

# Fairways, Greens, and Green Space in the “American Riviera”

## Constructing the Promise of the Cuban Revolution in the Capital’s Golf Courses

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In 2011, Cuba publicized its plans to partner with foreign developers and construct a series of eighteen-hole golf courses. These courses were to mark “a fundamental development in having a more eclectic tourist sector,” as one British financier of the undertaking noted—and they would include spas, shopping malls, villas, and apartments at a total cost of \$1.5 billion.<sup>1</sup> Another developer explained that “Cuba saw the normal sun and salsa beach offerings and knew it was not going to be sustainable.”<sup>2</sup> On its front page that May, the *New York Times* summarized: “[The] Cuban government has giv[en] preliminary approval in recent weeks for four large luxury golf resorts on the island, the first in an expected wave of more than a dozen.”<sup>3</sup>

But these greens were not, in fact, Cuba’s first-ever fairways. Golf arrived on the island in 1911—exactly one hundred years earlier—with the repurposing of a derelict farm on the capital’s periphery as the elite Country Club of Havana. Soon, the course boasted a thousand-name membership roster and a years-long waitlist. Over the decades that followed, a suite of local alternatives satisfied this demand: the Biltmore Yacht & Country Club, built on “an incomparable site overlooking the Gulf of Mexico,” according to one visitor; the *Almendares* Country Club, attached to a five-star resort; and

the Rovers Athletic Club, with its exclusively-British membership.<sup>4</sup> These greens sculpted thousands of acres of Havana and its suburbs into a realm of manicured Bermuda grass and raked white sand, where tropical fantasies of tourists became the backdrop for holes-in-one. They also affirmed the growing U.S.-American mandate in Cuba, which the explosive growth of tourism had incited in the early-twentieth century.

From farmland to fairways to parkland, these golf courses underwent yet another transformation upon the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Fidel Castro’s regime immediately nationalized them as a testament to Cuba’s egalitarian future under socialism.<sup>5</sup> And yet, authorities neither razed the Biltmore nor let nature reclaim the *Almendares*; instead, they converted Havana’s golf courses into a web of parks, government officials’ homes, and the *Escuelas Nacionales de Arte*. The Revolution therefore had the effect of intentionally preserving these landscapes while making them widely accessible to a Cuban audience. It had the effect, too, of ending the widespread practice of golf on the island for over fifty years, until the completion of those under-construction courses, announced in 2011.

With these successive spatial reconfigurations in mind, Havana’s golf courses appear as palimpsests where the political and socioeconomic forces that shaped Cuba between turn-of-the-twentieth-century independence from Spain and the rise of socialism are manifest in the built environment. To this end, the latter reconfiguration of the golf courses—as preserved, nationalized landscapes where the U.S.-American fantasy of Havana took root—reveals the initial promise of Castro’s socialism: that everyone (and not only the wealthy and foreign) could indulge in a paradisiacal, leisurely vision of the island. By extension, then, the Revolution proves *not* a radical rejection of Cuba’s past, but instead a response to this history that claimed the United States’ fantasy of the capital for Cubans themselves.

1 Archibold, Randal, “Revolutionary Cuba Now Lays Sand Traps for the Bourgeoisie,” *New York Times* (May 24, 2011), A1.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Woon, Basil, “The Golfer Discovers Cuba,” *Golf Illustrated* (December 1928), 25-56.

5 Nahmias, Alysa and Murray, Benjamin, “Unfinished Spaces” (New York: PBS), 2013, 0:4:45.

## A “Matchless Southern Climate”: the United States, Cuba, and Tourism’s Rise

Years before Bermuda grass and putting greens reached Havana, Cuba broke with its past, pivoting away from its Spanish colonial heritage and towards a new trajectory of U.S.-American touristic intervention. In great part, this break was predicated on the very foundation of an independent Cuba, typified by its new constitution, written in 1901.

The adoption of a new constitution was quite explicitly a directive of the United States in the wake of its victory in the Spanish-American War. Soon after this victory, the *New York Times* stated: “The convention that is to assemble in the city of Havana... ‘to frame and adopt’ a Constitution for the people of Cuba is called and appointed to meet, not by the people of Cuba... but by an order issued by the War Department of the United States.”<sup>6</sup> In particular, the United States consolidated its hegemony through the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution, which held that “all acts of the United States in Cuba... are ratified and validated.”<sup>7</sup> U.S. Americans thereby laid the groundwork to “leave the Cubans in vassalage to the United States,” as the *Times* continued, in the construction of the state itself.<sup>8</sup>

The reframing of Cuba in relation to the United States manifested in the explosive growth of tourism during the first half of the twentieth century. This growth both attested to Cuba’s “vassalage to the United States” and also reified it. In 1914, 33,000 tourists visited Cuba. One year later, in 1915, there were 44,000. In 1920, 56,000 tourists flooded the island; and in 1930, that number had increased to 100,000.<sup>9</sup> And although the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt abrogated the Platt Amendment in 1934 to pursue instead its Good Neighbor Policy, the groundwork for tourism’s exponential growth already lay in place: in the years immediately before the Cuban Revolution, over 350,000 tourists arrived annually.<sup>10</sup>

These visitors travelled between Key West and Havana by way of ferries, ocean liners cruising the Eastern Seaboard, and—beginning in 1921 with Aeromarine Airways’ daily flights from Florida to Cuba—planes. By the end of the decade, flights between Havana’s Camp Columbia Aviation Field and New York or Chicago had made the once-distant markets of the United States accessible within one day of

travel.<sup>11</sup> Writing in 1928 for the *New York Times*, one journalist synopsised: “A new Cuba is being built as the result of its discovery by the American tourist. He has in increasing numbers found that Cuba is only two days from New York, and that it offers as many attractions in the winter as any other spot outside of Southern France. An American Riviera is growing in the island republic.”<sup>12</sup> Cuba thus came to offer to U.S.-Americans the promise of a new world only hours away only hours from the North American mainland.

Cruise companies, airlines, and guidebooks sold these hundreds of thousands of tourists the hyperbolic fantasy of this “American Riviera.” One Pan American Airways brochure from 1934 claimed that Cuba “conjure[d]” the names of “Cap’n Kidd and Bluebeard,” and that it was a place “whose name[...] we have lived since childhood yet only dreamed of ever seeing.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, a junket for the Ward Line touted “an entrancing trip of fascinating interest to a gay and scintillating foreign capital. All the bubbling zest of Latin life and laughter in a matchless Southern climate.”<sup>14</sup> Here, the Ward Line presented Havana as a “matchless” experience to be had—rendered unique by virtue of its “gay and scintillating” built environment in *conjunction* with the “bubbling zest” of Latin America. These characterizations also imagined Cuba’s capital with regard to leisure: Havana was “a winsome and sunlit land of singular and abiding charm where travel is cheap, easy and safe; ...and where the expected pleasures await the traveler,” as one 1926 travel guide claimed.<sup>15</sup> The city accordingly existed to many of its visitors exclusively in terms of touristic value.<sup>16</sup>

This fantasy became a reality as Havana’s developers made good on the assurances of Pan American and the Ward Line. Downtown, old homes made way for casinos, theaters, and luxury resorts, which rapidly rose along the *Malecón* and *Paseo del Prado*. Of this phenomenon, architectural historian James Lynch notes that the city was “inundated by a flood of luxury hotels, gambling casinos, and brothels,” thus making it “the Caribbean terminus of a Las Vegas-Miami-Havana

6 “The Constitution of Cuba,” *New York Times* (August 6, 1900).

7 “Accept Platt Amendment,” *New York Times* (May 28, 1901).

8 “The Constitution of Cuba.”

9 Pérez Jr., Louis, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2008), 167.

10 Pérez Jr., 167. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy sought to move the United States away from interventionism in Latin America.

11 Ibid.

12 Owen, Russell, “Cuba Rebuilds Itself for Winter Tourists,” *New York Times* (February 26, 1928).

13 Pan American Airways Brochure, “The Air-Way to Havana, Nassau, West Indies, Mexico, Central and South America,” 1934, Folder 12, Box 1, Aviation Ephemera Collection, WSU; from Van Vleck, Jenifer, *No Distant Places: Aviation and the Global American Century* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest Publishing, 2010), 83.

14 Ward Line Advertisement, “Havana: ‘The Loveliest Land That Human Eyes Have Ever Seen,’” <http://cruiselinehistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/wardline.jpg>.

15 Terry, Thomas Philip, *Terry’s Guide to Cuba: A Handbook for Travelers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1926), iii

16 Schwartz, Rosalie, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 7.

axis.”<sup>17</sup> As Lynch observes, this axis proved transnational—a realm bound by entertainment and vice (and *not* by geographic borders). The wealth of nineteenth-century sugar production under Spanish rule had remade the Cuban capital in limestone and marble; this time, rum and roulette underlay the emergence of towering resorts and neon-clad dance halls.

Across Havana, too, civic and private undertakings aestheticized buildings and boulevards, which increasingly appeared as neoclassical objects for touristic consumption. In the city’s more aristocratic pockets, for instance, refined racetracks and palatial, neoclassical beach clubs replaced the remnants of sugar plantations.<sup>18</sup> In fact, it was during this period of upheaval and redevelopment that tourists began to draw comparisons between Havana and Haussmann’s Paris, as historian Louis Pérez Jr. explains: “[The city] was described variously as ‘a little Paris,’ the ‘Paris of the West Indies,’ and the ‘Paris of America.’”<sup>19</sup>

That “Paris” emerged from U.S.-American influence in Havana attests to the effect that this touristic fantasy achieved in practice: the production of streetscapes intentionally defined in contrast to those of cities in the United States. Ironically, the hegemony that the Cuban Constitution and Platt Amendment assured therefore worked to make Havana, with its expansive beaches, glowing casinos, and Francophilic architecture, appear *unlike* the United States’ cityscapes. Pérez Jr. summarizes: “It was precisely the juxtaposition of the foreign with the familiar, the old with the new, to be abroad without being away, that was at the heart of the Cuban appeal to North American sensibilities.”<sup>20</sup> And so Cuba’s capital emerged to embody the promised leisure of Pan American Airways and the Ward Line—a promise of a break from the real world.



### “Any One with... Two Eyes Can Play Golf”: Eighteen Holes Come to Cuba

An afternoon on the green at the Country Club of Havana embodied this promise. According to the *Cuba Review* in 1912, the club offered a landscape of “great[...] variety,” “attractive features,” and “distinctive characteristics conducive to skill and pleasure in the game.”<sup>21</sup> Havana’s golf courses quite literally treated the built environment as something non-real: the setting for a game. They consequently served as microcosms of the city’s larger transformation, which tourism had wrought. But even as microcosms, these courses were mammoth—for example, the Country Club’s green alone accounted for 125 acres and an additional 425 acres of clubhouses, beaches, and on-site homes lay nearby).<sup>22</sup> They subsequently bounded much of western Havana with a wall of privatized green space, segregating the city from its rural surroundings.

Enthusiasts had transposed golf from Scotland’s sheep pastures to the Western Hemisphere several decades earlier, when the Saint Andrews Club opened in Yonkers, New York in 1888.<sup>23</sup> The sport spread quickly across the suburbs of the American Northeast: in 1905, there were one million golfers in the United States, and a decade later, in 1915, there were three million. That latter year, the *New York Times* reported that the United States Golf Association included in its membership about 600 courses, and that there was at least one golf club in every state.<sup>24</sup>

Golf attracted U.S. Americans for the same reason that Havana did: it was leisurely and increasingly accessible. The sport, the *Times* claimed in 1891, did not have the “vivid excitement, violent exercise, and breathless hurry and rush of baseball,” but it was “suited equally to fat or middle-aged men and to lithe, active youths. Any one with two arms, two legs, and two eyes can play golf.”<sup>25</sup> That golf was less physically taxing than other popular pastimes made it particularly popular among older U.S. Americans “who are no longer able to indulge in those forms of sport which require more violent exertion,” according to one early-twentieth-century player.<sup>26</sup> The sport therefore attracted an audience that corresponded to that of the growing tourism sector in Cuba—of upwardly mobile U.S.-American adults looking to relax.

The completion of the Country Club of Havana in 1912 underscored this intersection of the touristic agenda,

17 Lynch, James, “Cuban Architecture since the Revolution,” *Art Journal*, vol. 39 no. 2 (Winter 1979-1980), 100.

18 Schwartz, 2; and Lynch, 100.

19 Pérez Jr., 180.

20 Ibid, 173.

21 “Golf Links in Havana,” *Cuba Review*, vol. 10 no. 12 (November 1912), 13.

22 Schwartz, 49.

23 Kirsch, George, *The Rise of Golf in America* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 4.

24 Ibid, 6.

25 *New York Times* (October 5, 1891); from Kirsch, 13.

26 Kirsch, 13.

the physical reinvention of Cuba's capital, and golf. The club emerged at the behest of a prominent developer from Englewood, New Jersey: Frederick Snare, who partnered with seventeen colleagues from the Northeast to finance the reconstruction of hundreds of acres of farmland on Havana's western fringe as the island's first golf course. To complete the project, Snare and his partners armed renowned Scottish golf course designer Donald Ross and scores of artisans with \$150,000—today, nearly \$4 million.<sup>27</sup> From the former *Finca Lola* tobacco farm, the team produced a larger-than-life tropical mirage. Writing of a river on the property, historian Rosalie Schwartz makes note of the artificial reality that Ross constructed: "Landscape architects, trained to see the dormant promise in a muddy pool, converted the stagnant pocket of sluggish stream into an inviting lagoon where ducks paddled on the water and attractive tropical plants crowded the banks."<sup>28</sup> Havana thus became the fantasy that U.S.-Americans envisioned—even if this fantasy ultimately proved a manufactured one.

The result of these efforts was, as one travel guide lauded, a "superb golf course (idyllic in its tropical beauty and one of the finest in the Americas)." Country Club Park, which Snare developed as an adjacent residential enclave, was "flecked with palms and flowers, and by a charming lake and many attractive homes."<sup>29</sup> Soon, the Country Club of Havana and its adjacent enclave welcomed the most high brow and well-to-do of U.S. Americans to its membership rolls: there were Astors, Hersheys, Vanderbilts, and Whitneys.<sup>30</sup> The course, in Schwartz' words, "evolved into an institution, a place where businessmen developed or improved critical contacts with important sources of investment capital."<sup>31</sup>

On a stretch of coastline near the Country Club of Havana, the Biltmore Yacht & Country Club opened in 1928 to capitalize on its neighbor's great success. Other than an interprovincial highway, the Biltmore was the most expensive construction project in Cuba at the time: it was built at an estimated cost of \$35,000,000 (nearly \$500 million in today's dollars).<sup>32</sup> The club rose from the ruins of a former sugar plantation over the course of twenty months and sat "on an incomparable site overlooking the Gulf of Mexico," according to one golfer, who added: "This course is really the nucleus of the future 'Cuban Monte Carlo.'"<sup>33</sup> The trappings of this Monte Carlo-to-be included a lavish oceanfront clubhouse in limestone, gardens, swimming pools, and elegant homes

perched along the fairways. Unlike its nearby competitor, though, the Biltmore primarily attracted wealthy *habaneros* who lived in nearby suburbs and filled its membership rolls.<sup>34</sup> The U.S.-American vision of Havana accordingly held sway beyond the realm of tourists.

Havana's remaining two courses—the *Almendares* and Rovers—sat next to each other to the south of the Country Club and Biltmore, in the elite suburb of Marianao. The *Almendares*, for one, was "an uphill course that commands attention," in the words of a visitor.<sup>35</sup> It was attached to the luxurious Hotel Almendares, which opened in 1925, had an English-speaking wait staff, and offered "efficient American style-service," as an advert in the *Havana Post* touted.<sup>36</sup> The Rovers Athletic Club, on the other hand, limited its membership to British citizens, as golfer Basil Woon observed in 1928: "Many members of this club are dyed-in-the-wool Scots who have memories of their native heaths. The Rovers Club course... is popularly supposed to be the coolest in Havana."<sup>37</sup>

Collectively, these golf courses extended the U.S.-American fantasy of Cuba to Havana's furthest reaches—and yet, they also constituted a counterpoint to the brass-and-neon nightlife of downtown Havana. If the *centro* served as a "Paris of the West Indies," then the Country Club of Havana, Biltmore, *Almendares*, and Rovers offered tourists from the United States a more familiar and expected landscape (albeit an exoticized, tropical one): that of the promised "American Riviera."



27 "Golf Links in Cuba," 13.

28 Schwartz, 49.

29 Terry, 311-12.

30 Schwartz, 49.

31 Ibid.

32 Russell.

33 Woon, 25.

34 Schwartz, 58.

35 Woon, 26.

36 *Havana Post* 1922-1925; and Pérez Jr., 171.

37 Woon, 26.

## “Riviera” for Whom?: Golf’s Affirmation of Inequality in Havana

Although this fantasy took root in the concrete terms of fairways, greens, and royal palms, it ultimately remained just that—a series of make-believe stage sets that worked to confirm the United States’ hegemony in Cuba by validating North American notions of what Havana should look like and whom it should serve. It therefore comes as no surprise that, in the spring of 1926, poet Hart Crane wrote to his father of the city: “It’s a funny little metropolis, more like a toy city than a real one.”<sup>38</sup> As Crane noted, Havana seemed closer to a playground for games like golf than it did a place for real-life.

For its Cuban residents, however, Havana was experienced in very different terms. Between 1920 and 1958, the capital’s population swelled from 600,000 to 1,360,000 as rural-dwelling migrants moved to the city to claim the service-sector jobs that tourism had produced.<sup>39</sup> These inhabitants encountered another Havana altogether—where nearly half of all homes stood in poor condition and where one-third of neighborhoods experienced frequent water shortages.<sup>40</sup> Even the construction of lavish resorts reserved for foreigners took on a different appearance from the vantage point of many *habaneros*, as one local remarked in the pages of a midcentury Cuban magazine: “Is this objective [of promoting tourism] worth staining the national panorama even more...?”<sup>41</sup> And unlike their U.S.-American counterparts, the vast majority of urbanites could afford neither the Ward Line’s cabins nor Pan American’s airfare. They were, in other words, stranded in landscapes that were no longer theirs.

Nor could these *habaneros* access the Country Club of Havana, Biltmore, *Almendares*, and Rovers, whose eternally green Bermuda grass never suffered from the water shortages that plagued other swaths of the city.<sup>42</sup> For one, membership was prohibitively costly: in the mid-1920s, for instance, annual dues at the Country Club totaled \$120 (today, \$1,630).<sup>43</sup> Additional costs targeted locals, thereby ensuring that the fairways remained primarily white, U.S.-American spaces. Also at the Country Club, non-Cuban new members paid \$100 in

initiation fees whereas Cuban residents paid \$250 (respectively, \$1,350 as opposed to \$3,400).<sup>44</sup> Golf in Havana was thus expensive to begin with—and it was even more expensive for locals, whom these charges disproportionately affected. This is to say that the construction of a fantastical touristic environment exerted particularly deleterious material effects upon Havana’s low-income denizens.

In this way, *habaneros* found huge wedges of open space in their city entirely closed to them. Moreover, the siting of the capital’s golf courses on the urban periphery disconnected residents from the world that lay beyond these courses. There, as historian Dennis Merrill observes, the “indigenous Caribbean cultural rhythms” that Havana’s gilded cityscapes “muted,” continued to exist.<sup>45</sup> In the words of James Lynch, the greens therefore presented “old pre-Revolution barriers—physical, economic, psychological—between urban and rural.”<sup>46</sup> They consequently not only reflected a U.S.-American vision of Cuba, but also perpetuated the social inequalities upon which this vision depended, inequalities confirmed by the physical and symbolic separation between urban wealth and rural poverty.

## “Four Kilometers of Beach and all of it, Privately Owned”: Land Reform and Tourism

The Revolution ruptured these dynamics of inequality and reimagined the ways in which the island’s residents interacted with their built environment. In the minds of Cubans, Havana’s landscapes—including those of its four golf courses—quickly presented new possibilities for constructing more egalitarian landscapes as Castro came to power.

On New Years Day in 1959, Cuba’s president, Fulgencio Batista, succumbed to the insurgency of Castro’s guerrilla army and fled into exile; one week later, on January 8, the army’s forces descended upon the capital as *habaneros* celebrated in the streets.<sup>47</sup> The new regime quickly assured Cubans that the kinds of disparities Havana’s golf courses confirmed would cease to exist, as the state-sponsored *Revolución* magazine proclaimed in July of that year: “The revolutionary government... has initiated a transformation that will tend to equalize the standards of living between the city and *campo*... and destroy all political differences between the peasant and the man of the city, fusing all into one sole reality: *the total Cuban in the new Cuba*.”<sup>48</sup> The pages of *Revolución* accordingly offered

38 Crane, Hart to Clarence Arthur Crane (May 20, 1926), in Lewis, Thomas, *Letters of Hart Crane and His Family* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 493; from Pérez Jr., 493.

39 Merrill, Denis, *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 136.

40 Ibid.

41 Pérez Jr., 469.

42 Snare, Frederick, “Grasses at the Country Club of Havana,” *United States Golf Association* publication (March 16, 1925), 63.

43 Terry, 311.

44 Terry, 311.

45 Dennis, 136.

46 Lynch, 100.

47 Beals, Carleton, “Revolution Without Generals,” *The Nation* (January 9, 1959), 43-44.

48 “Los Campesinos en La Habana,” *Revolución* (July 22, 1959), 18; from Guerra, Lillian, *Visions of Power in Cuba:*

an explicit response to the divisions that the Country Club, Biltmore *Almendares*, and Rovers propagated—of “city and *campo*” and “peasant and the man of the city.”

To actualize this transformation, the Castro regime undertook massive land reform efforts, which its *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (INRA) led. To this end, political and socioeconomic revolutions became extensions of a spatial one—and, in fact, by mid-1960, INRA had title to over half of Cuba’s land area.<sup>49</sup> Importantly, these nationalized properties were often manifestations of the U.S.-American hegemony in Cuba. A then-classified briefing from the United States’ alarmed Central Intelligence Agency in 1960 elaborated: “The [Cuban] government... has... assumed control over a wide range of business enterprises, ranging from sugar plantations and cattle ranches to mines, factories, airlines and hotels, in many of which U.S. investors have had a considerable stake.”<sup>50</sup>

With these re-possessed plantations and hotels, INRA reconceived of the ways in which Cubans might engage with the landscapes that their island possessed: the agency transferred a vast number of these holdings to the *Instituto Nacional de Industrias del Turismo* (INIT), which opened the sites to the general public as touristic destinations for locals. In its inaugural issue in 1960, *INRA* magazine visited these sites: the “‘*Hacienda Cortina*,’ a huge fief with more than 30,000 acres and a beautiful landscape”; and “‘*la finca ‘La Coronela*,’” with its “1,500 acres planted by farmers of the Revolution with pangola, corn, and beans.”<sup>51</sup>

As the magazine’s language demonstrated, INIT advocated for an alternative kind of tourism from that which had long existed in Cuba—one that advanced the Revolution’s project of “equaliz[ing]... standards of living” by sharing the fruits of the United States’ imperialism on the island with its inhabitants. With regard to this more-explicitly political tourism, Castro told reporters of the beaches on the eastern shores of Havana in 1959: “Four kilometers of beach and all of it, privately owned. Yet the people of Havana have so few places to go.”<sup>52</sup> His response, in Merrill’s words, was to produce “public space” in the form of a “beach equipped with a low-cost hotel, bathhouses, sports fields, and restaurants.... with

Cuba’s working-class specifically in mind.”<sup>53</sup> Castro and INRA therefore colluded to bring the U.S.-American dream of Cuba to *all* Cubans.

### “Build[ing] for the People” at the Country Club: from Greens to Green Space

The Country Club of Havana, Biltmore, *Almendares*, and Rovers were obvious and highly visible targets for this new mode of tourism. After all, Castro had dismissed golf as a “bourgeois sport” in 1959.<sup>54</sup> In the months after the Revolution, INRA nationalized Havana’s golf courses with the intent of substituting more accessible programming for the elite game on the thousands of acres of open space that it had procured in the city and around its edges. On these sites, architects and government officials took up a new initiative: “build[ing] for the people,” according to one local designer.<sup>55</sup>

Castro himself led the redevelopment efforts of these golf courses. Upon a visit to the fairways of the Country Club for a lighthearted round of golf with Che Guevara in 1959, he dreamt of “put[ting] hundreds of students of art in this beautiful landscape.”<sup>56</sup> Therein lay insight into Castro’s vision for the remaking of Havana under socialism: that the “beautiful landscapes” U.S.-American imperialism had produced *should* continue to exist, but with Cuban audiences in mind. That is, this vision sought to remake the built environment without erasing the architectural legacy of the United States’ hegemony in Havana.

Within weeks, Castro commissioned Cuban socialist architects Ricardo Porro, Roberto Gottardi, and Vittorio Garatti to design on the site of the former Country Club five different arts schools for the *Escuelas Nacionales de Arte*—for modern dance, fine arts, dramatic arts, music, and ballet.<sup>57</sup> These architects, with their “profound respect for the extraordinary landscape of the country club,” in the words of architectural historian John Loomis, produced a series of sweeping brick-and-concrete structures to sit amidst royal palms and rolling hills. Loomis describes:

“Each school was a one-of-a-kind achievement, conceived within a common material and structural language. Porro’s School of Modern Dance... is an angular, kinetic com-

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*Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 72.

49 Fitzgibbon, Russell, “The Revolution Next Door,” *The Annals of the American Academy*, vol. 334 no. 1 (1961), 115.

50 Director of Central Intelligence, “Communist Influence in Cuba,” *Special National Intelligence Estimate*, no. 85-60 (March 22, 1960), 1.

51 Nuñez Jimenez, Antonio, “El Rostro del latifundio,” *INRA* magazine, no. 1 (1960), 2; translated from Spanish.

52 Castro, Fidel, Interview, Rancho Alto, Sierra de Cojimar (February 15-19, 1959, Box 2, Folder Cuba Reports 1952-1960, HMP.

53 Merrill, 158.

54 Watterson, John Sayle, *The Games Presidents Play: Sports and the Presidency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 211.

55 Segre, Roberto, “Unfinished Spaces,” 0:8:15.

56 Ibid, 0:4:55; and Morley, Gary, “Why did Communist Heroes Castro and Guevara Play the Bourgeois Game?” *CNN* (March 9, 2010).

57 Loomis, John, *Revolution of Forms: Cuba’s Forgotten Art Schools* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 26.

position.... His School of Plastic Arts celebrated the country's Afro-Cuban heritage.... Gottardi's School of Dramatic Arts, like the social construct of a theater company, looks inward."<sup>58</sup>

These buildings thus placed the Country Club's landscape in dialogue with Cuban contexts that U.S.-American fantasies had long romanticized or ignored altogether—of Afro-Cuban identity, for example.

Havana's other golf courses met similar fates. The Biltmore, on the one hand, became cooperative farms and parkland. Possessed by INRA, its oceanfront clubhouse came to serve as a civic conference center, and the picturesque homes that overlooked its fairways went to government officials.<sup>59</sup> (In fact, Castro's own home, *Punto Cero*, sits near the Biltmore's fourteenth hole.<sup>60</sup>) The *Almendares*, too, opened to the public as a vast park on the city's southern fringe.<sup>61</sup> Only the Rovers Athletic Club—that “coolest” golf course—continued to function as a golf course; INRA preserved nine of its holes, to which it welcomed locals and tourists alike, free of charge.<sup>62</sup>

And so in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, these spatial manifestations of the U.S.-American fantasy of Havana metamorphosed once again. But this was not the sort of fundamental reconstruction of space that the original realization of the capital's four golf courses prompted in molding farms and plantations as Edens for North Americans; instead, it was an effort intended to share these paradises with *all* Cubans. At its start, then, the Revolution marked neither a break with the island's past nor an erasure of the legacies of tourism—instead, it served to make available to the masses a U.S.-styled leisurely way of life that golf and the courses on which foreigners played it epitomized. The rise of the Castro regime was therefore an acknowledgement and even acceptance of the Ward Line's vision of the “bubbling zest of Latin life and laughter in a matchless Southern climate.”

### Golf and Historiography: Visions for a “New Cuba” in Context

Although the Cuban Revolution effectively championed the U.S.-American dream of Havana, a very different picture of the Revolution's promise presented itself just ninety miles north, on the shores of the United States. Embroiled in the Cold War, officials in Key West and Washington, D.C. alike understood these political and spatial transformations in hyperbolic—and often cataclysmic—ways. They insisted

in 1960: “[We] believe that the Cuban regime is in practice following the line set for... Communist Parties... and that it will continue to... give increasing appearances of becoming a Communist society.”<sup>63</sup>

Two years later, the Cuban Missile Crisis confirmed these fears—in particular, that the island had fallen to the Soviet Union. And in fact, as the U.S.S.R. came to exercise a hegemonic control over Cuba analogous to that of the United States in earlier decades, the nature of Castro's socialism changed. To this end, construction on the *Escuelas Nacionales de Arte* stooped as bureaucrats deemed them excessively “deviationist” and “monumentalist.”<sup>64</sup> Given the United States' staunch opposition to the Revolution from its start and the influence that the Soviet Union quickly came to wield over the Castro regime, historiography has obscured the promise of Cuban socialism in its first months, as those guerilla forces arrived in Havana to cheers and celebrations: to make the visions of Pan American Airways and the Ward Line a reality for every *habanero*.

Ironically, the Cuban government cached its 2011 announcement of the construction of new golf courses for foreign tourists in this same promise. As one developer noted, “People [on the island] are desperate to buy,” so officials have pursued alternative streams of revenue (like those that the greens might generate).<sup>65</sup> Tourism in Cuba, too, was up by fifteen percent in the first quarter of 2015 from the same period a year before.<sup>66</sup> History may very well be poised to repeat itself, and whether Cubans will benefit this time from the reemergence of rum and roulette remains uncertain. But for now, at least, Havana's former golf courses—the Country Club, Biltmore, *Almendares*, and Rovers—are still theirs.



58 Ibid, 27.

59 “Facilities: Club Habana,” *USA Cuba Travel* website (accessed on June 8, 2005); courtesy of Meister, Christoph, “History of Golf in Cuba.”

60 Meister.

61 Loomis, 32.

62 Morley.

63 Director of Central Intelligence, 3.

64 Loomis, 27.

65 Frank, Marc, “As Cuba Opens, Developers Tee up to Build Golf Courses,” *Reuters* (July 3, 2015).

66 Ibid.