



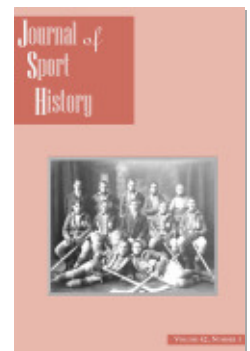
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Antonio Sotomayor

Journal of Sport History, Volume 42, Number 1, Spring 2015, pp. 59-86 (Article)

Published by University of Illinois Press



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“Operation Sport”: Puerto Rico’s Recreational and Political Consolidation in an Age of Modernization and Decolonization, 1950s

ANTONIO SOTOMAYOR[†]

*University Library, Latin American and Caribbean Studies
University of Illinois*

Contextualized in a Western push for post-war decolonization and modernization, the development of recreation programs in 1950s Puerto Rico helped consolidate the state’s sport institution and, in turn, legitimize a new political status. The 1950s was a pivotal decade in Puerto Rican history due to the creation of the Commonwealth in 1952 and the innovative economic project known as Operation Bootstrap. The term “Operation Sport” portrays the development of sport and recreation in this decade as collaboration between the government and

[†]The author wishes to thank the financial support of a Mellon research grant and a Freehling travel grant from the University of Chicago to do research in Puerto Rico. Thanks also to Dain Borges, Emilio Kourí, and Agnes Lugo-Ortiz for their valuable feedback on early stages of this project, to Dan Tracy for generous editorial work, to Lena Suk for an invitation to present this research at the Conference on Latin American History, to the Archivo General de Puerto Rico for permission to use the images, and to the anonymous reviewers whose comments made this piece much better. Any shortcomings are solely the author’s responsibility. Correspondence to asotomay@illinois.edu.

the working classes to develop recreational/cultural activities to assuage the impact of dramatic industrialization. However, regardless of the perception of progress, critics targeted the program for its centralization and expropriations, comparing it to "Communist" governments. For the newly established Commonwealth, at stake in the popular acceptance of these recreational programs was evaluation of a new political status arising from promises of social justice.

The 1950s might appear to be a decade of great optimism for Puerto Ricans. Higher wages, better public utilities, land reform, and improvements in health, education, and recreation were some of the indicators of Puerto Rico's dramatic modernization. Some of the changes occurred with the decline of local industrialization under a "war economy" of the Second World War and the rise of a foreign investment modernization model known as "Operation Bootstrap." Politically, amidst a worldwide movement to end colonialism, leaders from different ideologies came together in a Constitutional Assembly and drafted Puerto Rico's first Constitution leading to the establishment on July 25, 1952, of the Estado Libre Asociado (ELA), or Commonwealth. Puerto Rico, though in strict legal terms not a country, became for the U.S. a world example for developing countries, described as a "showcase" of democracy and capitalism.¹ For Puerto Rican sport, recreational programs served as another governmental tool to consolidate not only a growing sport infrastructure but a new political status led by a populist party in close association with the United States.

Sport can be an effective window to observe these political and modernizing dynamics together. In line with the scholarship that views sport as an embodiment of politics in Latin America and the Caribbean,² the case of Puerto Rico as presented here shows that sport aided in the legitimation of the newly established Commonwealth by providing a tangible result of the government's populist discourse. First, the centralization of sport under the reorganized Public Recreation and Parks Administration (PRPA) of 1950 allowed the government to increase its funding for recreation and centralize operations in order to streamline their mass recreation project. Second, as the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) built newer and better athletic facilities in order to train a physically healthy and culturally enriched labor force, sport and recreation became the embodiment of "Operation Sport," an athletic counterpart to the broader political mandates of Operation Bootstrap.

Leading "Operation Sport," and the PRPA, was Julio Enrique Monagas. Monagas, today considered the father of Puerto Rican Olympism, headed the government's sport agencies between 1942 and 1966 and became another key figure of the PPD government.³ His work on sport and recreation places him next to figures such as Teodoro Moscoso, architect of Operation Bootstrap;⁴ Antonio Fernós Isern, considered the ideological mastermind of the creation of the Commonwealth political status and resident commissioner in the U.S. Congress (1946-1964);⁵ Jaime Benítez, chancellor and first president of the University of Puerto Rico (1942-1971),⁶ and Ricardo Alegría, founder and director of the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture (1955-1973) and considered an integral figure in Puerto Rican cultural nationalism,⁷ among others. Additionally, the popularity of Monagas' sport and recreation programs shows the effectiveness of "Operation Sport" as a model of government and

citizen alliance. Following recent analysis of the negotiations of Puerto Rican populism,⁸ sport programs became a site of political contestation where the popular classes exerted their political agency by holding party leaders accountable for their campaign promises.

However, contrary to what the government alleged, the socio-economic changes in 1950s Puerto Rico fell significantly short of solving this society's ills. Growing dependence on the U.S. and increasing high levels of unemployment (12.9 percent in 1950 and 13.3 in 1960) also characterize this decade's "misdevelopment."⁹ As in other parts of Latin America, the local populist government succeeded in part due to increasing centralization that allowed for a tight grip on power and a somewhat successful discourse of social justice. Indeed, Monagas was highly criticized for his czarist approach to sport, which is similar to the "second line" of populist movements in Argentina. In times of growing concern over Communism, Muñoz's and Monagas' authority resemble other Latin American *caciques*, or strongmen, within democratic governments.¹⁰

Scholarship on Latin American sport developed around particular sports, mainly soccer and baseball.¹¹ As far as the Caribbean, recent work has revolved around professional baseball, migration, and Latino players in the U.S.¹² For Puerto Rico, with the exception of a few scholars' work,¹³ the majority of the literature has been celebratory or descriptive.¹⁴ Therefore, this study contributes to the field by analyzing recreational programs without privileging a certain sport and in relation to sport's socio-political impact on a developing country. Puerto Rico's participation in international sports became another source of political legitimation for the Commonwealth and for a developing sense of cultural nationalism. However, we need to comprehend first sports' development at the local level in order to fully capture the dynamics of international sports in a developing country. This local context of sport is what this article seeks to dissect. This article will begin with a brief overview of Puerto Rican history leading to the 1950s, followed by another brief account of sports development on the island until the 1950s. The next section exposes the politics behind the centralization of the PRPA and its meaning for the Commonwealth. The analysis of the PRPA will contextualize the development and activities around "Operation Sport" and show how this program became fertile ground for a government/popular collaboration in the pursuit of common progress. A final section in this article will show that the development sport in Puerto Rico was not always perceived as positive, as different individuals raised concerns over forced expropriations, centralization, and Communism.

Background of Operation Sport

At the end of the Spanish American War of 1898, Puerto Rico was ceded as war booty to the United States after four centuries under Spanish monarchy. Recognizing Puerto Rico's strategic importance in Caribbean waters, the U.S. officially began its imperial world presence.¹⁵ Puerto Rico was defined in the U.S. Congress as "belonging to, but not part of," the United States. That is, legally, the island became an *unincorporated* territory, which meant that while it was a U.S. territory, it remained, in perpetuity, a separate political entity.¹⁶ In 1900, a limited civilian government was established with a U.S.-appointed governor and an Executive Committee, a locally elected bi-cameral legislature,¹⁷ and a resident commissioner to Washington with no voting rights. The Jones Act of 1917, just as the U.S. entered the First World War, made Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens, which some argue solidified a hegemonic relation.¹⁸

Like many Latin American leaders of the nineteenth century who admired the republican and democratic government of the U.S., Puerto Ricans welcomed U.S. democracy, republicanism, and capitalism.¹⁹ However, the limits and shortcomings of U.S. democracy as a nascent world power were quickly noticeable. The U.S. replaced the local elite's privileged position with U.S.-owned absentee corporations that turned a somewhat diversified economy into a sugar monoculture. To be sure, there were some overall improvements in health, education, and roads, yet these mainly benefited a new socio-economic model that furthered U.S. interests. Business boomed for those in the sugar industry, while the rest of the population continued to live in poverty with no real chance for improvement in their quality of life. High unemployment, inadequate housing, and lingering health problems due to poor living conditions characterized Puerto Rican society during the first three decades of the twentieth century.²⁰

The result of these conditions was an increase in social instability that led to the rise of an active Nationalist Party in the 1930s, a decade known as the "troubled thirties."²¹ The climax in Puerto Rico's political instability came on November 30, 1950, when a group of Nationalists, under the direction of Pedro Albizu Campos, rebelled in armed conflict to declare Puerto Rican independent from the U.S., an event now called the "Grito de Jayuya."²² On March 1, 1954, a group of Puerto Rican Nationalists, denouncing the still colonial problem of Puerto Rico, opened fire during a session of the U.S. House of Representatives wounding five congressmen. Dolores "Lolita" Lebrón Sotomayor led the group and exclaimed during the arrest that she had not come to kill anyone but to die for Puerto Rico and that now she was "being crucified for the freedom of my country."²³

Nonetheless, the majority of Puerto Ricans viewed their "association" with the U.S. as beneficial. This was due in part to the reforms of a "war-economy" boom that the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) instituted during the 1940s²⁴ but that then expanded in the 1950s. In 1948, Puerto Ricans, for the first time in their 440 years of colonial existence, were allowed to elect their own governor, choosing the PPD's main leader, Luis Muñoz Marín. Benefiting from Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies of the 1930s, which were extended to Puerto Rico, the PPD (established by Muñoz in 1938) began a series of Pro-American populist reforms based on social justice. Taking advantage of the reforms of the war economy of the 1940s, the idea was to turn a primarily agricultural society into a self-supporting industrial one under the auspices of the U.S. But due to lack of local capital support that inhibited the locally created industries, the PPD beginning in 1947 shifted gears and instead opted for a foreign-led industrialization program, called Operation Bootstrap.²⁵ Under Operation Bootstrap, the local government invited U.S. companies to establish production on the island by offering tax incentives.

Puerto Rican modernization occurred as part of a larger process of post-World War II decolonization, industrialization, and modernization, which aimed to develop and stabilize the Third World in response to the rise of Communism.²⁶ During the 1950s, hundreds of companies flocked to the island in search of tax exemption benefits. At the same time, tens of thousands Puerto Ricans left the island for work opportunities in the U.S., accelerating a migration trend that would develop in a transnational flow of culture and identity.²⁷ Jobs were created, public works improved, infrastructure enhanced. Between 1950 and 1960, the Gross National Product, or GNP, doubled and allowed an annual growth rate of 8.3 percent. Gross investment increased in a dramatic 219 percent. Numerous social scientists

and leaders from other countries traveled to Puerto Rico to learn from this "miracle" in development.²⁸ Indeed, by 1961, Puerto Rico's industrial program was so influential that President John F. Kennedy appointed Operation Bootstrap's architect, Teodoro Moscoso, coordinator of Alliance for Progress.²⁹ The Commonwealth and Operation Bootstrap, with their (neo)colonial structures, became so entrenched in Puerto Rican society that they have shaped Puerto Rican history ever since. In turn, these projects became models for political and economic modernization in the developing world, most famously NAFTA—the North American Free Trade Agreement.³⁰

It was during this air of "progress" in the 1950s that a shift in Puerto Rican sport and recreation occurred. As in other parts of Spanish America, recreation has been part of Puerto Rican society since the early years of European colonization, particularly in the form of "popular games" and primarily during festivities, either religious or civic.³¹ Several of the so-called "modern sports"³² had been practiced on the island since before the U.S. occupation in 1898, including gymnastics as early as 1856 and baseball in 1896.³³ Once the U.S. occupied the island, and alongside its Americanization project, it brought its athletic practices and institutions. Two institutions were mainly responsible for the development and sponsorship of sport: the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the education system.

The YMCA entered Puerto Rico with invading forces during the Spanish American War as the "Army and Navy YMCA."³⁴ This Army and Navy YMCA was primarily a source of Christian support for Christian soldiers and offered among other things Bible classes and areas of recreation. From its official building in Calle Sol #42, along with its reading room, café area, and library,³⁵ it set the example of how a modern institution of recreation should look. The civic YMCA was established in 1912, and the new state of the art building inaugurated in 1913. While the YMCA had promoted its sports since early in the 1900s, by 1914 the civic center was a well-run recreational program practicing basketball, volleyball, athletics, fencing, gymnastics, frontón (or *Jai-Alai*/Basque Ball), swimming, and handball, among others.³⁶

The YMCA worked alongside the newly created public education system. After 1898, the U.S. abolished the frail Spanish education system and instituted its own system, which included a permanent component of physical education and athletics.³⁷ From grade schools to middle and high schools, sports including baseball, basketball, and track and field entered the curriculum. The model school program was the University High School under the leadership of George Keelan, an English teacher who arrived in 1908 from Dedham, Massachusetts, and then became the school's principal in 1926. At the college level, the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) was established in 1903, and physical education as a subject of study was established as early as 1904-1905 with the hiring of Sgm. Rafael A. Segarra as "instructor of Gymnastics."³⁸ The UPR became the standard of excellence in sports, and its athletes represented the island at international competitions starting in the 1930s. The UPR's athletic director during the 1930s was Cosme Beitía, a Puerto Rican with a B.A. from UPR and an M.S. in physical education from Columbia University. Athletics at the college level developed athletes to represent Puerto Rico at the Central American and Caribbean Games since 1930, and the summer Olympiads since 1948. By the 1950s, Puerto Rico's Olympic delegation was highly popular, helping to foster a sport culture and deeply influencing national identity.³⁹

These two institutions were responsible for the practice and spread of different sports throughout the island but in particular baseball, basketball, and track and field. Early migration to the U.S. led Puerto Ricans to more contact with baseball, which led to the establishment of the Porto Rican League in New Jersey in 1923.⁴⁰ In 1938, the Baseball League of Puerto Rico was established,⁴¹ while the Superior League of Basketball had been established in 1930.⁴² Professional baseball after 1940 became a transnational sporting affair, as baseball stars from the U.S. leagues played in the Puerto Rican Winter League and many local players signed with U.S. major league clubs.⁴³ This catapulted baseball's popularity and produced many heroes, foremost among them Roberto Clemente.⁴⁴

Sport as recreation for the general public was developed by the State only after the 1930s. The modern stadiums for professional baseball were located in San Juan, Ponce, Mayagüez, and Caguas. Although the stadiums hosted a few public special events, they were primarily used for professional baseball. The YMCA was not designed to be a provider of mass recreation. Actually, it had problems widening its membership due to racism and its missionary Protestantism.⁴⁵ The schools only allowed registered students in good standing to participate, and facilities were few, ill equipped, and limited. To play baseball as late as the 1930s, children had to improvise playing fields, often using random open fields or unpaved streets. Bases consisted of used pieces of cardboard or empty cracker tins; there were no fences but plenty of tall grass.⁴⁶

The government established an Athletic Commission in 1927 for the regulation of boxing and Greco-Roman wrestling,⁴⁷ later replaced by the Public Amusement and Sports Commission in 1934.⁴⁸ During the first decade of the Commission, recreational and sport spaces were developed for the San Juan area with little attention to the rest of the island. It was with the arrival of Julio Enrique Monagas as Commissioner of Sport and Recreation in 1942, and with the support of the PPD that the state adopted a populist and social justice approach to sport and began a comprehensive modernization of sport, known as *Un parque para cada pueblo*.⁴⁹ This initiative was an unprecedented athletic infrastructure project of Monagas' creation that aimed at providing each of the island's seventy-eight towns with an athletic field, yet with little recreational programming.⁵⁰ This changed during the 1950s when the Parks Administration began a more comprehensive recreational program with "Operation Sport."

Commonwealth, Sport Infrastructure, and the Public Recreation and Parks Administration

If during the 1940s the State began to build mass athletic facilities, in the 1950s it redesigned its approach to recreation. Once the athletic parks were created, it was now time to organize recreational programming. Yet, this shift in sport occurred within a broader shift in the State's structure, and in preparation for the political changes from a colonial State to the more autonomous Commonwealth. In his 1950 Report of the Governor, Muñoz described a series of governmental reorganizations. These reorganizations "establish clearer lines of authority and responsibility,"⁵¹ due to decades of creation of numerous agencies with unclear lines of accountability. The previously called Public Amusement and Parks Commission became the Public Recreation and Parks Administration (PRPA), placed under the local executive branch. On February 17, 1950, the governor addressed the

Puerto Rican Legislature, stating that "the direction of programs of recreation and parks is principally administrative in character, and they are much more apt to be directed by a single head."⁵² Muñoz's reorganization plan was to place different agencies of government under his direct supervision, called Administrations, and directed by one person. Julio E. Monagas became Administrator of the PRPA, which legitimized his already czarist role in sport, as he also headed the Puerto Rican Olympic Committee.⁵³

Monagas was the most obvious candidate to lead the PRPA. He had led the governmental sport institutions since 1942. Before that, he had been an important supporter of the PPD, helping the party organize locally⁵⁴ but also in its publicity, and even served as political mediator.⁵⁵ Monagas had been an athlete (high jump and pole vault)⁵⁶ in the early 1920s and later a leader of sport in his home town of Ponce, which gave him both popularity and credence. But it was his loyalty to the PPD that ultimately won him the job. Since the 1940s, Monagas helped to develop sport not only locally but internationally, and he catapulted Puerto Rico's Olympic participation, taking the "national" delegation to their first world summer Olympic games in 1948 in London. For his Olympic trajectory, the International Olympic Committee awarded him with the Olympic Order in 1984.⁵⁷

While the centralization and well-defined government hierarchy in sport was denounced by some sport leaders, others applauded the hierarchy in sport as integral for progress. Those who supported Monagas as the chief of sports in Puerto Rico made their views public. Part of their rationale lies in the context of the Cold War, where sport was used as a symbol of national strength.⁵⁸ In 1956, writing for the newspaper *El Mundo*, José Seda used the metaphor of baseball in order to set the parameters for a democratic country in times of distress. The section entitled "Como Dirigente (As a Head Coach)" is of particular relevance:

An analogy can be made that in times of crisis, baseball and a democratic government work the same way. The authority over a team is delegated to one individual, the coach. From the players' bench, the coach observes everything, because he dominates the entire playing field and notices many things that the individual players do not. This is how he leads his team. Once the game is over, the authority of the coach diminishes or ceases, to that pertaining to the action and movement of the players. However, the players are not reluctant to temporarily subordinate his desires and actions for the common good. Just as it happens in democracies, in times of crisis, as wars are, in that vast powers are given to a nation's leader, but once the crisis is over, those powers are revised, and fall then in the genuine representatives of the people. It is necessary that the player has faith in his coach. It is important that the player does what his coach orders. In a team game like baseball, unity of action is needed and if each player plays for himself, then there will be a lack of synchronicity of group effort and the purpose of winning will not be achieved or will become very difficult. Therefore, there must be trust in the coach and be faithful to the coach, which is to be faithful to the team.⁵⁹

With the push for better athletic facilities came increasing demand. New parks attracted more people, whether young or adult. The PRPA report from the month of September 1955 reported an attendance of 383,123 in the eighty parks where attendance was recorded.⁶⁰ Some 154,394 adults and 125,296 children attended the parks, with an average daily attendance of 12,770. By 1960, Puerto Rico's general population was 2,340,000.⁶¹

Thus, the PRPA and the PPD appeared to be providing the social justice through sport they had promised.

For all the centralization, the PRPA was not alone in the planning and construction of athletic parks. As a matter of fact, collaboration between agencies proved to be as necessary as the centralizing efforts were. The PRPA needed the monetary and logistical support from Puerto Rico's Planning Board. Since 1943, the Planning Board had been fully involved in aiding the PRPA with the construction of athletic fields for all towns, in addition to other recreational works. Works approved in 1951 included some additions to the José Celso Barbosa Park costing some \$50,000, improvements to the Sixto Escobar Park costing \$30,000, and building Puerto Rico's first ever indoor basketball court in San Germán costing \$30,000.⁶²

A new modern court for San Germán, a town known as "The Cradle of Puerto Rican Basketball," would send the message of governmental support for an activity that the people cared deeply about. Leaders of San Germán's Lions Club, being fully aware of the populist modernization project in athletics, held Monagas accountable for promising the basketball court. And Monagas delivered. The Legislature used the San Germán basketball project and gave it a political twist. The Law No. 227 of May 7, 1951 that approved the appropriation of \$30,000 to build the basketball court opened with a statement of motives that said, "In furtherance of the development of the said sport and as an encouragement for the public towards cultural and educational activities, it is necessary to construct a roofed court that will permit the holding of sports activities and at the same time afford an adequate place for people to get together in *democratic expansion*."⁶³ The basketball court was finalized in 1954, and it became the first and only roofed court on the island at the time, representing a symbol of sport modernization and pride for all *sangermeños*.

"Operation Sport"

Once the Public Recreation and Parks Administration was delineated according to the new Commonwealth's administration, and Mongasas was again recognized as both the foremost leader in sport and an integral ally of the PPD, the opportunity arose to take Puerto Rican sport and recreation to another level. Julio Enrique Monagas' athletic modernization program did not only consist of building athletic parks. He believed in the development of an athletic and recreational lifestyle for Puerto Ricans. The idea was to transcend the mere construction of athletic fields and develop a comprehensive athletic and recreational program not only in urban but also in rural communities. As a result of this, the PRPA organized and held several activities in different parts of the island that sought to increase the participation of the public in sport and recreation.

Although its original name was "Programa Cultural para Trabajadores Industriales (Cultural Program for Industrial Workers)," today these programs might be better understood under the term "Operation Sport." We know that part of the economic modernization program, from the late 1940s and especially after the 1950s, was officially labeled Operation Bootstrap.⁶⁴ However, the intensity of rapid industrialization, and the fear of being accused of abandoning ideals of social justice, forced PPD leaders to design equally strong programs of humanistic and recreational values. As early as 1949, Muñoz began defending industrialization against accusations of developing mass "sweatshop labor."⁶⁵ As a result of this, another governmental initiative dubbed "Operation Serenity" centered

on the promotion of the arts and the definition of a Puerto Rican "personality."⁶⁶ Sport and recreation were also crucial in the Commonwealth's program to balance a society with increasing levels of industrialization. In this regard, while former Puerto Rican Olympian and social critic José Santori Coll is right in asserting the political nature of the PRPA, his assessment of the PRPA as void of any athletic and recreation programs, but preoccupied only with building parks,⁶⁷ is somewhat inaccurate.

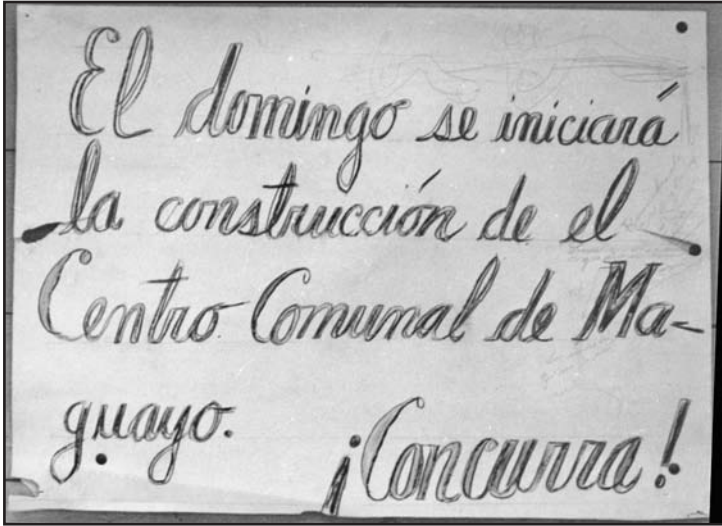
By 1955, the Puerto Rican Legislature was fully invested in these recreational programs. In their third regular session of the Second Legislature, legislators presented a statement of motives that introduced a series of appropriations to fund these "popular-cultural" recreation programs:

The effects of industrialization have been felt, directly and favorable, mainly by Puerto Rico's working class. Under the novel industrial development program there have thus far been established here more than 300 factories employing about 23,000 workers, with a pay roll amounting to \$18,000,000 annually. The flattering results of this program, which is still just in its infancy, may well be taken by us as an index of our future industrial expansion and of the concomitant effects of that expansion on our economy, our culture, and our general public. Evidently, there is need of a stabilizing factor in the lives of these green industrial workers while this change-over in our people takes place and the values of both cultures—the agrarian and the industrial—are definitively bent to a single pattern.

A program of this nature must have the active participation and collaboration of the workers themselves and their families, so that they all may become part of the program and be responsible for the carrying out of its activities.⁶⁸

The fact that the government encouraged the people to take the lead in the development of the sport program reflects a coalition between the government and the public en route to social progress. The law, which took effect on July 1, 1955, appropriated \$56,000 for the Department of Labor, which would develop these recreational programs in collaboration with the PRPA, the Economic Development Administration, and the Department of Education. The PRPA took the lead on this project, and in 1957 it was officially transferred to Monagas's agency under law No. 37. By 1959, and with an increased budget of \$71,400, "Operation Sport" had been installed in Ponce, Coamo, Salinas, Guayanilla, and Peñuelas.⁶⁹

Julio Enrique Monagas established his first community recreation project for a working-class community in Ponce's Mercedita sugar mill, or Central Mercedita. This project, despite being developed in a rural central, became the precedent for subsequent projects for industrial communities. Nevertheless, the goal was the same, to provide healthy recreation for workers to balance the pressures of work. This early project was designed with the economic aid of the prominent Serrallés family and targeted 50 *barrios* or communities in Ponce covering thousands of working families. The Serrallés cleared old barns and other buildings from machinery and equipment, in addition to providing building materials to workers. In the colonia of Boca Chica workers took the role of mechanics, carpenters, and foremen to build facilities themselves, which included an athletic field. In the colonias of Restaurada and Úrsula they held communal meetings, dances, and parlor games, while in Laurel and Poncedña they screened various films. In Mercedita workers managed to build an athletic field with night lighting and courts for various sports, all adjacent to their living quarters.⁷⁰



"On Sunday we will begin the construction of the Community Center in Maguayo, Dorado. Attend!" Construction of barrio Maguayo's athletic field, Dorado, 1955. COURTESY OF FONDO OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR, ARCHIVO GENERAL DE PUERTO RICO, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.



Local priest blessing the activity in barrio Maguayo, Dorado, 1955. COURTESY OF FONDO OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR, ARCHIVO GENERAL DE PUERTO RICO, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.



Construction of Maguayo's athletic field, 1955. COURTESY OF FONDO OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR, ARCHIVO GENERAL DE PUERTO RICO, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.



Construction of Maguayo's athletic field, 1955. COURTESY OF FONDO OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR, ARCHIVO GENERAL DE PUERTO RICO, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.



Construction of Maguayo's athletic field, 1955. COURTESY OF FONDO OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR, ARCHIVO GENERAL DE PUERTO RICO, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.



Construction of Maguayo's athletic field, 1955. COURTESY OF FONDO OFICINA DEL GOBERNADOR, ARCHIVO GENERAL DE PUERTO RICO, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.

The Central Mercedita was the flagship of this early community recreation program. The program was an athletic and recreational but also a morally comprehensive, educational experience, not only for workers but also for their spouses and children. In addition to offering clinics on different sports such as baseball, basketball, softball, and volleyball, the activities also included a "general program of social and moral fundamentals for the whole community." According to Monagas, this constituted the "primordial nerve" of the program because it intervenes in the "improvement of society and the training for better community relations and the favorable medium and conditions to create a spirit of civic consciousness by the workers."⁷¹

The program included town-hall-style meetings where workers would meet to recreate but also to voice concerns about the community and attend educational conferences on community, social, and religious matters. The meetings were hosted by physicians, school teachers, social workers, and civic and recreational leaders. It was designed to be a "democratic" gathering, allowing for the participation of all "religious sects and dogmas." Moreover, to encourage the application of these new and proper social, moral, and community principles the organizers awarded prizes to the best homemaker, family caretaker, and cleanest homes. For these goals to be met, Monagas acknowledged needing the cooperation of the Department of Education and Department of Health.⁷²

Monagas' recreation project required that these activities be organized, executed, and maintained by the workers themselves, without the involvement of their bosses. That is, it was supposed to be a workers-led recreation program. However, the workers would always have the supervision, guidance, and help of the PRPA and the Serrallés. In this way, Monagas set the parameters for a truly popular recreational program. Nevertheless, he also made sure that his administration was still supervising all activities and could "offer guidance" at any time.

The activities in 1955 show the diversity of the recreational program and groups involved. In Arecibo, the organizers continued the Retozo Festival that included the screening of several films in collaboration with the mayor, school superintendents, police, political and civic leaders, and librarians. In Dorado, the organizing committee continued dramatic plays in the barrio Maguayo, in addition to organizing popular games and a volleyball tournament. In the town of Toa Baja, in collaboration with the Asociación Recreativa, local leaders managed to get the approval to use the old milk station building for recreational activities. They cleaned the building, and they painted and expanded some walls. In Guaynabo, organizers helped to stage dominos and chess tournaments while staging a "Crayola" painting pageant. They also held a puppet show and a talent show for children. In San Lorenzo community members acquired an old town building for their Recreation Center and held a performance of Puerto Rican traditional dances in addition to organizing plays, puppet shows, and the performance of an oral reading of the poem "Árbol Sinfónico" by José Ramón Dávila.⁷³

A 1955 list of parks built since the 1940s might suggest that the bulk of construction was centered in urban areas. It should be noted that by "athletic parks" the PRPA meant a baseball field that was used also for any other sports or recreational activities. Island-wide in that year, there were eighty-two urban athletic parks, while only thirty-nine were rural.⁷⁴ By 1958, the PRPA had built a total of ninety-six urban athletic parks and eighty-nine rural parks. Also by 1958 there were forty-three basketball courts, five volleyball courts, four

tennis courts and thirty-four recreational areas.⁷⁵ In the rural district of the southern town of Ponce alone, there were forty-nine sport activities and ninety-six recreational activities.⁷⁶

The idea of *cooperativismo*, or cooperation, present in “Operation Sport,” was spread through a governmental agency called División de Educación de la Comunidad (DIVEDCO), agency that originated within the Parks and Recreation Commission of 1949. In 1951, the DIVEDCO released the film *Los Peloteros* (The Baseball Players).⁷⁷ Directed by Jack Delano, a Ukrainian-born photographer for the Farm Security Administration who became a close collaborator on social programs for the PPD,⁷⁸ the movie centered on the desire of a group of men from a small barrio in Comerío to build a school regardless of the inability of the government to provide funds. As the story goes, in order to prove the benefits of cooperation and will, Momo, one of the six men meeting at a local *colmado*, recalls his youth when his friends at the poor barrio of Cielito raised money to buy uniforms for their baseball team. In order to raise the forty-five dollars for the uniforms, the kids, assisted by their coach and friend Don Pepe, sold used bottles, local candies, and pasteles, and shined shoes, and even organized a circus. Ingredients for making the pasteles were donated from local businessmen who seeing the determination of the children donated the ingredients. In the end, and inspired by the perseverance of these kids, the men agreed to cooperate and “work together” to build the school.

The emphasis of the DIVEDCO to teach a lesson in *cooperativismo* could have been intended to encourage the idea of “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps.” But it also provided a relief to the government in terms of construction costs. This was made clear in the letter Monagas sent to Plácido Acevedo Quintana, aide to the governor, when he said that the Maguayo project in Dorado was successful because it was done “without any cost to the government.”⁷⁹ Twelve other similar Community Recreational Centers that involved the whole community were undertaken in the southern towns of Juana Díaz, Ponce, and Santa Isabel.

The governor himself was fully aware of the benefits of sport and recreational development for both society and his government, and actually had requested Monagas to make efforts to increase attendance to parks.⁸⁰ In his 1954 report to the governor, Monagas presented a positive scenario for the attendance and usage of athletic and recreational parks. He reported that the PRPA administered seventy parks in sixty-seven towns. Overall attendance to parks of the first three months of 1954 amounted to 1,078,067.⁸¹

Table 1: Participation in Parks, January to March, 1954

Month	Active Participants	Adults	Children	Total
January	125,488	109,481	103,385	338,354
February	106,293	98,637	99,335	304,265
March	139,723	138,087	157,638	435,448
Jan. to Mar.	371,504	346,205	360,358	1,078,067

Source: *Informe de asistencias y actividades registradas en los parques atléticos, desde enero 1 a marzo 31 de 1954*, p. 1, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, Archivo General de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The report goes on to state that the parks with most attendance were in Cayey at 60,431; Naguabo at 41,097; and Vega Baja at 29,372. Towns with the lowest attendance were Las Marías with 1,396; Lajas 3,857; and Maricao 4,011. However, once in the parks not all attendants were active in sports or athletics. Monagas reported that 34 percent of attendants "developed their muscles and received all the physical benefits derived from sports," while 66 percent "received the spiritual joy and all the emotional benefit that sport produces in all the people that rejoice observing its progress." In total, 360,358 children used the facilities "that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico government has placed at their disposition in order to keep them away from the streets and from other places that do not guarantee their physical health or their moral stability."⁸² Schools took the most advantage of the facilities, using them for athletic practices, inter-scholastic competition, and Field Days. Baseball, softball, and basketball were the principal sports practiced. Baseball was actually played in all parks, while the parks that were used for most sports were the Liga de París in Mayagüez and the athletic park in Toa Baja with five different sports in each.⁸³ The frequency of sports practiced is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Participation Frequency by Sport, January to March, 1954

Sport	Frequency
Baseball	3,982
Softball	2,375
Basketball	428
Track and Field	330
Volleyball	158
Horseshoes	14
Boxing	11
Soccer (Balompié)	4
Unspecified	2,150

Source: *Informe de asistencias y actividades registradas en los parques atléticos, desde enero 1 a marzo 31 de 1954*, p. 1, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, Archivo General de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

In addition to the PRPA there were private organizations willing and able to organize sport clinics, demonstrating civic leadership in the dissemination of a culture of physical health. This was the case of the Club Atlético del Sur in Ponce, led by Manuel González Pató, and the athletic department of the Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, represented by Professors Carlos Negrón and Enrique Colón. These individuals organized and scheduled different athletic clinics not only in Ponce but also in Jayuya, Adjuntas, and Coamo.⁸⁴ In Coamo, children bombarded the athletes and coaches with questions before putting to use newly learned skills. Nonetheless, the government's PRPA was hands down the premier

sponsor of sport in Puerto Rico. "Operation Sport" became the programmatic recreational-athletic activity that helped embody the goals of the Commonwealth.

Populism in Times of "Operation Sport"

Regardless of the questionable "populism" in Puerto Rico's industrialization, the discourse of populism was present, and in sports it was no different. If the mid 1950s was the height of the PPD's sport populist discourse through "Operation Sport," they were also the height of sport-related demands. That is, if the PPD government had been using sport and athletics to gain the favor of the people in order to carry out its governmental reforms, the people themselves used this same paradigm to make their own demands and hold the government accountable to its promises. In other words, the PPD and their hegemonic agenda had the effect not only of the people's consent but also produced a reaction when people began to demand more athletic parks and sports gear. Populist reforms were not only welcomed, but they were also sought out and stretched to the limit. To some extent, Puerto Ricans under the Commonwealth government put to the test the real meaning of populism and modernization by holding the government accountable for the delivery of sport facilities.

The populist discourse of the PPD and its sport branch, the PRPA, had managed to instill in Puerto Ricans a sense of a powerful government able to provide for all. Dozens, if not hundreds, of letters sent to the governor in the 1950s alone prove that the people believed that Luis Muñoz Marín could provide them with everything necessary for the practice of sport. From all corners, men and children, boys and girls wrote to "Don Luis" to please provide them with baseballs, gloves, bats, volleyballs and nets, and other sport equipment. They asked for basketball courts for their barrios, whether it was for the public housing project San José in Hato Rey, or for the barrio Bajadero in Arecibo. Even the Jesuit Seminario Interdiocesano San Ildefonso in Aibonito asked the governor in 1954 for a sport complex consisting of three cement courts, one of them with a roof.⁸⁵ Monagas replied that the current political system of the Commonwealth did not allow for construction in private entities.⁸⁶

Whole communities gathered to write and ask Muñoz for better athletic facilities and parks. This was the case of the Asociación Atlética de Villalba (affiliated with the athletic Department of the Villalba High School) that, by asserting their political loyalty, invoked their district senator, Agustín Burgos. Edilberto Colón, president of the association, requested a basketball court for their school. Yet it was the style and word choice that depict the common view of the time:

"We are inspired by the Greek idea, "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano," and we have reached the conclusion that having recreational parks and places to practice sports, youth can fully develop physically, intellectually, and morally. Such is the opinion of our modern educators.

Knowing that Puerto Rico has generous and altruist souls, and having considered you among them, we have decided to write to you this letter that encapsulates all the tenderness, warmth, and enthusiasm of a progressive youth.⁸⁷

Although this letter was written by teachers and demonstrated a level of education and erudition, not all requests were made in this manner. The majority of requests were handwritten

by children, or their parents, with little education. The following was a request from the children of the Santo Domingo settlement in barrio Romero, Villalba:

Respected Governor

Don Luis Muñoz Marín.

This letter is to inform you that the undersigned are children of the Santo Domingo settlement that we are in school don't have means to have a piece of land for sport because thousands and thousands of children have a place to play ball we write this letter to see if you could cooperate with us and as a Christmas gift find us a piece of land to play like other Puerto Rican children that have gotten it we will live grateful.⁸⁸

Twelve children signed their names, and two, not knowing how to sign, signed with an X. Many of these requests were not made to Monagas but to Governor Muñoz. Even though Monagas was seen as a leader and patron of sport, Muñoz, as a traditional charismatic *ca-cique*,⁸⁹ was still the supreme figure. His charisma and approachability was evident. This is why, for example, a group of young children wrote on December 3, 1952, so that he could help them by providing baseball gear for their barrio Río Cañas of Caguas.⁹⁰ In their letter they indicated that they knew he could "personally resolve" their request.

Some of these letters made their way to the newspaper. The following letter appeared in the newspaper *El Mundo* in the section "La Voz del Lector" on September 4, 1956:

For Julio E. Monagas

The other day I was coming back with my parents from San Juan. It was the night of the other Sunday, when we passed by Guayanilla, there were many children playing in the Recreation Park that has been built in that town.

My parents and I stopped for a while in the park, where I had much fun on the swings and slides.

If only in my town of Sabana Grande there was a Recreation Park like the one in Guayanilla, which is such a pretty little park, the children from here would be very well behaved, because we would have where to have fun and where to go with our friends.

Couldn't you, Mr. Monagas, do something so that Sabana Grande would be endowed with a little park like the one in Guayanilla? The children of my town would appreciate it a lot and our parents as well.

Carmencita Camacho

Fourth grade student, Sabana Grande.⁹¹

All these requests placed too much financial stress on the PRPA, already stretched to the limit. Muñoz's aides forwarded many of the letters from their constituents to the PRPA for Monagas to evaluate and decide the course of action. Many times Monagas had money or resources to begin evaluation of the request, but sometimes he did not have enough funding. The requests for parks or athletics fields were given priority over requests for specific gear such as balls, bats, or nets. However, sometimes requests for parks were plainly rejected due to having "surpassed their estimates." Answering the letter from Carlos Santana from the *barriada* Maricutana in Humacao, Monagas stated: "I have received a great number of applications like yours and for the same reasons laid out before I am unable to answer them as I desire."⁹²

Acknowledgment of the government's development of sport was common. However, acknowledgment led the way to requests because to praise can be a great way to grab fa-

avorable attention. This was the approach of Eugenio Guerra, considered one of the best athletes ever in Puerto Rico as well as Physical Education Professor at the UPR, when he published an open letter on September 6, 1953, to Muñoz in the newspaper *El Imparcial*. Stating that basketball was the second most popular sport, Guerra, a known PPD follower, congratulated the governor and the PRPA on their governmental “policy of progress” in relation to favorable laws of sport and recreation that had placed Puerto Rico in “an advanced position among the countries of the Caribbean.”⁹³ However, the “thesis” of his letter was to request a “modern” indoor basketball court for the Metropolitan Area. He thought that with the inauguration of the new International Airport in Isla Verde in 1955, the old hangar in Isla Grande could be converted into “a modern gym” with a capacity for 10,000 people. Speaking on behalf of the many children and fans of the sport, he thought it could be a “great present” to his constituency who would know “how to deeply recognize” such a “present.” He finished by saying that the indoor court in San Germán was on its way to being completed and invited him to share a night of enjoyable basketball with his “good, loyal and noble” fans.

The Cost of Modernization and Populism:

Expropriations and Centralization

Not everybody was happy or otherwise benefited from the populist government of the PPD during this decade. Another group of people saw these reforms as detrimental to their own interests. This group consisted of some landowners and farmers who saw their land expropriated for the construction of athletic parks and recreational facilities. The backdrop of these concerns was a so-called “populist” government that had attempted in 1941 a timid land reform that limited corporations to own no more than 500 acres. Known as the Land Law, this reform was actually an initiative to displace large absentee U.S. sugar corporations and place local economy back in local hands.⁹⁴ Large local landowners were not stripped from their lands, and the so-called expropriations were actually the State’s legal purchase of their land. However, the PPD’s opposition, mainly local sugar landowners favoring U.S. statehood for the island, used “expropriations,” including the ones for recreation, as political attacks.⁹⁵ Operation Bootstrap, with its industrialization by invitation model, steered away from a locally driven economy, yet the opposition used the PPD’s discourse of “populism” to undermine social policy.

When the government did not have enough funds to purchase private land, the plan collapsed. For example, when José Ismael Aguilar from *barrio Factor II* in Arecibo approached the PRPA for an athletic park, two private farms were considered for State acquisition. However, due to lack of State funds, and because the neighboring *barrio Factor I* already had a park, the petition was rejected.⁹⁶ However, if the PRPA had the money and support from the community, they would approve and proceed with the compensated expropriation, regardless of the owner’s refusal. This occurred as early as 1949 in the lands of Ramón Cardona Rivera in the town of Comerío to establish an athletic park, or in 1950 in the lands of Miguel A. Martorell in Dorado for the establishment of a beach recreational area.⁹⁷ Another of these landowners was Pedro Roig of Juncos. On August 25, 1950, Monagas filed “Consult No.1651c” at the Planning Board of Puerto Rico, a plan to

build an athletic park in barrio Rio de Juncos. Monagas' plan was to purchase roughly four acres of land. The Planning Board, then under the direction of Enrique Géigel Polanco, after reviewing four different locations, thought the land belonging to Roig was the most appropriate due to being located closest to the school.⁹⁸ On March 31, 1952, Monagas notified Roig of their interest in the land and offered \$1,994 for 3.988 *cuerdas* (1 *cuerda* = .9712 acre) and \$39.88 for the sugar cane roots already planted for a total of \$2,033.88.⁹⁹ Monagas thought this was a good deal and hoped that the offer would be accepted. Finally, on July 10, 1952, a U.S. Marshal from the Expropriation Court of Puerto Rico handed the government the title for the land.¹⁰⁰

The issue was not resolved because on July 25, 1952, (coincidentally, the date of the establishment of the Commonwealth) Roig wrote to the governor asking the government not to expropriate the land in question and instead suggested the acquisition of some land that the Eastern Sugar Company possessed in the same town. Responding to this request, Monagas justified the acquisition of the land by citing the legality of all documents involved in the expropriation process.¹⁰¹ When the construction crew began to clear the field on August 5, Roig immediately telegraphed the governor protesting that "employees public parks and recreation commission by order of Monagas have taken possession my farm and prepare to proceed to destroy sugar canes."¹⁰² It is not clear if the construction crew actually cleared the farm. It is clear, however, that Roig contacted Sen. Ernesto Carrasquillo about the situation in an attempt to use a high-ranking official to protect his farm. However, not even Senator Carrasquillo could intervene with the government. Lt. Col. Alberto Arrillaga sided with the government, saying that "the law was fulfilled strictly following the rigorous procedure of those cases and when on July 25 Roig wrote to the Governor about the issue, the case to acquire the land was already being undertaken following law #381 of May 1950."¹⁰³

It is unclear to ascertain what happened to the sugar cane farm in relation to the athletic field. At least we know that there was eventually an athletic field built in Juncos. It is interesting to note that a well-connected landowner such as Roig could not, at first, stop the expropriation. It speaks to the support and backing that the PRPA and Monagas enjoyed in the years of "Operation Sport" and to the importance of sport in legitimizing the Commonwealth. There were other expropriation cases, and it appears that the government tended to side with the recreation project.

Yet, this incident shows that the PRPA and Monagas did not have an easy task in the modernization of sport programs. There were many who absolutely abhorred Monagas's absolute power in sport and recreation. The complaint was at the core of a centralized Commonwealth government and its new structure of "Administrations." While Monagas enjoyed fame for being the biggest patron of sport, he was also attacked for his lack of shared governance in sport.

Emilio E. Huyke, a preeminent leader in Puerto Rican sports, was one of these individuals who complained about too much centralization in sport and recreation. Huyke's complaint was less regarding populism in sport but in the dangers of too much government involvement in sport. Writing to congratulate the governor on his recent victory in the 1956 re-election campaign, Huyke thought that the "sport law" that permitted direct government funding for sport in the island that had been constructing parks since the 1940s had

“malacostumbrado,” or spoiled, Puerto Ricans. As a result, the government now was “forced” and had a “moral obligation” to continue with this policy from here “to eternity.” This full government policy was detrimental because it used limited governmental funds, but also because it appeared to be similar to Communist countries. The “Red Scare” influence in sport was not a unique characteristic of Puerto Rico. A big source of the tension between Latin America and the U.S. during this period was the U.S.’s sponsorship of authoritarian and anti-Communist regimes that repressed and censured opposition groups.¹⁰⁴ Huyke thought that a sport system totally supported by the government looked too much like the Soviet Union’s, and that the island system needed to look more like the one used in the U.S.,¹⁰⁵ that is, privately funded.

The centralization of sport institutions that led to an increasingly governmental intervention in the development of sport in Puerto Rico had actually been a point of concern before 1956. The study entitled “La recreación pública en Puerto Rico,” published in 1952, highlighted too much centralization in sport and recreation. The extensive report, made by the Public Administration Service of Chicago, Illinois, documented a thorough history and description of the organization of the PRPA, in addition to its different programs, divisions, and budget. Their conclusions, despite acknowledging at the same time that one organization overseeing sport and recreation was better than many, also showed concern for Puerto Rico’s high degree of centralization. Their study revealed that the PRPA, although having different divisions and subsections, should have allowed for the distribution of power, yet could not achieve decentralization due to a lack of delegation. Divisions and sub-administrators were only in name, with Monagas the premier boss. Lack of trust and communication among directors and sub-directors impeded proper delegation, which was compounded by the lack of a clear demarcation of directive roles.¹⁰⁶ That is, some employees of the Administration were unclear as to who was their immediate boss, probably referring to Monagas as the actual superior to everybody.

Nevertheless, the authors of the study did acknowledge the positive impact of the PRPA in the creation of a sport and recreation minded Puerto Rican society. The benefits of creating athletic fields and recreation centers in highly industrialized and crowded urban places made recreation a healthy outlet for the youth and workers. The PRPA’s work on rural towns provided much needed facilities to often neglected parts of the island. The central government provided much needed support, as did local town government. Still, the authors of the study raised the alert that recreation was more prevalent in urban than in rural places, geared towards men, the youth, adults, athletics, and “champions.”¹⁰⁷ Left behind were women, adults, non-athletic recreation, and amateurs. However, these are not necessarily problems of centralization or social justice but rather problems of resources, sexism, and the lingering view of sport as competition.

The people of Puerto Rico in general benefited from the increasing priority of sport and recreation during the era of PPD political hegemony. In this sense, sport and recreation contributed to the aura of “progress” that permeated during Puerto Rico’s years of industrialization and “decolonization.” The growth of sport as a highly popular activity of physical, mental, and spiritual health resulted in the growth of sport and recreation as a field of politics. The leaders of the political reforms that resulted in the establishment of the Commonwealth effectively appropriated sport as a way to do the political job of providing

adequate mass athletic and recreational facilities. In turn, the Puerto Rican people not only accepted these changes but actively helped to build athletic parks and develop recreational programs as seen in the project "Operation Sport." This dynamic, which might point to a socio-political coalition between the people and the government, could be seen as mutually benefiting because while the people received the infrastructure to recreate, the government obtained the popular support to enforce its political agendas.

However, what is evident is that Puerto Rico's modernization period although appearing to be one of progress, was full of limitations and shortcomings. For example, even though "Operation Sport" intended to provide sport programs and parks for all, Monagas still denied the building of an athletic field for the island-town of Culebra, claiming that for a town of only 877 persons it was just not worth it.¹⁰⁸ The same shortcoming can be said of Operation Bootstrap, which resulted in growing dependency on U.S. imports, persistent low standards of living, a negative balance of personal savings, and high unemployment.¹⁰⁹ Politically, the establishment of the Commonwealth meant a degree of self-sufficiency and political development, yet the fundamental relations between Puerto Rico and the U.S. that declared Puerto Rico an "unincorporated territory" stayed the same, prolonging their colonial existence. Dubious expropriations and a high degree of sport and recreation centralization, by a seemingly authoritarian figure in Monagas, affected what appeared to be a successful social justice program in a society featured to be a "showcase for democracy."

Yet, sport fulfilled its main principle during this decade in terms of local governance and the perception of progress. As long as there were athletic parks, as long as there were government-sponsored recreation centers, as long as the people were joyful, the PPD had done its political job. On the other hand, as long as the government provided the support for athletic facilities and as long as the political leaders fulfilled their promises of social justice, the people had done their political job of holding the government accountable. Not everybody was satisfied, but as long as the perception of progress loomed over the modernizing changes of the Commonwealth, it was all worth it.

In the end, "Operation Sport" can be seen as more than a catchphrase for sport and political consolidation in Puerto Rico. "Operation Sport" might help us understand the importance of sport and recreation in the politics of the developing post-colonial world. The expansion of athletic activity in this Caribbean island shows us that sport embodied political motivations, decisions, and acts. As C.L.R. James in *Beyond a Boundary* (1963) masterfully analyzes for Trinidad,¹¹⁰ sport is a source of political struggle, of imperial mandates and colonial pressures, and of governmental agendas and popular action. In Puerto Rico in particular, sport became a source not necessarily of colonial resistance, but a source of colonial legitimation.



KEYWORDS: PUERTO RICO, MODERNIZATION, POPULISM, SPORT AND RECREATION, DECOLONIZATION, COMMONWEALTH.

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⁶²Memorandum, Octavio R. Picón to Rafael Picó, 5 September 1951, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273.2 Construcción de., AGPR.

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⁶⁵Maldonado, *Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico's Operation Bootstrap*, 74.

⁶⁶See Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 122-136.

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⁶⁸J.R. No.110, Joint Resolutions of the Third Regular Session of the Second Legislature of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, 1955, pp.194-196, BLPRTFB.

⁶⁹Administración de Parques y Recreo Públicos, *Resumen General Estadístico del Presupuesto. Presupuesto Modelo año fiscal de 1959 según sometido a la Asamblea Legislativa de Puerto Rico por el Gobernador del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* (San Juan, P.R.: Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, Oficina del Gobernador, Negociado del Presupuesto, 1959), 70, found in Colección Puertorriqueña, Universidad de Puerto Rico en Río Piedras, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico.

⁷⁰Proyecto de Recreación Comunal en la Sucn. Serralles, pp.1-2, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR.

⁷¹According to Monagas, this constituted the "primordial nerve" of the program because it intervenes in the "programa general de fundamentales principios sociales y morales para toda la comunidad" and the "mejoramiento del estado social el [sic] adiestramiento para las mejores relaciones comunales y los medios y condiciones favorables para crear un espíritu de conciencia cívica por parte de los trabajadores." *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁷³Administración de Parques y Recreo Públicos, Informe Mensual, Septiembre 1955, pp. 2-3, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1888, carpeta 274.2 Informes., AGPR.

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⁷⁵Administración de Parques y Recreo Públicos, "Resumen de información," in *Presupuesto Modelo, año fiscal de 1958, según sometido a la Asamblea Legislativa de Puerto Rico por el Gobernador del Estado Libre*

Asociado de Puerto Rico (San Juan, PR.: Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, Oficina del Gobernador, Negociado del Presupuesto, 1957), 72, found in Colección Puertorriqueña.

⁷⁶Administración de Parques y Recreo Públicos, Informe Mensual, September 1955, pp. 2-3, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1888, carpeta 274.2 Informes., AGPR.

⁷⁷*Los Peloteros*, dir. Jack Delano, División de Educación de la Comunidad, 1951, 90 mins.

⁷⁸Juan José Baldrich, "Jack Delano: ¿Un expatriado al servicio del estado?" *Revista Mexicana del Caribe* 7 (1999): 36-62.

⁷⁹Letter, Julio E. Monagas to Sr. Plácido Acevedo Quintana, Ayudante del Hon. Gobernador, 21 October 1955, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR.

⁸⁰Letter, Julio E. Monagas to Honorable Don Luis Muñoz Marín, Gobernador, 29 April 1954, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR.

⁸¹Informe de asistencias y actividades registradas en los parques atléticos, 1 January 31-March 1954, p. 1., Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR.

⁸²In total, 360,358 children used the facilities "que el gobierno del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico ha puesto a su disposición para alejarlos de las calles y de otros sitios que no garantizan su seguridad física ni su estabilidad moral." *Ibid.*

⁸³Comité de Educación Física, *Educación Física: Síntesis y comentario de los puntos de vista del informe del Comité de Columbia acerca de la educación física* (San Juan, P.R.: Departamento de Instrucción, n.d.) in Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1248, AGPR.

⁸⁴Pedro F. Giusti Piazza, "Tienen Gran Éxito Clínicas Atletismo," *El Mundo* (San Juan), 31 May 1956, p. 23.

⁸⁵Letter, Fernando Díaz Faes to Honorable Señor Luis Muñoz Marín, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, 15 September 1954, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273.1 Solicitud de., AGPR.

⁸⁶Memorandum, Julio E. Monagas to Lic. Elfrén Bernier, 1 October 1954, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273.1 Solicitud de., AGPR.

⁸⁷"Nos anima la idea de los griegos, "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano" y hemos llegado a la conclusión de que teniendo parques de recreos y sitios donde llevarse a cabo los deportes, la juventud puede desarrollarse física, intelectual y moralmente en un grado sumo. Tal es el pensar de nuestros modernos educadores. Teniendo en cuenta que Puerto Rico tiene almas altruistas y generosas, y habiendole [*sic*] considerado a usted entre éstas, hemos decidido dirigirle esta misiva que encierra todo el cariño, el calor y el entusiasmo de una juventud progresista" (letter, Edilberto Colón, *et al.* to "Señor," 2 November 1955, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273.1 Solicitud de., AGPR).

⁸⁸"Resp. Gobernador Don Luis Muñoz Marín. La Presente [*sic*] es para informarle que los abajo firmantes somos niños del poblado Santo [D]omingo que estamos en la escuela no tenemos medios para tener un pedazo de tierra para deporte ya que miles y miles de niños tienen dónde [*sic*] jugar pelota hacemos esta carta para ver si ud. [*sic*] puede cooperar cón [*sic*] nosotros y como regalo de navidad conseguimos un pedazo de terreno para jugar también como juegan otros niños [*sic*] Puerto Riqueños. [*sic*] que se le adado [*sic*] esa . . . les viviremos . . . agradecidos." Letter, José Luis Álvarez *et al.* to Resp. Gobernador Don Luis Muñoz Marín, 2 December 1952, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273.1 Solicitud de., AGPR.

⁸⁹Knight and Pansters, eds., *Caciquismo*.

⁹⁰Letter, unknown to Sr. Luis Muñoz Marín, 3 December 1952, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273.1 Solicitud de., AGPR.

⁹¹"Para Julio E. Monagas. El otro día regresaba yo de San Juan acompañada de mis papás. Fue la noche del otro domingo, Cuando [*sic*] pasamos por Guayanilla, había muchos niñitos jugando en el Parque de Recreo que han construido en esa población. Mis papás se detuvieron un tiempo conmigo en dicho parque, donde gocé muchísimo en los columpios y las chorreras que hay allí. Si en este pueblo mío

de Sabana Grande hubiera un Parque de Recreo como el de Guayanilla, que es un parquecito tan lindo, los niños de aquí seríamos todos muy buenos, porque tendríamos donde divertirnos y donde ir a jugar con nuestros amiguitos. ¿No podría usted, señor Monagas, hacer algo por que se dote a Sabana Grande de un parquecito como el de Guayanilla? Los niñitos de mi pueblo se lo agradeceríamos mucho y nuestros padres también. Carmencita Camacho. Estudiante del Cuarto Grado, Sabana Grande" ("Sección La Voz del Lector," *El Mundo* (San Juan), 4 September 1956, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR).

⁹²"He recibido un gran número de solicitudes igual a la suya y por las mismas razones [sic] expuestas anteriormente no he podido atenderlas según es mi deseo" (letter, unknown to Sr. Carlos Santana, 25 April 1955, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR).

⁹³Newspaper clipping, Eugenio Guerra, "Baloncesto en Marcha," *El Imparcial* (San Juan), 6 September 1953, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR.

⁹⁴Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico*, 194-195.

⁹⁵César J. Ayala and Rafale Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 182-184.

⁹⁶Letter, Juan F. Pérez Muñiz to Julio E. Monagas, 20 September 1954, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR.

⁹⁷Memorandum, Julio E. Monagas to Roberto Sánchez Vilella, 8 December 1949, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR; letter, Julio E. Monagas to Miguel A. Martorell, 8 December 1950, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR.

⁹⁸Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico, Informe Num. C-1197, Consulta Num 1651c, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR.

⁹⁹Letter, Julio E. Monagas to Pedro Roig Díaz, Pueblito del Río, 31 March 1952, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR.

¹⁰⁰Letter, Víctor Gutiérrez Franqui and Clemente Pérez Martínez to Julio E. Monagas, 18 June 1952, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR.

¹⁰¹Letter, unknown to Col. Alberto Arrigalla, 4 August 1952, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR.

¹⁰²"empleados comision parques y recreos publicos por orden de Monagas han tomado posesion mi finca y se disponen proceder destruccion cañas." Telegram, 5 August 1952, Hon Luis Muñoz Marín, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR.

¹⁰³However, not even Senator Carrasquillo could intervene with the government. Lt. Col. Alberto Arrigalla sided with the government, saying that "la ley cumplió siguiendo estrictamente el procedimiento de rigor en esos casos y cuando el 25 de julio el señor Roig escribió al Gobernador sobre este asunto, ya el caso de expropiación para adquirir los terrenos estaba cumpliendo según lo dispuesto en la Ley #381 de mayo de 1950" (letter, Alberto Arrigalla to Hon. Ernesto Carrasquillo, Senador, 12 August 1952, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 272 Lands for Parks and Recreation, AGPR).

¹⁰⁴Kirk Tyvela, "A Slight but Salutory Case of the Jitters": The Kennedy Administration and the Alliance for Progress in Paraguay," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 22 (2011): 300-320.

¹⁰⁵Newspaper clipping, Emilio E. Huyke, "Los Deportes en el Mundo: Señor Gobernador," *El Mundo* (San Juan), 7 November 1956, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreational Facilities and Equipment, AGPR.

¹⁰⁶Public Administration Service, *La Recreación Pública en Puerto Rico: Informe sobre un Estudio Administrativo*, 1953, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273, AGPR, p. 19.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁸Letter, Julio E. Monagas to Sr. Plácido Acevedo, Ayudante del Gobernador, 17 September 1953, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, tarea 96-20, caja 1881, carpeta 273 Recreation Equipment and Facilities, AGPR.

¹⁰⁹Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico*, 261, 308-309; Orlando Sotomayor, "Development and Income Distribution: The Case of Puerto Rico," *World Development* 32 (2004): 1395-1406.

¹¹⁰C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1963).