

UN PARQUE PARA CADA PUEBLO: **JULIO ENRIQUE MONAGAS AND THE POLITICS OF SPORT AND RECREATION IN PUERTO RICO DURING THE 1940s**

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ABSTRACT

During the 1940s, Puerto Rico enjoyed the benefits of a U.S. sponsored economic boom as a result of the Second World War. Taking advantage of this influx of capital, the Puerto Rican government's sport and recreation commission, led by Julio Enrique Monagas, sought out an island-wide plan to build sport and recreational facilities under a social justice ideology. The mass-produced athletic parks were built in both the major urban cities as well as in the rural towns, a process later dubbed a "sport revolution." The government, through its sports commission, claimed that the mass athletic construction project was to uplift society, as well as a long awaited push for athletic modernization. However, more than top-down government policies, the politics of sport and recreation entailed popular demands for even more and better parks and programming. Thus, at stake with the plan, also known as "*Un parque para cada pueblo*," was the negotiation over the terms of a hegemonic relation between the emerging *Partido Popular Democrático*, the citizenry, and in turn U.S. colonialism.

Keywords: Puerto Rico, Julio Enrique Monagas, sport, social justice, populism, hegemony

RESUMEN

Durante los años 1940, Puerto Rico disfrutó de los beneficios del *boom* económico resultado de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y auspiciado por los Estados Unidos. Aprovechándose de esta entrada de capital, la comisión de deporte y recreo del gobierno de Puerto Rico, liderada por Julio Enrique Monagas, persiguió un plan abarcador para construir facilidades deportivas y recreativas bajo una ideología de justicia social. Estos parques atléticos producidos en masa fueron construidos tanto en ciudades urbanas como en pueblos rurales, un proceso luego llamado una "revolución deportiva". El gobierno, a través de su comisión de deportes, argumentó que el proyecto de parques atléticos en masa era tanto para la sustentación popular, como para el tan ansiado empuje para la modernización de los deportes. Sin embargo, más que una política de arriba hacia abajo, la política de los deportes y la recreación conllevó demandas populares para más y mejores parques y programación deportiva.

Por ende, en juego con el proyecto, también conocido como “Un parque para cada pueblo”, fue la negociación sobre los términos de la relación hegemónica emergiendo entre el Partido Popular Democrático, la ciudadanía, y a su vez el colonialismo estadounidense.

Palabras clave: Puerto Rico, Julio Enrique Monagas, deporte, justicia social, populismo, hegemonía

RÉSUMÉ

Durant les années 40, Porto Rico bénéficie de l'essor économique survenu aux États-Unis après la deuxième Guerre mondiale. Profitant de cet afflux de capitaux, selon une idéologie de justice sociale la Commission des sports et loisirs du gouvernement portoricain, présidée par Julio Enrique Monagas, a mis en place un programme de construction d'installations sportives et de loisirs à travers l'île. Les stades furent construits en masse non seulement dans les zones urbaines mais aussi dans les zones rurales, un processus qui par la suite sera appelé « révolution sportive ». Par le biais de cette Commission des sports, le gouvernement expliquait que l'objectif de ce vaste projet de construction n'était que pour moderniser le système sportif et répondre au besoin de la société. Toutefois, cette politique de sports et loisirs découlait plus d'exigences la part du public pour des meilleures installations et de programmes sportifs. Ainsi, l'un des enjeux de ce programme, connu sur le nom « *Un parque para cada pueblo* » (Un parc pour chaque ville), fut le motif des au-delà d'une modernisation des infrastructures attendue de longue date, devait contribuer à améliorer la société. Toutefois, cette politique de sports et loisirs découlait plus d'exigences accrues de la part du public pour des installations et des programmes que de décisions gouvernementales venues d'en haut. Ainsi, un des enjeux de ce programme, aussi connu comme « Un parque para cada pueblo » (Un parc pour chaque ville), fut la négociation des termes d'une relation hégémonique entre le Partido Popular Democrático émergent, les citoyens, et le colonialisme nord-américain.

Mots-clés : Porto Rico, Julio Enrique Monagas, sport, justice sociale, populisme, hégémonie

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In 1984 Julio Enrique Monagas was awarded the prestigious Olympic Order by the International Olympic Committee, being at the time only the second person in the Western Hemisphere to receive such honor. During the ceremony, Francisco Soto Respeto labeled Monagas's work in developing sports and recreation in Puerto Rico as a “sport revolution” (Tomasini 1992:161). It is debatable whether Monagas's work, leading the sport and recreation government agency

for 24 years (1942-1966), was “revolutionary.” But the phrase does acknowledge his impact on the modernization of sport and recreation in Puerto Rico.

Officially labeled “*Un parque para cada pueblo*” (a park for each town), Monagas and the Puerto Rican government embarked during the 1940s on an aggressive plan to build athletic parks all over the island. This plan was immersed in a larger project of industrialization to escape colonial underdevelopment. However, Puerto Rico’s economic and political development, as in the Dutch and French Antilles, did not seek to cut economic or political relation with its metropolis, but on the contrary, strengthened it (García Muñiz 2011). Monagas, and people’s acceptance of the parks project, were instrumental in this process. A loyal party member, Monagas was first and foremost at the service of the new political shifts in Puerto Rico under the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD) that sought to modernize Puerto Rican society under the U.S. auspices (Bolívar Fresnada 2011; Dietz 1986; García-Colón 2009; Pantojas-García 1990; Perloff 1950; Steward, et al. 1956; Wells 1969). However, there has been little scholarly attention paid to the role of sport, and Monagas’s influence, in relation to the top-down/bottom-up negotiations over the political program of the PPD.¹ Instead, Puerto Rico’s history of sport has been mainly told in either documentary or laudatory terms (Álvarez and Lorenti 2007; Colón Delgado, Mercado, and Rosario 2002; De la Roda 1995; Fonseca Barahona 2008; Huyke [1968] 1973; Stewart 1998; Tomasini 1992; Torres 1999; Uriarte González 2009, 2011, 2012; Varas 1984 & 1985). This article hopes not only to contribute to Puerto Rican historiography of politics and sports, but also to the growing scholarship of sport in the Caribbean (Carter 2008; Chappell 2001; DuBois 2010; González Huertas 2006; Klein 1991; Pérez Jr. 1994; Pettavino and Pye 1994) and Latin America (Alabarces 2000; Andrade de Melo 2009; Arbena 1988, 1992, 1999, and 2000; Arbena and LaFrance 2002; Chappell 2001; Elsey 2011; Mangan and DaCosta 2002; Rein 1998; Wood 2007).

The development of sport in Puerto Rico, as elsewhere (James 1993; Klein 1991; Carter 2008; Brewster and Brewster 2009; Ribeiro 2012; Melo and Bittencourt 2013), was both a cultural and a political affair. The PPD rose to power under the promise to take back Puerto Rico from the hands of colossal absentee-owned sugar corporations and from imported U.S. colonial bureaucrats. The PPD held tight to its promises of providing crucial changes in Puerto Rican sense of ownership. Social justice, progress, a voice to the voiceless, and a new way of living were central in the PPD’s discourse and became key points for people’s overall approval. Sports, while not the only factor in these political reconfigurations were nevertheless a central part of these populist promises.

Neglected for decades, mass recreation and sport facilities were never a part of the old Spanish or new U.S. colonial regimes. With the increasing popularity of sport practices brought by the United States, including baseball, basketball, track and field, and volleyball, the people longed for adequate spaces to play. Monagas understood this situation, and figured that to provide the people with athletic facilities would not only satisfy a cherished popular need, but would gain masses of political followers for the PPD. In turn, people understood the populist promises of the PPD, and following the idea of a party by the people for the people, proceeded to request more and better sport facilities and programming. This process is clearly seen in mass park attendance throughout the island, but also in dozens if not hundreds of letters to the local government, and even to the U.S. President, asking for athletic parks and equipment.

It is pertinent to note the questionable basis of the PPD's populism during the 1940s, and more so in the 1950s. According to Bolívar Fresnada, more than populist, Puerto Rico's industrialization privileged "big capitalist" interests and was a direct result of emergency measures brought by the onset of the Second World War and sponsored by the United States. Nonetheless, the PPD's rise as the island's premier party occurred as a populist movement (Villaronga 2010); a party by the people and for the people with the motto "*Pan, Tierra y Libertad*" (Bread, Land, and Liberty).² For Gabriel Villaronga, Puerto Rican populism was "the result of exchanges between many agents that informed the rise of a new political language and practices as well as values and identities" (Villaronga 2010:175). For sport and for Monagas, at stake in the implementation of "*Un parque*" was a hegemonic relation between the citizenry and the ruling party, and in turn to the so-called U.S. "harmless imperialism" to which many Puerto Rican leaders consented. The scholarly attention to sport, athletic programs, and imperialism is not new and has been addressed by scholars such as J.A. Mangan (1988). However, Puerto Rico presents a unique case in that it is the only Latin American and Spanish Caribbean nation³ under the territorial/colonial rule of the United States, now spanning more than 116 years.

Julio Enrique Monagas, considered the father of Puerto Rican Olympism, was not only a patron of sports, but also, perhaps mainly, a skillful PPD supporter. In this regard, Monagas has to be placed in the same category as other eminent PPD supporters including: Teodoro Moscoso in economic policy (Maldonado 1997), Jaime Benítez at the University of Puerto Rico (Acevedo 2008), Ricardo Alegría at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (Duany 2002), Rafael Picó in the Planning Board and the Government Development Bank (Bolívar Fresnada 2011), Roberto Sánchez Vilella at the State Department (Romany Siaca 2011), and Antonio Fernós Isern with the political ideology of the *Estado Libre*

Asociado (Commonwealth) (Colón Ocasio 2009). All of these individuals had a significant role in establishing the complexities of Puerto Rican society post 1940s.

After a brief contextualization of Puerto Rican industrialization, we will discuss the prevalence of the Second World War on the social changes on the island, followed by a section on the emergence of Monagas as both a PPD politician and a sponsor of sport. This article ends with an analysis of “*Un parque para cada pueblo*” from both its administrative and popular sides, showing how sport can be seen as a politico-cultural window to observe the politics of the world’s oldest colony.⁴

Background to a Sport Revolution

During the first three decades of U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico, social and economic conditions did not improve to desired levels. After the U.S. occupation following the 1898 Spanish American War, Puerto Rico transformed mainly into a foreign and absentee-owned sugar monoculture economy. Despite some improvements in education and basic infrastructure, wages were still low, work scant, housing fragile, health precarious, and athletic facilities scarce, all aggravated by the depression years of the 1930s. In an effort to consolidate hegemonic colonial rule, the U.S. government imposed U.S. citizenship to all Puerto Ricans in 1917 (Rivera Ramos 2001). This was done regardless of lacking full representation in Congress, denial to vote for the President, and existing ambiguously in an “unincorporated territory” that made them “foreign” to the United States in a “domestic” sense (Burnet and Marshall 2001). The dire and colonial conditions of the U.S. system in Puerto Rico produced numerous strikes, overall discontent and instability, climaxing in the Ponce Massacre of March 21, 1937 when 18 Puerto Rican Nationalists were killed and more than 200 wounded by the insular police during a peaceful parade to commemorate the abolition of slavery on the island (Ferraó 1990).

In an attempt to alleviate this instability, in 1941 then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed Rexford G. Tugwell, a left-wing agricultural economist and member of the President’s Brain Trust, as governor of Puerto Rico. Representing the extension of U.S. New Deal policies, Tugwell joined efforts with the energetic and newly elected President of the Puerto Rican Senate Luis Muñoz Marín of the recently founded (1938) PPD. Together, Tugwell, Muñoz, and the PPD machinery—Monagas and sports included—began a series of reforms and changes based on social justice. After the Second World War ended, the United States emerged as a premier world power eager to show its commitment to democracy, economic might, and social strength. The policies enacted

in Puerto Rico would follow these ideals and served as a bridge between the Anglo and Latin Americas.

Land reform, public works, new and better housing, education, health care, higher wages, and athletic and recreational facilities were some of the changes seen by Puerto Rican people progressively after the mid-1940s. With the Nationalist Party in a sort of hiatus after the repression of the 1930s, and the incarceration of its leader, Harvard-educated Pedro Albizu Campos, the political arena was wide open for a new leader, a new party, and a new political movement. Yet, this movement sought to empower the people *with* the sponsorship, aid, and approval of the United States. Puerto Rico was an important component of the Good Neighbor policy (Johnson 1997), and social and economic development on the island contributed to perceptions of a successful U.S.-Latin American alliance.

The role of the United States in developing sports in Puerto Rico is essential. While it is important to study the traditional Puerto Rican/Spanish games like cockfighting, this article focuses particularly on the development of “modern” sports.⁵ Although baseball was played in the island in the 1890s, other sports such as basketball, volleyball, track and field, and tennis were introduced after the U.S. invasion. Under the United States, sports were part of an Americanization agenda, best seen in the public school system (Del Moral 2013b), which included not only English as medium of instruction, but also the instruction of other U.S. cultural elements like songs, patriotic figures, the flag, and anthems. Puerto Ricans were selective in the Americanization process. For example, while they rejected English as the lingua franca, they accepted and welcomed U.S. sports. Two institutions were paramount in this project from the early 1900s to the 1930s: public schools (including the University of Puerto Rico) and the YMCA. While the school curriculum included an American style physical education (Del Moral 2013a), the majority were not equipped with proper athletic installations, if any. Monagas was fully immersed in this process during the 1910s and 1920s.

Julio Enrique Monagas Sánchez was born on October 17, 1903 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic to Puerto Rican parents from the city of Mayagüez. In 1906, his family moved back and established residence in the city of Ponce. In Ponce, Monagas studied primary and secondary school at the privileged Ponce High School, practicing multiple sports such as shot put and pole vault.⁶ Ponce High sports were coached by the legendary Charles Terry, an American teacher who developed one of the most successful athletic programs in the island during the 1900s and 1910s, by competing against the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (CAAM), among other elite institutions. Yet Ponce High was an exception, as they managed

to get enough funds to build a state of the art athletic field replicating the one at the University of Pennsylvania. As such, Monagas had been exposed to arguably the best athletic field in the island and had seen how this infrastructure could train strong and successful athletes. In 1929, he was cofounder of the *Federación Deportiva del Sur* (Sports Federation of the South) in Ponce, which, along with a similar one in San Juan and the government's Athletic Commission (1927), constituted at that time the only three Puerto Rican-born sport organizations outside the school system. Monagas was included in the Puerto Rican Olympic delegation that participated in the 1938 Central American and Caribbean Games in Panama. After these experiences Monagas became completely—almost obsessively—devoted to the development of sport (Tomasini 1992:162). Although Monagas had access to one of the best athletic programs in Puerto Rico, he was equally aware that the story for the vast majority of Puerto Rican children was very different.

The YMCA, which first entered the island with the U.S. invading forces in 1898 as the “Army and Navy YMCA,” introduced basketball, volleyball, tennis, and even the Boy Scouts movement.⁷ Founded in 1912, the civil YMCA in San Juan, with its Cristian missionary scope, but also segregationist and elitist, did not find many followers among the popular classes. Instead, for most of the first half of the century, it remained a small institution by membership standards. Nonetheless, they still taught and sponsored many activities for these new “progressive” sports, even serving as consultants to the public education system. The YMCA hosted athletic demonstrations and sports tournaments, which were very popular and attracted both players and audiences. This institution was successful in showing and teaching Puerto Ricans how to play certain sports, yet they were limited and in no position to provide mass athletic facilities for the common people.

Indeed, locales for popular recreation were in dire conditions, effectively non-existent, for most of the first three decades of U.S. rule. Children practicing sports in the 1930s became creative in order to practice sports. According to the memoirs of José Ubarri, who taught physical education in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, children used hoes or *machetes* to clear empty lots (with or without permission) in order to play baseball.⁸ To delineate the infield diamond, children used the same agricultural tools or just ran enough times in a diamond shape around the field. The most creative part of the enterprise was marking the bases. Youth used pieces of cardboard, empty cracker tins, or any piece of trash to mark the bases. Hills, bushes, or barbwire fences marked the outfield. Equipment was hard to come by, and often catchers did not use any protection whatsoever. During inter-town games, the visiting team usually helped in preparing the field, and also served as umpires. Local tournaments

were organized locally, among the people themselves, just by calling on friends and forming their own teams.

The same creativity was employed in other sports, such as basketball. Players would build their own baskets by placing rims on backboards made out of wooden panels, or on any wall. Courts were irregular, rustic, and set up in any random place. Competitive swimming was performed in local streams or rivers, and diving was practiced on nearby big rocks or on local waterfalls. Children learned the rules of various sports by word of mouth or by observation. Vicente Nieves Mora provides a similar description of sport infrastructure in the Santurce area of the 1930s and early 1940s.⁹ To practice pole vault, children used long bamboo sticks and landed on plain grass. Since there were few or no actual baseballs children used tight balls of black tape and for bats any roughly straight stick or broom. Those children who could afford gloves and masks would lend their equipment to their neighbors. If there were not enough gloves, they caught the ball with their bare hands.

Ubarri and Nieves Mora's experiences playing sports during the 1930s and early 1940s were a common occurrence. They show us the need for basic sport facilities and equipment in Puerto Rico. Many poor children saw and longed to play in the facilities in some of the elite schools in San Juan, Ponce, and Mayagüez, and at the YMCA in San Juan. As mentioned before, while Monagas attended one of the best and athletically successful high schools, he was by no means segregated from the rest of the local youth. Aware of the two faces of Puerto Rican sport, one of poverty and underdevelopment and the other one modern, prosperous, and American inspired, it was not difficult for Monagas to understand the need to bridge this gap. This opportunity came as a result of the PPD's reforms that focused more on social justice and the people than on the island's political status. Once there was governmental backing to provide widespread athletic facilities, it was just a matter of having the approval of the masses to the project, and in turn to the PPD. Continuing demand and extensive use of these new facilities was enough evidence to support Monagas's "*Un parque para cada pueblo*", PPD rule, and the United States' presence in the island.

Sport and Recreation during the Second World War

Perhaps more than New Deal policies, the dramatic changes in 1940s Puerto Rico happened as a result of the emergency and real threat posed by the Second World War. The United States used the jurisdictional limits of Puerto Rico as a military base after they entered the Second World War in 1941. One point two billion dollars were invested in Puerto Rico between 1939 and 1950 in pre and post-war works (Bolívar

Fresnada 2011:1). The Caribbean during the late 1930s and early 1940s was a coveted region for German imperial aspirations (McCaffrey 2002:28-29). German submarines torpedoed the *Carolina*, a ship of the Puerto Rican Line, in June of 1917. In 1939, the United States made Puerto Rico a separate Department of the U.S. Army. Between 1940 and 1945, the United States expropriated more than 21,000 acres of populated land on the island-town of Vieques, and some 6,600 on Puerto Rico's east coast, to build the biggest naval base outside the continental United States, known as Roosevelt Roads. This naval base was designed to house the entire British fleet in case of a German occupation of Great Britain (Ayala 2001). The connection between war, the U.S. armed forces, and sport is not new or particularly Puerto Rican. Carlos Martínez Valle and Dafne Cruz Porchini (2009), for example, have demonstrated the different roles sport had in the institutionalization of the Mexican Army and Police in the immediate post-Revolution years.

Tugwell's government in Puerto Rico quickly enacted a series of laws to provide for better facilities and internal self-subsistence. In 1942, Tugwell wrote to Harold Ickes, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, reporting that in cooperation with the Army and Navy the Legislature had enacted laws on "recreation and welfare...to prepare us for an attack."¹⁰ Tugwell also reported that these recreational facilities were extended to civilian zones, in addition to the creation of the Parks and Recreation Service (PRS). The PRS became responsible for providing "the benefits of professional park and recreational services to all the people over the entire island."¹¹

The Parks and Recreation Commission's report of 1943 further developed the reasons for more and better facilities. Detracting from warfare and adheres, the Commissioner focused on uplifting the Puerto Rican spirit by saying that "art and recreation have long been recognized as the Royal road to ethics because it is the natural means to the realization of the physical as well as the moral welfare of human society."¹² Viewing recreation and parks as art, the idea was to counteract the negativity and fear of German hostilities by providing the "best means for the expression of human emotion through constructive channels, and it always resulted in the amelioration of the social environment."

More practically, the Puerto Rican government, fearing widespread "starvation and despair,"¹³ more than ever realized a need of self-reliance. To that effect, on November 27, 1942 the government established the Insular Emergency Council, which in turn created the War Emergency Program (WEP). Funded by local legislative appropriations, and by 70 percent of the taxes of Puerto Rican rum sold in the United States, the WEP was devised to carry out "public works program to give employment to persons in need of work thru [sic] the operation of projects of general benefit to the community."¹⁴ Two other institutions were created:

the Puerto Rico Planning Board, which was “capable of coordinating... governmental works with the needs of military activities,” and the Puerto Rico Development Bank to help fund these projects.

In the United States, there was also a push to enhance recreational and sporting facilities due to increasing global political use of athletics to display national strength (Keys 2006). Indeed, in these times of war, American football became a symbol of the nation’s toughness (Kemper 2009:8). In 1940, influenced by a similar act in the United States,¹⁵ Puerto Rican Acting Governor José E. Colón, requested the local Legislature to pass a “National Sports Week” proclamation. He also sought the “full cooperation of all with the Public Amusements and Sports Commission.”¹⁶

However, Puerto Ricans were interested in pursuing an athletic and recreation project, not only U.S. inspired, but also from within. For example, also in 1940, then Commissioner of Sport and Recreation Juan Maldonado sent a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt asking for funding to build a sports palace in San Juan. The last paragraph of this letter clearly states the benefits of sports locally and the meanings for both Puerto Ricans and the United States:

If given this assistance, the youth of this country will be still more grateful to you for everything that has been done by that Administration in behalf of our people, and the Sports Palace will become the enduring symbol of the good wishes of Your Honor for the happiness and welfare of the “Forgotten Man.”¹⁷

Here, Maldonado referred to the basis of U.S. colonial hegemony in Puerto Rico. By using the phrase “forgotten man,” famously used by populist President Roosevelt (and Muñoz) during the New Deal years (Shlaes 2007), Maldonado held the president accountable, and in turn put the system to the test. In the eyes of Maldonado, it was the best deal. The United States could have its colonial subjects content, while Puerto Ricans could have a Sports Palace to hold athletics tournaments with other Latin American and Caribbean countries, and thus showcase Puerto Rico’s progress.

The Rise of a Sports Czar: Julio Enrique Monagas

Julio Enrique Monagas was known for no non-sense leadership, blunt, fierce, and energetic. He was feared by his adversaries, yet admired by many. Yet, Monagas was grateful and loyal to his party and to the visions of a new country, a new society. He was more than a sponsor of local sport. He was a sport giant who was also known for his international sports leadership. To some extent, he could be considered a sort of “sports czar,” a designation not used at his time, yet fits his stature in

Puerto Rican sport history. His international leadership goes back to the early 1940s, when, in collaboration with Cuban and Dominican sport leaders, he signed the Charter of Rules of the *Unión Gubernamental Deportiva Interamericana*. Being elected Vice-President, he managed to have this new international association adopt the amateur sports regulations used in Puerto Rico.¹⁸ His international prestige kept growing, and in 1948, he achieved sending the first Puerto Rican national delegation to the Summer Olympic Games in London. In 1960, he became the first president of the *Organización Deportiva Centroamericana y del Caribe* (ODECABE). This international leadership role was bestowed upon him due to his motivation and deep involvement in international Olympism since the 1930s. Locally, Monagas's sport preeminence did not mean he had an unlimited budget or was exempt from bureaucratic constraints. He had to struggle with a colonial economy in development.

Monagas became the Commissioner of the Public Amusement and Sports Commission (PASC) in 1942 after the short presidencies of Juan Maldonado (1939-1940) and Juan Ramón Balseiro (1940-1942). Monagas presided over the Commission, which was later referred to as Administration, from 1942 until 1966, coinciding with Muñoz's PPD government. However, in addition to his role in the development of sports, we have to understand Monagas as another significant PPD politician. Monagas was more than a loyal PPD supporter; he was another member of the PPD's close group of allies in upholding local hegemony. Since at least 1940, when Monagas worked at his furniture store in Comercio Street in Ponce, he had been directly corresponding with Muñoz and offering his loyalty as a *popular* (PPD follower). In 1941, he sent a letter to Muñoz recommending a local *ponceño* for an administrative Police position in San Juan. In it, Monagas stated that this candidate was more intelligent, approachable, and had a "clean" history because he was "our man, very ours indeed."¹⁹ Although he did not say what he meant by "our man" he did mention how effective this candidate was in appeasing locals after the Ponce Massacre of 1937.

The Monagas-Muñoz connection is clear when Monagas reminded Muñoz of all the help he gave him during the 1940 political campaign, where Muñoz first got elected to the Senate. Monagas further stated that he had never asked anything from his party and that he even had declined PPD political nominations. His only wish was "the faithful fulfillment of all promises made to the people in the pre-electoral campaign."²⁰ In the same letter, Monagas requested a meeting with Muñoz to talk further about these matters. The letter was sent in 1941 and by 1942 Monagas had been appointed Amusement and Sports Commissioner.

The political favors between Monagas and Muñoz did not end with Monagas's appointment as Commissioner of Sport. In 1944, Muñoz

sent numerous memos to Monagas asking to intercede in political and security matters in different towns. For example, in October 16, 1944 Muñoz sent a telegraph to Monagas asking him to organize his personal security during the island-wide electoral campaign.²¹ A memo from Muñoz that same year addressed to all PPD department chiefs asked to “personally” loan vehicles to Monagas for Muñoz’s transportation.²² Other favors included investigating telephone sabotage by the opposition, and arranging and paying newspaper and radio advertisement for the PPD. In addition to this, Monagas, on behalf of Muñoz, repeatedly contacted then Insular Chief of Police Col. Joshua Hellinger regarding different conflicts involving the PPD and the opposition in the rural towns. The task of handling these explicit non-sport political favors seem to decline after 1944. In spite of this, he would still uphold the Party’s ideology through his most powerful weapon: sports and recreation.

Un parque para cada pueblo: Sport and Social Justice

With a majority of the children enthusiastic about sports, but without proper spaces to play, Monagas set out his social justice plan of remapping the athletic infrastructure of the island with a park in every town. However, in 1944, Monagas wrote to Muñoz complaining that the PASC did not have enough funds to carry out Puerto Rico’s modernization of sport.²³ He referred to Law No. 46 of April 24, 1942 that established the “Parks and Recreation Service” (PRS), which would work closely with the Public Amusement and Parks Commission (PASC), in existence since 1934. The creation of the PRS was to undertake an island-wide project of sport and recreational expansion, portrayed almost as a human rights issue in its “Statement of Motives.”

Within a philosophy of government that wishes to plan the needs of the people in order to keep supplying them with adequately, the facilities for recreation for the people themselves necessarily form an integral part. People have to be fed, dressed, sheltered, educated, and to have the solace of wholesome and healthful recreation. As by other legislation means are provided for the better feeding, clothing, educating, and sheltering of the people, this Act completes the normal cycle of a good, decent life, for the purpose of providing forms of recreation, both spiritual and physical, for people in the towns and in the rural districts of Puerto Rico. It is not the spirit of this Act to create luxurious and few works and buildings, but to scatter, within the reach of the greatest number of citizens in the greatest number of places and localities in rural districts and towns, simple means for physical recreation and spiritual enjoyment.²⁴

Whether building parks can be considered a human rights act or not,

it was nonetheless an effective tool to gain the approval of the masses, calm the virulent airs of conflict of the 1930s, and recreate a “bond of dependence” that tied the popular classes to a government of social justice (Lomnitz 2001).²⁵

Emphasizing the building of recreational facilities in rural areas, the PRS had an overarching, comprehensive, and ambitious duty to build all recreation and athletic facilities. The inaugural report of the PRS in 1943 stated that their “goal includes the planning, construction and care of places for public recreation, such as athletic fields for the use of the public; bathing places; swimming tanks; community centers; community libraries, buildings for moving pictures; theaters, and lectures; parks, and any other work or establishment to be devoted to all those cultural and recreational activities in which the public may participate directly.”²⁶ Most of the so called “athletic fields” were open fields cleared in order to delineate a baseball diamond, build cement bleachers, and surround the field with a fence (see image 1). Sometimes they were called “baseball fields,” but often they were left under the generic term of athletic field. Nonetheless, the PRS and the PASC, also consistently built basketball and volleyball courts (see image 2), and track and field spaces, in addition to renovating public plazas, which were the place for recreation in the

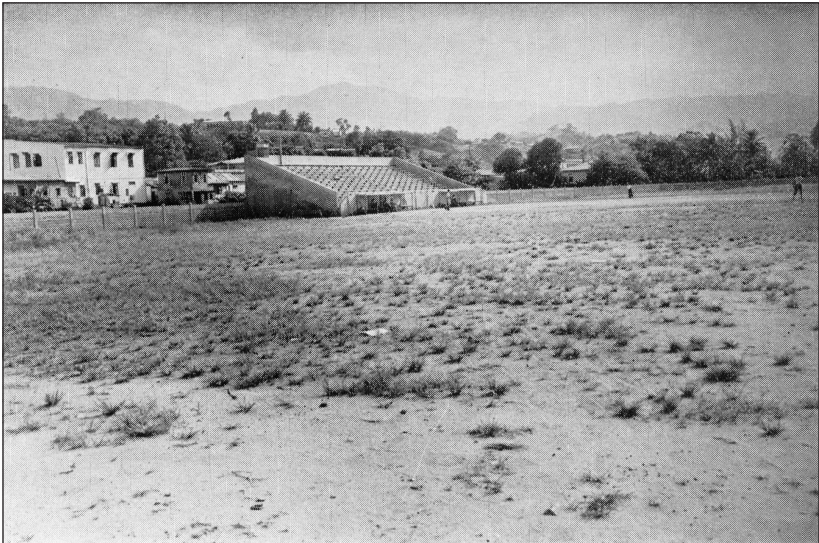


Image 1. Athletic field, Utuado. Marrero, Mario. *Annual Report of the War Emergency Program of the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico and the Insular Emergency Council for the Fiscal Year 1946-47*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division. Government of Puerto Rico, War Emergency Program, 1948, 14-15.

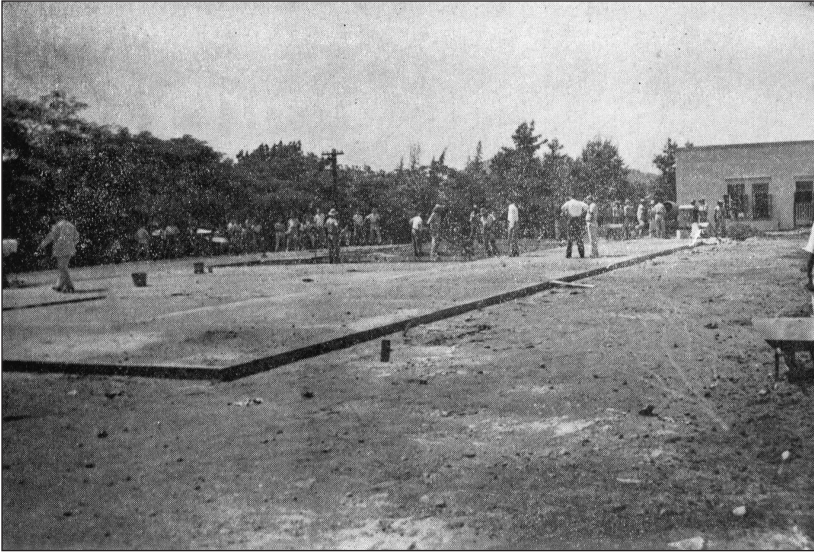


Image 2. Basketball court, Coamo. Pérez, Manuel A. *Annual Report of the War Emergency Program of the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico and the Insular Emergency Council for the Fiscal Year 1943-44*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division. Government of Puerto Rico, War Emergency Program, 1945, 40.

past. Baseball was the most popular of sports, followed by basketball. Volleyball and track and field were also very popular. Boxing was another popular sport, yet boxing rings were not part of the construction agenda.

The PPD government designed a “Master Plan” of industrial development, guided by the Planning Board. As for sport, this Master Plan had three main goals:

- Parks and playgrounds in the metropolitan areas of San Juan, Mayagüez, and Ponce.
- Athletic playgrounds in the urban areas of all municipalities of the Island, except San Juan, Mayagüez, and Ponce.
- Athletic Playgrounds in the rural areas of Puerto Rico.²⁷

In 1942, in order to centralize efforts, Monagas’s PASC was placed under the Department of the Interior.²⁸ This way there could be close collaboration between the PRS and the PASC. Nonetheless, the PRS and the PASC worked closely with the newly created War Emergency Program and the Planning Board in order to gather more funds.

Monagas ideal, later made into a motto, was to build “*un parque para cada pueblo,*” (a park for each town) in each of the 78 municipalities. This

project intended to convey the messages of physical and mental health, the PPD's social justice, and maybe unintentionally, U.S. benevolent rule. In a 1944 article in the newspaper *El Mundo*, Monagas talked about the project by complaining that there were not enough playgrounds. Play, according to him, was a means to reduce youth delinquency, in addition to contribute to a healthy way of life. Those were the results of studies in New York that included more than 3,000 Puerto Ricans.²⁹ He acknowledged, as well, the use of playgrounds in developed countries for the wellbeing of communities. Particularly influential for him, was an American phrase that said "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."³⁰ Moreover, his goal was to provide the poor boys of the rural countryside with playgrounds, and believed it was the "duty of the state to provide such necessity."

Following the PPD's U.S.-sponsored populism, Monagas's intellectual and practical inspiration was derived from the United States. He affirmed in 1945 that his inspiration for the revamp of sport came from a 1930 *U.S. White House Conference on Child Health and Protection*.³¹ This conference was called by President Herbert Hoover to address the wellbeing of children, and for this, he gathered around 3,000 professionals from medical, social, and education fields.

In particular, the report written by Henry Breckinridge, entitled "Recreation and Physical Education," reads like an extended report on Monagas's ideas. Breckinridge argued for the construction of new and better parks, playgrounds, and equipment for children; the collaboration with schools, and the strengthening of PE programs; better leadership and educators; and the recreation for workers. Yet, funding would come from communities and independent organizations.³² Following this initiative, Monagas called for a similar Puerto Rican conference on recreation that would gather local leadership, including doctors, businessmen, teachers, economists, policemen, engineers, psychologists, and district judges.

Indicating that out of the 808 rural *barrios* (neighborhoods) only 10 had playgrounds, Monagas stated that in relation to recreational activity there were approximately 1,250,000 rural people "abandoned to their own fate."³³ He particularly specified that the comprehensive project to build new and better playgrounds was due to Governor Tugwell's "social justice" law. The idea was to abandon the old use of the concept "park," which included from open fields designed to stroll and admire scenery, to plazas for social interactions. The new meaning for parks and recreation, as in the United States, meant active recreation—the practice of modern sports and athletics. Monagas stated in the 1944 annual report: "Most or practically all of the work performed by the Service of parks through the Island is of an active type."³⁴

Monagas's sense of urgency was based on his belief that dismissing recreation was detrimental to the overall wellbeing of Puerto Rican society. He argued for a "scientific and well oriented program of public recreation," as an "effective method of social prophylaxis" in order to aid the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Service to battle juvenile delinquency, in turn sponsoring a healthy citizenry.³⁵

Funding for "*Un parque para cada pueblo*" was actually achieved by special allocation due to a series of reforms derived from a war-driven economy, which included increasing support to the Works Projects Administration and Puerto Rico's Civil Defense, the creation of Puerto Rico's Planning Board, Development Bank and Development Company, and War Emergency Program (Bolívar Fresnada 2011). The PASC during the 1930s had limited support from the local government. Although it had a budget of up to \$49,224 in 1936,³⁶ of which \$15,000 were devoted to sending a delegation to the Third Central American Games in El Salvador, by 1938 it had gone down again to \$15,485.³⁷ When the Puerto Rican delegation returned from the 1938 Central American and Caribbean Games in Panama, the PASC had a budget deficit of \$17,311.37. The first act to start building sporting facilities was to pay that debt, by passing law No. 45 in the local legislature.³⁸

In 1940, the PASC received from the insular government \$20,754. The Parks Commission received \$69,373 to "maintain" the "passive" parks of San Juan and Santurce.³⁹ Then, the legislature approved law No. 206 of May 11, 1942 that transferred money from the selling of internal revenue stamps housed on the island's Treasury Funds to the PASC as a "Trust Fund." A day later, the legislature approved law No. 235 which imposed a tax on dog races, and another on cockfights, and gave authority to the PASC to sell licenses, tickets, and regulating all sports. By 1944, the PASC had a working budget of \$40,000.44, while having the legislature approve also \$100,000 for the purchase of athletic equipment for poor children. This figure is comparable to the disbursement in 1942 for the PASC of \$18,963.⁴⁰

The power of the PASC kept growing, and by 1945, it had absolute control and administration over the Shooting Association including the collection of fees for licenses and other permits. The budget for the PASC in 1945 tripled to \$167,400 (increasing by 318.5 percent), while the PRS had \$130,000.⁴¹ In that same year, the legislature approved another \$100,000 to the PASC for the installation of electric lighting at the Sixto Escobar Park in San Juan. PASC's budget kept growing throughout the 1940s. In 1946, their working budget was \$355,220, or an increase of 112 percent from the previous year.⁴² By 1950, the now called *Administración de Parques y Recreo Públicos*' budget had increased to \$587,416, and by

1955 it had reached \$1,160,454.⁴³ Not only was the Commission getting more money during the 1940s, it was also a growing agency. In 1937 the PASC had only 8 employees,⁴⁴ while a decade later, in 1948, it had grown to 103.⁴⁵ Throughout the 1930s, the PASC had remained a small agency, with 5 employees in 1935 (having received \$16,247 from the insular government⁴⁶) and 6 in 1936.

These administrative and ideological reconfigurations began to yield results as early as 1945. In that year, the Commission organized a baseball tournament that gave equipment to “more than 6,000 boys” in 58 municipalities.⁴⁷ The professional baseball season, which included the teams from San Juan, Santurce, Ponce, and Mayagüez reported a total attendance of 248,835 that paid \$109,865 in ticket sales. The next year, in 1946, Tugwell reported that 11,980 boys participated in the baseball’s amateur championship.⁴⁸ Also, the commission distributed baseball equipment to more than 10,000 boys in 67 municipalities. The professional baseball tournament obtained record-number attendance with 417,806 persons that paid \$206,064 in ticket sales. Furthermore, there were volleyball and basketball tournaments in 84 rural communities, and 466 movie screenings with an attendance of 270,000 people.

Monagas’s “*Un parque para cada pueblo*” was projected to be island-wide without privileging any region, except, that is, for the rural areas. The PRS quickly became active, and by 1943 had built a basketball court at the *Barrio Obrero* in Santurce, and by the end of the year “baseball fields and courts for other games either had been completed or were under construction in eleven municipalities.”⁴⁹ The PASC acquired plots of land quickly after the program began. In 1944, 48 plots of land were distributed for parks, while the next year, in 1945, they almost doubled with a distribution of 95 plots for “playgrounds.”⁵⁰ In 1944, the PRS reported having “completed 38 projects...in various towns of the island. These included base ball [sic] and track and fields and courts for basket ball [sic], volley ball [sic], and tennis.”⁵¹ This same year, the PASC provided the “athletic” equipment to the Police Athletic League, while also reporting an “extensive program of sport” that included 5,000 players participating in the amateur baseball league now covering 53 out of the 78 municipalities.⁵²

Building sport and recreation areas throughout the island was a cooperative effort between the PRS, the Planning Board, and the WEP. For example, in 1942-1943, the year the Planning Board was established, the Board had a budget for “Parks and Playgrounds” of \$75,784 or 0.9 percent of their budget.⁵³ The next year, 1943-1944, their budget had increased to \$238,995 or 1.1 percent for 16 urban parks, and \$84,336 or 0.4 percent for a rural park,⁵⁴ an increase of 326.6 percent in one year.

Table 1. Projects Constructed by the Service of Parks and Recreation for the Year 1943-1944

<i>Municipalities</i>	<i>Basketball Courts</i>	<i>Baseball Fields</i>	<i>Tracks</i>	<i>Volleyball Courts</i>	<i>Tennis Courts</i>	<i>Total</i>
Aibonito	-	2	-	-	-	2
Arecibo	1	-	-	-	-	1
Barceloneta	-	2	-	-	-	2
Bayamón	1	-	-	-	-	1
Cayey	-	1	-	-	-	1
Cidra	1	-	-	1	-	2
Guánica	1	1	1	-	-	3
Manatí	1	1	-	-	-	2
Orocovis	1	-	-	1	-	2
Patillas	1	-	-	-	-	1
Peñuelas	1	-	-	-	-	1
Ponce	3	1	-	-	-	4
Río Grande	-	1	-	-	-	1
Río Piedras	2	-	-	2	1	5
Sábana Grande	1	1	-	-	-	2
San Germán	1	-	-	-	-	1
San Lorenzo	1	-	-	1	-	2
Tallaboa [sic]	-	1	-	-	-	1
Toa Baja	-	2	-	-	-	2
Trujillo Alto	1	-	-	1	-	2
Total	17	13	1	6	1	38

Table taken from "Parks Commission and Service of Parks and Recreation." In *Report of the Commissioner of the Interior of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1944 to the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico*. San Juan, P.R. Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1945, 101.

In the same report, the Planning Board stated that in order to complete the parks project they needed 1,250 acres of land and some

\$12,000,000.⁵⁵ Alternately, in 1946, the WEP worked on 10 projects including a “recreational park” in Santurce, improvements to the Luis Muñoz Rivera Park, a fence for the “sport” park in Arecibo, “athletic parks” in Utuado, Manatí, and Salinas, and a basketball court in Juncos,⁵⁶ totaling \$236,126.⁵⁷

However, while these new parks offered both children and adults athletic spaces to play, not everyone agreed with how the project unfolded, in turn pressing Monagas and the government for more and better sport programming. The critique revolved around Puerto Rico’s preparation as a competitive sporting country as compared to other countries of Central America and the Caribbean. José Seda, writing for *El Mundo* in 1945,⁵⁸ presented himself as the voice of amateur athletes due to his extended contact and participation in different sports throughout the island. He claimed that while basketball and boxing had been developing excellently, Puerto Rico lacked progress in tennis, volleyball, track and field, softball and even amateur baseball. While not mentioning parks as such, he did argue for more leadership and tactical training. That is, he observed that Puerto Ricans lacked the appropriate tactical expertise in these sports to be at the same level of amateur competition as other places.

A year later, Felicio Torregrosa, Director of the Department of Physical Education of the University of Puerto Rico and Technical Consultant to the PASC, argued that Puerto Rican sports still had problems to solve.⁵⁹ His major concern was track and field and the lack of institutional sponsorship. Lack of facilities (tracks), equipment (shoes), interested youth, or knowledgeable trainers were some of the problems for Puerto Rican athletics. He then urged Julio Enrique Monagas with his “enormous influence and prestige” to solve these problems, because according to him, “nobody else” could do it. Both of these sport leaders argued for better programming, training, coaching, and facilities for organized sports. The problem, according to Torregrosa, was that any suggestion by interested parties was seen as a “pitch” for political privileges or as political rivals looking to discredit the government. Regardless of this perception, programming as such was not Monagas and the PASC’s mission with “*Un parque para cada pueblo*”, at least in the 1940s. For them, the problem was the lack of basic mass athletic infrastructure, and spaces to play for the people as a whole. In this regard, increasing attendance and demands for parks proved to Monagas’s PASC that their mission was working.

Perhaps attending to the pressure and requests from sport leaders like Seda and Torregrosa, Monagas envisioned a larger more comprehensive project to develop sports and recreation in Puerto Rico. Originally he wanted to create not only a powerful commission of sport, but

actually a Division called *División Recreativa Insular* (DRI). To establish this broad program, he requested the astonishing and never before seen sum of \$9,000,000. This budget almost equaled the newly created Agricultural Company's budget of \$10,000,000.⁶⁰ The Puerto Rican government's working capital for 1945 was \$166,247,182.87 and a cash balance of \$104,546,653.13.⁶¹ In other words, the DRI's budget would have been 8.6 percent of the cash balance for the 1945 general budget. To Monagas regret, his plan for the creation of the DRI fell through. However, he received \$4,600,000 out of the requested \$9,000,000, still an impressive amount of money for sport and recreation in 1945.

This *División*, designed to work alongside schools, not only provided the youth with means of recreation, and hence, prevent juvenile delinquency, but also included recreation for Puerto Rican laborers and the working classes. In his own words, Monagas's DRI was an agency of social justice "for the Puerto Rican worker so that he, in his own time, can utilize his free time to the practice of outdoor sports and instructive recreation that keeps him in a perfect peaceful mental attitude that will provide him greater wellbeing in his natural life conditions."⁶²

Puerto Rico's general industrialization needed able and peaceful workers, which in turn would lessen the so common strikes at this time. Providing the majority working class with recreation and sport facilities would entertain them, keep them content, and improve their health. This is not the first time that sport was used as mechanism of social control; it was in fact the reason for the development of sport associations in nineteenth century England (Hargreaves 1986). In Latin America and the Caribbean, it is no different and there are various examples of this throughout the region (Arbena and LaFrance 2002). In the Caribbean, Laurent Dubois demonstrates how sport was utilized as social control in Guadeloupe in the 1930s. Interim governor, and sport patron, Félix Eboué made official the reduction in laboring hours and instituted a comprehensive sport program to channel "activities that sustained individual and social progress (DuBois 2010:56)." In reality, this measure resulted in quelling racist assumptions that with increasing leisure time of Guadeloupe's black working class they would fall into "alcohol and debauchery."

On June 30, 1947, as a result of law No. 4, the PRS and the PASC, both under the Department of the Interior, merged creating the Public Amusement and Parks Commission (PAPC), under the War Emergency Program of the Insular Government. This merger, similar to the sport centralization in Perón's Argentina under CADCOA (Rein 1998), meant that Commissioner Monagas was thereafter the sole person responsible for all planning, executing, and administration of everything related to parks, sport, and recreation, in addition to being the head of the Puerto

Rican National Olympic Committee; thus becoming *the* person in charge of all matters of sport—a sports czar. Attending a meeting in preparation of the Tenth Caribbean Series of Baseball in Venezuela, Luisín Rosario, Director of Sport for the new PAPC reflected on Puerto Rico’s sports progress. Backing the government and the work of Monagas, Rosario said that in terms of sports Puerto Rico had matured a great degree: “With a population of only two and a half million inhabitants, Puerto Rico is without a doubt giving lessons in sport to larger countries.”⁶³

By 1948, the PAPC under Monagas managed to build athletic parks in 81 rural and urban areas.⁶⁴ By 1950, the PAPC had completed additional works in the municipalities of Luquillo, San Lorenzo, Las Marías, Aguada, Hormigueros, Yauco, Cabo Rojo, Vieques, Gurabo, Corozal, and Maricao. However, although devised from the top-down, the project quickly turned as a bottom up demand from the people for better recreation, turning into a political negotiation between the citizenry and the PPD as seen in the numerous funding requests for athletic parks in the *Archivo General de Puerto Rico*.⁶⁵ Villaronga (2010) explains this negotiation by stating that the “disadvantaged sectors sought to improve their chances for a better livelihood by either approaching or heeding political leaders less likely to turn down their demands for reform,” while at the same time “Muñoz and his peers geared the campaign of the PPD to address key groups that had proved to be or promised to become powerful political agents.”⁶⁶

People’s requests and demands for sport and recreational facilities were made to Monagas, but also to Muñoz. While Monagas was the public face of sport and recreation, Muñoz was the premier leader (or *cacique*) of the populist discourse. Twenty eight citizens of the *barrio* La Plata in the town of Lajas, wrote to governor Muñoz in 1950 complaining that their athletic park was not yet built. They had written several times to Monagas, yet due to insufficient funds they could not begin works. Expressing their need for recreation for the *barrio*’s children, they stated their commitment to the political ideals of the PPD. In this case, they requested the delivery of sport social justice by building a recreation park in their sector.

We wish that our urgent necessity to provide us of an amusement park in this neighborhood be met. In the *Estación* sector and its surroundings there are an average of 125 or more houses with more than 1,200 or more inhabitants that include between 400 to 450 children that do not enjoy any opportunity of leisure nor even a place to gather to exercise outdoors and devote themselves to game for their physical and mental development. The majority of the inhabitants of this neighborhood have given our enthusiastic and firm support to the current Governmental program which you so marvelously direct, (of this, the Municipal

Administration of this town of Lajas can bear witness) and we therefore raise our humble petition to you.⁶⁷

In other cases, requests naturally turned into demands. In 1947, locals in Arecibo had been requesting, and later demanding, an athletic field for years, which Monagas had denied supposedly for lack of funds. Finally, on October 17, 1947, at a press conference at the Country Club of Arecibo, Monagas declared that he had the money to build not one, but two athletic parks. Calming the “tension and manifested rancor of this community towards the Amusement and Sport Commission and the Insular Government” Monagas affirmed that if the said projects were not done in a reasonable time he would resign his post.⁶⁸

Popular requests came from different regions at an increasing rate in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. In 1949, Muñoz received a letter from Leonardo Martínez requesting an “athletic field” for his town of Ciales.⁶⁹ In that same year, Gerardo Quiñones, organizer of the “Intercolonial Championship” in Fajardo, asked Muñoz and his “Distinguished” cabinet for a “recreational area.” According to Quiñones, the athletic park would benefit not only children, but also provide “entertainment and solace” to adults. While the petition was directed to Muñoz, Monagas and the PPD’s populist (i.e. personal approach) project featured prominently in the request:

We personally know the dignified and courteous President of the Honorable Public Amusement and Parks Commission and we hope the Honorable Planning Board and the Honorable Governor quickly resolve our Sports Organization [sic] petition, because it would not only please this town’s inhabitants, but would also cooperate with the Dynamic President [sic], Honorable Julio Enrique Monagas for the development of his plan so that our Isle of Enchantment [sic] keep earning more sport prestige within and outside our island.⁷⁰

People not only requested athletic fields, but also equipment or land. In 1950, Carmelo Aponte from Villalba wrote to Muñoz asking for baseball gear,⁷¹ while Nicolás Cancel, “owner” of the Costa Rica team from barrio La Costa, Lajas, wrote to Muñoz asking to purchase three or four acres of land from rich landowners so that his team could continue playing and “fans” could keep watching them play.⁷²

The government received dozens, if not hundreds, of these petitions. Requests were not only addressed to Monagas or Muñoz, but included another key person in the PPD. In 1951, the Secretary of the “Víctor Rojas” Lodge in Arecibo wrote to Inés Mendoza, Puerto Rico’s First Lady, requesting not an athletic field, but grounds to build their own park. Personally noting the First Lady’s interest in the “serious problems” affecting Puerto Rico, they were interested in collaborating to fight

“juvenile delinquency.” The Lodge wanted the children of Arecibo to have a space to play with the aims of “spiritual expansion and physical strength.”⁷³

As mentioned before, the PASC’s role was primarily to provide a park for each town, but they were also in charge of other types of amusement, including movie screenings. Moreover, although the PASC’s populist work was another important tool of PPD’s hegemony, it also worked to help solidify ties to U.S. benevolent imperialism in the island. By the late 1940s, Muñoz had abandoned the PPD’s original ideal of independence, and had adopted an autonomist ideal that sought a close relation with the United States (Colón Ocasio 2009). This close relation can be seen also in sport and recreation when people thought that the U.S. President was as approachable as Muñoz or Monagas. Alluding to his World War I U.S. veteran status, José Echevarría, from Peñuelas wrote in 1947 to Harry S. Truman asking him to intervene in the business of open-air theaters in his small town.⁷⁴ Given the smallness of the town, and that there were other private theaters, the idea was for the President to arbitrate in the best use of space, equipment, entertainment, and fair competition.

Women also made petitions, as evidenced in a letter written in 1947 by Mercedes Arias, a school principal in a rural area of the town of San Sebastián, and Isabel Arroyo, a social worker. Writing to the U.S. First Lady, Mrs. Bess Truman, Arias appealed to Mrs. Truman’s “interest in children’s welfare” and requested a comprehensive collection of recreational and sport equipment in order to fight juvenile delinquency:

The people of this rural district is [sic] too poor and they lack even the essential things necessary to make a decent living. We have noticed that our children are acquiring bad habits and vices partly due to the lack of recreational facilities, so we have decided to improve this condition by offering them a recreational program for this and subsequent years. This program would include the provision of swing sets, small merry-go-rounds, steel slides, rings, bars, and teeter totter; some indoor games as parchesi [sic] and chinese [sic] checkers. We would need also basket ball [sic] equipment.⁷⁵

As Arias and Arroyo’s request shows, some demands were too big to fulfill. They acknowledged approaching the local government, but knew they could not provide everything their school needed. For them, and for many other Puerto Ricans, the next step was to look for aid in the Federal government, replicating the Puerto Rican government’s own approach to modernization. There were many athletics projects that were left incomplete, or could not begin, for lack of funds, sometimes creating discontent among the people. The economy of Puerto Rico, regardless of the war-driven economic boost, was never able to carry

out a self-sustaining model of industrialization. Local state-owned industries that were supposed to create internally driven development, sharply failed due to a systematic boycott by local capitalists who viewed private capital and their own colonial interests as foremost.⁷⁶ Yet, in the 1940s, there were an impressive number of new playgrounds and athletic fields built. “*Un parque para cada pueblo*” was successful as a right arm in the PPD’s agenda at capturing the approval of the masses. If people were frustrated because they still did not have an athletic field in their *barrio*, there were many others content with the efforts of the PAPC and Monagas, and by default with the *Populares*.

Popular approval led to public recognition. As early as 1948, local sport leaders planned homage for Monagas, including a trophy, a diploma, and an exhibition baseball game.⁷⁷ He declined the tribute saying that all he wanted was “understanding” and “cooperation” with his athletic projects, and ended his statement by thanking the legislature, Gov. Piñero, Frank Campos, and Eugenio Guerra for their help.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, he did accept numerous recognitions and awards, such as the one given by Miss Puerto Rico in 1948 for being the person “that has contributed the most to sport sponsorship in Puerto Rico,”⁷⁹ and the “Medal of Merit” given that same year by the American Legion of Puerto Rico.⁸⁰ Furthermore, he accepted the honorary position of “Associate Professor ad Honorem” of Physical Education at the UPR from the hands of Chancellor Jaime Benítez.⁸¹

Monagas was recognized in 1949 by the Lions Club of San Juan with a plaque presented by Rafael Pont Flores. In his speech, Pont Flores said that “never before had there been so many athletic parks and recreational facilities in the island,” while also stating that Monagas was “irreplaceable.”⁸² Monagas was happy that so many gentlemen from different political ideologies could come together for “great and noble purposes.”⁸³ An activity that was seen as apolitical was actually doing the PPD’s political work of social justice and bridging the often irreconcilable gaps in party politics. Pont Flores also mentioned recognitions coming from the *Diario de la Marina* in Havana, Cuba. Accepting this tribute, Monagas “visibly emotional” clearly stated that the award was not a personal one, but one towards a “governmental philosophy that believes and has made possible the realization of these programs.”⁸⁴ Then, as soon as Muñoz won the 1948 elections, making him the first governor in Puerto Rican history elected by the people, he sent a public recognition to Monagas saying “accept my testimony of my profound acknowledgement for your magnificent aid in this campaign of the great cause we defend.”⁸⁵

Much is known about the political, military, economic, and social repercussions of the Second World War. Only recently has sport featured

prominently in the studies of international relations before, during, and after the war (Keys 2006; Dichter and Johns 2014). In Puerto Rico, the War, and its institutional offshoots, produced essential changes and helped advance local political agendas. Puerto Rico's strategic relevance to the United States was the reason for more attention from the colonial authorities in a decade now proven to be a "military economy." Sport and recreation activities, regarded as symbols of national strength in the United States and elsewhere, were developed in Puerto Rico with the full support from the United States.

Julio Enrique Monagas, knowing this strategic interest, aptly used the war economy boom to carry out his plan to build "*Un parque para cada pueblo*." His loyalty to the PPD's pro-American industrialization got him the position to implement an island wide athletic development project. The result, and his success, won the hearts of many. Finally, after decades of few, if non-existent, athletic facilities, the Puerto Rican youth, especially children, received what they longed for, parks and equipment to play sports and recreate. Yet, the discourse of social justice involved a multi-sectorial populist movement that opened up the rationale for bottom-up demands if the party desired to hold power. Monagas's main goal was to be of service to the PPD as he developed a heart-felt need for the development of sport.

In the end, "*Un parque para cada pueblo*" became the motto for a movement of athletic development, later labeled a "sport revolution." With the help of Monagas, and other intellectuals and trusted men, Muñoz held the governor seat for an unmatched 16 years from 1948 to 1964, managing, along the way, to change the face of this once backwards Caribbean island, to a so-called "showcase of democracy." Nevertheless, this modernization of sport fell abruptly short of helping to change the basis of Puerto Rico's colonial relation to the United States, as the Commonwealth established in 1952 still holds the island and its people under the "plenary powers" of the U.S. Congress, without proper representation in said Congress, without Presidential vote, and without the freedom to trade internationally. Still, this Commonwealth instituted a new period in Puerto Rican history. "*Un parque para cada pueblo*" was another piece in a larger puzzle of industrialization that helped the PPD and its leadership institute changes in an attempt to uplift Puerto Ricans from the shadows of colonialism.

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Notes

- ¹ Two significant exceptions are John MacAloon's "*La pitada Olímpica*," 1984, Roberta Park's "Forget About that Pile of Papers," 2003 and "From *la bomba* to *béisbol*," 2011. Additionally worth mentioning are Geral Gems, "Sport and the Restoration of Pride in Puerto Rico," 2006, and Félix Huertas González, *Deporte e identidad*, 2006.
- ² Probably the most populist element of the PPD reforms was the enforcement of a 500 acre limit, in place but ignored since 1900, to sugar companies, effectively braking up a powerful small group of U.S. foreign owned sugar companies. See Dietz, *The Economic History of Puerto Rico*, 1986, 150.
- ³ Here I refer to the development of cultural nationalism under a colonial structure, rather than political nationalism under political independence. See Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move*, 2002; Hutchinson, "Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration," 1994.
- ⁴ Here I refer to José Trías Monge's description of Puerto Rico as the "oldest colony in the world" (Trías Monge 1997).
- ⁵ For a study of the meanings of modern sports see Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 2004. Although the book was first published in 1978, the 2004 edition addresses the multiple critiques the book has received since.
- ⁶ I want to thank Mr. Benjamín Lúgaro Torres for providing me invaluable data from his personal historical collection about sports in Ponce, including data about Monagas and Ponce High School athletics.
- ⁷ The role of the YMCA in the development of sport in Puerto Rico, and in its relation with religious Americanization and imperialism extends beyond the scope of this paper and will be addressed in an upcoming publication by this author.
- ⁸ Ubarri, *El deporte ayer y hoy*, 1989.

- ⁹ Nieves Mora, *Personal interview*, 2009.
- ¹⁰ Letter sent to Honorable Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, May 1, 1942. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 238, 190, Archivo General de Puerto Rico (hereafter AGPR).
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ¹² “Muñoz Rivera Park Commission and Service of Parks and Recreation Annual Report.” In Report of the Commissioner of the Interior of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1943 to the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico. Insular Procurement Office Printing Division. San Juan, P.R., 1943, 92.
- ¹³ Annual Report of the War Emergency Program to the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico and the Insular Emergency Council for the Fiscal Year, 1943-1944, 8.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ¹⁵ San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 25, 1940, Administrative Bulletin No. 661. By the Acting Governor of Puerto Rico, A Proclamation. Box No. 963, RG 126, Office of Territories Classified Files, 1907-1951, File No. 9887 Recreation and Sports, General, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA).
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Letter to The Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 30, 1940. Box No. 963, RG 126, Office of Territories Classified Files, 1907-1951, File No. 9887 Recreation and Sports, General, NARA.
- ¹⁸ *El Mundo*, “Carta Fundamental Unión Deportiva Interamericana,” March 22, 1944, 7, 10.
- ¹⁹ “hombre nuestro, muy nuestro.” Letter dated October 10, 1941 to Sr. Luis Muñoz Marín. Sección IV, Luis Muñoz Marín, Presidente del Senado. Serie 3. Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín (hereafter AFLMM).
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, “que se cumpla fielmente todo aquello que al pueblo se ofreció en la campaña pre-electoral.”
- ²¹ Telegraph dated October 16, 1944 sent to Sr. Julio Enrique Monagas. Sección IV, Luis Muñoz Marín, Presidente del Senado. Serie 3. AFLMM.
- ²² Memorandum dated September, 23 1944 sent to Los Jefes Populares de Departamentos. Sección IV, Luis Muñoz Marín, Presidente del Senado. Serie 3. AFLMM.

- ²³ Memorandum dated July 31, 1944 to Hon. Luis Muñoz Marín. Sección IV, Luis Muñoz Marín, Presidente del Senado. Serie 3. AFLMM.
- ²⁴ Law No. 46, page 1. Box No. 963, RG 126, Office of Territories Classified Files, 1907-1951, File No. 9887 Recreation and Sports, General, NARA.
- ²⁵ Here I refer to Claudio Lomnitz's theory of national identity, in which the nation is better seen as one by the attachments of different groups of people from different social classes creating a sort of dependence on each other. In the Puerto Rican case, the populist project that became known as "*Un parque para cada pueblo*" created a dependence between the ruling party *Partido Popular Democrático* and the lower classes by way of organizing, providing, and building athletic parks. On the one hand the people needed the government to provide the parks, and on the other the PPD needed the support and votes of the people.
- ²⁶ Muñoz Rivera Park Commission and Service of Parks and Recreation Annual Report, 1942-1943, 92. In Report of the Commissioner of the Interior of Puerto Rico For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1943 to the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico. 1943.
- ²⁷ Cross Reference dated July 2, 1943. "Post-war plans under preparations of the Insular Government. Box No. 963, RG 126, Office of Territories Classified Files, 1907-1951, File No. 9887 Recreation and Sports, General, NARA.
- ²⁸ Act No. 206, *Acts of the Second Regular Session of the Fifteenth Legislature of Porto Rico*, 1942, 1046-1048, Biblioteca Legislativa de Puerto Rico Tomás Bonilla Feliciano.
- ²⁹ It should be noted that Puerto Ricans had been migrating and establishing their communities in the U.S. since early in the twentieth century (Duany 2002)
- ³⁰ *El Mundo*, "La falta de campos de juegos en Puerto Rico," September 20, 1944.
- ³¹ *El Mundo*, "Nueve Millones pide Monagas para proyectos de recreación," May 29, 1945, 9. On the conference see Wilbur et al. *White House Conference on Child Health and Protection*, 1931.
- ³² Breckinridge, Henry. 1931. Recreation and Physical Education. In Ray Wilbur, L.; H.E. Barnard; Katherine Glover, and Winifred Moses, editors. *White House Conference on Child Health and*

Protection. New York, Century Co., 215-230.

- ³³ Ibid., “abandonados a su propia suerte”
- ³⁴ *Report of the Commissioner of the Interior of Puerto Rico for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1944 to the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico*. San Juan, P.R.: Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1945, 97-100.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable Blanton Winship*. San Juan, P.R.: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1936, 111.
- ³⁷ *Thirty-Eight Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable Blanton Winship*. San Juan, P.R.: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1938, 64.
- ³⁸ *El Mundo*, “Gobierno comienza en julio 1 construcción de parques para ampliar facilidades de recreo,” 25 May 1945, 9.
- ³⁹ *Fortieth Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable William D. Leahy*. San Juan, P.R.: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1940, 68, 69.
- ⁴⁰ *Forty-Second Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable Rexford G. Tugwell*. San Juan, P.R.: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1943, 80.
- ⁴¹ *Proposed Annual Budget for 1945-1946. Budget A for Operating Expenses in Detail as Submitted to the Legislature of Puerto Rico by the Governor of Puerto Rico*. La Fortaleza, Puerto Rico. April 4, 1945, 2.
- ⁴² *Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable Rexford G. Tugwell*. San Juan, P.R.: Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1947, 80.
- ⁴³ *Presupuesto Modelo del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico para el año económico de 1953-1954 según sometido a la Asamblea Legislativa de Puerto Rico por el Gobernador del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico*. San Juan, P.R. 1953, 150; *Resumen General Estadístico del Presupuesto. Presupuesto Modelo año fiscal de 1956 según sometido a la Asamblea Legislativa de Puerto Rico por el Gobernador del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico*. San Juan, P.R. 1955, XXVIII.
- ⁴⁴ *Thirty-Seven Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable Blanton Winship*. San Juan, P.R. Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1937, 50.

- ⁴⁵ *Forty-Eight Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Hon. Jesús T. Piñero for the Fiscal Year 1947-1948*. San Juan, P.R. Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1949, 135.
- ⁴⁶ *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable Blanton Winship*. San Juan, P.R. Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1935, 101.
- ⁴⁷ *Forty Fifth Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico Honorable Rexford G. Tugwell*. San Juan, P.R.: Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1945, 60.
- ⁴⁸ *Forty Sixth Annual Report*, 79.
- ⁴⁹ *Forty Third Annual Report of the Governor Honorable Rexford G. Tugwell*. San Juan, P.R.: Insular Procurement Office, Printing Division, 1944, 37.
- ⁵⁰ *Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico, Honorable Rexford G. Tugwell, 1944*. San Juan, P.R.: Oficina Insular de Compras, División de Imprenta, 1945, 54; *Forty-Fifth Annual Report*, 98.
- ⁵¹ *Forty Fourth Annual Report*, 20.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 44.
- ⁵³ *Annual Report of the Puerto Rico Planning, Urbanizing and Zoning Board Submitted to the Governor of Puerto Rico, fiscal year 1942-1943*. San Juan, P.R.: Service Office of the Government of the Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1944, 13.
- ⁵⁴ *Second Annual Report of the Puerto Rico Planning, Urbanizing and Zoning Board Submitted to the Governor of Puerto Rico, fiscal year 1943-1944*. San Juan, P.R.: Service Office of the Government of the Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1945, 13.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.
- ⁵⁶ *Annual Report of the War Emergency Program to the Hon. Governor of Puerto Rico and the Insular Emergency Council for the Fiscal Year 1945-1946*. San Juan, P.R. Service Office of the Government of Puerto Rico, Printing Division, 1947, 18.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.
- ⁵⁸ Seda, José. "Seda afirma que la Isla no ha progresado en varios deportes." *El Mundo*, September, 1945.
- ⁵⁹ Torregrosa, Felicio. "Puerto Rico tiene aún problemas que precisa resolver rápidamente." *El Mundo*, October 17, 1946.

- ⁶⁰ *Forty Fifth Annual Report*, 6.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ⁶² *El Mundo*, “Nueve Millones pide Monagas para proyectos de recreación,” May 29, 1945, 9. “para el obrero portorriqueño a fin de que, en sus ratos de ocio, pueda utilizar su tiempo libre en la práctica de deportes al aire libre y recreo instructivo que lo mantenga en una perfecta actitud mental de placidez que habrá de proporcionarle mayor bienestar en sus condiciones naturales de vida”.
- ⁶³ Lutz, Antonio. “Rosario señala auge deportivo en Puerto Rico.” *El Mundo*, September 20, 1948.
- ⁶⁴ *Annual Report of the Public Amusements and Park Commission* dated November 18, 1948. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 828, 190, AGPR.
- ⁶⁵ Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 630, 190, AGPR.
- ⁶⁶ Villaronga, 2010. *Constructing Muñocismo*, 2010, 181.
- ⁶⁷ “Deseamos que nuestra urgente necesidad de que se nos provea un parque de recreo en este barrio. En el poblado estación y sus alrededores hay un promedio de 125 o más casas con 1,200 o más habitantes entre los que figuran de 400 a 450 niños que no gozan de ninguna oportunidad de diversión ni de un sitio siquiera donde reunirse a hacer ejercicios al aire libre y dedicarse a juegos para su desarrollo físico y mental. La mayoría de los habitantes de este barrio hemos dado nuestro entusiasta y decidido respaldo al actual programa de Gobierno que tan maravillosamente usted dirige, (de esto pueden ser testigos la actual Administración Municipal de este pueblo de Lajas) y por lo tanto elevamos nuestra humilde petición hacia usted.” Letter dated June 14, 1950 to Hon. Luis Muñoz Marín, Gobernador de Puerto Rico. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 1881, 273.2 Construcción de., AGPR.
- ⁶⁸ Marqués, “Monagas esbozó proyectos para ciudad Arecibo: Presidente CPR asegura Arecibo tendrá parque atlético y un gimnasio.” *El Mundo*, October 18, 1947. “tensión y el manifiesto rencor de esta comunidad hacia la Comisión de Recreo y Deportes y hacia el Gobierno Insular.”
- ⁶⁹ Letter dated May 10, 1949 from Luis Laboy to Leonardo Martínez. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 1881, 273. Recreational Facilities and Equipment, Archivo General de Puerto Rico.
- ⁷⁰ Letter dated October 1, 1949 from Gerardo Quiñones to Luis Muñoz

- Marín. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 1881, 273. Recreational Facilities and Equipment, Archivo General de Puerto Rico.
- ⁷¹ Letter dated August 2, 1950 from Carmelo Aponte to Luis Laboy. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 1881, 273. Recreational Facilities and Equipment, Archivo General de Puerto Rico.
- ⁷² Letter dated July 11, 1950 from Nicolás Cancel to Luis Muñoz Marín. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 1881, 273. Recreational Facilities and Equipment, Archivo General de Puerto Rico.
- ⁷³ Letter dated September 30, 1951 from Francisco “illegible” Rivera to Inés M. Mendoza de Muñoz Marín. Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Tarea 96-20, Caja 1881, 273. Recreational Facilities and Equipment, Archivo General de Puerto Rico.
- ⁷⁴ Letter dated February 14, 1947 from José Echevarría to Harry S. Truman. Box No. 963, RG 126, Office of Territories Classified Files, 1907-1951, File No. 9887 Recreation and Sports, General, National Archives and Records Administration.
- ⁷⁵ Letter dated October 16, 1947 from Isabel E. Arroyo and Mercedes Arias to Mrs. Harry S. Truman. Box No.963, RG 126, Office of Territories Classified Files, 1907-1951, File No. 9887 Recreation and Sports, General, National Archives and Records Administration.
- ⁷⁶ See Bolívar Fresnada, *Guerra, banca y desarrollo*, 2011, chapter 2. Moreover, although centralization was part of the modernization of sport, it was also seen, especially in the 1950s, as undemocratic and communist, as one of Monagas’s main critiques, Emilio Huyke, argued. Huyke, Emilio E. “Los Deportes en el Mundo: Señor Gobernador”, *El Mundo*, November 7, 1956.
- ⁷⁷ *El Mundo*, “Homenaje a J.E. Monagas es el 24 de junio: Será un reconocimiento a labor desplegada por Comisionado Deportes”. May 21, 1948.
- ⁷⁸ *El Mundo*, “Monagas dice no aceptará el homenaje”. May 21, 1948.
- ⁷⁹ *El Mundo*, “Un premio para Comisionado Monagas” October 18, 1948. “que más ha contribuido al fomento deportivo en Puerto Rico.”
- ⁸⁰ *El Mundo*, December 22, 1949, 19.
- ⁸¹ *El Mundo*, “Nombran Monagas Catedrático Honorario de la

Universidad”. May 11, 1949, 2; *El Mundo*, “Rector le hace nombramiento J.E. Monagas: Le ha solicitado siga cooperando Programa Deportivo de la UPR”. July 28, 1950.

⁸² *El Mundo*. “Leones hacen reconocimiento de labor Comisionado Monagas”. March 4, 1949, 5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ “Reciba el testimonio de mi más sincero reconocimiento por la magnífica ayuda aportada por [ti] en esta campaña a la gran causa que defendemos”. *El Mundo*, “Muñoz Felicita Monagas,” November 13, 1948, 10.

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