played in the heyday of Cuban anarchism in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Through this resistance culture, anarchists challenged various forms of oppression that average Cubans encountered in the first decade and a half of the Cold War. These challenges and criticisms manifested at the same time ideas, ideals, and notions to what a future free Cuba could aspire. Sexuality could be taught shamelessly. Racism could be relegated to the dust heap of history with the triumph of social justice. Tourism could be a force for recreation not just for the elite but also for workers, who if they labored in the tourism and food service industries would simultaneously benefit economically. Rural life, especially cooperatively run farms and decentralized communities, could sow the seeds of human regeneration and free communities with no need for state interference or oversight. Revolution was the cause of the day, and when Batista was overthrown, anarchists celebrated the dawning of a new libertarian day. But growing Communist control and state centralization of revolutionary forces in the early 1960s disillusioned anarchists, who soon found their newspapers closed, themselves portrayed by the government as counterrevolutionaries, and most forced to stop agitating or go into exile.

Notes

[1] Jesse Cohn, *Underground Passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture, 1848-2011* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014), quotes from 4, 14, and 16-17.

[2] For reference to the nickname, see the last page of *Solidaridad Gastronómica*, July 15, 1955.

[3] Javier Navarro Navarro, "Transnational Anarchist Culture in the Interwar Period:

The Magazine Estudios (1928-1937)" in *Writing Revolution: Hispanic Anarchism in the United States*, eds. Christopher J. Castañeda and Montse Feu (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019): 209-212. See also Navarro Navarro's "Reforma sexual, control de natalidad, naturismo y pacifismo. La cultura libertaria trasatlántica en las décadas de 1920 y 1930: Estudios. Revista Ecléctica (1928-1937) y su proyección y redes en América," *Historia y política* no. 42 (2019), 145-174.

[4] Frank Fernández, *Cuban Anarchism* (Tucson, Arizona: Sharp Press, 2001), 62.

[5] *Estudios*, February 1950. Front matter.

[6] See *Estudios: Revista Ecléctica,* December 1928 to June 1937. Lazarte's column in the Cuban magazine is from vol. 2, April 1950, 16-19, 46.

[7] For Orwell, see *Estudios,* April 1950, pgs. 33-34. For García Lorca, see *Estudios*, July 1950, 22-24. For Lam, see *Estudios*, February 1950, 19-20 and an interview with Lam in *Estudios*, July 1950, 34-35. For Picasso, see *Estudios*, April 1950, 7-9. For Rodríguez, see *Estudios*, April 1950, 35. For music, see *Estudios*, February 1950, vol. 1. For baseball, see *Solidaridad Gastronómica*, September 15, 1953, 2.

[8] *Estudios*, February 1950, 42-43.

[9] See Kirwin Shaffer, *Anarchist Cuba: Countercultural Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2019).

[10] *Estudios*, April 1950, 10-12, 46.

[11] Shaffer, *Anarchist Cuba,* 215-220.

[12] *Estudios*, February 1950, 32-34; June 1950, 38-39.

[13] Shaffer, *Anarchist Cuba,* 107-161.

[14] *¡Tierra!,* December 25, 1913, 1

[15] *Estudios,* August 1950, 7.

[16] Javier Navarro Navarro, "Transnational Anarchist Culture in the Interwar Period: The Magazine Estudios (1928-1937) in *Writing Revolution: Hispanic Anarchism in the United States,* Christopher J. Castañeda and Montse Feu, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019): 213.

[17] *Estudios,* July 1950, 26-7.

[18] Ibid., September 1950, 26.

[19] *Bohemia,* September 14, 1947, 20-22, 77-78.

[20] Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford, 1995), 307; *Solidaridad Gastronómica*, April 15, 1957, 6.

[21] *Solidaridad Gastronómica,* May 15, 1957, 1-2.

[22] Ibid., June 15, 1957, 11.

[23] A fine discussion of the developing-country driven aspects of the declaration can be found in Rebecca Barlow's *Women's Human Rights and the Muslim Question: Iran's One Million Signatures Campaign* (Melbourne University Publishing, 2012).

[24] *Solidaridad Gastronómica*, November 15, 1952, 3; June 15, 1953, 1.

[25] Ibid., January 15, 1956, 1 and 3.

[26] Marcelo Salinas, *Diálogos libertarios de actualidad* (La Habana: ALC Editorial, November 1959): 29-33; Justo Muriel, "'Este hombre generoso que no sabía odiar,'" *Marcelo Salinas: Un ideal sublime y elevado…* (Miami: Ediciones del Movimiento Libertario Cubano en el Exilio, 1977): 23.

[27] *El Libertario,* August 31, 1959, 3.

[28] For the earlier era, see any edition of Havana's *La Voz del Dependiente* (1907-1911) or *El Dependiente* (1911-1917).

[29] *Solidaridad Gastronómica,* November 15, 1960, 4-5.

[30] *Estudios*, April 1950, 4-6; June 1950, 5-7. The paper did not mention displaced Arabs.

[31] *Solidaridad Gastronómica,* December 15, 1953, 6-7.

[32] Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution,* 305; *Solidaridad Gastronómica,* October 15, 1957, 1-2; October 15, 1958, 12; November 15, 1958, 2, 6-7. Photo from *Solidaridad Gastrónomica,* October 1957, 1.

[33] *Solidaridad Gastronómica,* September 15, 1955, 4-5.

[34] Ibid., March 15, 1958, 2.

[35] Ibid., December 15, 1955, 6-7.

[36] *El Libertario*, January 10, 1959, 3.

[37] Ibid., January 10, 1959, 1.

[38] Ibid., May 10, 1959, 4; Solidaridad Gastronómica, May 15, 1959, 12.

[39] *Solidaridad Gastronómica*, June 15, 1959, 1 and 11; August 15, 1959, 1-2.

[40] Ibid., July 15, 1959, 7

[41] Ibid., July 15, 1959, 1 and 7.

[42] Ibid., November 15, 1959, 1 and 12; *El Libertario,* November 25, 1959, 1. Photo from *Solidaridad Gastronómica,* November 15, 1959, 12.

[43] *Solidaridad Gastronómica,* November 15, 1960, 1.