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Abstract

Between Ink and Power: The Politics of Cuba's National Press in the Late Republic (1940-1958)

by

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This dissertation explores the evolving relationship between the Cuban state and key sectors of the national commercial press on the island during the late republican era (1940-1958). These sectors included proprietors of newspapers and magazines, journalists, shop workers, and the professional and labor organizations of each. During this period, the Cuban state actively collaborated in organizing and professionalizing the commercial press industry. Under Fulgencio Batista's presidency (1940-1944), a series of legislative measures helped make Cuba's media market one of the largest in the region. Throughout the constitutional administrations of Batista, Ramón Grau, and Carlos Prío, the state sought to control the press through co-optation and other indirect methods, but seldom resorted to outright repression. However, a brief repressive phase under Prío combined with a highly politicized media environment critical of corruption and political violence to set the stage for Batista's military coup in 1952, ironically ushering in an even more repressive period to follow. Initially, Batista's regime implemented inconsistent repression and heavy press co-optation through increasing subsidies, sinecures, and bribes. As his rule progressed, outright press censorship became more frequent, and repression grew more violent. This escalation led to the increasing politicization and mobilization of news workers, who played a crucial role in resisting Batista and supporting the Cuban Revolution. All told, this dissertation complicates depictions of the "free press" prior to 1959 by focusing on its

contentious, deep entanglements with the Cuban republican state. It also elucidates how conflicts in the sector prior to the Cuban Revolution in part laid the groundwork for conflicts that would follow its triumph, culminating in the closure of most commercial press publications and the exile of many proprietors, journalists, and shop workers.

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Major Professor: Dr. Michael J. Bustamante

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