

MIGUEL FIGUEROA Y MIRANDA

HISTORY
OF THE

AGRUPACION
CATOLICA
UNIVERSITARIA
1931 - 1956



The life of Miguel Figueroa y Miranda took a very particular turn at age 27. He came in contact with Jesuit priest Felipe Rey de Castro, one of the prime movers behind the foundation of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria (ACU), one of the most important lay institutions organized by the Catholic Church in Cuba during the 20th century. From that encounter sprung Figueroa y Miranda's resolution to do the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and, afterward, to join the "Agrupación." The importance of these decisions arises from the fact that they will become true north in the life of Miguel Figueroa y Miranda. Later, when writing his memoirs regarding his stay in Rome and the Vatican, he will publicly acclaim this phenomenon, affirming that he had been educated on the "Rules to feel with the Church" and that his "orthodoxy" was formed in the "Spiritual Exercises." The worldview and life of Miguel Figueroa y Miranda passes, before all else, through the prism of his Catholic formation that, in turn, is informed by his ties to the ACU.



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by Miguel Figueroa

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Rev. Fr. FELIPE REY DE CASTRO, S.J.

Founder of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria

1889-1952

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

MT 13:31-32

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DEDICATION

Ceaselessly, for twenty-five years, without resting or wavering, hundreds of men bent on reaching an ideal have used the utmost of their intelligence, energy, hope, and love to build the Agrupación. He that arrives at it now finds it fully grown and complete and ready to start the shiniest period of its history. But since this effort is a living body in full development, in constant evolution, the newly arrived, if he wants to be a part of it, needs to join the torrent of work and sacrifice that, from its onset, flows ever more potently and mightily towards the end that God has identified. And he must unite his effort to those of others until they are all one, so that from the present, its roots may be in contact with the past, while its branches project to the future.

For the many who do not know it well enough and may not be fully aware that one of the greatest blessings granted by the Lord is to be called to the Agrupación Católica Universitaria and, hence, may fail to weigh properly the unmeasurable value of the gift granted them by Divine Providence, for them I write this history as an instrument of formation with the expectation of motivating them to carry through on the mission that has been given them, and with the aim of getting them to commit fully to it so that, as St. Ignatius says, "love is communication, and that through knowledge of the Agrupación may come to love it, and hence be defenseless against the impulse toward apostolates of love."

Therefore, to we dedicate this book to all its members, but most specially to postulants and aspirants of the Agrupación, with the desire to infuse the spirit that animates it, so that they may commit fully to the task of realizing its end and set upon the reconquest of

Cuba for Christ, laboring to attain said conquest by influencing the mind of our people and reorienting it towards God.

M. F. M.

THE GENESIS OF THE ACU

Dr. Juan A. Rubio Padilla

The new Colegio de Belén¹ opened for the first time in the beginning of September 1925. For those of us that lived for some years in the big old house on Compostela, it seemed like a dream. We were amazed by the open air, the sunlight in its wide open spaces, the majesty of its enormous cloisters and the beauty of its fields.

Among its novelties was found its Prefect: Fr. Felipe Rey de Castro. His affable countenance and forthright manner won us over from the start. But a question came to our lips at once: Could such a young, smiley, and simple man make a good Prefect?

Accustomed to confusing coercive rigor for discipline, brought up in an environment of distrustful vigilance and hard and fast rules, we could not imagine authority as anything other than quick and firm reproaches and punishments dispensed upon us.

That little Galician priest, charismatic, joyful, and simple, was the antithesis of the classical Prefect.

It took us just a few days to overcome our bias! Within a week of the start of classes, Fr. Rey kicked off a series of chats with me that my memory and heart will never forget. The first one was at the Music Hall and lasted over two hours. He already had a plan for us! He talked to me about our problems as young adults and about our educational shortcomings, of which the gravest was our scanty willpower, result of discipline based on excessive oversight and coercion and not on the voluntary fulfillment of our freely accepted

duties. To meet an obligation in order to avoid the stick requires only fear, not willpower. And willpower, like physical strength, is achieved through exercise.

He wanted us to develop our willpower by teaching us to wield it on personal decisions about our duties. But the ideal duty to serve, the program to pursue, the behavior pattern to follow had to come to us from Christ, and the fire from the cauldron of willpower could only come through Grace.

How surprisingly easily he simplified the puzzle of our contorted, intransigent, and windblown lives into a simple scheme: to strengthen our willpower with the gift of Grace, in order to freely fulfill our personal obligations.

In my judgment, these few words express Fr. Rey's plan for all of us, for the full length of our tutelage by him.

What, then, were our personal obligations? To study. And from the onset he offered us the opportunity to study, not under threat, but through our willpower, for the fulfillment of our obligations, free of oversight.

How were we to garner the gift of Grace in support of our plan of study? By exercising it in a fight against personal sins. And just like that, almost imperceptibly, out of those first chats with Fr. Rey, our youth was made crystal clear to us: chastity and studies.

This was the cornerstone of the apostolate of Fr. Rey in Cuba — to define ideals capable of enthraling the youth of many generations of Cubans. But it was only the first stone. The others followed very quickly.

With what persuasiveness, overwhelming impetus and celestial light that Apostle of Christ spoke to us! He took possession of our souls in the same quick and simple way that Christ did with his disciples in evangelical times. Everything else ensued in a manner of days. I was

among the high school seniors. And one after another we became part of the ranks of the small army with whom he fought the early battles of a triumphant war that had its most difficult reversal at midday on February 12, 1952, but which would continue until the end of time.

With the seniors of that memorable school year of 1925-1926 he drafted the first plan that, essentially and for all practical purposes, is the ACU's plan: He formed our free will as St. Ignatius taught; he taught us to study like men; to place in our hearts the heroic ideal of chastity and, through the Spiritual Exercises, the ascetic norms and spiritual techniques that best prepared us for success. Those, his first, Spiritual Exercises in Cuba, were glorious! What saintly envy must have been felt towards those of us privileged enough to receive the first fruits of that Apostle of God! This was the second major cornerstone for the congregation's foundation: The Spiritual Exercises.

We graduated from Belén brimming with the ideal and spirit for the Christian battle ahead. But up until then it was just preparation. Now would begin the most difficult part. Now he would commence dealing for the first time with Cuban university students. Now would start the grand duel of Fr. Rey de Castro with the Cuban milieu of that time. The battlefields were defined by the two banners of the classical meditation.



First Exercises of the Group of Catholic University students, under the direction of Fr. Rey, during Holy Week in 1927. Of the entire group, only three remain in the A.C.U.: J. M. Rouco, J. A. Rubio, and the current Fr. Chisholm.

It was in this, our first year at the University of Havana, 1926-27, that Fr. Rey's plan suffered baptism by fire from a hostilely belligerent reality that engulfed us from all sides but one — heaven above. Everything conspired against us; enemies of Christ, surely! But it wasn't them alone. It was everything! Lack of understanding, indifference, and a most hostile environment that reached levels I cannot bring myself to mention. And that glorious stalwart Priest clung like St. Ignatius to Christ's banner and committed himself blindly to his work, his apostolate, and his battle.

This was, without doubt, the most difficult period in the gestation of the ACU. It was a year of trials not only for the plan itself, but also for the most important character of the burgeoning Agrupación: Fr.

Rey himself, against wind and tide, remained steadfast on the tiller, assured that the Lord slept safely on the deck of the ship.

During our first year at the university, we kept attending Mass at 9 a.m. every Sunday, celebrated by Fr. Rey himself in the Chapel of Belén. Rouco and I helped out. Almost all of the graduates of that celebrated senior year were there. We went to Communion and later shared breakfast in the same spirit as ACU's Sunday breakfasts, and on Easter Week 1927 we witnessed the first public miracle — we locked ourselves up in Belén for three days to do the first Spiritual Exercises ever done for university students in Cuba.

Some Belén parents had predicted a colossal failure for Fr. Rey. We had planned the Exercises, and 25 had promised to participate. During the morning of the first night of Exercises, when Fr. Rey prepared, with enthusiasm, the Chapel, the dormitories, the dining room, etc., he received prudent counsel to prepare for the worst because "that" had been attempted a few times before and had always been a total failure. He was even forewarned that, quite possibly, no one would show up. It was a war of nerves capable of breaking anyone down.

I was entrusted not to trust individual initiative, and in order to buttress weak flanks, doubts, and late arrivals, I took it upon myself to pick up nearly everyone at their respective homes. When it was time to pray the Our Father at the first dinner there were 22 out of the 25 of us, for only 3 had failed to show. The encounter was victorious along every battle line!

Everything else was the work of that most inspired word of our Apostle. The Exercises were a phenomenal success.

It was the last step needed to complete the plan and it had been attained. The university students were not only able to participate in Mass on Sundays, to attain Grace through practice of the Sacraments, and to keep ourselves united around our Spiritual

Father, but also knew how to obediently adhere to the complete plan that he had laid out for us. The most difficult and essential part of this plan was the commitment to do the Spiritual Exercises yearly.

The daily efforts for a year-and-a-half full of difficulties and stumbles were turning into reality. The ACU had ceased being a pipe-dream, a project, an ideal. Like a poor newborn, we had neither name, nor home, nor properties, nor visits from a social chronicler, but we were alive and all else would come in due time.

The basic and the important had been attained. The house close to the University of Havana, by then already planned, the hymn, the banner, the bylaws and everything else were important, but not essential. The essential had been accomplished. Fr. Rey had his Catholic university student sodality.

But the joy lasted a scant few months. The truly inscrutable designs of Providence called for the transfer of Fr. Rey back to Spain in the summer of 1927, and I thought all was lost. He did not see it that way. He deemed the victories achieved by those historic Spiritual Exercises so significant, that in spite of the realities that dictated his departure, he continued on with blind faith in the survival of past efforts.

Days later, when I went to pier San Francisco to bid goodbye to Fr. Rey who departed apparently "for good," upon receiving from his own lips the order to look after his group, to keep it together, to follow his basic rules, to continue the fight for the ideals he had taught us, and to not surrender the congregational banner now alive and fluttering in our souls, I felt overwhelmed and declared myself incapable and impotent for the task at hand.

Fr. Rey told me with evangelical simplicity, so common to those who have a relationship with Christ: I will continue to be your Director from Spain, and all my prayers will be for all of you, but the true

Leader and Teacher will remain with you and cannot falter. If you do not falter, if none of you falter, He will not falter!

Fr. Rey knew how to fill us with an ocean of Hope and Faith! I departed from pier San Francisco desolated by his absence, but I also left there with the courage and faith that allowed me to fight and follow Fr. Rey's order. We did not falter, and He did not falter.

Fr. Rey's absence lasted three-and-a-half years and his order on pier San Francisco weighed on my shoulders and my dreams. The group survived. Nevertheless, humans after all, with the absence of our Apostle many faltered, but other new graduates came to take their places. The first Exercises following his departure were done not by 22, as was the case the first time, but by 35 who did not miss a single Exercises afterward.

I cannot resist the temptation to include some paragraphs from selected correspondence I penned to inform Fr. Rey on how his apostolate was progressing here.

"Here we are, abandoned, foundations lain by you for the beautiful building you planned. And the new men that come each year, destined to erect the structure, are dispersing aimlessly or worse, scared away by the misunderstood discipline of the last year at the Colegio de Belén. Once apart, without direction on how to avoid sin, and without a helping hand after the fall, they drift further apart in spite of the strong ties of unity that you used to bring us together in our senior year and in the first Spiritual Exercises for university students.

Perhaps God will place very big holes along your way that you will be able to fill; but it is hard to believe that they would be bigger than the one here in Havana. Yet, you might not come back. Better not to think about it, and may God want you back here very soon."

Recalling some other Exercises:

“Once March rolled around, Fr. Maturino and I started to think about the Spiritual Exercises and the difficulties we would have to overcome.

The regrouping was very difficult to achieve due to the late date (April 13), the undisciplined candidates that we had to reject, the small inventory of rooms — no more than 35 — and, most of all, due to the poor disposition of many people, etc., etc. Here you may add all the difficulties you can imagine, atop the enmity towards those at the university wanting closer ties to the Colegio de Belén. When everything was ready, the final exercitant list drafted, and I started to give thanks to God for having helped me to bring about the session of Exercises, I got a call from Fr. Maturino telling me...”

Another paragraph:

“Each time they want to talk to me about this, I offer the same answer: While we lack a priest capable of working “this,” we will not achieve anything. Here being capable means many of the things that you know and have, like skills and goodwill. Many might have goodwill, but only you have the skills.

Some have put forth initiatives to bring you back one way or another. And there is one initiative that, absent your objection, we will carry through on, and it is to write to the Superior General asking for your transfer to Havana, signed by 200 or more graduates. I volunteer to collect the signatures.

I discussed the matter with Fr. Carvajal, and although he understood me, or at least he said that he understood me, he also said that at that time all our initiatives to bring you back to Cuba were impossible, as you were already in the Prefecture of Gijón, and such midterm changes were very difficult to do. He promised to look after us and to do all possible within his means on our behalf.

Do not think for a minute that the seed you planted in Cuba failed to germinate, for it was not just within me that your path left footprints

through our souls, but within many others too. As for me, I assure you they were the most transcendental footprints of my entire life, for your guidance during my senior year at Colegio de Belén and my first year at the university marked a definitive course in my life on a path that I believe to be the only one that takes us to a true end.”

The final Exercises before the return of Fr. Rey were done on Holy Week of 1930. The discussion with Fr. Carvajal that had left me with little enthusiasm turned out to be providential.

In spite of the disruption resulting from a change of Prefect of Gijón once classes were underway, on the very day that the Provincial arrived in Spain he ordered Fr. Rey to return to Cuba to once again lead the apostolate with university students. His return to Cuba was delayed for a few months in order for him to visit similar institutions in France, Germany, etc.

In October 1930, when our Director received the order to return to Cuba and lead us, unavoidable personal duties led to my persecution, imprisonment and later exile.

When Fr. Rey returned, I was not able to welcome him at pier San Francisco, because I was imprisoned. He visited me the following day at Castillo del Príncipe. It was on the morning of April 11, 1931.

Once back in charge of his university apostolate, he took up his tasks immediately, offering the first session of Exercises in which I was not involved. The rest is contemporary history told and retold a hundred times over, and now well known. The ACU had been saved!

How I reminisced on that afternoon of February 13 while standing over the marble lapidary interposed between us, “definitively” it seemed, about that enlightening exchange on pier San Francisco between the greatest apostle to ever live among Cubans and the brokenhearted adolescent who believed that all had come to an end forever. I thought about your final words of parting, just like those of the first goodbye, dropped from heaven like divine rain — I will

continue to be your director from heaven and all my prayers will be for you, but the true Leader and Teacher will remain with you and cannot falter. If you do not falter, if none of you falter, He will not falter.

However, it was no longer my duty to assume the previous responsibilities. We now counted on ample and high values, as well as men to shoulder the responsibility of looking after the ACU. The Society of Jesus itself, absent from pier San Francisco that sad morning, now roared like a lioness to defend its cubs; this from the very lips of Fr. Calvo.

Heartbroken due to the apparent "definitive" absence, I sometimes feel as I did that morning on pier San Francisco. The tempest has hit and the gravest of conflicts thrashes against the weakened sides of my ship. My flesh weakened occasionally by the sting of adversity but, as always, the more violent the whirlwind and the more miserable I feel my tendency to succumb, the more I embrace the golden rule that Fr. Rey taught me at a very difficult time and that in so many times of desolation has been my strength and my victory. If you do not falter, He will not falter.

And He never falters!

I

THE FOUNDING

It is difficult for those born after 1931 to understand the religious situation of the country before that time, due to the radical transformation effected on Cuban Catholicism and in the speed with which it occurred.

The origins of such state of things can be found in 1802 when Bishop Espada, at the onset of his disastrous administration of the Archdiocese of Havana, that at the time encompassed the western half of the Island, swept away, like one of our tropical storms, all the Catholic tradition created over 300 years of steady practice, and placed men like himself in key positions of the Curia during the long term of his episcopate that, informed by the Encyclopedia and the doctrine of Pistoya, infiltrated the cold venom of laical regalism into the bloodstream of our Church, capable of turning a priest into a functionary of the State, and of totally sapping popular religion of its spiritual content. Men burdened with the horrible task of facilitating, through their creed, and contributing, through their positions, to the rigorous application in Cuba of the laws of exclaustation decreed by the liberal government of Spain, thus striking a grave blow to Cuban Catholicism that the rest of Latin American countries were able to avert because they were already independent.

All these circumstances, plus the growing wave of liberal doctrines they accepted rather than warded off, and that little by little eliminated from popular thinking supernatural causes, brought about as a natural outcome of the destruction of the previous propitious

environment a precipitous decline in Cuban religious vocations and a consequent need to replace them with Spanish priests that, in the long run, accustomed people to the idea that local vocations were unnecessary, for they would come from abroad, and to see him as an alien, being void of ties with the family or society, ignorant of local customs, views, and interests, confined within the walls of the parish church, without additional ties to parishioners beyond the administration of sacraments, when requested.

This situation would have been a great shame in any country, but in Cuba it was even worse because it had local clergy from both parishes and religious orders that, until the 19th century, made illustrious history with regard to beneficence, demagoguery, oratory, science, and works of mercy, and was a powerful force in the formation of our nation and our culture.

The wars of independence widened the rift between the Spanish clergy and the Cuban people and when these wars ended came to shine a light on the inadequacies of the system, the clumsy conduct of the Bishops of Cuba, who, blinded by a mistaken concept of fidelity born out of the institution of Patronage, decided to return to the Iberian Peninsula, as did a large portion of the pastors along with colonial authorities, leaving the Church in Cuba leaderless and abandoned, which God, and not the government, had commended unto them.

The enemies of the Church have chosen to tie her to the colonial Spanish empire, in juxtaposition to the separatist spirit found in other countries of the Americas, ignoring or maliciously overlooking the fact that, due to the Patronage to which the Church had resigned itself, the Spanish clergy of the 19th century did not properly represent the interests of the Universal Church beyond the borders of the Iberian Peninsula; and that it was precisely the independence of those countries, deed that they also wish to portray as emancipation from what they call Papal power, that properly reestablished the ties that should exist between them and the

Center of the Church, ties that the Patronage abrogated on behalf of the Spanish Crown.

Proof of that may be found in the famous appointment of Venezuelan bishops at the request of Bolivar, a result of the liberation of that territory that led to Spain severing diplomatic ties with the Holy See.

Hence, independence was the best thing to happen to Cuban Catholicism, for with the abrogation of the institution of Patronage² in our country came the restoration of the proper standing of our Church before the Pontiff, allowing it to garner sap straight from the tree trunk, directly and without any debilitating intermediation, enabling a future where new clergy could be free of commitments beyond those proper to their sacred ministry.

Unfortunately for us, the blow struck against Cuba's religious sentiment by the laical regal Patronage was so hard that the Church was not able to bounce back quickly; and what is worse, the San Carlos Seminary was closed from 1895 to 1905, so that the number of Cuban priests was so small that it was necessary to continue to import clergy that, albeit, now rid of commitments to its government, except for some notable exceptions lacked understanding, was at times incompetent, and, far from overcoming the calamity rather deepened it during the first years of the Republic, accentuating the experience of isolation that with the passage of time became a given peacefully accepted by both sides.

Given this state of affairs, religious education took refuge in Catholic schools, which lacking public funding necessarily had to charge tuition and, in spite of the free schools they were able to offer, could not reach all the people. This placed religious education out of the reach of most of those practically abandoned in that area, and led to the still prevalent Cuban phenomenon that fervor for and practice of Catholicism be directly related to one's cultural, economic, and social status.

It is obvious that propagation of the faith would be hindered by such conditions, which hinder a proper environment for the spiritual life, thus bringing about a weakening of customs that would in turn impede the birth of new vocations, thus closing the vicious circle.

In such state of spiritual indigence is found the reason for fierce egotism, rude materialism and the absence of moral sense that had been penetrating and lowering our standards.

Naturally, taking advantage of propitious circumstances, other factors cooperated to bring about such lamentable outcomes.

As may be supposed, a weakened Catholicism, superficial and without prestige, could not counteract the effect of liberal ideas, the source of all those ills that, having inspired the thought of our intellectuals during the previous century had now come, just when they had begun to lose credibility in the eyes of science, to inform all the activities of our society along with, to round out the picture, a disposition ever more distant from a spiritual and transcendental life that comes to us from the United States.

It should not be surprising, then, that the general attitude concerning religion was one of absolute indifference, with occasional occurrences of open hostility, a shortcoming due, more than anything else, to a shrinking Church with scant influence on the society of the time.

This explains how the law in favor of divorce, which everywhere it passed met with very strong resistance, was approved in Cuba in 1918 with only minor protest from the ecclesiastical authorities.

If it is true, as has been said, that men from monied classes, generally educated in Catholic schools, practiced less and less after graduation for lack of a propitious environment, until they stopped practicing altogether, it can also be said that an environment missing from religious associations, that with very rare exceptions dedicated themselves to syrupy piety and were strangers to apostolic action of

any kind, more of a refuge for “goody-goodies” that might have been earning eternal glory for themselves but were far from doing anything to help their brothers and sisters, contributed much to distance men of energetic temperament from church.

In summary, religious practice had been exclusively left for women. It was as if men did not have souls to save or were not obliged to follow the same commandments as women: never mind that, while women are the center of moral life in a family, it is men that set the spiritual level of the people. The behavior of the Catholic Cuban man could be described by paraphrasing St. Augustine by saying that he respected the Church but did what he wanted.

Likewise, it follows that moral examples set by women in a family and by Catholic schools would evaporate during the most malleable age when there is the greatest need for direction, assistance, and counsel, when a decision is made regarding a vocation for life, and what is most grave: eternal salvation. For them, the only thing one could hope for was that Divine Mercy would grace them with a confession at the time of their death. And the priest patiently awaited that hour, impotent and discouraged, lacking economic means, losing ground daily, and breaking down amidst the apathy, cold shoulder, and disregard of others.

That moribund body called out for saving grace. Something to stop in its track the progress of decomposition, something that would firm up, illuminate, guide, and, most of all, would save our Catholicism, something laid out with intelligence and reason, put into effect with energy and tenacity, something that called for great sacrifice, unbreakable faith, total self-renunciation, and a truly cyclopean strength capable of shaking up an overwhelmed and materialistic society, making it wake up from its stupor and forcing it to take on the conquest of the kingdom of God.

And it was a Spanish priest, precisely from among that imported clergy, from religious orders which had and continue to have truly

eminent men totally committed to the sublime nature of their ministry that greatly served and are serving Cuba, without any malice, as it was amidst the Patronage that debilitated our secular clergy practically to the point of death, who saw the answer clearly and dedicated his life, his culture, his exceptional gifts, each and every one of his thoughts, and all the beating of his heart, to rebuild Cuban Catholicism from the ground up, to form educated Catholic men, stalwart and active; to recreate the necessary environment for Cuba to one day have a local clergy, supported by conscientious laypeople who know where they are going and how to get there, capable of developing efficient apostolic work. A providential man — Fr. Felipe Rey de Castro, S.J., who quite clearly came to complete the cycle started by Espada one hundred twenty-nine years earlier.

This is the veritable historical position and the importance of Fr. Rey and of his work, the Agrupación Católica Universitaria.

The problem to tackle was of such magnitude and the goal set so high, that only a man of his valor, spirituality, energy, and faith in God could consider tackling it.

The idea had been provided by Pius XI in "Quadragesimo Anno" — "That these whole classes of men may be brought back to Christ Whom they have denied, we must recruit and train from among them, themselves, auxiliary soldiers of the Church who know them well and their minds and wishes, and can reach their hearts with a tenderly brotherly love."

Fr. Rey discovered in those words, with true acuity, the remedy for the ills of Cuba and the exact way in which it had to be applied.

The source of the illness was to be found in the mind and heart of Cubans who had distanced themselves from God, so it was necessary, then, to form a group of select men, perfectly trained in religion and culture who, inspired by supernatural objectives, would

commit themselves to influence the ethos of the country in such a way that it would reorient itself toward that path that would bring it back to Him.

A group that could wield such great influence on society had to be found among intellectuals capable of successfully promoting their ideas through words, books, or articles, from newspapers, pulpit, cathedra, or pew; but given the state of affairs, in order to find the right men it was necessary to go upstream and move from professional to university student; but since by then these, too, would have absorbed the venom, he had to reach back to the very source where the waters had not yet been contaminated, and commence this work with a few high school students, resigning himself to slow and thankless labor, to later continue through the university years, in order to have an initial nucleus with which to start once they obtained their doctorates.

The approach taken by Fr. Rey, due to the nature of existing conditions, has been followed by the Agrupación since that time, adding on special characteristics and directing the formative tasks focused on students who are then called after graduation to put into practice the mission of the institution.

As did the sower of the parable of the mustard seed that Fr. Rey would so often apply to the institution he founded, he chose the smallest of seeds, a few senior high school students, to put in place, as he said, "grandiose plans for men who would have the enormous responsibility of engaging in great apostolic works."

It is possible that very few at the time knew of his plans and even fewer would believe that those adolescents could, one day, ferment the religious Cuban masses.

But he never doubted, and in 1925, when he approached the seniors of Colegio de Belén in order to start the apostolate that he would only abandon at the time of his death, he had already laid down his

plans and what he proposed to them, at least in broad strokes, of what the Agrupación Católica Universitaria later became, and the ideals of yesteryear are the same that it holds to this day.

Among those chosen, Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla captured the imagination of Fr. Rey completely and was the one to become closest to him and assimilate his ideals to such a degree that when misunderstandings were on the brink of upsetting plans and Father was obliged to return to Spain, Rubio was able to replace him and to keep the light he first lit burning for four years, and undertake the struggle alone without rest or discouragement until his return.

Persistent to a fault, Rubio would not stop calling on the Rector and Prefect of Colegio de Belén to beseech and even demand the return of Fr. Rey until finally in 1930, following a long conversation with Fr. Enrique Carvajal, at the time Vice-Provincial, from which he departed, as in previous occasions without hope of having made any progress, Fr. Carvajal, won over by the persuasive power particular to Rubio that few are able to resist, ordered Fr. Rey to leave behind Colegio de Gijón and research the top university organizations in Europe prior to returning to Cuba and continuing his apostolate.

That faith, that persistence, that energy of Rubio that served to enable the founding of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, make him, after Fr. Rey, deserving of the gratitude and admiration of all agrupados and also of the admiration and gratitude of Cuban Catholicism, to whom it owes, in part to his efforts, its vigorous resurgence in our time.

Fr. Rey was not able to return to Havana until March 3, 1931³. By that time, he had a very clear picture of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, down to the minutest detail, from its moniker, to the kind of influence it would have to exert in our future society. The project plans were so detailed that in the parting visit paid to his aunt, the Abbess of the Monastery of Benedictine Sisters in Cuntis-

Pontevedra, Spain, he described the future apostolate with such detail as if it were something already existing.

That explains why as soon as it was founded, it projected the feeling of something quite mature, and at the end of 1931, at ten months of age, it differs not at all from what it is today, though poorer, smaller, without its own house, but already underway and complete in all ways the Agrupación was born, like Minerva out from the head of Jupiter, out of the mind of Fr. Rey fully grown and sheathed with all its armaments.

His first action upon disembarking was to make contact with "los del cuarto" (the seniors), with whom he never broke off spiritually thanks to constant correspondence with Rubio during his entire absence, and Fr. Rey considered March 4, 1931, as the foundational day of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, as he so recorded officially during the December 15, 1940 session of the Board of Directors.

The Book of the Agrupación begins with the names of those first Agrupados, the so called "Promoción de la Anunciata⁴," previously consecrated in that earlier Marian Sodality that in light of the absence of its Director, Fr. Estevan Rivas, S.J., split from the old trunk to create a new one: Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla, Ricardo Chisholm Fernández, Ataulfo Fernández Llano, Angelberto Coro del Pozo, Cesar y Roberto Incera Soriano y Cesar Rey Rodriguez.

But this "Promoción de la Anunciata" is a tradition and was recreated by Fr. Rey years later when he inscribed all the names of the consecrated in the Book of the Agrupación. Those that formed the initial nucleus were not seven, but six, and not all met on the 4th, as the others joined in the course of the month of March. Chisholm was not a member of the Anunciata but, finding himself abroad when Fr. Rey inscribed his name, he was not able to correct the error. Luis Blanco is not listed among them even though he was part of the initial group, but the omission is understandable, as he was an

Agrupado for merely a month — he died on April 5, 1931. On the other hand, in just recognition of the work done during his absence, he added the name of Rubio at the top of the list, rightfully first among peers, even though he was not at the initial meeting and did not participate in some subsequent activities. He also placed Ataulfo Fernández Llano amidst the famous “Promoción,” one of his most valuable aides in the Agrupación from day one, who at the time was President of the University Youth of the Anunciata and did not come over to the new institution until some time later.

From a merely human point of view, there was not a worse point in time in our history to undertake that apostolate. It was a year of exacerbated passions, of tough struggle, of never before seen political and economic conditions in Cuba, of a shuttered University, of authorities on lookout for any student action, of polarized attention to all events that moved precipitously to violent resolution: it did not seem possible to find anyone capable of taking an interest in spiritual renewal or of being in a state of mind for lengthy formation with long term payoff or to acquire new candidates or to find areas of any kind to exercise the apostolate.

As if that were not enough, Rubio, the only one capable of uniting all these different interests, of keeping alive the embryonic Agrupación, who could now be a priceless participant, imprisoned at Prince’s Castle (“Castillo del Principe”) could not be of any assistance. It could be said that circumstances were all conspiring to squash the endeavor.

Yet, that was the precise moment God chose, when the storm was in full strength, a time of chaos, of confusion and skepticism, when all human resources were lacking, to show his power, to infuse the Agrupación’s faith in his plan for her, to bestow blind faith in his Divine Providence. As He did with the Apostles, he sent her on her way without gold, silver, or copper, backpacks, sandals, or walking sticks, so that it would never think that the victories He would attain in the future were its own victories.

The situation Fr. Rey found when he returned to Havana were quite different from that of 1927 when he left for Spain, but his determination to obey a divine plan kept him away from discouragement and moved him to adapt to the reality of the moment.

Lacking the support of Rubio he turned to Arnaldo Coro, heart of those early days of the Agrupación, who full of resolve went about reconvening the initial nucleus. With those as a starting point, Fr. Rey sent a missive to his old students on March 17, announcing his "return to these beloved Cuban beaches" and the "session of Exercises in Belén planned for the upcoming Holy Week," "in spite of multiple difficulties facing us now," in order to renew "not only our spirit, paramount objective of the Exercises, but also our old and extremely pleasant encounters that characteristically contributed to our mutual union, fraternity and wholesome joy during our first years at the University."

And he closed the communication by informing them that "the fact that I was destined by my superiors not only to return to Havana, but to explicitly return to my previous activities with you, bestows on me the consolation of being able to commit myself ENTIRELY and offer myself completely to you from this moment on."

No one thought it feasible for men to undergo Spiritual Exercises during such a tumultuous time. But Fr. Rey was resolute that if the Agrupación was to come to life, it should spring forth and solidify itself from these very Exercises, in order to absorb its spirit, so it become the very spirit of the institution.

That explains why, back in 1925, in his first attempt to create the Agrupación, he had directed himself to the Belén seniors and started with a Spiritual Exercises' retreat. And that is why the efforts of Rubio during his absence were focused on gathering the lost sheep, dispersed over the years, making it possible now to begin to labor on solid ground.

Father wanted the Spiritual Exercises to be the spinal column of the Agrupación, the mirror before which each one learned to know himself, the fire where the souls of the future leaders of the country were forged, the crucible that wiped them clean of scourges, the cornerstone on which the edifice of the new evangelization would rise, and the source that heroically moves the wills of men destined to lead the people to God.

Since his own will was unbreakable and sustained by Grace, the first session of Exercises of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria got underway on March 29, 1931, in spite of obstacles, and against wind and tide; and as if he were not satisfied enough with that feat, realized a mere twenty-three days after his return, he organized three more sessions for the Agrupación in that very year, April 2nd, October 9th and December 4th, making clear the foundations upon which he wanted to build.

II

THOUGHTS OF FR. REY REGARDING THE ACU

Fr. Rey thought that the Agrupación Católica Universitaria should follow the molds of the Society of Jesus, so concretely and conveniently appropriate to the objectives of the newly established association, found in the Common Rules of the Sodality of our Lady, and adhering to them in such a way that what he was founding would be nothing less than the complete realization of those very rules.

Unfortunately, at the time, those organizations, departing from the ends for which they were created, with the possible exception of the Anunciata and perhaps one or two others that performed very basic catechesis, were exclusively dedicated to works of piety.

This did not satisfy the requirements of Fr. Rey, who aspired to instill in the Agrupación the true end of Marian Sodalities, that of fighting brigades in the vanguard of a most solid Catholicism, inspired by medieval and knightly Ignatian ideals diametrically opposed to the selfish materialism of the Renaissance, so akin to that of our own age.

Towards that end and in order to attain the paramount objective of the sodalist, which is the same as of a Jesuit, one's personal sanctity and the salvation of others, an ideal that can be summarized in the phrase — to be a saint and to be an apostle — he wanted the

Agrupación to have the characteristics that defined Marian Sodalitys, which are order, balance, discipline, sacrifice, self-denial, a spirit of responsibility and service, audacity and courtesy, charity and action, at the time all but forgotten in the uninspiring gentrification of monthly meetings and general assemblies.

That is why, from day one, he always had in mind the model to follow, found in the first article of the General Admonitions of the Bylaws of the University Student Board, where it expressly states that lacking knowledge of the Common Rules of Marian Sodalitys and of what the Supreme Authority of the Church has stated about them one is incapable of fulfilling the duties of an agrupado and even less of a Director.

He was so clear in his thinking that at the start of the Agrupación when it had just a few members he did not hesitate to part with the few who were against constituting it as a Marian Sodality. And true to that end, twenty years after its founding, he continued to insist to the Board of Directors, who agreed to it on March 7, 1951, that twice a year, before Sunday Mass, the Common Rules would be read aloud so that agrupados would never forget them.

That resoluteness was so fruitful that when Pius XII described a Sodality in "Bis Saeculari," or in his address to Sodalists on January 21, 1945, or in the letter of 1950 to the Superior General, one would think that he drew his inspiration from the Agrupación Católica Universitaria of Havana, for in each of his postulates he does no more than confirm what Fr. Rey had wanted to do and was common practice by then.

So much so, that Fr. Juan Bautista Jansen, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, used the Agrupación as model, at first for the directors of homologous French organizations, and then for all Marian Sodalitys worldwide.

Nevertheless, the Agrupación is totally unique among Marian Sodalities, for, in order to find a solution to our problems, Fr. Rey understood the need to give a singular orientation to the institution he planned to create that, without departing one iota from the spirit or letter of the Common Rules, would be perfectly in tune with Cuba's particular situation and needs, and most efficient in pursuit of the chosen end, true north of the Agrupación's intentions, in order to ensure that the evangelizing doctrine, understood and accepted as one's own via the Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, be put into practice, thereby fulfilling man's ultimate end through personal perfection based on apostolic works performed by well-formed intellectuals, in order to reach influential positions of true spiritual leadership capable of saving the country.

This was, in brief, the thinking of the founder of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, who shaped the characteristics that distinguish its apostolate and instilled in its members uniform ways of life, core values, rules of conduct, criteria, and ideals.

To make this concept a reality in practice requires achievement of two objectives that are as pillars of the congregational conduct — the ultimate one, to serve God in the most perfect way possible, keeping Cuba as beneficiary, for that is the path marked by divine providence; the other, the more immediate — to prepare for said ministry, perfecting one's nature in all facets of life.

Both objectives go hand-in-hand to shape a new type of human being capable of bringing about the ideal of the Founder who, aware of that need, set out to satisfy it "for Christ and for Cuba," imagining an open, trustworthy, sincere, generous, valiant, spiritual, and sacrificial man in whom piety, study, and action would be in perfect equilibrium, so different from the man of our time — untruthful, selfish, rapacious, petty, sensual, lacking self-respect, and accepting of social norms that, as he said, do not idolize God in order "to idolize money, and does not love his homeland, in order to love himself."

This image he forged of the agrupado, and to which he devoted his life realize, is captured in the motto he established for the Agrupación, "Confortare et esto vir," which brings together his concept of a prototypical future citizen of a new Cuba, as well as the program that would allow those who aspire to embody it to develop to the utmost the possibilities of their spirit and the fullness of their personality in order to attain it.

This motto captures his thinking so perfectly that, even if there were no other descriptors, it would suffice to uncover it and to demonstrate that, according to the Founder, to be an agrupado requires a virile posture and an attitude for militancy proper to men devoted to the service of a cause, always ready for action, animated by a Christian spirit, a spirit of sacrifice that fosters true sense of heroism without which everything unhinges, falters, and ultimately dies.

That individual he dreamed about and who, according to Fr. Busitill, must be a man deeply convinced of being "consecrated" to the renewal of society, to transform it and lead it to reason and to a Christian and civil formation, is the yeast with which Fr. Rey wanted to ferment the Cuban people in order to "catholicize" their institutions and restore the environment destroyed by Church enemies, the individual used by him to influence the Cuban mind and ultimately turn it back to Christ.

A highly developed and formed character is an absolute requirement for the Agrupación, and Fr. Rey made it a basic tenet of all activities, aimed to create, via intense inculturation during the university years, Catholic professionals capable of giving witness to God "with word, pen, and press," to all corners of the Island in accordance with pontifical directives; aimed, to be more precise, to bring forth leaders capable of influencing and directing, so as to attain the ideal of the Founder, who, for this reason, was only interested in them, and not in the masses whose conversion he left as future work for the agrupados. But, since Fr. Rey was convinced that leadership

relies on some essential God-given qualities and that these are not sufficient in themselves but need to undergo a careful process of formation so that the desired fruit is yielded, he gave great import to this aspect of his work, never shortchanging efforts of any kind directed to this end. This judgment is evident in a phrase he mentioned to someone uneasy about a required monetary sacrifice when it was necessary to send an agrupado to study abroad at significant expense: "I would be pleased to disburse any amount for an agrupado to be well-versed in his faith, for that is priceless."

And on another occasion, when he visited a Marian Sodality in a neighboring country and its Director finished showing him an impressive set of dining facilities, classrooms for laborers, break rooms, theater, etc., unmoved and unimpressed by it all, he asked: "Tell me, Father, what is the state of the formation of sodalists?" And since the answer to his question was: "That's our weak point. It isn't very solid, truthfully speaking," he retorted with his usual sincerity: "Well then, Father, you have works of charity, but you don't have sodalists."

From the start, he took care to declare this characteristic of the Agrupación, stated clearly in his first bulletin board notice in 1931: "The ACU is an institution of practical and apostolic Catholicism, founded for comprehensive moral and intellectual formation of its members."

"Its intent," wrote Fr. Rey, also in 1931, "is to bring together Cuba's Catholic students for more comprehensive religious and social formation and propagation of the Good News."

This idea is repeated ad nauseam in all official documents. "The Agrupación is a specialized Marian Congregation," relates "*Esto Vir*" in November 1946, "that attempts to form truly Catholic professionals who are effective coworkers in the propagation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ." "It is," once more, "a Marian Sodality of students and professionals, formed in it when they were students."

In the mind of its Founder one finds the model for his ministry's formative activity, a copy of the early formation phase of the multi-year career of members of the Society of Jesus, namely, to inspire agrupados with a high, balanced spiritual life and to create a fountainhead of Catholic intellectuality from which could spring men destined to etch a truly Christian sentiment on the ethos of Cuban society.

It is logical that such aspirations to shape a forceful and vigorous intellectuality concerned for its nation and with true Christian sentiment and clear concept of duty would give rise to a medullary patriotic institution that impelled by its tendency for action would prepare its men to serve Cuba with the purity and perfection dreamed of by the Fathers of our homeland.

In fact, not only did the Agrupación have those tendencies imbued by Fr. Rey from the onset, but he was intent on strengthening them by all means at his disposal, so it would never be forgotten that beyond personal perfection, the goal was the salvation of the country, and in order to make sure that each agrupado would accept the Agrupación, in general, and himself, in particular, as instruments of Divine Providence in the attainment of such ends, he attempted to affix in their consciences — to the point of turning it into the axis of all their activities — the idea that they had a mission chosen for them by God when they were called to that institution, and to engender in them an unavoidable onus to fulfill it in the best possible way; from which it could be deduced that the better or worse the performance of congregational obligations, the better or worse their true value for the moral renewal of Cuba and also for their personal spiritual growth.

Because of this Fr. Rey saw the importance of always insisting that they should never lose sight of supernatural motivations in order to impart to their work for the homeland a sentiment of obedience to the will of God and to cooperation with Divine Providence, which animate the works of the Agrupación, and that at the end of the day

conscious and free submission is the most direct path to attain one's personal sanctification.

Thus, Fr. Rey posited, to the point of merging them into a single ideal, the ultimate end of man, the aspiration of Marian Sodalties, and his unique objective for the Agrupación.

The natural outgrowth of all this is a basically apostolic institution whose activity should always be pointed towards attainment of its specific end, but which must not be considered fully reached until each and every Cuban thinks and acts, in everything, as a Catholic.

Hence his claim that "agrupado" is synonymous with "apostle," and his determination to form them, as Pius XII would say years later in his speech to the First Congress of Marian Sodalties, to be always ready "to respond generously to the gifts of grace, to seek and practice Divine Providence according to one's vocation," incessantly, if need be, sacrificially, ahead of options more appealing to human nature.

According to the direction he had given to the Agrupación, and within the moral and intellectual context he fashioned for the agrupado possessed by apostolic zeal, an agrupado should be convinced that a simple, honest life might be excellent for others destined to be complacently bourgeois and good family men, but for them, chosen for more demanding work, it would be unpardonable egotism, a veritable treason that would convert them into failed, frustrated men, incapable of knowing themselves and, hence, of knowing God.

That is why he did not want for the agrupados' apostolate, imposed upon all with a strong sense of obligation, to be sporadic or circumstantial, but rather continuous, for all time, above all things, from any place, and for it to spring incessantly from the heart of each one as the irrepressible expression of their spirit; but also organically, in order to channel impulses in a single direction and to

systematize works, for the aim of the congregational apostolate as conceived by Fr. Rey is not found in mere apostolic, yet anarchical, works intended to attain salvation for a smaller or greater number of individuals, but rather in the achievement of a concrete mission, which is to win Cuba for Christ, a mission that can never be achieved without a carefully considered plan, rigorously followed.

III

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The indispensable first step on the road to realizing the apostolic ideal of the Agrupación, in perfect harmony with its formative character, is a rigorous selection of candidates that aspire to be a part of it.

In an undated note written by Fr. Rey at the very start of his work in which he jotted down an overview of the organization, the first word that appears under the headline A.C.U. initials is: "Elite."

This first thought that belays the thinking of its author, which could have been of some other fundamental aspect of the Agrupación, starts off with a strictly selective concept that is at the heart of everything else. Such disdain of quantity in favor of quality is one of the traits most attacked concerning the thinking of Fr. Rey, whose constant preoccupation was the formation of leaders capable of directing, and not of gregarious ones who follow. Without the former, he saw no chance of persuading the latter. "It's absurd," he was prone to say, "to try to persuade the masses with the masses, one has to approach it with the select few. Jesus gave us a good example of this, who, to conquer all of humanity, chose and formed twelve men, which were sufficient to found the Universal Church."

Imbued by this principle in light of the Cuban situation and searching for a way to Christianize our society anew, he saw the orientation he gave the Agrupación as the only possible solution, that of dedicating himself assiduously to the Catholic and cultural formation of those

who, due to their positions, are destined to take the country's future, not on the path that distances it evermore from God, but rather returns it to Him.

Following that train of thought, a report titled "Brief notes on the growth and activities of the A.C.U. during the two years since its foundation," written in May 1933, maintains that "the idea that has guided the development of the A.C.U. has been careful selection with long probation."

"As a carbon copy of Jesuit schools in the lay realm," commented Fr. Alberto Castro, S.J., "the A.C.U. is primarily an association focused on quality not quantity. The demanding selection process has been criticized as exaggerated, and even ridiculously reworked. But the obvious outcome has been that small and colossal critical mass that surprises and enthuses those who study closely its mission and practice."

The precondition of this strict selection process is that the candidate be in the first years of his university education when he asks to join.

At the start of the Agrupación, Fr. Rey begrudgingly let in some that were not students, but they did not last long, hence the practice since then has been to only allow students in. The reason is self-evident, for it is easier to influence and imbue young people with the spirit of the institution when they start their university years than to alter solid judgments and points of view of fully-grown men.

On rare occasions, and despite the extraordinary gifts of individuals that have made up the very rare exceptions to this rule, some have made the congregational ideals their own. Because the spirit of the Agrupación has been so uniformly assimilated by its members during the only age in which it is possible to do so, it is nearly impossible for the latter that lack it to share the same general outlook on life with the former.

Various are the qualities demanded of those who aspire to join while attending university. First of all, he must be a good student so that, according to Pope Pius XII, he might find himself among “the best professors, the best lawyers, best writers, doctors, engineers, naturalists, physiologists, researchers of matter and spirit, of truth, and of the personal and social good,” and he might be capable, at the end of the day, to fulfill that ideal so often cited: “an agrupado in each top position.” He must have sufficient talent to persuade his peers and lead them; be religious, but with manly piety, free of any sanctimoniousness that would instantly close the Agrupación’s doors to him; with human virtues, a call to apostolate, wholesome character, admiration, and manly mien; prone to action and organization; holder of that indefinable aptitude to fit into the Agrupación that we might call a vocation, and sympathy for it, a most important quality to project externally to others those qualities that define the agrupado.

When considering the Agrupación’s selection criteria it is important to have in mind, beyond those already mentioned, that Marian Sodalties are not for the “everyday” faithful, but for those, as Pope Pius XII said in “*Bis Saeculari*,” who feel called to “follow Christ in a perfect and absolute way;” there is an obligation, therefore, to select members carefully in order to achieve its ends and protect its true character from adulteration.

In that same Constitution, the Roman Pontiff confirms this exposition of the Common Rules directing Marian Sodalties in clear and definitive terms to use the strictest selection rules: “In the acceptance of sodalists,” says Pope Pius XII, “diligently choose those not content with a basic and common Christian life, but rather those who desire to prepare their hearts for further spiritual ascents, even the most arduous ones, following the ascetic norms and pious exercises proposed by the Rules.”

“Better selection,” writes Pope Pius XII to Rev. Fr. Luis Paulussen, S.J., President of the Central Secretariat of Marian Sodalties, is the

wellspring of all renewal, and hence should be undertaken with determination, particularly where a genuine spirit has faltered. The only ones who should be admitted are those who desire and are able to live, according to the Common Rules, a more fervent, more apostolic, more militant Catholic life.

Selection, says the Pontiff in his speech to the First Congress of the World Federation of Marian Sodalitys, "is essential to assure the desired renewal. The sodalitys are not simply pious associations, but schools of self-improvement and apostolate."

Reiterating the same idea in October of 1950, he writes to the General of the Society of Jesus about the charge he has given to the Marian Sodalitys to "form and guide groups of the choicest apostles, that will prove themselves to be like salt of the earth and heavenly yeast of virtue among men." And he goes on to recommend that "strict procurement and selection of candidates is paramount, choosing only those that truly aspire to the highest ideals and desire to soak themselves in apostolic spirit."

Finally, to stop with the citations, the first item addressed in the First Congress of the World Federation of Marian Sodalitys, celebrated in Rome in 1954, whose theme had been previously approved by the Pope, was "For the Greater Glory of God through better selection."

With the passage of time, as the Agrupación grew in numbers, the Board of Directors has been restricting admission more and more, lifting standards and making tests more difficult.

On February 15, 1935, it agrees that all requests for admission will only be valid if accompanied by the signature of an agrupado introducing the postulant, and ratified by the Board of Directors.

On June 2 of the same year, it was decided to lengthen the Postulant phase to test the commitment of the solicitors. This first phase was lengthened to five weeks, and in order to properly inform the postulant of the objectives, activities and fundamental tenets of the

Agrupación, the Aspirant Instructor gives him a series of talks, whilst the Agrupación informs itself more comprehensively about his personality, aptitudes and conduct. The Aspirant phase runs for about nine months, during which the candidate must faithfully complete all the obligations of an agrupado, among them participation in some apostolic activity, based on his preferences and ability, while he receives special instruction, as he did in the previous phase. "These instructions," writes Fr. Rey in 1950, "with which we take special care, are not only required to become a sodalist, but also seek appropriate ways to gauge the fruits that have been garnered from them."

If the aspirant does not measure up, or falls short in part, whether in his personality or conduct outside of the ACU, he cannot be consecrated as a sodalist. Nor can those who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances, considered and accepted by the Director, who will remain aspirants until, if circumstances do not change, they lose the possibility of consecration and pass into the protector category.

And then again in 1950 the approval time was extended. Fr. Rey writes concerning this: "Once the Aspirant phase ends, aspirants accepted by the Board of Directors will be consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, as is now the case; but the A.C.U., for its part, will not write their names onto the "Book of the Sodality," until no less than two years have passed and they have exhibited the fruits of their consecration."

"Once this period transpires, those admitted by the Board of Directors will be registered in the "Book of the Sodality" at last, following a vow of fidelity.

In this phase they will be called, "New Sodalists," and will be part of the Junior Circle."

Naturally, the Board of Directors does not want to add on the signature of any sodalist, regardless of seniority or worthiness, who without justifiable cause is not fulfilling or is fulfilling poorly his congregational obligations.

In the same missive addressed to Agrupados, Fr. Rey says: "In the A.C.U., perhaps unlike any other society, not only is the individual tested, but sufficient time is allowed to think and come to realize what one is doing and committing to; it is also impressed on the aspirant that each step he takes is taken voluntarily; but that, if he takes the definitive one, it is for life, on his 'word of honor'; and it is ultimately up to each one to gauge and assess how much his word is worth and how much it means."

This is the reason for the solemnity with which the act, during the vigil of the Immaculate Conception, just prior to Communion and in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, in a ceremony inspired by the renewal of vows of the Society of Jesus, those who are about to become congregants repeat in unison the formula of consecration.

The Agrupación has such particular characteristics and steadfast objectives that in order to join, and especially to persevere in her demands, a true vocation is necessary.

Undoubtedly, God calls some individuals to the Agrupación and wishes for them to surrender to Him through it, and not via some other place, and the measure of their surrender depends on the degree of perfection that they are able to attain and the realization of the divine plan in them and in the society in which they live; herein the need for the rigorous requirement to fulfill one's duty and the prohibition on every agrupado to belong to other religious organizations, in order that they might concentrate all their efforts to following their vocation.

For this reason, also, once the test is passed, the rigor does not ease up and the agrupado shall continue to perform duties that were

freely accepted and that are the cords that bind and without which cohesion, discipline, and spirit are quickly lost, along with a miserable waste of time.

The Agrupación is like a laymen's religious order, with ends, spirituality, and particular physiognomy, which not all that aspire to a more perfect life are obliged to accept, but only those that are called to it; as are those who aspire to perfection through the priesthood not through any order, but rather in that in whose rules his particular idiosyncrasies find the most favorable environment to attain salvation.

And precisely because of that freedom with which God calls men to follow different paths, and the consequences that might ensue if that call goes unheeded, one has a grave duty, not only of not obstructing it, but rather of defending, assuring, and facilitating it.

These things are not understood by those who, unknowing of the deepest essence of the Agrupación and of the spirit proper to Marian Sodalities, call her exclusivist and disciplinarian.

The above reasons explain the measures taken by the Board of Directors in its session of March 7, 1936, when it agreed that sodalists that stop attending for three months without justification be suspended, and if after this they absent themselves for an additional six months, be permanently expelled. From that day forward discipline was more rigorous, especially during the years between 1942 and 1946, and numerous agrupados were admonished, suspended temporarily, or expelled, depending on their degree of non-compliance.

So resolute is the Agrupación in not taking in a large number of members, but rather a very select and effective few, that up until December 8, 1955 it has only consecrated six hundred twenty-four congregants from which one hundred fifty-five were expelled. But thanks to this strict admission policy, rigorous discipline and intense

formation that shapes its members, it is possible to turn her into a more compact body, a true union, a home to many faithful members, active, truly determined to attain their objectives more than the majority of associations with massive number of members.

To reach the goal he had set for himself, Fr. Rey conceived of three phases in the life of the agrupado prior to sending him to fulfill the ends proper to the Agrupación. Moral formation came first, then intellectual formation, and finally the phase of apostolic formation, programmed to come to an end with the student's graduation, so he would be perfectly ready to commence his public life and set out to rescue all of the homeland's institutions and bring them back to Christ.

With the three phases concatenated and subordinated to each other, the first one is of course the fundamental one. "In the labors of the A.C.U.," writes Eduardo Bosa Masvidal in the December 1942 "*Esto Vir*," "spiritual formation of agrupados takes first place. The A.C.U. knows perfectly well that lacking this, there is no hope for a more Christian future and a better homeland." Without it exists the danger foretold by Pope Pius XII "of the exclusiveness of the external element, of labors that are superficial and naturalistic," which elsewhere he calls "heresy of action."

Without a rich interior life, work is fruitless. The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus expresses it this way: "The interior [works] make the exterior ones attain their proper ends," and Fr. Rey lays out this thought in 1945 when he writes that "if social action is to be fruitful, it must be stimulated by the intense Catholic life of its leaders," adding elsewhere that "the apostolate that doesn't spring from love tends to be pure vanity."

Without doubt he saw clearly that true and exact dynamic that dwells in the soul, which cannot give what it does not have; hence, it is necessary to enrich it, as Fr. Llorente would note years later, "a

solid spiritual and religious formation is necessary for an agrupado's truly effective apostolate of action."

"Consider interior formation of souls," wrote Pope Pius XII to the General of the Society of Jesus in 1950, "of foremost importance, as, without it, all purely exterior actions should be held by you sterile and even suspicious."

It is necessary, then, that the soul of an agrupado be imbued with principles and ideals that shape Catholic faith, that his life be a practical realization of its norms, with an ever growing desire for greater perfection, burning for the kingdom of God, so that this aspiration, in concert with the Divine Will, impels and gives his apostolic action a supernatural content, and, also, so that turned into prayer it may be like a magnet that attracts and hastens its acceptance among men.

That is why there is such insistence that, for an agrupado, it is indispensable to have an intense spiritual life sustained by an unbreakable will, based on solid theological foundations, and characterized by an intimate knowledge of Christ, discipleship, and absolute trust in Divine Providence; which must be exteriorized in charity, abnegation, sacrifice, and complete acceptance of God's will; so that his apostolate may be a projection of his spirituality, spring naturally and spontaneously from him, and possess such warmth and sincerity that it can't help but be irresistible and draw to itself all that are surround him.

Without this, it is impossible for the leaders that Fr. Rey wanted to shape to exist, because it is necessary for Christ's Word to end up in our souls so our souls can serve as vehicles that deliver it to others; for only those who surrender completely to God are able to conquer others in His name.

"If we are as God wants us to be," said Fr. Ricardo Lombardi, S.J., "the world will renew itself in Christ," and as we were told, "be

perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," the ideal of the agrupado determined to bring about the conversion of Cuba is no less than that of his own sanctification. Whoever thinks that he can undertake great works for the glory of God and the salvation of souls without aspiring to this with all his strength, is like "the foolish man who built his house upon the sand."

There is an abyss, and also an infinite number of levels, between he who aims to attain that ideal of a perfect agrupado and he who is a good family man.

This difference in levels is what prompts Fr. Rey to write in 1948 about: "The great difference among agrupados: those who follow Christ, and those who go it alone and halfheartedly."

The ones who follow Christ are those who visit the Blessed Sacrament conscientiously and intimately; those who are committed to perfecting their daily or nearly daily Communion; those who study Christ during their time of meditation; those who... those who share the yoke with Him, and those who seem to never tire."

On the other hand, it is not possible to place a yoke on a loner, as it was designed for two, and so they drag their load along the ground, even if they are like Solomons at University and Pauls at Church capable of giving apostolate lessons to the Pontiff of Rome, for the load... the load is eventually left behind.

This also explains the story of the hundred and fifty-five sodalists that the Agrupación expelled during its first twenty-five years of existence. There are no agrupados without a spiritual life, as without it the Agrupación lacks any sense and it would be useless to ask its members to aspire to "the summit in supernatural and human things."

But Fr. Rey never lost sight of the apostolic objective and demanded perfect equilibrium between the interior and exterior life; just as he demanded as indispensable for a fruitful apostolate an intense

spiritual life, called for an ever higher level, and taught that action, particularly social action, was required to complete it.

One of the principal characteristics of Fr. Rey's thinking was the structural logic of his ideas. His thinking had the clarity of syllogism and the solid rationality of a work of architecture. In him everything was harmonious, ordered, and useful. He started with an initial idea, and immediately started to put in place the most adequate means to make it real, using his special gift for effectiveness and efficiency, everything he did about it was perfectly directed to the end he was pursuing.

That is why when he understood that the solution to Cuba's problem was to be found in the criteria, customs, initiatives, and, finally, in the actions of all Cubans, they turned back to the norms that Christ taught, and proposed to those destined to be leaders of change to get as intimately close to Him as possible, and to make His teachings their own.

He wanted the agrupado to feel friendship with Jesus Christ throughout his life and to become accustomed to turn to Him in times of troubles, disappointments, reversals, sadness, but also in times of joy and prosperity which can be so perilous.

He refers to this as "Divine Intimacy⁵" in the above cited notes on plans for the Agrupación.

In order to attain it and possess a deep knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ that gives living witness and is able to shape one's spirit and conduct, making it possible to truly have Him as Teacher and guide day to day; in order to understand his way of life, his sentiments, his character, to understand and learn to trust in Him, and ultimately attain a life of true intimacy; he insisted that it was not enough to know the historical Jesus, it was necessary to get used to mental prayer, which he never stopped promoting and is a notable characteristic of the spiritual life of agrupados.

To promote a love of meditation able to yield an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ, and offer pointers for agrupados to follow the way, as well as to etch in their prayers an apostolic inclination, he always emphasized the second week of the Exercises, spending ample time on the life of the Redeemer and the vocation of the Apostles. With extraordinarily profound psychological insight he studied how the Lord went about gathering them around Him. In order to make the Apostles comprehensible to his audience, he compared the Agrupación to the College of Apostles, and presented St. John the Baptist as precursor of that cohort of the Anunciata, initial instrument of the work he was about to undertake, handing over two of his disciples, united by friendship and identical ideals. He then went on to show how Jesus Christ, using them as foundation and little by little, without haste, went about choosing the others, adapting, and making use of his deep knowledge of the human soul, to the varying personalities so as to call each one in the way most fitting to his temperament. He went on offering to Peter's vehemence a vision of a great undertaking; accepting the critical eye of Nathaniel; praising the publican, rejected by the official sanctity, with a brief and direct invitation; or taking advantage of the prior friendship or familial relationship among them in order to attract some through others.

The figure of Christ continued solidifying in the eyes of the agrupados, taking shape, becoming almost tangible, they saw him move among men, treating them with affection, respect and ease. And as if time and space disappeared, the exercitants felt close to Him as He wrote on the sand at his feet or cried over the death of Lazarus. They seemed to discover Him for the first time, and experimenting His attraction, they succumbed to his love. They then came to realize that twenty centuries ago, when He founded his Agrupación, He was also founding theirs, the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, and as He called the Apostles, He was calling the agrupados, because each and every one of them could relate to one of the twelve, and feel himself like him, called to intimacy with Him, to be part of his family, to become His coworker and share in His

glory, to attempt to attain the highest possible sanctification, and to fulfill the precept of teaching all peoples.

Little by little, agrupados became accustomed to mental prayer until it became widespread and natural. Placing agrupados in daily contact with Jesus Christ through meditation became the paramount triumph of Fr. Rey as Spiritual Director.

Once attained, making it a practice would come naturally and when it came time to tackle a new initiative, at the very conception of an idea, at the time for action, they would consult with Jesus Christ about the project and would try to act as Jesus would, with supernatural spirit, valor, justice, energy, and love of neighbor.

"If you don't falter, He won't falter," said Fr. Rey to Rubio when parting for Spain in 1927, summarizing in these words the trust, the fidelity, and the love that encapsulates his formula, "Divine Intimacy," ideal of the sodality's spirituality.

But this love for God and neighbor, able to melt the ice of materialistic egotism with its warmth, and to fully develop the true values of future builders of a new Cuba, Fr. Rey wanted to multiply many times over and in the aforementioned notes on the plans for the Agrupación he writes this phrase which encapsulates the whole of his formative work: "Amor-Exigir⁶ much."

He asked for nothing less than perfect love of God and neighbor, for God loves him, so that uniting our love to His we might live for God and not for ourselves.

Such love implies a need to fully accept the concept of sacrifice, without which it is impossible to take up the cross and follow Christ, the only way to understand Him, imitate Him, get close to Him, attain "Divine Intimacy," and be able to practice effective apostolic action, free of any wisp of egotism that can hinder and even invalidate it completely.

Hence, Fr. Rey's insistence on the supernatural character of even the most insignificant action, repeating that the search for God's will should be the only preoccupation of the agrupado, and putting it in practice his only desire.

"You are my friends if you do what I command you," said Jesus Christ, and also "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother." It would be useless to get to know the personality of the Redeemer perfectly if his examples and his words are ignored. On the heels of deep knowledge should ensue a love that engenders desire to serve, to surrender and to obey, which are steps that lead to God.

But since it is not easy to achieve this frame of mind unless one's sight is fixed upon Him, and through love of Him complete self-dominion, in order to achieve these aims he made the spiritual life of the Agrupación circle round the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Among the many means used by Fr. Rey to guide the conscience and shape the principles of the Agrupación is "*Esto Vir*," his official organ, that through its twenty-five years of existence has never ceased to teach and guide agrupados through articles either penned or directly inspired by him, so that everything that appears in it can be considered to be the institution's official version, with formative authority.

On that point, the August 1955 issue states: "The Marian Sodalties founded by the Society of Jesus, largely run by them, filled from the start with His Holy Spirit, are a veritable triumph of "Jesuit" ideology.

"The more closely a sodalist embodies the spirit of St. Ignatius, the more perfect a Marian congregant he becomes."

"A noted characteristic of St. Ignatius is his complete dominion over self, over his human appetites."

“His ‘Spiritual Exercises to conquer oneself and regulate one’s life without determining oneself through any tendency that is disordered’ are a hymn to voluntary dominion of one’s own passions, appetites, and human affections, all a way of life offered up to God, our Lord.”

“This virtue, ordered toward the greater glory of God, must constitute the basic foundation of our life as a Marian sodalist.”

“The only way to ascend on each man’s walk towards God is to always advance without a break, because in the spiritual life any break is a descent and the only way to continuously ascend and have ever greater control of our passions and appetites is achieving an ever more perfect and complete subjugation of our human nature.”

In summary, the ideal agrupado, as conceived by Fr. Rey, is to be the incarnation of the “Principle and foundation” of the Spiritual Exercises, foreign to human motives, moved solely by desire for the greater glory and service of God, always alert and ready to turn away from any lesser intention and correct the tiniest turn towards one’s own complacency.

But such a man does not come about spontaneously, nor is a strict selection process sufficient to find him. Careful formation is required to achieve such heights, and for what is yet even more important and difficult: remaining at the desired level requires a complex assistance and interior support system that, beyond contributing to his formation, will aid him during his life once training is finished.

It was for this end that St. Ignatius of Loyola built formidable scaffolding for an interior structure that Fr. Rey put to work for the spiritual life of the agrupados as much as possible.

Pius XII proclaims this system in “*Bis Saeculari*,” where he praises “the norms and rules of the Marian Sodalties that lead the congregant to an outstanding spiritual life that allows him to reach the summit of sanctity, thanks, above all, to those most useful ways

to follow Christ: Spiritual Exercises, meditation and examination of conscience, frequency of Sacraments, frequent and filial docility to a single spiritual director; in the end, total surrender and consecration of self to the Mother of God, and resolute promise to work for perfection of self and of others.”

In this paragraph the Pope synthesizes the program that has been applied since the Agrupación’s start to form and sustain the spiritual life of the agrupados.

In practice, the first thing the postulant receives is religious instruction, with ever increasing breadth and depth, more reasoned and personalized.

“We should not forget” — said Fr. Rey in a homily on the first commandment — “we are obliged to develop ourselves religiously, knowing and understanding the principal truths of our faith. That is the reason for these explanations in Mass. It cannot be that in some given areas, occasionally non-essential areas, we know a lot, yet when it comes to conscience, we overlook the basics.

Towards this end he took advantage of all means and opportunities, offering brief courses not only on apologetical, moralistic and dogmatic subjects, but also on the Spiritual Exercises, Sunday Mass, Saturday “Guardia,” and monthly retreats, tirelessly and tenaciously planting religious teachings, day after day, that would form an agrupado into a well-rounded Catholic.

To understand the scope of this task, one need only examine the panoply of activity in the brief courses Section of the Agrupación.

As early as June 1931 Fr. Rey starts his classes on communism and socialism “considering the knowledge of these subjects a pressing necessity.” Towards the end of that very year he deals with Apologetics; in 1932 he offers a brief course on Rational Psychology; the following year, his series of conferences on Apologetics are mandatory for all agrupados; in 1934 commence the commentaries

on the Gospels during Sunday Mass. Fr. Román Galán, S.J., offers two brief courses on Liturgy, and Fr. Javier Ascensio, S.J., another on Ethics. In 1935, Fr. Ascensio continues discussion of Ethics, and Fr. Rey offers brief courses on Religion and Metaphysics. In 1936, he offers a brief course on "The Historical Church of Jesus Christ" that *Esto Ver* deems a "valuable addition, ever more notable, of our ACU's cultural level;" and towards the end of that same year he takes on another on Metaphysics. In 1934, he offers a brief course on Apologetics; in December 1941, he offers three conferences on Advent: "The revelations of Jesus in Genesis, from the beginning of the world until 1050 before Christ," "The revelations of Jesus in the Psalms of David, from 1050 until 970 before Christ," "The revelations of Jesus in the prophetic period from 970 before Christ to the Fullness of Times." In 1943, he develops course-cycles on the Gospels, Psychology, and History of the Church; and Fr. Foyada on social matters. In September 1924 commenced the practice of going up to the chapel on Sundays at 8:25 a.m., where Fr. Gustavo Amigó, S.J., would offer five-minute explanations on the liturgy, before Mass. In 1945, Lent conferences on the "Existence of the human soul," "Its essence and spirituality," "Free will," "The immortality of the human soul," and "Metaphysical phenomena" were the responsibility of Dr. José Ignacio Lasaga. In 1948, Fr. Rey offered a brief course on Metaphysics, and, the following year, one on the Gospels and another on Medical Ethics, while Lasaga discussed the Encyclical "Casti Connubi." In 1959, brief courses were offered on the Pontificate, and Encyclicals, and in '51 on "The Holy Fathers of the Church." In 1952 Fr. Llorente introduced Formation Courses, a cycle of four brief courses, one per year, designed to be repeated indefinitely, so as to have all students receive them and understand the treatises on Ecclesia, Grace, Sacraments, and Revelation.

Year after year, from our foundation to our day, it is like a constant river current that flows incessantly and fertilizes the fields it traverses.

This instruction was increased and deepened in 1934 via an Ascetic (Study) Circle for a select group that grew in number course by course, so that in 1944 there was a need to divide it into two, one for students and another for professionals. After seven years, the growing success of the Ascetic Circles called for a new approach designed to develop, as penned by Fr. Rey, "a soul that animates the internal and apostolic life of the ACU. We shall call it 'Acies Ordinata,' and it will be made up of a tight-knit nucleus of 'Friends of Jesus Christ,' under the direction and protection of the Queen and Mother of our Sodality."

"Thus, the paramount aim of the Circle is an intimate friendship with Jesus Christ, one generous and active, sincerely seeking the most adequate and practical means to attain it."

This Circle was placed at the very center of the Agrupación, like a sort of yeast of yeasts, where ascetics took a turn towards apostolic work, destined to serve as the engine that would propel action from the participants, and, through them, all agrupados.

The system worked to perfection, and thanks to the members of the Circle there has never been a lack of apostles to maintain alive interest for the activities of the Agrupación.

The Sunday Mass has great importance also in the formation of agrupados. Making use of dialogue⁷ so they may take on an active role, attendance has always been mandatory, as it is considered the central and official act of the sodality and, along with the Spiritual Exercises retreat, is the foundation of its spiritual life, as was written in the minutes of the First Congress in October 1944 that, absent either it "is evident that neither the spirit of the ACU can be formed, nor conserved once formed."

The value placed on Sunday participation has to do in large part with the Mass being the time when all agrupados receive regular and uniform religious instruction from the pulpit.

During the early years Fr. Rey stopped for the homily following the Creed, but starting in January 1944, once he began to rely on other priests to officiate he introduced the approach, which still exists, to offer instruction from the conclusion of the Creed to the start of Communion while the Holy Sacrifice was underway.

Another reason to participate is the opportunity for agrupados to meet frequently, something that promotes and sustains friendship among them and is paramount for the creation of an ambience to which the Founder gave much importance and to which much closer attention would be given in the future.

The talk at the Saturday Honor Guard ("Guardia de Honor Sabatina"), one of the oldest congregational traditions, was also used for religious instruction.

It was born at the session of the "Consejo" of January, March 28, 1932 where it was agreed to: "Found a Saturday Honor Guard in the name of the Mother of God, to implore her intercession and for special graces for the moral and material needs of the agrupados."

At the onset, the "Guardia" consists of half-hour shifts before the altar of the Immaculate of the "Iglesia de Reina⁸." It was inaugurated at 5 p.m. one afternoon by eight agrupados, in groups of four, meditating for a set time before the Blessed Sacrament.

The number of those present grew steadily to over twenty by year's end, even though participation was not mandatory, this without considering extraordinary "Guardias" with as many as 37 and even 45 agrupados.

At the start of 1933, due to the large number that participated, it was necessary to replace the shifts of mental prayer with the rosary, with a fifteen-minute talk by Father Director, a format that exists to this day.

The success of the "Guardias" was such that, at the request of some agrupados, starting on March 9, 1936, daily 7 a.m. sessions were started for those whose work-schedule kept them from evening ones.

Nevertheless, in 1941 attendance dropped so much that October 4 was the last time afternoon sessions took place, but that was not the fate of the morning ones, which continued for ten years, until February 2, 1952 when afternoon ones were reinstated at 6:30 p.m. in the chapel of the Agrupación. Since then, attendance has been increasing and reaching well over a hundred attendees today.

Fr. Rey, who wrote in 1932: "I expect much from the Agrupación's Saturday Honor Guard," fought tenaciously to promote it to agrupados. After him Fr. Llorente continued laboring with great determination and the Guardia today is one of the Institution's most characteristic activities.

Less frequent than talks or study circles, but of greater import due to the moral impact and the outcomes they produce, St. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises' retreats are without any doubt the cornerstone of this system of religious formation.

In fact, the Exercises are the axis of the Agrupación's spirituality. The powerful vitality that motivates it is due almost entirely to the Exercises, as are its concepts of sacrifice and duty. We must look within the Exercises for the origin of the Agrupación's quality and the secret of its union, discipline, and strength.

"Primary source of our spiritual wellbeing," said Fr. Rey. From them spring not only the reformation of life, but also something even more important, the energy to tackle that task. Hence, the Consejo agreed on January 13, 1932 that, in order to become congregants, all aspirants must do the Spiritual Exercises, repeating them annually without fail, so they might periodically make a stop in the frenzy of life and conduct self-examination, decide what needs to be corrected

or improved, and nourish their souls from the fount of mental prayer. This periodic repetition that makes agrupados' lives play out in annual cycles, fixed by the session of Exercises, is the reason that, given the strength of will to continue the fight during the following twelve months, the spirituality of the Agrupación might be kept at the desired level.

Thanks to this practice, which has never wavered and that nearly reached perfection in 1938 when 109 out of a total of 111 agrupados did the Exercises, judgment and self-confidence have validated our concepts and self-knowledge, which along with the desire for perfection and the practice of apostolates are strong points of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria.

The Agrupación, forerunner in Cuba of Spiritual Exercises' retreats for men, penned a most brilliant page on behalf of its apostolate by making the Exercises known, promoting them, and making them a familiar part of Cuban Catholicism.

First through example and direct promotion and later through active collaboration in the Pro-Retreat House fundraiser⁹. Ideated and animated by agrupados, it culminated in the Casa del Calvario¹⁰; the Agrupación also succeeded in getting other organizations to support the admirable apostolate, to the point that Calvary House in Havana and Colegio de Belén were not sufficient to meet annual demand for Exercises and it became necessary to build another house, named Pius XII, for agrupados who could no longer find space in those other two houses.

The Agrupación cannot be denied legitimate pride for being responsible for setting the foundations for this apostolate and having worked to raise it to such a high level, unexpected at the start, and of continuing to be its primary engine.

From May 1931 to May 1933, in spite of it being a novelty in our area, and in spite of difficult times, the Agrupación organized 16

sessions of Exercises in the Colegio de Belén in Havana, and Fr. Rey also traveled to Camagüey¹¹, where that surprising initial effort has continued unabated for twenty-five years.

This has been the primary force that has transformed Catholicism in Cuba, that has unfrozen the indifference that engulfed it, infusing that moribund body with vigorous spirit, solid instruction, and awareness of the need for energetic apostolic action. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola are responsible for filling churches with men, for frequent receptions of the Eucharist, for countless works of charity and apostolate that signal commencement of our religious renaissance. Its practice today may be found from factory to University, from Guild to bar at the Club. Laborers, youth, professionals, public servants, journalists and others do Exercises every year, and the spirituality and energy drawn from them have been slowly refashioning the environment that was imported at the beginning of the nineteenth century and that Fr. Rey set out to renew via the Agrupación.

I am certainly not saying that the Agrupación has been solely responsible for all the work done to date to re-Christianize the people of Cuba, but it was, absolutely and inarguably, the first to move and show the way and by making use of that most effective force, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, true renewer of our environment and ultimate cause of all the results at hand. The Agrupación was the first and for a long time the only one to make use of the Exercises, and was always their most ardent promoter; hence, it is only just that it be recognized as the seed and initiator of what Cuban Catholicism is to become.

The results obtained in our homeland through Spiritual Exercises that began regularly and systematically with three agrupados in March 1931 is proof positive of the power of that yeast spoken of in the Gospels, and also of where the Agrupación has achieved most fully the end for which it was created.

Excellent spiritual director, insightful psychologist, deep connoisseur of human nature, Fr. Rey knew that it was not enough for agrupados to do Exercises once per year, so he organized an effective spiritual strategy, defensive, but also formative, to keep them alert and to avoid energies gathered in four days of retreat to peter out in the monotony and dangers of the remaining three-hundred and sixty-one days. Hence, he availed himself of the most efficient and effective means for the task: spiritual direction, frequent Communion, monthly retreats, moreover, he put himself out to create the appropriate environment to nourish and grow in the Agrupación the seed of the fruit planted during the Exercises.

The Aspirants' Instructor has a series of notecards at his disposal with topics to be addressed during the cycle of conferences designed to imbue those intending to become congregants with the spirit of the Agrupación. The third of these notecards is entitled "Spiritual Direction" and says: "The strength of the ACU emanates from here, two priests with the sole aim of counseling us during the worst of days and years when our mind is obscured by passions, yet during that very period in our lives when our decisions will carry great transcendence and whose outcomes will weigh forever on us."

It is impossible to become fully formed spiritually without external direction, just as it is difficult to keep vows made at the Exercises without an energetic helping and guiding hand.

Without a spiritual director to keep one's free will on the straight-and-narrow, within limits of prudence and reason, and animating one to continue growing, one wastes time idling around without progressing, or completely abandons God's work, or runs off like an unbridled stallion down the wrong path, or falls into all sorts of extravagances that make the "sanctimonious" so repulsive.

"Absent a guide, the more intelligent and spiritual one is, the more exposed one is to deformation" says Fr. Ayala in his book, *"Formation of the Select."*

Fr. Rey, who saw this clearly, surrendered completely to the task of direction from the onset, making this activity the spinal cord of the Agrupación since day one.

Thanks to this, agrupados have always had at their disposal, initially one priest then two formed and experienced men, absolutely dedicated to them, with whom to consult the most intimate matters and the most painful problems, assured that their replies, offered in the light of eternal truths, would be free of passion and of any personal interest other than their ultimate well-being: their eternal salvation, which is all that matters.

But that task, which carries such grave responsibility and is validated by proof of the excellent outcomes obtained, calls for absolute and total consecration to those directed by both the Fr. Director and Fr. Sub-Director. In its absence and lacking the constant sacrifice that calls for complete dedication to them night and day, the effect of the Exercises on the agrupados would dwindle, the proper spirit would not be imbued, and it would be impossible to attain the cohesion that defines them.

The constant presence of these men guarantees that the Agrupación is protected against the peril of dissolution, safeguards its Catholic principles, and nourishes its intellectual and apostolic activity. Moreover, the stable permanence of the Director assures continuity through time and facilitates the development of a plan that to be effective takes time to execute, and frequent changes in leadership would endanger.

There is no question that Fr. Rey understood this perfectly well, as evidenced by the issues he submitted to Vice-provincial Fr. Carvajal, and to which the latter responded to in the margins on April 18, 1931.

The first issue raised: What is my charge? To which Fr. Carvajal replied: "Director of young university students. Attend to them

ABOVE ALL ELSE, then, if possible, to other matters.” Related to the seventh issue:

“I ask that you make official what you told me repeatedly, namely, to ignore other things as long as there is work to be done at the Sodality, which you

“hope will occupy me fully.” To which the Vice-provincial replied: “So be it, as long as work with the young men is gainful.”

According to Fr. Ayala in the book cited above, the director of an organization, like the Agrupación, should be young, unencumbered, prayerful, and protective of God’s work, active, amiable, and understanding, well centered, stable, with generous sacrificial spirit and a natural and supernatural vocation to direct it.

The Agrupación has always benefited from these qualities in their directors, thanks to whom it has been able to develop and attain the maturity it has today, and who have powerfully influenced agrupados and without whom it would be impossible to maintain discipline and obedience, “that affectionate fidelity with which agrupados have followed my instructions,” as Fr. Rey refers to it in a 1936 letter, and that is indispensable for the proper function of such a complex institution.

The Agrupación would be in chaos if each one followed his own way of acting and his own worldview. Hence, unity among agrupados is promoted assiduously, attained through direction, formation, constant interaction, and teamwork; thanks to which desired results were obtained, as it is precisely discipline and obedience, the very images of the spirit of the Society, that create cohesion, not only absolutely necessary to date, but more so once a much greater apostolic campaign is undertaken.

With respect to this, the Summary Rules of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria say: “When it comes to moral and civic order, given that the paramount mission of the Director is to serve as guide and

counselor, particularly to agrupados, thereby procuring their individual and collective betterment, it is the onus on each one to: Receive in good faith, seeking self-improvement, friendly advice and recommendations concerning any character or other flaw impeding his own formation or the good esteem of others." And the new sodalist's vow: "To better receive the spirit of this Sodality, I will gladly attend to observations that in a friendly manner may be tendered, so as to adapt my life to its ideals."

This, Pius XII defines as to: "mold the souls of the members... on the Christian models, particularly of those who will someday be leaders" is the arduous and incessant task that befalls the Director of the Agrupación, thanks to whom the initial thrust from the Spiritual Exercises is maintained, confirmed in the regular practice of the Sacraments, and renewed periodically via Monthly Retreats for many years.

Weekly confession and frequent communion, daily or nearly so, is common in the Agrupación and accounts for its level of spirituality and "Divine Intimacy" that only regular communion and meditation can bring about, and that make the word "Teacher," written on the Tabernacle of its chapel, so descriptive of the life of all agrupados.

Fr. Rey commenced preaching on the merits of daily Communion since the founding of the ACU, and that at a time when it was difficult to find men who would fulfill the Paschal precept even once in a while, and a group began to form that comes to receive the Sacramental Jesus every day, which the passage of time has seen grow prodigiously.

Another of the ways devised by Fr. Rey to solidify and preserve the fruit of the Exercises were Monthly Retreats, brief repetitions of those celebrated each month from Thursday night to the first Friday of the month, from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m., consisting of an apologetic conference, minor exposition, rosary, practical "examen," meditation, reservation, and celebration of the Eucharist.

These late-night student sessions started on the 1st of May, 1931. They were suspended from January 1932 to the end of '33 by government decree, because it feared student gatherings at night. In 1938, when they were modified to include a religious or other general interest talk, they were placed under the responsibility of the Social Circle and because of the burden on students that had to attend the earliest classes the following morning, distribution of the Eucharist ceased starting the month of May and the service concluded at eleven at night, leaving Mass to be attended the following morning, where most convenient. But in December we received authority from the Holy See to celebrate Mass at midnight, and, from January 1943 the retreats were held from 11 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

This privilege came about as follows: During the early days of the Agrupación, Fr. Rey often commented on his initiatives saying that once his institution had a home of its own he looked to build a chapel following the plans of the primitive Christian basilicas, as their architectural style best embodies the catholicity of the Church and its hierarchical unity, best meets liturgical needs, and is most in consonance with the spirit of the Agrupación. In that chapel, of course, the altar would be placed at the center of the transverse under a ciborium and Mass would be offered facing the faithful. But since a special dispensation was required for this, Fr. Rey used the opportunity to ask for another one, to offer midnight Mass during the monthly retreats, thus making it easier for the students to go to bed early; he would also ask for the authority to offer the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament without chants to avoid bothering neighbors at such late hours.

Those which seemed to agrupados such vague, distant and difficult to realize dreams began to show signs of feasibility when one of their own was destined to fill the position of Third Secretary of the Cuban Legation¹² in Italy. Before departing¹³, he offered Fr. Rey that he could assume responsibility for working on all three dispensations, but Fr. Rey said that, since construction of the chapel

was still in the distant future, he focused on the two most immediate ones.

The dispensations were requested in 1937 by the Legation¹⁴ of Cuba before the Holy See; and in 1938 via the Provisor of the Diocese of Havana, while on a trip to Rome; and in 1939 via the Procurator of the Society of Jesus, without any success. Finally, in 1942, said Secretary, by then Chargé d'Affaires, following the advice of sage Jesuit Fr. Romualdo Galdóz who had been a teacher of Fr. Rey, personally asked the Holy Father for a private audience at which he could describe the work of the Agrupación and the need for the requested dispensations, and submit a detailed memorandum regarding the matter. The response was immediate, and on October 22nd, Cardinal Maglione, Secretary of State for the Holy Father, informed the Legation of Cuba that, "The Holy Father chose to personally review this request, and following his directive, the Apostolic Nuncio in Cuba has been instructed to make a recommendation in situ regarding the possibility of conceding to this pious request." Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, Substitute of the State Secretariat of his Holiness, explained to the Chargé d'Affaires of Cuba that the request was accepted in principle but, in order to comply with the Sacred Congregation of Rites, it had been forwarded to the Nuncio as a mere formality adding that, beyond granting the privilege, the Holy See desired to offer the Agrupación a special courtesy, asking for a report of its activities, and adding that if it desired anything else from the Holy Father, he stood ready to comply.

Monthly retreats continued following said format until the 5th of January of 1954, with the sole exception of a quarterly retreat from 3 to 6 in the afternoon, introduced in 1944, but repeated only a few times.

Starting in 1955, following the updated norms on the celebration of Mass and Communion issued by Pius XII, the monthly retreat took place from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., a custom no longer followed, as the

Mass for the first Friday of the month is celebrated in the morning and only students are required to attend.

Thanks to these practices the Agrupación has always enjoyed the proper balance between apostolic action and interior life, as Pius XII recommended to the Marian Sodality when alerting them that, as they intensify in ardor, they should flee from "an excessive and timorous limitation of piety, heeding the words of our Lord: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!'"

Fr. Rey wanted the spiritual life of the Agrupación to yield a vigorous and manly, sober-minded, serene, constant, humble, and correct cult, perfectly assimilable and welcomed by the restless temperament of the young intellectual.

Free of sentimental devotion, but united to God by faith, hope, and charity, in love of Christ, and in imitation of his life and example.

An eminently practical man, informed in all actions by reason and firm doctrine, sure enemy of that imbalance that shows itself in exaggeration, Fr. Rey would put to a forceful end any off-color remark, and wrestle away completely any show of sensitiveness towards piety in the Agrupación, for nothing filled him with greater horror than sanctimoniousness.

This is what we find in the first notecard on the instruction of aspirants, namely, that the Agrupación would fail if it produced sanctimonious men, and in the seventh notecard, regarding the qualities demanded of candidates, we find in the heading the phrase: "must not be sanctimonious."

The spiritual life of the agrupado, regardless of the level it might attain, must be free of eccentricities and of anything out of the ordinary: simple prayers and devotional exercises; sober and terse expression; regular receipt of the sacraments, struggle against the passions, self-control, and renunciation within a joyful and natural spirit.

There should not be and indeed there is not indifference in the piety of agrupados led by Fr. Rey: for without it "there cannot be true apostolate."

Yet he, who in the plans for the Agrupación had written "Amor-Exigir mucho," did not wish for the flame of that fire to perish in smoke, but rather that pent-up it provide force to prime the "strengthening of the will with the aid of Grace for the voluntary fulfillment of one's responsibility," and that thanks to that internal pressure one would consciously, forcefully, and unfailingly make everything a means to reach God.

In the letter on Marian Sodalities penned by Pius XII to the Society's General on the 15th of April of 1950 he presents another characteristic aspect of piety in the Agrupación that could not be found missing due to its special nature: the "solid spiritual formation and apostolic activity that spring from it, should give witness of its fully Marian character, given that such pious inclination of soul to honor and love Virgin Mary, just as it is always professed by your Sodalities, has always been considered by all as a peculiarly distinctive seal of true faith and doctrine."

In effect, the Virgin takes paramount place in the spiritual formation of the agrupado in which his devotion, with Divine Intimacy, absolute fidelity to the Apostolic See, buttressed by the "Rules to Feel with the Church" and the conviction of having received from God the mission to return Cuba to Him, are constantly inculcated in order to make them characteristic of the spirituality of the Agrupación.

Constantly and at every opportunity, the Directors of the Agrupación have exhorted the conduct councils to imitate the virtues and to seek the intercession of the Holy Virgin, and with the special aim of honoring her, not just with a daily rosary in the chapel, but also by founding the Saturday Honor Guard, key homage to the Queen of Heaven and of the Agrupación.

Fr. Rey, who was always realistic and who always strove to form practical not theoretical agrupados, knew that to know all these things fully and very well is not always enough to assure perseverance, and that even those with best intentions often fail if they lack the proper environment.

Hence, to create the right environment in the Agrupación, it was not sufficient to have a physical location where agrupados could receive spiritual and intellectual formation, but rather to be the center of the lives of all of them, where besides getting together to study they could make friends, gather with social and work friends, share similar tastes and interests, like ideals, cultural level, and values, ways of thinking, where they can find others with whom they could deal with the confidence that comes from understanding and being understood, with that ease that guarantees honesty and spiritual purity, and is fail-safe.

In effect, a place where, thanks to contact among agrupados sharing the ideals of the Agrupación, it will be possible for it to achieve the aim of informing all the efforts of the agrupados, inculcating a particular spirituality forged in the Exercises and oriented evermore towards mental prayer; projected in the stark expression of their piety; in the eminently Catholic outpouring of their culture; in the way they practice their individual or collective apostolate and the idea they hold of family and social life.

But, to achieve that goal with the individuals one desires to shape, the first and indispensable condition is active conviviality in an appropriate environment. If not, it is not possible to attain the spirit proper to the institution, which is the only way by which the Agrupación becomes consubstantial with the agrupado and can extend itself beyond the walls of its social space.

It cannot be repeated enough that the Agrupación has very concrete characteristics and ideals and only those who fully make them their own can be useful for its ends. That is why one cannot be merely a

nominal agrupado, even if one is more or less sympathetic to the Agrupación yet is physically and spiritually preoccupied with other matters or duties. The aims of the Agrupación demand an active militant commitment that calls for physical presence, dedication, and discipline; he who cannot accept this cannot belong to it, regardless of the excellence of his qualities or the merit of his works that may qualify him for something else, but not for the Agrupación.

The Agrupación does not look to form good heads of families, nor even exemplary Catholics, though both are expected from an agrupado, but rather its aim, as has been stated again and again, is to form leaders capable of moving the country towards God. Leaders that can lead and can also act with discipline, harmony, and in coordinated fashion, free of arrogant individualism, with constant conviviality that forms individuals impregnated with the spirit of the Agrupación, who know, appreciate, and fuse with each other in order to attain what in the Acts of the Apostles is described as "ONE heart and soul."

It is for the purpose of remembering this mandate that the President, at Board sessions, reads chapter 4, verses 1 through 7 of the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, which so well expresses the environment desired for the Agrupación, that it is worth transcribing below:

"1. I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2. with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love,

3. eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call,

5. one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6. one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all in all.

7. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."

A stanza of the hymn of the Agrupación echoes this passage when it says: "Only one is our Leader and Master, only one our feelings and thoughts, only one common goal that unites us, come what may we will say, Esto vir."

It is obvious that to attain such a lofty and difficult ideal it is not enough to just pay monthly dues and appear on the list of associates. He who is content with this will not prepare to take over the leadership to which he has been called, nor will he be conscious of his obligations, nor will he be able to fulfill his duties. In order to reach the position awaiting him it is necessary, it is essential to constantly participate, for without that, it is impossible for conviviality to come about, and without conviviality it is impossible to acquire the spirit of the Agrupación.

Fr. Rey wrote to the agrupados in 1950: "For all, but in a very special way for students, one of the most efficient ways to become a true agrupado is to frequent our social house for study and play, as well as for all other activities. Only those who come to the Agrupación frequently will get to understand it perfectly and love it truly."

The instruction for aspirants takes great care to manifest the importance of this point, exclusive subject of the 8th notecard.

Immediately after the foundation of the Agrupación, Fr. Rey took care to promote this very important aspect of his work by studying it from every angle, in order to remove any obstacles that could hinder it and to smooth away any roughness that might make it less desirable. His resoluteness, which does not overlook the smallest of details, is evident in the notice that he posted on the Bulletin Board on November 14, 1931 when he said that: "Agrupados must never

forget the behaviors and norms that go hand in hand with the highest level of education.”

On Sunday, July 14th of that same year, he delivered a homily on the true level of friendship that should unify agrupados; and the following October 14th the very first resolution of the Board of Directors in its first session was: “To promote a high spirit of unity and friendship within the Agrupación.”

“The most beautiful unity that God created on earth after the familial one is friendship,” wrote Fr. Rey to the Agrupación, from Puerto Rico on the 5th of July 1932, and in that very letter he exhorts that, “by the firm and unbreakable laws of friendship for noble souls, we will be bound together with great interest for each other and assist each other with noble selflessness whenever possible.”

“If I were to ever ask you,” is written in a 1936 issue of “*Esto Vir*,” “what is most appealing about our Agrupación, you would probably respond with the edifying fraternal fellowship that manifests itself in it in so many diverse ways. That intimate rapport that each day unites with new and invisible ties those who share in works, joys, and ideals, until a group of true spiritual brothers is formed. Brothers in Christ.”

“One of the most typical features of the Agrupación,” reports a 1938 flyer, “is the deep and healthy spirit of friendship that animates its members. Its first fruit is the motivating force of the other’s example. Moreover, agrupados help each other in all spheres of life, making it possible to say, with all certitude, that in our house and outside of it, the members of the Agrupación live like family.” Thankfully, that is what makes conviviality possible and agreeable, and what allows the spirit of the Institution to infiltrate the new members inconspicuously as they deal with the older ones.

Addressing this topic, the “*Esto Vir*” of January 1949 states that, “the Agrupación is defined more by brotherhood than by anything else,

which is why it is possible to speak of a spirit that marks as well as informs all our activities." That same article, further on, gives the key to what characterizes and is the very essence of congregational conviviality: "The supernatural-like brotherhood that exists among agrupados is much above any human sympathy or antipathy."

"The level of Catholic charity practiced among agrupados should attain its highest level and its greatest excellence."

That is why the new sodalist vows: "I will never grow distant from the Agrupación due to personal antipathies or dislikes toward one or more of my companions, much less toward the Board, but rather accept the Congregation to be above all these human minutiae, which I will personally try to avoid."

Only in this way will it be possible to imagine a certain triumph, with firm supernatural belief and absolute dominion of personal passions that, by destroying all trace of selfishness, make possible the unity that can overcome amorphous disorganization.

"Our great motivation and our spirit" writes Fr. Rey to the Agrupación on the 20th of March, 1936 referring to the political opinions of agrupados, "can be found in the respect for the other's opinion on these matters, even when they contradict our own, staying united, so that the plurality of views be incapable of abating by an iota the intimate unity, joint interests, sincere friendships, just as Christ wished for his disciples, the most desirable charm of our much heralded and beloved Agrupación Católica Universitaria."

"I remind agrupados... to be against distinction in their esteem and show of affection for those who march to different drummers."

Therefore, "in anything that stays away from dogma or morals,"

allow each one "full liberty, within the bounds of justice and charity, to opine and act," and, in order to maintain harmony, counsel

“careful avoidance of impassion and unchecked determination to drag others to one’s point of view.”

Such attention to detail and constant vigilance by the Founder nurtured the birth, development, and solid establishment within the Agrupación of its characteristic ambiance, strong predisposition for apostolates, that enabled the community of principles, of aspirations, and of the way of life of agrupados, full of possibility for the Church and for Cuba.

Due to the meticulous attention paid by Fr. Rey to the structure of the environment, in which he considered everything from resentments left by political discussions to mortification resulting from name-calling, he deliberately omitted a chapter on sports.

Even though it addresses an area of importance to youth, more so at the time of the founding when it was all that could be counted on, he paid little attention to it because moral and intellectual formation trumped physical formation.

This does not mean that sport activities were banned from the Agrupación, on the contrary, it knows that physical exercises are convenient for the development of the body that, as a temple destined by God to be His tabernacle, should strive for perfection, but the sanctuary must never become the object of cult, hence, spiritual exercises must always supersede physical exercises.

Moreover, the Agrupación sees exercise as a vehicle for physical improvement, not as a means to set new records, which is the goal of sports today. Hence, he does not place emphasis on it if used for distraction from intellectual effort, much less if used for achievement of notoriety in that field.

IV

INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

The phase of moral formation is followed by an intellectual one, both equally important and very closely related, since to attain the ends of the Agrupación it is necessary, in the words of Pius XII, "to reach high intellectual and social levels" in order to commence with success "the defense of Catholic morals from a scientific point of view."

"Our God and Lord," writes Fr. Rey, "has so carefully and clearly placed before our eyes the fruits that can be reaped from the strongest and much measured foundation one could hope for, that it would be contemptuous to ignore them."

The onus that ensues from this is amply covered in the August 1943 issue of "*Esto Vir*": "God, without us having done anything to deserve it, has given us body and soul, not as our personal property, but for our administration."

"Therefore, it is clear that in due time He will ask for a true accounting of how we have administered for his service what he has given us."

"Hence, it is also clear that more should be asked from a student's psychic, intellectual side, for God gives students an intellect to labor on behalf of Him and his kingdom."

“That intellectual matter, forged and honed at the University and in our Study Circles, will become a powerful tool to fight for our dearest and most precious ideal: Cuba for Christ.”

“The student’s career is an important piece of his work for the Church: it is his calling from God that, if not properly formed, will be a weak flank on the intellectual front, key and central to the cause for Christ, for the Church, and for the Homeland.”

“If the time for intellectual formation is not taken advantage of, we would not only be dilapidating something that is not ours, but rather turning against God the very weapon he gave us to fight for Him for, in his Divine Providence, “he wanted you to be a student, just as he wanted others to be priests, and others masons, and if possessing the faculties to be one you are not, then you are a traitor to Providence, to God, to your faith, and to your Homeland.”

He returns to this topic in 1949: “The secondary objective, qualitatively subordinate to the first (self-perfection), but of paramount importance, and an unavoidable duty for members of the Agrupación, is in the intellectual sphere,” and consists of “complementing and strengthening knowledge particular to one’s chosen career. Towards this end, members of the Agrupación, PARTICULARLY STUDENTS, will have Study Circles by University School and by year, where students of Medicine, of Engineering, of Law, etc., can clearly comprehend the true significance and value of what they are learning, and can reaffirm the professional vocation that will accompany them for life. It is the Agrupación’s solemn intention that students and professionals be true ROLE MODELS in their respective careers.”

“The professionals, gathered by chosen interests or careers, should study domestic and international issues in research seminars, so the Agrupación might have a SOLID, UNIFORM AND AUTHORITATIVE understanding of economics, national and

international politics, employment, education, modern philosophical currents, etc.”

“Professionals have a solemn duty to maintain the Agrupación’s pennant for MOST PROMINENT CATHOLIC CULTURAL CENTER IN CUBA at a lofty level. It is the responsibility of professionals to organize all ordinary and extraordinary coursework offered to students; to offer conferences for the general public; and to regularly update their own formation, begun in the Study Circles they attended as students.”

The obligation to commit to study in order to put souls to work is the logical outcome of the Agrupación’s apostolic ends and the most appropriate way to attain the goal it set for itself, showing clearly the intellectual and combative character its founder desired.

But as the ideas in vogue at the time of its foundation were far from apt for attainment of its goals, they were the first obstacles to overcome, and to do so he adopted a more harmonious, more organized, more humanistic educational system than was in use then and, unfortunately, also in use for the formation of our youth. Lacking that it would be useless to get anything done in an environment more in need of guides and guidelines than of catechisms and wardrobes, where the ship of the Church was sinking due to breaches of ignorance, and in which sophisms, prejudices, low places, lies, and lack of information described public opinion on matters of religion, with no scientific grounding on which to base criticisms or attitudes. In order to combat these deficiencies, an elaborate program was created with care, a program of Study Circles, conferences, and brief coursework of meticulously selected and organized subject matter that, year after year, left a foundation of fundamental principles in the minds of agrupados.

As with all of the Agrupación’s efforts, its intellectual activity started on the day of its foundation. From the start, every effort was made for the cultural formation of agrupados to have depth and discipline

that are like the seals that make European thinking stand out, with deliberate emphasis on the particular characteristics of Hispanic culture, so as to strengthen our own traditions, thus attempting to strengthen our own strong points, bring out our spiritual physiognomy, and lend renewed vigor to our personality in order to allow it to safely coexist with other foreign cultural currents that threaten to overwhelm us.

In this context, the Agrupación was moved by a desire to rescue Catholicism's intellectual values, indispensable to reaching the specific ends pursued and in opposition to the tendency of affiliating culture to the atheism predominant in Cuba.

The cover page of a 1936 issue of "*Esto Vir*," designed by Gabriel Gonzalez Regalado, expressed that ideal perfectly: a student carrying a torch up a stairway whose steps are books that lead up to a resplendent cross. It is the agrupado that, lit by the light of reason, rises to God, defined as Truth and Light, through his studies, aware that his intellectual and spiritual progress depends in good measure on Cuban intellectual and spiritual progress.

Fr. Rey was on mark when he imprinted this training with a lively, enthusiastic, alert rhythm, a "current," so named by Ignacio Warner in the Apostolic Assembly of 1943, "of highly intellectual, patriotic, and religious tension... in order to move Cuba," to give it a sense of preparation for an upcoming battle and awaken in the agrupado a clear vision of his duty, endowing the studies with a feeling somewhere between martial arts and sports, so fitting to the young.

It was his ideal that the Agrupación be an arena for training future winning athletes in the intellectual field and, along with an intense spiritual life, also have an intense intellectual one. That is why the Agrupación is not only Catholic but also academic, and why we have repeatedly said that the two pillars on which it rests are Spiritual Exercises and Study Circles. Only in this way can one conceive of

creating a new type of man that, at least in theory, might be a true giant capable of confronting and conquering a whole society.

It is vital for the life of the Agrupación that neither of these two pillars falter. If that should happen, equilibrium would be lost, and it would not be able to fulfill in any way the mission for which it was created, for a powerful intellectualism lacking human warmth and a sense of the supernatural is as useless as a legion of anchorites cloistered within a spirituality incapable of imposing its principles on a hostile or indifferent environment. The former would not persuade, and the latter would lack the means to do so. On that day, the Agrupación would cease to exist and become something other than what it had planned to be.

We return again to the necessity of accepting the concept of sacrifice that enables the mutual dependence between the spiritual and intellectual life of the Agrupación. Without it, without self-control, without supernatural motives, the immolation of so many attractions, distractions, and interests that come in the way of strict fulfillment of duty is difficult. That is why both activities must be integrated when it comes to formation of future leaders, and both need to encourage a spirit of sacrifice, without which it would be useless to labor, for it would greatly hinder progress on both fronts.

In practice, the Agrupación's principal means of bringing about intellectual formation of members is Study Circles, where knowledge is imparted and without which any action would be worthless because of misdirection and misinformation. In the weekly sessions, attempts are made to offer just and reasoned criteria based on firm philosophical and sociological principles that can properly focus University learning and construct a scale of values for the future tied to fundamental truths. Hence, students, grouped by Schools, and within that by subject, expand upon the classes of their academic programs by selecting from them themes of special interest for supplementary brief seminars.

The intellectual formation of agrupados in Study Circles is complemented and strengthened by spiritual formation, making them extremely important tools in the work of tying the individual to the Agrupación, as well as of preparing him for the achievement of its ends so they become essential contributors, without which the Agrupación could not exist.

From this it follows that Study Circles have a practical objective: theoretical concepts are guidelines to direct future action, but are never used for purely speculative study of abstract subjects.

In order not to lose sight of this objective, Fr. Rey recommended in 1936 that knowledge acquired in Study Circles be applied in the great testing field of the Yaguas neighborhood, with agrupados participating in the work of the Agrupación there; and, in 1938 he remembered to devote part of the weekly sessions to mentioning current events related to the subject matter under discussion. Hence, pointing study towards action, it is possible to keep in mind that apostolic end that is the true north of all the Sodality's aspirations and activities.

Fr. Rey's ideal concerning formation at the Agrupación was to have agrupados attain a cultural level appropriate to the studious and indispensable to their apostolate as professionals.

He would often talk to them about the meaning of work, of its immense value, and of the endless trove of benefits derived from it, as compared to the uselessness of inaction and the sterility and harm of idleness.

"The indelible character of the seal that God has stamped on us," says the August 1943 issue of "*Esto Vir*," "is that of study." And to study, regardless of age or profession, is our divine service, our sacred duty, our apostolate for Christ."

"If you are not up to this priesthood of study then you were not born for the Agrupación and will never be Christ's professional."

Throughout members' university years, Fr. Rey continued to promote and demand the laying of a solid foundation upon which to rest future efforts, paying great import to grades earned by agrupados, and insisting greatly on the obligation to be first-in-class. Thanks to this, in a 1934 class of two hundred students with just four "A's," the sole pair of agrupados in the class were among the total of four that earned "A's." And in 1937, the best academic records among the 1st year of Law, 2nd year of Medicine, 1st of Civil Engineering, and 1st of Philosophy and Liberal Arts were those of members of the Agrupación. In that same year, out of 19 taking examinations in Philosophy and Liberal Arts, agrupados earned 10 medals, 18 "A's" and one "B." Similarly in Engineering, Law, Commercial Sciences, and Medicine and Pharmacy, out of 369 taking examination, agrupados took 66 medals, 234 "A's," 67 "B's," 40 "C's," and 28 "D's."

It is certainly true that in the years between 1934 and 1938, the Agrupación lived its "golden age" as it relates to cultural formation, and that during that time Fr. Rey was motivated by a desire to make agrupados not just very Catholic men, but also very well learned, and to produce an intellectual effervescence within the Agrupación that would never be outdone. But as it is also true that such activity, favored by the circumstances of that moment, had a lower profile in '38, it has retained a very high average level in keeping with the founder's desired goals and, even if later agrupados are not possessed by a similar fever-pitch, it continues to be "a ready spirit and an unbreakable will for the work at hand." "A tenacious researcher, a zeal for excellence, and a serious student for Science," without which he would be of no use in achieving the Institution's ends.

"Do not collaborate where you cannot contribute, but why stay with your arms crossed if you can contribute?" That was the spirit that infused Fr. Rey and that from the start was successful in stirring the minds of his young men, putting them in motion, and filling them with noble ambitions.

The initial formational activity at the Agrupación on the intellectual front was the brief course that Fr. Rey commenced on July 1, 1931, about communism and socialism with the aim of preparing agrupados for Catholic social action. It is curious to observe how this preoccupation for things social taken up by Fr. Rey at the onset of the Agrupación comes alive anew towards the end of his life, to the point of dominating his thinking during his last days, when he considered ways to raise its profile in the life of the Institution.

Once he completed the brief course, he started immediately to organize the crux of the future work of the Agrupación, the first of his Circles, the most important, the truly foundational Study Circles.

The August 1, 1931 issue of "*Esto Vir*" gives us, in clear and precise manner, what Fr. Rey wanted to impress upon students, namely, "all of man's work must be conscientious work." To analyze the field of our efforts it is first necessary to draft a map of the Catholic world in our country... and, in passing, it is equally necessary to know the non-Catholic terrain... moreover, it is necessary to know contemporary history from a Catholic-Social point of view. Only in this way will we be able to seize the high ground and achieve effectiveness of action."

"... it is also necessary to seriously study the very wise norms emanating from the Holy See in Rome in order to guide Catholic Action, and to examine them based on our particular circumstances and the possibilities of our nascent Agrupación. Only in this way will we be able to graft the shoots of our incipient action onto the secular tree of the Church."

"... it is of paramount importance that we study in common. Only by studying as a group will we be able to attain that great Catholic ideal of having common and unique conscientious criteria... a single feeling... and a single want... and thus attain... the eventual and desired fruit that we hope to reap from the hidden and quiet labor of our Study Circle: a single work."

In spite of the desires of Fr. Rey, the limited number of agrupados in the initial months did not allow for Circles to take place on a regular schedule, hence they cannot be considered a common fixture until the 10th of November of the subsequent year, with its first session taking place on the 24th of that month, presided by Luis Delgado.

Since then the Circles continued on a regular schedule until 1947. To capture the tenor from the first sessions until we read the report issued by Ataulfo Fernández Llano, we can mention the efforts of the first two courses on Psychology and Ethics, delving into matters of great importance like the nature of man, his spirituality, his free will, his transcendental end; the existence of natural law, his essential characteristics, his relations with positive law, moral conscience, and norms to distinguish good and evil; nature and the end of man as viewed by the main philosophical schools; as well as the thoughts of various illustrious Cuban ancestors like Félix Varela, Gaspar Betancourt, and José Antonio Saco.

The Study Circles also tackled the social question. Following an introduction on its existence and nature, and on individualism and how to overcome it, attention was turned to a Catholic approach to decentralization of governmental functions and on the way of organizing local autonomy in Cuba given its past history and its geographic, political, economic, and social circumstances. Finally, Attorney René Capistrán Garza, then exiled from Mexico for political reasons, offered a Study Circle on the nature and characteristics of Catholic Action, civic action, and political action.

The primary promoters of the Study Circles were Ataulfo Fernández Llano and José M. Lázaro, men of solid formation in philosophy and sociology, and truly providential assistants in the formational task undertaken by Fr. Rey.

In 1935, the highlights of the Circles' activities are the course on the History of Philosophy offered by Lázaro and the series of conferences of Fernández Llano on the "The Thought of José

Antonio Saco¹⁵,” and “Corporatism.” The scholastic controversies that periodically break the schedule of the conferences and give much life to the Circle are introduced in '36; 1939 is marked by the course on Psychology offered by José Ignacio Lasaga, and 1942, seeking to perfect the formation program, by the adoption of a three-year plan of required coursework.

Later on, due to a growing number of agrupados, the Study Circle starts to be divided and subdivided into a number of other Circles, such that, in 1945, there were eight weekly Circles. Three of them were professional Circles divided into three main fields: Law, Medicine, and Engineering that, in addition to their particular subject matter, took on moral and ascetic issues. The Student Circles were the following: a philosophical one made up of Liberal Arts students, though not exclusively so; and others on Social Sciences, on Medicine, and an additional two on ascetics.

A brief course entitled, “Catholicism versus Liberalism” continued to create buzz within Study Circles until 1947 when it ceased to exist, because it was absorbed by other Circles increasingly oriented towards specialization.

It is true that in each and every one of them can be found a philosophic and sociologic bent to the matter at hand, so members will not be ignorant of the material previously acquired in Study Circles. Nonetheless, it would be advantageous to renew this Circle in its original form in order to transfer a wider knowledge of those foundational disciplines that should be common to all agrupados, regardless of career path, as their future apostolate should rest upon them, irrespective of the position they might occupy in the future, particularly those in technical careers whose university curricula omits them.

The desperate economic situation of 1931 gives rise to an activity that, partly foreign to the ends of the Agrupación and to the background of its members, was created “with the objective of

increasing the economic lifeline of agrupados, in light of the dire circumstances of our time,” and that in spite of success in its initial two years, disappeared as soon as things returned to normal: The Languages and Commerce Academy.

It was inaugurated November 14, 1931 starting with German language instruction, typing and business writing on December 11, and English and bookkeeping on February 4, although business coursework came to an end before the year’s end, and languages, including French, in 1940.

More akin to the spirit of the Agrupación, but also in response to a true need, was the creation of a Literary Academy to form Catholic writers and orators able to defend with dignity the truths of our faith and to propagate the doctrine of Christ.

If the Studies Circle is indispensable for the solid development of ideas, the literary Academy is indispensable for their propagation, therefore the formation of each and every agrupado must now lack neither of these two essential elements, for if the works of the Agrupación are intended to direct Cuban thought the young man formed for that task requires both content and form, right idea and proper expression, in other words, both the Study Circle and the Academy.

Fr. Rey saw this so clearly that in his original plans he devoted greatest attention to these two cultural activities of the Agrupación, and in 1931 he tries to start both the Studies Circle and the Literary Academy.

The start of the Academy and the Studies Circle were delayed for similar reasons, with the former formally established on January 28, 1932, in the “Avellanada Literary Academy” hall of Colegio de Belén. Its first president was Carlos Martínez Arango, who came onboard on February 4, at the home of the Agrupación. On that occasion, it

was agreed, as proposed by its President, to name it Heredia Academy, under the direction of Fr. José Rubinos, S.J.

In addition to the practical tasks undertaken at the Academy, Fr. Rubinos offered lessons in writing style and thanks to his extraordinary literary gifts, his generosity, his patience, and his great pedagogical talents, he soon encouraged a good number of agrupados, making the Heredia Academy one of the more brilliant functions of the Agrupación in and for a long while.

The year 1936 marks the high-water mark of the Academy, and, in general, for all other efforts relating to intellectual formation. In that year, Fr. Rubinos offers his brief course on the epithet, and Lazaro speaks on Henri Bergson, and Guy Perez Cisneros on "Modern Art" and "Afro-Cuban Poetry Content" in open sessions, masterful conferences, still remembered, that belay the cultural restlessness of the agrupados of that time.

The Academy was split into two sections in 1937, one for older academics, already advanced in literary formation, who that year studied Oratory in Antiquity with Fr. Rubinos, followed by research on journalism; and another, with much greater attendance, that met with the objective of learning to write literarily, more like a regular class, emphasizing practice over theory.

But due to this very split and to the formation in 1935 of the Journalism Circle, also directed by Fr. Rubinos, that took from the Academy the support of some of its most enthusiastic collaborators, it began to languish in 1939. Fr. Rey, alarmed by this symptom, gave full powers to Jose Sust, in his capacity as President of the Academy, to reorganize. Sust's efforts were successful in reviving it for a time, but once his term expired it again commenced to falter. In 1943, nearly dissolved, Fr. Rey called for various sessions intended to give it new life, with partial success, but not sustainably. In 1944 it celebrated an oratory competition, and in '45 it had a stormy conference by Octavio Smith on modern poetry. In '49, it seems that

a brief course by professor of Calvary, Fr. Gamazo, on literature and oratory makes a comeback, but in 1950 it comes to a final end.

Two years later, a brief oratory course by Fr. Juan Lopez Pedraz, S.J., makes a fleeting appearance and, finally, in 1955 the side-by-side Oratory Circle and Writing Circle, directed by Fr. Pedraz and by Rene de la Huerta, respectively, seem to have made a comeback.

A Library is a natural complement to both the Circles and the Academy. The 1931 activities' report states that the "Agrupación hopes to make available to its students the most effective, airy, clean, and comfortable study hall, full of reference books, copiers for reproduction of University conferences, and specialized assistants to help with difficulties and provide guidance."

This ideal was already a developing reality in 1933 and has continued to grow steadily thanks to generous donations like that of Mrs. Rosalía Fernández Quevedo, widow of Bidegaray, in 1935, who gifted the law library of her husband, Attorney Cristóbal Bidegaray y Erbite; and to the steady acquisition of works that cover all branches of Catholic thought.

The Library is now organized into sections, by field, each one in a large room, with over twenty total rooms where agrupados may study in comfort without being disturbed and without disturbing others.

In 1935, during the "golden age," the extraordinary intellectual activity of the Agrupación gives rise to the birth of three Study Circles. The first one is an offshoot of Studies: the Social Circle, whose subject was the analysis of sociological topics, adopting as its first textbook "Christian Sociology," by Presbyter José María Llovera, and then the work on Natural Law by Fr. Victor Cathrein, S.J., translated specially for this Circle from the original Latin by Fr. Alfredo Pérez del Río, S.J., of Colegio de Belén and printed for the study group members.

In 1938 the Social Circle was divided into two, as were the Medicine and Law ones: one for the older members, dedicated to the study of particular topics in Classical Philosophy and Sociology, and the other for the younger men that took up "Sociology" by Llovera.

The year 1941 brings about another novelty, a week of studies led by Fr. Manuel Foyada, S.J., on the sociological aspect of economics. It gives rise to a new Economic-Social Circle led by Fr. Foyada and to the Pro-Christian Social Democratic movement which we will take up below, and is among the accomplishments of the Agrupación, one of the ones most akin to its spirit.

In '49, Claudio Escarpenter offers a brief course on Economics, and in '51, Angel Fernández Varela another on Social Encyclicals, making use of the textbooks of Llovera, "Pontifical Addresses" and "Sociology."

Finally, in 1955, the Social Circle has been reorganized and placed under the direction of Fr. Salvador de Cistierna, Capuchin, who studied at the Leo XIII Social Institute" in Madrid. This Study Circle, which brings a time of renewed liveliness and vigor, sent off various conference speakers to the interior of the Republic with the objective of teaching the social doctrine of the Church.

The Medical Circle, founded by Ovidio de la Osa on June 27, 1935, and started on October 30 of that same year, is one of the most active and fruitful ones to come out of the Agrupación.

The foundational thrust, far from losing strength, has intensified with time and, from the onset, covered Physiology and Pathology; Gabriel González Regalado offered a brief course on Osteology, designed for high schoolers who began to study Medicine and for university freshmen; and Fr. Román Galán, S.J., Chemical Engineer from the University of Oviedo, and Chemist from Barcelona's Sarria Institute, offered 22 theoretical and 89 practical classes in the laboratory of

Colegio de Belén, in essence, an Introduction to Biochemistry for medical and agronomical engineering students.

During that year Fr. Rey proposed to base the Medical Circle in “las Yaguas,” and considered the possibility of building a small space with four or five sickbeds, including the initial warehousing of medicines for the indigent of that neighborhood. This was the genesis of the existing “Fr. Rey de Castro Dispensary.”

The year 1937 followed a similar path: Hygiene Conferences in “las Yaguas;” brief courses— General Introduction to Biochemistry and Chemistry by Fr. Galán; on the nervous system by Sergio Alvarez Mena; and Anatomy and Histology for university freshmen.

The Circle was divided into three sections in 1938 but, far from weakening, it picked up renewed energy. One for freshmen and another for sophomores led by juniors, designed to guide those starting their medical career via reviews of core coursework. The third Circle, for seniors, is the most important one and devotes itself primarily to the study and discussion of specific clinical cases.

In addition, the Medical Circle engaged in numerous extraordinary activities that year: Brief Courses, Medical Addresses, Office Hours, etc., exceeding all expectations at “las Yaguas,” where 108 patients were examined during the first three months, many of which were admitted at various City Hospitals thanks to the intersession of Circle members.

In 1941, driven by eagerness to enhance the Medical Circle, the Library of Medical Studies was established, home to the most useful medical journals from around the globe. For a time, it took on a circulatory approach wherein each associate had access to a different journal each week, and it made available upon request, for the cost of postage, copies of any article appearing in American journals. Moreover, weekly conferences were introduced for Circle members to read documents— synopses of recent medical articles

penned by members, and fostering greater benefit than purely individual effort, for it not only facilitated the exchange of life experiences, but also provided motivation to stay abreast of scientific advances abroad, so crucial in the field of medicine.

Other developments at the time were Medical Congresses, first celebrated on January 28 and 29, 1945 where it was agreed to issue awards to medical students, promote Ascetic Circles for doctors regarding the major challenges of Medical Ethics, to offer and require successful completion by medical students of coursework in Medical Ethics as a condition for becoming a sodalist, to promote the Agrupación's Medical Studies Academy and "*Lumen*" magazine as apostolic work, to remind agrupado doctors of their commitment to study at the Medical Library for a given number of hours each week in order to attain the highest preparation, and to remind each and every agrupado doctor to publish in a scientific journal annually.

It is important to understand that the Medical Circle is the Agrupación's most solid and vigorous one. Its enthusiasm is sustained via brief courses, staff meetings, conferences, etc., and competent professionals that also make daily calls at various University Hospital's study halls and other centers, a commendable practice where a resident doctor transfers his knowledge to students with maximum didactic effectiveness.

The last Circle founded in 1935 was the Legal one, which was presaged the prior year in a course on Political Law offered by Dr. Ataúlfo Fernández Llano, who in a 1935-36 journal offered coursework on "General Theory of the State" and "Introduction to the Study of Law," in addition to a brief course on Political Law. That year also saw various conferences on Roman Law, in addition to new scholastic debates on metaphysical subjects.

Like the Medical Circle, the Legal one was divided into three sections in 1938, orienting each much as the former had been.

A fourth section arose in 1939 devoted to Penal Law, following the guidelines found in the work of Fr. Cathrein and, finally, in 1942 new members founded the Law Academy, where a brief course on Legal Framework was offered.

In addition, in the second year of that fecund 1935-36 course, the Historical Research Seminary was born, so promising, yet so sad in outcome.

It met for the first time on April 13, 1936 when it was put forth that "all kinds of historic research shedding light on the origin, construction, object, architecture, etc., of all historic buildings, monuments, or public places worthy of attention be considered."

The first subject of study was the Convent of Santo Domingo for which a great amount of data, photographs, etc., was compiled, but activities came to an end when its director was relocated abroad.

At the urging of Fr. Rey, who had great interest in the objective of the Seminary, the Board agreed to reconstitute it in June 1947, pointing it towards documentary research of historical events. But just a month and a half after that resolution, the person selected to lead the effort also left Cuba before the Seminary could begin work.

Finally, in 1953 it was possible to bring together a number of agrupados with the intent of publishing annals with original works on the history of Cuba, and they chose to commence with research on the pontificate of Trespalacios, first Bishop of Havana, by first seeking documents on the Prelate in the National Archives, the National Library, and in the Society of Friends of the Country in teams of two, planning to later search the Archives of the Archdiocese, as well as request data from Seville and from the Vatican. Work had progressed well and the fruits of their effort promised a result that would have shed much scientific prestige on the Agrupación but, once again, developments foreign to everyone's

wishes cut short the activities of the Seminary, never to reconvene again.

Two others, the Science and the Commercial Sciences Circles were born in 1938.

The former one, for students of all scientific fields, came about thanks to Marcelo Alonso who started with a mathematics course for sophomores, while José Sust offered advanced math classes to engineering students.

From these early days came a brief course by Marcelo Alonso on the constitution of the atom that was later published in pamphlet form and garnered much praise. The course, offered by Alonso while still a student, was audited by Dr. Gran, Dean of Mathematics at the University of Havana and by Maturino Castro, S.J., physics professor at Colegio de Belén.

The Apostolic Assembly of 1944, on the Catholicization of the labor masses, gave rise to an idea within the Sciences Circle to bring together all agrupado engineers scattered over the Island to a small annual Congress in conjunction with laborers, in order to consider possible projects for joint efforts; these sessions were very successful and gave rise to practical proposals and to collaboration in apostolic works with members of the Medical Circle whose congresses were held at about the same time as the Engineering ones.

The Commercial Sciences Circle, twin of the latter, was founded in October 1938, presided by Bartolomé Monserrat for students of the School of Commercial Sciences of the University of Havana.

Meanwhile the Agrupación neared the moment when it would commence working on the end for which it was created.

The year 1938 is critical to the A.C.U. because it was the graduating year for the first group of members, too small to wield sufficient

numerical force capable of bringing about conquest, it was more like a beachhead, point men that would be augmented by graduating class after graduating class until a powerful army is formed. Hence, Fr. Rey, who had been awaiting this moment since his time at Colegio de Belén, commenced to take steps that not only served to meet current needs, but would also lay the groundwork for those who would make up the real Agrupación. Later on, we will see how that enormous transcendental milestone was then perceived, but for now we are solely interested in examining the impact on formation, where it brought about a new reorganization of the Study Circles.

Firstly, the Professionals Circle is founded in 1939, divided into three sections, one for Law, Philosophy, and Arts and Pedagogy; another for Medicine, Pharmacy, and Dental Surgery; and a third for Engineering, Business, and Sciences; dedicated to advanced studies and open to all modern intellectual movements that often occupied its rostrum, along with its members, each time a representative of the Catholic culture visited Cuba.

While there were only 26 professional agrupados in 1939, of which 8 were not based in Havana, in spite of their meager number yet conscious of their duty they immediately began working to the best of their abilities.

In due time a Student Circle was created, made up of all existing students, now divided not only by field, but also by year, it dedicated one day of the week for each of the activities of the Agrupación, as approved by the Board. It was also agreed to create a group within each Circle to consider matters appropriate to it, made up of a President, a Secretary, members of the Board of Directors of the corresponding Circle, and the Section Heads from each year, with the exception of freshmen.

In 1944, Fr. Foyaca offered the Professionals Circle a brief course on Comparative Constitutions, Fr. Amigó offered another on Catholic Action, and Marino Pérez Durán a final series of conferences on the

French Revolution in February 1952. Since then Circles that operate within the program of intellectual formation work independently of each other, as it was prior to 1938, each made up of both students and professionals.

The last one created was "Catholic Center for Cuban Studies," dedicated to considering our country's problems and possible solutions based on Catholic principles.

The themes addressed in the 1954-55 courses were of great interest and are sufficient to display the level of maturity in the thinking of the Agrupación: large agricultural estates in Cuba; adult literacy; problems in the university; high school reform; unemployment in Cuba; tuberculosis in Cuba; parasitism, individual and societal ills; the social problem; the armed forces of Cuba; smoking problems; the sugar dilemma; the press in Cuba; unions in Cuba; financial reform; communication and transportation; addiction, gambling and prostitution; opportunities for religious instruction in Cuba; divorce; and the racial problem.

For the spiritual and intellectual formation of agrupados and infusion of the spirit he wished them to have, Fr. Rey complemented the Circles with "*Esto Vir*," the official organ of the Agrupación, issued sometimes biweekly, other times monthly and dean of its activities, it saw first light on June 1, 1931.

"Notwithstanding its small size," explains the activities' report for the 1931-32 year, "this publication is of great import, for its goal is to develop good Catholic authors and offer agrupados, amidst a close environment of familiar cordiality, Catholic thinking regarding the key issues that each month monopolize public opinion."

Its main purpose is entombed in the phrase "truth, truth that enlightens, truth that shows the way," which he chose as the way through the chaos of passions and ideas that informed Cuban society at the time.

Its first phase, which ends August 1 of '31, was of a very high quality, particularly the last issue; later on financial reasons interrupt publication until January 10, 1932 when a drop in quality is evident, particularly the mediocre initial issues.

It again ceases publication on October 22, 1933 until June 3 of '34. Since then, with increasing quality, it brings to light instructive articles on current events. Not only the editorials, largely dedicated to fundamental aspects of the agrupados' spiritual formation, but also numerous articles that appeared from time to time, particularly the column by José Ignacio Lasaga: "From our Observatory," examine the most significant current events taking place in Cuba and abroad, from the Church's point of view, in order to offer agrupados criteria and insights that might allow them to properly judge the most discussed topics, and more importantly, to later take a stand for a position based on solid Catholic principles.

Since then "*Esto Vir*" has continued its journey with only one interruption: from July 21, 1935, to January 31, 1936.

As years passed, the publication started to lose interest in foreign affairs and focused attention on national issues, nearly losing completely its original character. Fortunately, in the Pax Romana Congress, celebrated in Spain in 1946, Fr. Rey realized that "*Esto Vir*" no longer exemplified what was then the Agrupación, and that it was giving up its formative role to become a self-referential chronicle. He writes that various people told him that "from reading its pages one gets an idea of a very congenial, very Catholic, and even very typical and interesting university association, but one misses completely anything of seriousness, of profundity and of interest regarding the world and the future at large."

Fr. Rey accepted these observations in the editorial of October 1946, in which his signature appears for the first time, and from which moment he imparts a brand new point of view, partly looking out from the Agrupación, observing and judging external challenges:

university, national, global, and above all foreign Catholic movements. This, along with the initial years, is its most brilliant era, in which it fulfills its formative objectives to perfection yet, starting in 1949, it once again falls back on internal events exclusively and acquires, once again, the character it had prior to Fr. Rey's trip to Spain. It never ceases to be an important piece in the spiritual formation of agrupados, yet it has lost almost completely any interest in the cultural aspects that it had at its foundation and which would be desirable to recover.

V

APOSTOLIC FORMATION

On par with molding agrupados spiritually and intellectually, the Agrupación's plans call for perfect preparation by also having them undergo a phase of apostolic formation.

To that end a series of activities have been organized that, although excellent for building character and promoting a spirit of sacrifice due to the ends to which they themselves must adhere, namely training future men of action through practice, are insufficient to attain the desired objectives with which they should not be confused, in any case, just as by themselves they are insufficient to meet the needs of the times.

The Rules of Marian Sodalities insist that members know firsthand the bitter part of life lest a soaring spirit give rise to utopian soldiers for an unreal battle, but they are also not content with mere practice of mercy, hence its first rule establishes that its aim, beyond perfection and salvation and holiness of self and of others, is to "defend the Church of Christ against impious attacks."

This concept is affirmed and clarified by Pius XII in an address to 300 sodalists in 1946 when he says that the practice of works of mercy "complements your very scientific formation since it matures your judgement, simultaneously granting life experiences and opening pathways to the hearts of the people so you might penetrate them with greater assurance and naturalness. One cannot

truly garner these benefits solely through book study or mere attendance to classrooms at a University or Institute.”

In other words, even though the Agrupación must retain its works of mercy at all cost, as a formative tool and to uphold the spirit of the Church, it cannot expect that solely through these it will be able to influence the thinking of the country and, for this very reason, it must follow a different path.

Looked at in this way, “the first apostolate of the agrupado”

according to an article in “*Esto Vir*” signed by E. S. R., “is his own — his religion, his study, his profession, his formation. It is first in order and importance, it is required to exercise the others, it is the one on which all the work of the Agrupación is based, it takes a long time, and it takes great care.” In other words, to do everything possible to absorb the formation offered that when perfectly done, gives rise by itself to an excellent apostolate, a most powerful apostolate of personal example, an impeccable life and conduct, always ordered according to the most orthodox of Catholic principles.

It could be named the apostolate of self, and should have primacy over all external activity, good as it might be, during the formative phase, and it suggests that apostolic works in which students participate should be few in number.

Fr. Rey was categorical about that and he always maintained that “the norms of the current Pope and the spirit of the Agrupación make it paramount that students not be loaded up with tasks or promotions detrimental to their spiritual or intellectual formation, for better preparation is superior to premature action.” This is the reason why, without hesitation, he preferred that agrupados remain out of the workforce until fully formed as professionals.

In 1951, clarifying concepts, he writes to Manuel Artime: “The apostolate God wants from one is that which thanks to our conditions only one, and no one else, can do.” That is why the

A.C.U. should dedicate itself to the university apostolate, for anyone can teach catechesis, but only a graduate student or professional can convert a university student."

It is logical, then, given the Agrupación's intention to create a Catholic intellectuality, that it would be tantamount to betraying its very essence if it did not engage in university activities, hence, the most natural field to exercise the apostolate proper to a student agrupado is the University, where abundant fruits are within reach.

"The mobilization of a nucleus of hundreds of apostles," states the pamphlet entitled "What is the A.C.U.?", integrally formed, both religiously and intellectually; carrying out their activities in a center of cultural irradiation, a university with nearly twenty-thousand students, is a powerful force of incalculable effects when it comes to the propagation of doctrine."

In practice, in addition to selecting possible candidates for the Agrupación from among peers, the apostolate is realized by contributing to the congregational "record" of good grades, in order to obtain a superior education and thus enhance the prestige of the institution; by giving solid examples of moral conduct; taking the greatest number of students to the Spiritual Exercises; propagating Catholic ideas through conferences, publications, etc.; spreading, through conversations, right ideas concerning the topic under discussion; creating, at the end of the day, a Catholic environment that counteracts the wave of materialism that threatens to engulf the young during their formative years.

Finally, in May 1955, this apostolate, targeted at students who are not and will never be part of the Agrupación or any other university Catholic organization, has taken the form approved by the Hierarchy of an association named "Fraternity of Catholic University Students," in which we hold great hopes for the future.

Fr. Gustavo Amigó, S.J., is on the mark about this subject in his synopsis of the formation objectives of the Agrupación in the September 1942 issue of "*Esto Vir*": "The youth apostolate, carried out by youth, requires organization, piety, study, and action.

"Atop all, organized bodies, hierarchies, and commands with delegation and execution. The voice of the leaders of the Church cannot be lost amid the noise of arguments, but rather received with respect and executed in obedience, to include recommendations that are not mandated. A Christian conscience acknowledges that to rule is to serve the interests of the collective, and to obey and carry out one's duty is not just a serious obligation, but also in one's best interest.

"Piety that lifts the soul to God in prayer, in respect towards his commandments and his Church, in love of Christ and everything related to his divine person. Not sentimentalism, but reasoned affection, able to withstand upsets, and able to enlighten and comfort others.

"That is why it must be accompanied by study, as much preparatory or philosophic as more strictly religious in its dogmatic, apologetical, moral, and cultural aspects. The Study Circles, the brief courses on religious formation, the companion readings, the appropriate instructions, are all front-line, required elements to sustain, defend, and develop the young.

"Only in this way is it feasible to engage in true apostolic work."

To do so, university students ready their arms, practicing for the professionals' apostolate, by participating in a series of works that were undertaken from the time of the A.C.U.'s foundation, to later develop and support through continued effort.

The oldest of all, started following the March and April 1931 Spiritual Exercises, was the conversion of the Church of Reina's school for

poor children into one for laborers, more attuned to the ideals of the new institution.

It started with forty students and grew to ninety that very year, most were young men who worked during the day and then took advantage of the evening to study.

With true spirit of abnegation that presupposes a commitment to daily classes, two professors volunteered in Mathematics, two in English, one in Spanish grammar, one in civics, two in stenography, and one in drawing. With their help, it was possible to work regularly in the space ceded by the Anunciata, in spite of little or no funds available.

Of course, the work of evangelization was not forgotten. Religion classes were offered three times per week, and preparations were undertaken to allow them to fulfill the Easter Sunday precept.

The second course was inaugurated on October 19, 1932, and it started with 123 enrollees that grew daily to 130, a most satisfactory demonstration of the previous years' success.

Classes continued in spite of the storm of 1933, for which professors were honored as "true heroes of our time" by the press.

As early as '34, one finds seeds of what is today the Belén Electromechanical School, and work begins on an "Electro-Industrial School that through technique and exercises promises to be a magnificent evangelization of Labor Leaders."

With time, this initiative develops, and, in 1938 with the School now located in the Agrupación's new building, it is decided to certify students in electrical assembly, radiotelephony, and other similar jobs.

In 1945, the Agrupación supported three schools for laborers in Havana and three others in the interior of the Republic.

With the passage of time, this work has evolved, adapting to needs in order to better cooperate with emerging institutions, like J.O.C., received with great enthusiasm by the Agrupación, like the Electromechanical School of Belén, for which three of the Agrupación's works, the Yaguas School for Laborers, the San Lorenzo night school, and the school at "La Lisa" neighborhood serve as stepping stones.

In addition, in October 18, 1931 an initiative lasting to this day was launched that, due to the sacrifice required and the consolation and spiritual support offered to its recipients, Fr. Rey labeled as one of the principal sources of overwhelming graces the Lord has always granted to the Agrupación: monthly visits to the Lepers' Sanitarium at Rincón. For the first visit, Fr. Rey, Ricardo Chisholm, Enrique Oslé, and Juan Suárez, the three priests still with us, met up at the Víbora bus stop.

The group grew to seven in November and 19 in December, the approximate number maintained to this day.

The height of the season, beyond the various events designed to cheer up the sick, was the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, celebrated February 14, 1932, programmed as a novena-mission attended by the Agrupación at large in communion with the lepers, and parading along the Sanitarium's esplanade in an emotional procession in which each of the sick was blessed with the Blessed Sacrament during prayers to Our Lady of Lourdes.

For a time, from the start of 1933 until revolution broke out, the visits to the Rincón ebbed, in part because of the political situation and "also in part because of the financial condition of the agrupados, for the Leper Hospital is located far from Havana and trip costs are a bit high." This note from the report of 1932-33 shows the gravity of the economic crisis impacting the country, for the roundtrip between Víbora bus stop and Rincón did not exceed twenty cents, to which must be added ten cents for the roundtrip between the point of

origin and said meeting point, for a total of only thirty cents per month.

In addition to the works just mentioned, the Agrupación always offered Catechism classes in one form or another.

The Agrupación started this work by collaborating with the Catechism classes offered by the Church of Reina and the missions at the Chinese "Chung Vah" old-age home, and on various occasions, without success, it tried to do the same in the prisons of Castillo del Príncipe. In 1944, the classes were offered in the House of Beneficence, and to students in Baldor, Americas, and San Antonio High Schools.

In addition to the Agrupación's initial social apostolate at the Yaguas, discussed above, and the work for the "Sellers of Newspapers," to be discussed below, the most significant and most socially transcendent Catechism effort of the Institution was the one at Torrens Reformatory School, started in September 1944.

The administration at Torrens provided agrupados, from the start, with any number of facilities in which to work and they were immediately attentive to all requests, often taking initiative to improve classes.

A number of the administrators took personal interest in the development of young men under the care of agrupados, starting with those in the Agricultural Center and in the Industrial looked after by the La Salle Brothers and applying appropriate methods and admirable constancy, obtained notable success.

When the Brothers sold their farm next to Torrens in 1952 and stopped visiting the reformatory, the Agrupación took charge of both Centers until the end of 1952, when the Board, without openly prohibiting it, started to raise so many obstacles that agrupados would have to return to Havana week after week without holding classes because of insignificant objections. They continued to visit

for some time until they became convinced that the effort was futile and gave up on a service they performed with great enthusiasm and that could have yielded much benefit to our society.

In the 1951-52 school year, religion and morality classes were held at the Military Civic Center in Ceiba del Agua; Catechism classes were started at Santa Barbara Church in '54, and the Agrupación expanded into the facilities at "Sacred Heart" School in Lisa in 1955 and explored formation of a savings cooperative that without doubt will contribute to raising the conditions of laborers of said neighborhood.

The apostolate at Yaguas could be considered part of the Laborers' School, but due to its accelerated development and to the different aspects encompassed, it is best to examine this activity separately, as it was adopted early on by the Agrupación as its principle formation apostolate.

By direct decree of the Archbishop of Havana, Monsignor Manuel Ruiz, the Agrupación started working in the indigent neighborhood of Yaguas, made up of some nine hundred houses raised atop the limited space of three square blocks, where 4,773 people lived, according to a survey fielded by agrupados.

At one time communists had a school at this location, if a limited number of classes under the shade of trees can be called a school, until they had to abandon it because of accusations of seditious propaganda during the revolutionary general strike of 1935.

The longstanding concierge of the school, the famous Manuela that would later be of much service to the Agrupación, turned over to the new teachers pencils and writing pads left behind by the communists so the teachers could commence their labor.

Little by little, funds to build a classroom were collected and on October 18, 1936, under the patronage of the Most Holy Virgin of Charity of Cobre, a Chapel-School was inaugurated. The building,

erected by José Ignacio Lasaga and workers from his father's farm, was made with materials and structure compatible with other houses in the neighborhood and included enough surrounding open space for five additional classrooms, along with fields for recreation and farming.

General instruction classes for children were at first entrusted to the Salesian Sisters and later to the Servants of the Sacred Heart and of the Poor, led for twenty years by the heroic and admirable Sister Magdalena, one of that work's most solid pillars, assisted at all times, in selfless sacrifice, by Clementina Coello, fully in concert with the ideals of the Agrupación. A group of four or five young ladies help them with the school's chores, which this year served about 150 boys and 155 girls.

Agrupados took care of classes for adults, with 49 enrollees, and also visited the homes in the neighborhood, one by one, in order to assess and meet the needs of each family whenever possible. Towards this end they collected clothing, organized visits by members of the Medical Circle and started to build up a stockpile of medicines, provided freely by laboratories and pharmacies in the city.

Weekly Catechism classes commenced at the same time, offered by the nuns in the morning and by agrupados in the afternoon, with the latter session ending with a film program.

The seriousness of the effort was eloquently highlighted when the Archbishop of Havana delegated to Fr. Rey assistance with marriages, waivers of objections, marriage waivers, and handling of requests from beyond the diocese, not only in Yaguas, but also in the indigent neighborhoods of Cueva del Humo and Isle of Pines.

The first dispensary was built in 1937, a most humble structure supported by posts donated by the Cuban Telephone Company, that lasted until a new masonry structure was built in 1941 that also housed a doctor's office and a hall/chapel.

By 1943 a night school for adults abutted the children's school that assisted 300 students, offering tailored programs in sewing, domestic service, modeling, etc., and prepared the youth for advanced electromechanical studies.

In addition, the Agrupación offered weekly Catechism classes and annual missions, Fr. Rey celebrated Mass on Sundays and Days of Obligation, and agrupados organized vigils for national holidays. By then, three sessions of Spiritual Exercises for men of the neighborhood had been offered at Colegio de Belén, an association of married couples was getting together monthly for religious instruction, and four groups of Acción Católica, for men, women, and young people of each sex, had been organized.

Furthermore, that year the dispensary had a clinician, two pediatricians, a throat, nose and ears expert, a dermatologist, two dentists, and a lab technician. Between October 1938 and October 1943, 1,750 patients were attended to, not counting house calls, and a good number of those who were ill were registered at different hospitals. Agrupado medical students played a role, contributing their time and talent in groups of three, three times per week, dispensing injections for those in need.

The cyclone of 1944 leveled the neighborhood while the sole solid structure, the Hall/Chapel, became the refuge for all those unfortunate people that following the disaster suffered the added injury of being threatened with forced separations, men going one way, women another, and kids to beneficence facilities "for fear of epidemics and scruples regarding family promiscuity."

The Agrupación protested energetically against such inhumane measures and was able to overcome the pending danger and rebuild the razed abodes.

In spite of the disaster brought by the cyclone work continued apace and, by the end of the year, activities had expanded to such an

extent that there was amazement over the resulting outcomes, given the adverse circumstances. Already in operation at the time, in addition to what has been mentioned, a workshop, a Laborer Literary Academy, Laborer Study Circles for youth and adults, Brotherhood of Laborers, Marian Laboring Youth, Eucharistic Crusade, Marian Sodality for women and for the young, and the addition of radiology and first aid services at the Dispensary.

Finally, following his death, as homage to Father Rey, came the construction of "Father Rey de Castro School-Dispensary," inaugurated on February 8, 1953, of a building with three wings surrounded by a patio where all the activities of the Agrupación in the neighborhood of Yaguas are comfortably carried out, and to which have been added home economics classes under the direction of 16 young ladies of the Marian Sodality, Court of Mary the Repairer, presided by Josefina Gelats, teaching sewing, embroidery, knitting, cooking, typing, shorthand and English. With the passage of time the Dispensary has grown and developed and today has eleven doctors, an ophthalmologist, three dentists, twenty-six students, and twenty-one young female assistants.



To a large extent, these developments are due to the sacrifice and constancy of Alvaro Ledón, Director of the works at Yaguas for the

past fifteen years and true soul of all that takes place there, whose efforts cannot be lauded enough and who is a living example of how the Agrupación understands the concept of duty.

In October 1937 agrupados took charge of works on behalf of Newspaper Salesmen, founded by Father Laburu, work he had previously done in Buenos Aires. It was temporarily operated out of a house across from the University of Havana that Raimundo Cabrera had once owned, but had ceded to his sons Raul and Ramiro, until 1938 when it operated out of the new home of the Agrupación.

Agrupados took responsibility for primary and religious instruction, and for preparing the top students for enrollment in the State School of Arts and Crafts. Concurrently, the Medical Circle administered care and medicines. Lunch and snacks were offered starting in 1940 and in 1941 the work was moved to the recently completed Hall-Chapel in Yaguas, thus combining both efforts from that date on.

VI

1931 — 1939

Shortly before his transfer to Spain, while Fr. Rey was still prefect of Belén and was thinking about the Agrupación Católica Universitaria he was determined to create, he looked for an appropriate site and by the time he received the transfer order had nearly decided to rent an apartment for \$35 per month on 21st. Street between B and C in Vedado, with sufficient rooms for a chapel, assembly hall, dormitories for residents, etc. But upon his return he found that the economic situation had worsened considerably during his absence and it was not possible to even think of rental payments at that time, so he went to Fr. Estevan Ribas, S.J., Director of the Sodality of the Anunciata to request, for the time being, a hall and some dormitories then in use and again today by said Sodality, on the second floor and the side of the Residence of Jesuit priests facing Estrella Street.

Fr. Rivas generously made the space available for all agrupados from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. daily and on Sundays after Mass.

The facilities are described in a report of 1931-32 as "a hall for games and recreation that had only a ping-pong table, two domino tables and four lounge chairs." In addition, there was a room destined for the secretariat, and another at the end of a long corridor, where Fr. Rey held audiences.

At that time the entire Agrupación took up a single pew at the Iglesia de Reina¹⁶ on Sundays, and the monthly dues were twenty

cents.

Nevertheless, in spite of its small size, its lack of funds, and the challenging times of its birth, the progress made in a few months was so extraordinary that the mentioned report, probably drafted by Fr. Rey himself, could not help but note: "Without a shadow of doubt, our work has had Providence and special assistance from God on its side, for agrupados themselves are flabbergasted at the exuberant harvest reaped under such difficult circumstances."

Fr. Rey knew the secret of that success, therefore his unbreakable hope in the assistance God would give to the work done in obedience to his Divine Will, kept him from getting discouraged for even an instant nor from vacillating in the certainty that the mustard seed would come to be a copious tree; that is why he always acted as if he had all the necessary means at his disposal, and when he submitted his foundation proposal to Fr. Carvajal, he asked "if it were possible to acquire or purchase a house for students right next to the University with a) an Adoration Chapel to nurture piety; b) an office for the director in which to hold audiences with the students and in which to work during the day; c) study halls where students could prepare for class; d) a school cafeteria where we could even serve lunch; e) a recreation and gymnasium room in which to rest."

A very short time later, two years and nine months, that ideal plan was partly realized, but in the original document — written when the Agrupación was not yet one-month old, at a time when realization of such a plan seemed extremely difficult, not just on paper, but in fact — we find plans for the very house the Agrupación Católica Universitaria has today, thus becoming the most eloquent monument possible to faith in Divine Providence.

It started to show its contributions early on when, along with the Archbishop of Havana Monsignor Manuel Ruiz' blessing of the foundation, we also received the confident and enthusiastic protection of the Prelate, who has since then placed all his episcopal

powers at the disposal of the Agrupación, already interceding before the Holy See to obtain a series of privileges that facilitated the spiritual development of agrupados immensely by contributing financially to its sustenance or overwhelming it with blessings and indulgences when all else failed. He animated and stimulated it constantly, being more than a father and pastor, but also an affectionate and reliable friend.

In considering the incipient work, it is surprising to see supporting acknowledgements received by the Agrupación from its very beginning. Right after the one from Monsignor Ruiz, on April 15, 1931, the next one to arrive was a decision to name Fr. Rey Adviser to the Cuban Catholic Youth Federation, founded three years earlier, and "that witnessed, once again, the sympathy and affection professed by all its members." The strong personality of the Founder, his intelligence, charity, vast culture, the force of his character, and his profound understanding of the most intricate problems of the soul, gave him moral authority, and exerted such a powerful influence over those who dealt with him that few could resist him.

In the first few months, during which the Agrupación is just Fr. Rey, his exceptional qualities serve to give his work consistency and vitality in the eyes of others, and to inspire in them, who see in the idea of the new institution the much needed solution to Cuban problems, the unshakeable faith that Fr. Rey has in their destinies.

That explains how, when agrupados can still be counted with the fingers of two hands and are not more than poor material to be formed and organized, to the onlooker the Agrupación looks firm and self-assured, quickly drawing many desirous to escape the confusion that engulfs them and find safe harbor.

Among them was Juan Suárez, one of the most faithful and useful collaborators that Fr Rey had.

Following a session of Spiritual Exercises for men offered by the latter in Iglesia de Reina during the month of May, Juan Suárez resolved to go and speak to him and become a member of the new organization at that time.

A true pillar of the Agrupación, he was one of those first agrupados that like Chisholm, Ataulfo Fernández, Lasaga, Lázaro, and Luis Delgado, helped to mold, strengthen, polish, and secure it, each etching on it something of their own personality.

When Juan Suárez was ordained priest in 1944, José Ignacio Lasaga described him, recalling “that selflessness with which Juan gave himself to the service of that nascent work, just as in an Ignatian consecration: with all that he was and had, with all his will and understanding, with all the energy of his body and all the power of his soul.”

“Wherever there were sick persons to visit, erring ones to correct, lost ones to guide, troubled souls to console, sinners to convert, lukewarm ones to nurse, Juan was at their side with a cordial word and generous arms, as if he wanted to turn himself into a universal healer of all human problems.”

“When it came time to work, and before petitioners could turn their cry for help into words, Juan had already voiced words of assistance; and, moreover, without anyone ever knowing how, when it was time to allot tasks to be undertaken for any event, Juan always ended up with the humblest and most difficult of them, accepting them with a malicious smile, that of someone who knows he has cheated the wheel of life with skullduggery, against himself, which in the language of ascetics is called sacrifice.”

All the material work of the Agrupación and a good portion of the spiritual one fell on his back, but he multiplied himself tirelessly to tend to the innumerable tasks he had assumed, while having time to fix breakfast, instruct aspirants, look after housekeeping, scour all

the neighborhoods of Havana seeking out candidates to fill the numerous sessions of Spiritual Exercises he organized. Thanks to his effective help in all these areas, as Ataulfo Fernández, Lázaro, and Lasaga on the intellectual ones, Fr. Rey had the necessary freedom of action to give himself completely to the formation and direction of agrupados.

Once the first two sessions of Exercises were over, Fr. Rey's powerful resolve got the Agrupación underway. Schools for laborers were started immediately; Monthly Retreats started on May 1st in the private chapel of the Anunciata; the first issue of "*Esto Vir*" appeared on June 1st with a man on the cover lit by a new dawn filled with hope; right away, a dramatic ensemble is formed that on July 12th presents Tamayo and Baus' "*Lances of Honor*" in the ceremonial hall of Colegio de Belén, with an encore in honor of Monsignor Arteaga on August 1 in the School of the Salesians.

That very same month of July, on the 15th, Fr. Rey, wishing to promote a true sense of fraternity among agrupados, convened them for the first official assembly of the Agrupación for a banquet celebrated in the recreation hall of the Anunciata where he brilliantly and explicitly expressed "the ends that inspire our association, so that very presently it may fulfill the aspiration that gave birth to it." In the homily of the final Sunday of the month he emphasized that true friendship was the foundation on which the growth of the Agrupación should rely.

Prior to the first Assembly there already existed a nascent board composed of heads of Sessions of Schools, Magazines, Feast Days, and Celebrations that later, on the 14th of October, became the Board of Directors, and a General Secretary was added, for which Juan Suárez was selected, a Treasurer, a Prefect of Celebrations, a Chief of Hospital Visits, and a Recreation Room Delegate. This Board composition did not last long and at its first meeting, held November 14th, it was announced that "thought should be given to selecting the first President and Vice-President." At that session, Fr. Rey

highlighted the importance of those positions for the Agrupación, for they portended that the work would enter a phase of greater development and importance, and talked about the qualities required from candidates for those positions: model congregants, both in spirit and commitment; with love for the Agrupación based on work accomplished; of sound judgement, common sense, and prudence, "all in concert with our spirit;" with sufficient humbleness to consider the opinions of the Board of Directors and of the Fr. Director; respected by members of the Agrupación, in order to possess authority; and respected outside the Agrupación. And, on the other hand, alerting all that the very best congregant, the holiest and most dutiful one, could be useless as President, just as one who possesses much personality, but is a bad congregant.

Taking into account these guidelines, the Board of Directors posted the following notice on the bulletin board on November 30:

"Because the A.C.U. can benefit from electing a President and Vice-President, and having consulted agrupados that make up the Board of Directors, they propose Mr. Ricardo Chisholm Fernández as candidate for the Presidency, and Mr. Rafael Buigas Sanz for the Vice-Presidency."

"If any agrupado opines differently, and believes that others would better serve the A.C.U., he is asked to freely bring their names to the Fr. Director, for awareness and consideration by the current Board of Directors."

"The swearing in will be next December 8, 1932, and the current office holders, along with the entire Board of Directors, will step down on that date."

"Hence, these elections are for the current 1931-1932 term."

"Directors will be selected according to the Rules of Marian Sodality."

On that day, at the office of the Secretary, and following the remarks of Fr. Rey on the duties proper to Directors, they were consecrated before the image of the Immaculate Conception. They were, in addition to Chisholm and Buigas; Juan Suárez, Secretary General; Julio Andino, Treasurer; Enrique Oslé, Chief of Catechisms; Angelberto Coro, Celebrations; José M. Mariñas, School for Laborers; José Ignacio Lasaga, "*Esto Vir*," Enrique Rodríguez, Feast Days; and Esteban Beltrán Cuesta, Hospitals.

In November the first medals for the Agrupación, with the image of the Immaculate Conception on its face side, were ordered from the German firm of Heinrich Kissing, just like the ones in use today but with nothing on its flip side.

Finally, in addition to the activities mentioned above, the list for the year included others already mentioned: a brief course on communism, German language, typing and business writing instruction, Oratory Academy, visits to Rincón, as well as the appointment of two representatives to an International Congress, at the invitation of Archbishop Ruiz.

In just ten months, Fr. Rey's idea was a reality, so full of life and purpose that any newcomer to the Agrupación could feel he was dealing with an institution with years of experience.

In this astounding initial period, in which in spite of a slew of obstacles and difficulties encountered at inception, we can find, at least in germination, all activities to be developed later on, ideals perfectly framed, a particular personality, and the direction the Agrupación would later follow. Before its first birthday it had forged into a single solid form, with the very same characteristics that define it today and with some of the indestructible stability that the Lord promised his Church.

The year 1932 starts off on January 3 with the first consecration of agrupados that become sodalists in Iglesia de Reina, consisting of 19

of the aspirants that had come onboard after the primitive nucleus. Even though the welcome extended to the Agrupación should not surprise us, the story about the event that appeared in "Diario de la Marina¹⁷" is notable given the relative obscurity of the association; not so obscure, however, to keep Fr. Rey and Chisholm from receiving death threats, if they did not abandon the work they had undertaken. This goes to show that it was not just Catholic circles that acknowledged the importance attributable to the Agrupación, but that antagonists also shared the same view and feared the role it could command in the future.

That very year of 1932, full of challenges for an organization that, humanly considered, should have been weak and inconsistent, but that Divine Providence, showing clearly that it had grand designs for it, gave it sufficient vigor and maturity to overcome them and emerge unscathed and aware of its own strength.

The first challenge was the trip taken by Fr. Rey to offer Spiritual Exercises in Santiago de Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, leaving on June 7 and returning August 21, an enormously long time considering his importance to the Agrupación just months after its foundation.

Nevertheless, the serious purpose of the agrupados that in spite of the short amount of time with Fr. Rey were already influenced by his personality and fully committed to his ideals, made things work as if the Director were present, and to such an extent that when he returned he expounded on, according to the minutes of the Board meeting, "the great satisfaction felt upon learning of the special interest shown by all members of the Board in sustaining and growing the Agrupación, and the prudence and labor exhibited by the presidency of Ricardo Chisholm during his absence."

This trip gave rise to one of the most curious efforts undertaken by the Agrupación, that in spite of best efforts failed miserably due to lack of interest by the groups invited to participate in them, which

pointed to the spiritual imbalance between the two, or perhaps it was because God's Will was for the Agrupación to concentrate on fully forming its members, before engaging in wider-ranging activities until it had met its goals in Cuba.

It is possible that the presidency of Lázaro, ex-professor at the University of Puerto Rico, and Capistrán Arza, head of the Catholic Movement of Mexico, both in Cuba for political reasons, fostered in the Agrupación great interest for external affairs, influenced the project; or perhaps it was Fr. Rey's original idea to create an organization sometimes referred to as "Catholic University Alliance of the Antilles," or "Federation of the Caribbean" which could have awakened general suspicions.

"The objective of this alliance is the union of Catholic students of the Antilles for the purpose of strengthening spiritual and intellectual ties."

Fr. Rey talks about it for the first time in a letter dated July 1, addressed to the Agrupación from Puerto Rico: "I am planning, along with these students, a Catholic University Alliance of the Antilles: the Alliance will be established by the Agrupación, by the Catholic University Center here, and by what I find Catholic in the Dominican Republic. My assembly with the university students is on the 7th and 8th." Yet the assembly was called off, at first because of absence of some of the principal participants, and later for trifles that Fr. Rey could not fathom, delays continuing day after day, until it was time for him to leave the country without being able to make contact with the famous Catholic Center.

It was even worse in Santo Domingo, where he was not even able to see the few students he had met with in Puerto Rico, and which seemed to scatter whenever he approached.

All of '33 was spent writing letters to Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo tirelessly and eagerly, in which even the Archbishop took

an interest, but they never received replies. Moreover, the Finlay Association of Camagüey, with whom there was a close relationship, was invited to participate, for some of their members had done the Exercises with agrupados; but the best that could be achieved, despite pretexts and delays, was a halfhearted commitment from Puerto Rico, conditioned on the participation of Santo Domingo, yet the latter remained absent from the discussion; moreover, the hard-won participation of the Finlay Association was also conditioned on a positive response from Puerto Rico.

By November of that year, Fr. Rey understood that it was completely futile to continue, and the "alliance" was never brought up again, but did not lead to turning away from other international initiatives started before the Antillean adventure.

At the Catholic Students Convention celebrated the previous year in Mexico, at which the Agrupación was represented by engineering students Eusebio Azcue and Juan Magraner, the Ibero-American Secretariat of Mexico was conceived, and agrupado Armando Trelles was named Counseling Member from Cuba, and approved by the Board on May 3, 1933, based on a resolution that reveals the understanding that the Agrupación had of its own personality and responsibility: "It falls on the Agrupación, currently the only organized group of Catholic university students (of Cuba), to represent their participation until the day when a National Association of Catholic Students (of Cuba) is organized."

Members of the Mexican students Secretariat visited the Agrupación in May and November of 1933, the latter as delegates from their country to the First Ibero-American Congress of Catholic Students celebrated in Rome in December, who also represented the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, and who in its name, during the Congress, inquired of the delegations from Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo regarding the planned "Alliance," but getting no better results than from similar inquiries made from Havana.

Additionally, in '33 the Secretary General of Catholic Students of Uruguay, working to organize all Catholic student associations of that country and place them under the umbrella of Catholic Action, as planned by their Bishops, asked the Agrupación, by then almost better-known abroad than in Cuba, for information that would help him with that task.

Meanwhile the Ibero-American Secretariat of Catholic Students became a Confederation (C.I.D.E.C.) that celebrated congresses in 1938, 1940, and 1950, not attended by the Agrupación the first two times for economic reasons, but attending the last one, celebrated in Rome, where Valentín Arenas, Jr., was its representative.

The Agrupación established relations with Male Youth of Peru in 1940 at the request of the National President.

It was with somewhat greater reluctance that the Agrupación joined an important movement like "*Pax Romana*." Since February 1935, when the Board addressed the matter for the first time, there had been extended negotiations that culminated in 1941 when, thanks to a visit to Havana by Rudi Salat, Secretary General of the organization, the Agrupación decided on incorporation.

It is Fr. Rey himself who attends the "*Pax Romana*" Congress in Spain in 1946, and in 1947 Mexico represents the Agrupación in Rome at the Inter-federal Assembly, as is customary when the Agrupación is not able to attend.

Since then, the Agrupación has participated directly in all meetings of this organization; in El Salvador in 1954, attended by Fr. Barbeito, Manuel Artime, and Celso Miguel González Falla; to the Second Meeting for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean in 1955, represented by Julián Gómez, who was elected Secretary; and finally to the Nottingham Congress, in which René de la Huelga presented results of the survey fielded at the University of Havana regarding religious views of students.

Moreover, the Agrupación, following a tradition that is as long as its own existence, dating back to 1931, has been represented in Congresses and Conferences of various kinds. In 1945, Marino Pérez Durán, then President of the Agrupación and Secretary of the Confederation of Catholic Schools of Cuba attended the Second Inter-American Congress of Catholic Schools; the following year, Claudio Carpenter takes his delegation to the International Marian Congress celebrated in Barcelona; in 1949, José Ignacio Lasaga and Marino Pérez Durán attend the Second International Week of Catholic Action; in 1954, Fr. Llorente and Lasaga attend the First Congress of the World Federation of Marian Sodalitys, where Lasaga is elected World President of the Federation; and, in 1955, Lasaga attends the Eucharistic Congress of Brazil, and Jorge Rodríguez Bezos, Ramón Domínguez, and Julián Gómez attend the Mexican Congress of Marian Sodalitys, later visiting El Salvador and Guatemala where they hold conferences about the Agrupación.

And to finish the chapter on relations of the Agrupación abroad, it is important to recall the small Agrupaciones founded by agrupados at the "Massachusetts Institute of Technology" and in New Orleans in 1938, though the latter disappeared in 1940, and also at Williams College in 1945, under the name of "*Esto Vir.*"

Returning to the events of 1932, two of them affected the Agrupación in September causing one of the worst crises in its history. On the 15th of the month, Chisholm, Oslé, and Beltrán left Havana destined for Belgium to enter the novitiate of the Society of Jesus.

These first three priestly vocations of the Agrupación caused an impression difficult to understand today, more because of its unlikeliness at the time than because one could foresee the enormous transcendence that first step could portend for the spiritual future of Cuba.

The first idea was to start a novitiate of the Society of Jesus in our country for them, but upon further reflection it was evident that at the time it was impossible to bring sufficient numbers of professors to instruct them and, not wanting to risk poor formation, it was better to send them to Europe; but, in any case, they are the first agrupado vocations, to be followed by others in the course of time, although the initial idea has been realized today with the Novitiate at San Estanislao in El Calvario, currently led by an agrupado: Fr. Fernando Azcárate.

The Agrupación has yielded thirty-one religious vocations to date, of which twenty-six have entered the Society of Jesus, and four the secular clergy. This number might seem insignificant in comparison with other countries, yet one must remember that a mere twenty-five years ago there were hardly any Cuban clerics, and it seemed only a dream that this could be different one day. But, fortunately, thanks to the momentum created by those first three and to the favorable environment that, without a doubt, the Agrupación has helped create, especially through the Spiritual Exercises, and to the growth of the institutions of Catholic Action, many other vocations besides those of agrupados fill the Seminaries and novitiates of the Island today.

The news of the trip, although not a surprise, did not fail to cause concern, for all three were members of the Board, and Chisholm and Oslé were two of the key contributors Fr. Rey counted on at that time. The first, from the presidency he abandoned, filled in the interim by Juan Suárez, had contributed in large measure to etch onto the Agrupación the particular spirit that Fr. Rey wanted it to have. His departure would undoubtedly double Fr. Rey's workload but, most of all, he would lose an effective collaborator who could fill in for him in many situations.

Nevertheless, this bad situation that the Director could have overcome without great effort, and which was expected, became unsurmountable that same day when it became known to the

agrupados wishing the travelers farewell that Fr. Rey had been transferred to Camagüey as Superior of the Residence of that City.

For the second time that year the Agrupación would be left without its Director at a time when it could not have survived his permanent absence.

A letter penned at the time by Juan Suárez said that "a wave of disappointment" swept the agrupados.

An idea arose immediately to send a cable to Fr. Carvajal, then Provincial residing in Hendaye, but a Jesuit priest counseled that it was not prudent to do so at that time and so Juan Suárez wrote to Vice-Provincial, Fr. Camilo García, explaining the harm to the Agrupación of transferring Fr. Rey at the same time as three members of the Board of Directors, and just twenty days after his absence of three months; the impact on formation of new agrupados, on the spiritual direction of the Exercises, and the smooth running of all other activities; noting that "since the very beginning of the Agrupación we have lived on the expectation that Fr. Rey de Castro, by his own words for the sake of our motivation and personal efforts and by order of the Vice-Provincial, Rev. Fr. Carvajal, would not be assigned to any other ministry as long as the university students needed his constant and active direction for better formation during our Catholic years at the university."

That very same 15th day of September, Fr. García replied "your plea will have the effect of reducing the time (of Fr. Rey's absence) to a minimum" and he assigned Fr. Rivas to attend to the agrupados in the meantime.

Not satisfied with the result of his efforts, the following day Juan Suárez sent a copy of the letter sent to Fr. García to Monsignor Enrique Pérez Serrante, Bishop of Camagüey, who was in Havana at the time, along with another letter invoking the "high spirit that inspires you on behalf of the Catholic cause in our homeland,"

begging him to do all he could to “obtain a favorable outcome that would yield so much good for our university students, so needful of constant direction.” Impatiently, as days went by without word about the return date of Fr. Rey, it was decided to write to the Fr. Provincial on the 20th, sending another copy of the letter to Fr. García, saying that: “these back-to-back absences could seriously hamper the work done with so much sacrifice,” for “it interrupts the nurture of those less formed which require proactive spiritual direction in order to awaken in them the spirit of sacrifice so needed by our activities,” and he added: “We decided to forward to you this letter, respectfully, upon recalling your promise that Fr. Rey de Castro, S.J., would not be assigned to other tasks as long as the formation of our university youth depended on his labors.”

But even before the letter reached its destination, Chisholm had already met Fr. Carvajal in Hendaye who, conscious of the importance of that small group yet in training, sent a wire to Fr. García telling him that if he “did not wish to use him at the Agrupación, Father Rey should be returned to me, for he is needed in Europe to found a similar apostolate to the one he led in Havana until just days ago.” And upon receipt of the letter from Juan Suárez he replied saying, “the updates concerning the Agrupación are already most encouraging and bode well for the future; hence it behooves us to prioritize it over other works,” promising to write to the Vice-Provincial so that Fr. Rey’s absence “is reduced to a minimum.” It was unneeded, for the wire had had its effect, so when the letter from the Fr. Provincial was received in Havana, Fr. Rey had been back at the Agrupación since September 26.

As had Antonio Rubio Padilla during the first transfer of Fr. Rey then, Juan Suárez had now been able, thanks to his diligence and persistence, to save the Agrupación whose life is due to the efforts of both of them and of the faith of Fr. Enrique Carvajal in Divine Providence’s designs for the Agrupación.

And yet, in the middle of October, Fr. Rey made another trip to Camagüey to offer a session of Spiritual Exercises, while the last event of the year was the inauguration of Luis Delgado to the Presidency on the 10th of December for the 1932-1933 year.

Very characteristic of those days was the gleeful camaraderie that reigned in the Agrupación, where the average age of the agrupados did not exceed twenty years by more than just a few months. Fr. Rey had written from Puerto Rico congratulating himself for the "culture" that, beyond arising spontaneously out of youthfulness, was carefully nurtured, enlivened by any special event, whether consecration of congregants, inauguration of new directors, milestones of any sort, or any agrupado's saint name day giving rise to gatherings around a table with cakes and ice creams, with the casual event creating tight friendship bonds and promoting familial comfortableness.

In pursuit of a similar end, lunches of various sections were held, outings to Lasaga's "Baraguá" country farm, chess and ping-pong championships, all laying foundations of unity and fraternity that until this day is one of the Agrupación's most noted characteristic.

The most curious thing about this fusion of wills was that it mixed together in large proportions, given the number of agrupados at that time with a central nucleus coming from Belén, with a good number of alumni from its rival, Colegio de La Salle, with whom there had never before been a meeting of the minds. Many of them came to the Agrupación via Spiritual Exercises, sent there by La Salle Brothers themselves, while others came thanks to their schoolmates and friends. That is how, early on, we found Oslé, Julio Andino, Calixto García, Miguel Pichardo, Luis Delgado, etc., and five of its first eleven presidents, come from La Salle, four from Belén, one from the Piarists, and one from the Marists.

The desire of Catholic schools to cooperate with the Agrupación was widespread then and the directors of the schools directed seniors to

visit the ACU on a Sunday, so future university students would know it and consider joining it. These visits commenced on February 12, 1933 with seniors from the Marist Brothers' Champagnat School; followed on May 14 by those from La Salle; and Colegio de Belén on the 21st. It would be good to reinstate this practice, regretfully lost due to the birth of new organizations, by any means possible and without prejudicing other schools, for the great number of yearly graduates from each school, and the special vocation required to feel called to the Agrupación will clearly ensure that each person will affiliate with the organization he desires.

The first marriage of an agrupado took place on May 6, 1933 in the Chapel of the Escuela de Belén; that of Dania Padilla and Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla who, imprisoned since March 19, 1931, had been freed the night before and went into exile that very afternoon.

The political situation worsened until the general strike that preceded the fall of Machado on August 12. During the month-long general strike, attendance to activities of the Agrupación dropped significantly, though none were cancelled, and were always attended by those who lived close by and could come by foot. Except that the Board of Directors, which requires a forum to function, cancelled sessions from July 9 to September 8.

The turmoil that curtailed enthusiasm reached the Agrupación, and a fighting spirit came over its members. For the first and only time in its history, arms appeared within our walls, and in the face of dangers that fortunately did not materialize, and of assaults on churches and convents, defense groups were organized, under the leadership of José M. Rouco, that kept watch of the buildings during many days and nights.

Nonetheless, the pace of life at the Agrupación was not altered at all, nor did the incidents of the moment, which could not be avoided, affect spiritual life. The session of the Board on October 22, held in the midst of a revolutionary storm with as much serenity as could

have been enjoyed at a time of greater calm, agreed to adopt the Immaculate Conception as patroness, and request from Rome, in light of developments at the Institution that already numbered eighty agrupados, separation from the Congregation of the Anunciata.

The decree requesting formation of the Congregación Universitaria de la Inmaculada y San Pedro Canisio¹⁸, and its inclusion in the Prima Primaria, was signed on July 19, 1934, and was solemnly read in the chapel of the Agrupación on December 8 of that year. Those consecrated at that time were the last considered founders of the Agrupación.

The requested decree, submitted at the time of the fall of Machado when it became possible to think that university activities suspended since the 30th of September of 1930 might be restarted, is intimately related to steps taken concurrently to find a location close to the University and show the intention of Fr. Rey to separate his foundation spiritually and physically from the Anunciata and to place the Agrupación on the road that it would follow in the future.

It is curious to observe the firm resolve of Fr. Rey, who goes straight for the desired end without allowing the force of external events to divert him one iota from the preset direction, and the clear vision with which he acts at the precise moment without flinching before the violence of passions unleashed all around him.

It was not difficult to find a proper site next to the University, at Mazón and San Miguel, diagonally across from the corner first occupied by the Agrupación.

The house, conserved in excellent condition, had been constructed by the Count de Lersundi and seemed made to measure for the needs the Agrupación had at the time.

On an elevated first floor, which left ample space underneath for garage, storage, and servants quarters, there were two halls, one in front and another in back, with the former extended into a space where the chapel was placed and that, with doors left open, allowed, along with adjoining space, ample room for all agrupados to attend Mass. The halls were connected by a wide corridor in the middle of the house, with struts shoring up a second floor balcony supported by columns and with rooms on the sides, with the lower ones designated as office for Fr. Rey, for the Secretariat, classrooms for Study Circles, etc., and the upper ones as residence for the Director and students from the interior. Moreover, a stately staircase with beautiful balustrade of marble that according to legend cost a significant sum, led down to a great hall along the full length of Mazón Street that served as both dining room and assembly hall.

Until that time, in spite of economic restrictions, it was possible to get along thanks to the hospitality of the Anunciata, but once in new quarters the Agrupación had to face the problem of maintaining its new house.

Fr. Rey was not concerned about this drawback, nor was he ever in the face of obstacles that come in the way of things he considered necessary to do, and so, to seek a possible solution, he asked the Archbishop to trust him with a chaplaincy whose total income he would devote to the upkeep of his work.

But Monsignor Ruiz, always generous and concerned about the proper development of the Agrupación, replied by allocating the sum of \$50 per month without any other obligation than an annual report on its activities.

With that generous assistance that could never be appreciated enough, it was possible to rent the first house of the Agrupación, into to which it moved in on the 1st of December of 1933, counting only on furniture loaned by the Association of Belén Alumni, coming from their old social center in Almendares.

Once the quick move was completed, Fr. Rey blessed the chapel, the study hall and the library, celebrating the first Mass on the following day, Sunday the 17th.

The dream caressed during so many years commenced to take tangible shape and it did so at the unlikeliest of times, as if it pleased the Lord to make perfectly clear that it was all a product solely of his Will and He wanted to teach the Agrupación to have blind faith in his Divine Providence, promising via palpable form a most brilliant future if it remained faithful to the end for which it had been founded.

An unforgettable period commences in the minds of those who got to know the new house. If the Anunciata was the childhood of the Agrupación, Mazón y San Miguel are its teen years, joyful, vigorous, active, full of ambitions and generosity, able to caress the most glorious illusions and of sacrificing diversion for serious study, for difficult charity, for the love of Christ; but also for jest and belly laughs, so familiar at that time that even Fr. Rey succumbed to its contagion, occasionally having to interrupt a ceremony in the chapel due to uncontrollable hilarity that shook him to his very being. It was in that same chapel, for it was out of those contrasts that the soul of the Agrupación was made, where some agrupados meditated for a whole hour on Holy Thursday of 1936 as a sendoff for Fr. Rey, who on that day was to begin leading a session of Exercises at Belén and had challenged them by saying that if they were capable of doing that whole hour, the phenomenon at Castillo de Loyola would recur, with a telegram announcing: "16 meditate hour Agrupación Chapel — walls crack."

It was an odd mix of deep spirituality, good humor, seriousness, and an endless capacity to dream, without losing touch with reality, set to both a heroic and carefree tune, disciplined and frolicsome. A unique period of semi-bohemian years of studentship that the closing of the University made possible, saw the birth of an intimate

camaraderie among all agrupados that, lacking anything else to do, spent the whole day at the Agrupación.

It is wonderful to ponder the intervention of Divine Providence in the life of the Agrupación and to see how it made use of the potential calamity of an idle student body, transforming it into a way of intimately bonding agrupados to each other and allowing them to so absorb the spirit of the Institution so as to turn it into second nature; just as, given the circumstances, it made it so the number of young men be relatively small, allowing for constant contact with the Director, giving him the task of taking them through and intense spiritual and cultural formation that turned them, as Maza said in an article published in "*Esto Vir*" in 1946, into the "columns of today's Agrupación," and that saw the birth of that golden cultural age that would last in full vigor until 1938.

That was also the time of the "saintly women," generous protectors Herminia Huergo and María Luisa del Pozo, later joined by Conchita Soto, always ready to attend to the needs of the Agrupación, whether to repair ornaments, prepare the altar, or offer hands full of money to cover the numerous expenses that arose, without whose support they could not have been covered.

And to complete that unforgettable picture, we must recall the picturesque and sui generis Manuel, "doorman, cook, mechanic, sacristan and anything else needed," more an agrupado than any other that with his cat and his radio made up a trio worthy of inclusion in an anthology of oddities.

First adjustment, due to the comfort afforded by the new house, was a change to the time of Sunday Masses that since January 7, 1934 has been celebrated at 8:30 a.m.

On the 14th of that very month, José María Rouco took over as president, while at the University nearby the awaited classes started afresh. Nothing was missing from Fr. Rey's aspirations. The rosiest

optimism reigned over the Agrupación as it turned to its works with resolve.

Ataúlfo Fernández Llano and José Lázaro were in charge of the intellectual movement that in prior years had been led by Luis Delgado. Now, atop the latter's static conception of culture came in contraposition the dynamism of the other two, expounded with greater force and steeped in greater dogma than the encyclopedism of Delgado. It is no wonder, then, that the new doctrines, more in concert with the tumultuous revolutionary times, were preferred by the students over the tranquil manner of their old "leader." Fr. Rey, who at first looked on this change with sympathy, kept a close eye on it with increasing concern, having to exert his full authority in 1935 to stifle the forces it might provoke, for things got to a point of such exciting action, that some preferred to throw themselves into it before acquiring the necessary formation, circumstances that would have been disastrous for the Agrupación.

October 28, 1934, day of Christ the King, marks the most memorable date in the history of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria: the permanent installation of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. To solemnize its entrance, it was guarded during the initial twenty-four hours by consecutive shifts of two agrupados at a time, starting with Sunday's 8:30 Mass and continuing until that same time the following day. Since then the Blessed Sacrament, always the center of the Institution, the blood in its veins and the life of its soul, has never abandoned the Agrupación.

That same 28th day of the month gave rise to a custom, lasting throughout time, that every agrupado visit and pay homage to the Blessed Sacrament on the way in and out of the house.

Another congregational tradition commences on that very day, namely, the commemoration of that installation, celebrated every year on the Feast of Christ the King, after which the President consecrates the Board of Directors to Jesus Sacramented, along with

the consecration of the Agrupación and every one of its activities. In the initial years, these ceremonies started at ten o'clock at night at vespers, in order to conclude at eight the following morning, but it was quickly curtailed to one in the morning and later to twelve-thirty.

The Board composition changed again and, on December 9, Carlos Martínez Arango assumed the presidency. His thoughtfulness, serenity, and forthrightness were of great help to Fr. Rey during those difficult times, as well as to the Agrupación at all times.

Based on a relatively normal academic year in 1934, hope went up in smoke the following year when there were only twenty-five days of school during the semester. The result of the University closing in March was an exodus of agrupados towards the interior and of the Director concentrating his efforts on the students that lived in Havana. In spite of this, 28 congregants were consecrated in 1935 and 29 aspirants signed up, raising the number of agrupados to 125, whence it seemed that God's plans were to use difficulties and setbacks to strengthen the Agrupación, at which one is surprised to witness such seriousness and vigor of intellectual activity.

Work goes on day, afternoon, and night, reviewing and expanding the academic subjects corresponding to different careers to such an extent that, according to words in the Report of 1935-36, the Agrupación had turned into a "small University" characterized by feverous study during months that passed quickly and routinely.

On October 30, by agreement of the Board, it was decreed that starting with the next president, presidential terms would last two years, and it was José Ignacio Lasaga who took possession on the 15th of December in a solemn ceremony attended by professors of the University and Institutes, as well as delegates from the Colegio de Belén and Knights of Columbus.

The first flag of the Agrupación was blessed at that event and was just a pennant, that since 1943 can be found inside a rectangle.

Both first and second flags were designed by Dr. Virgilio Lasaga y Castellanos.

As early as 1935 the Agrupación started an activity perfectly in concert with its proposed end, and also one of the best ways to attain it, and which can be considered one of its finest fruits.

It is important to keep in mind that the Agrupación seeks to enlighten, orient, and guide Cuban thought through its professionals, formed within it during their student years, through Study Circles and activities during the phase of spiritual and intellectual formation, and the works of the phase of apostolic formation; mere preparatory formalities geared towards ensuing external action, which is the true and only action of the Agrupación, and the only possible realization of the end for which it was created.

Looked at from this point of view, the Academy of Medical Studies, the greatest work of the Agrupación in the teaching sphere, brings together all the characteristics that Fr. Rey wished for its various organs to have in order to make itself present in society.

Founded by Armando Ruiz Leiro and Juan Simón independently of the Agrupación, but intimately linked to it, it keeps intact its spirit that gives it a decidedly apostolic orientation.

A private teaching institution, at university level, with the goal of strengthening and expanding the scientific knowledge of students in the medical school of the University of Havana, helping them to deepen their study of the coursework thanks to personalized attention.

Despite a rough start, the Academy began to prosper in such a way that it garnered five hundred and fifty-five students and up to one hundred and forty-three in some subjects. From that point on it was decided to be more selective, it attracted top students and the greater part of awards from Medical School were granted to students of the Medical Studies Center.

It quickly became necessary to rent a larger facility and most recently it became necessary to add one of the houses acquired by the Agrupación on San Rafael Street, where coursework has expanded to include the School of Pharmacology and four brief post-graduate courses.

During the first phase of its history, which extends to 1941, the Agrupación maintained very close relationships with other Catholic Cuban organizations and collaborated frequently with them on joint work.

As mentioned above, Fr. Rey had been named Advisor to the Federación de la Juventud Católica Cubana¹⁹; the following year the Knights of Columbus ask for the Agrupación's assistance for their celebrations to take place on October 9 and 10 in Cienfuegos; in 1935, he participated in Eucharistic Day celebrated in Camagüey; more importantly, he was part of the Catechist Congress of 1937, at which he was in charge of order, all this in addition to the magnificent Catechism open class offered by Lasaga in the assembly hall of the Centro Asturiano, of his accompanying pamphlet titled "*How to teach Catechesis?*," disseminated among members of the Congress, and of memoirs presented by Fernández Llano, Chils, and Boza Masvidal.

In 1941, thirty-one agrupados attend the Eucharistic Congress of Camagüey, where Angel Fernández Varela presents a dissertation, and Fr. Rey offers seven one-day retreats to masons, non-agrupado congregants of the University, chauffeurs, soldiers, old exercitants, students of the Institute, and railway men.

More recently, he participated in the First National Eucharistic Congress of 1947 and in the Eucharistic Congress of Matanzas of 1951.

Yet, the most intimate relationship of all with those Catholic Associations, and the most fruitful, is with Cuba's Caballeros

Católicos²⁰. In December 1935, José Ignacio Lasaga, as President of the Agrupación, went to Dr. Valentín Arenas of the Caballeros Católicos proposing a pact of cooperation whereby agrupados moving to the interior could fulfill their congregational duties within the Asociación de Caballeros Católicos; and conversely, Caballeros Católicos moving to Havana and accepted into the Agrupación could do the same.

The pact was accepted at the VII convention of Caballeros Católicos celebrated in Havana on January 3-4, 1936.

Since then the Agrupación has sent delegates to its provincial assemblies and Conventions.

At the VIII Convention, celebrated in Santiago de Cuba on December 17, 1936 an agreement was forged that speaks eloquently of the spiritual and intellectual level attained by the Agrupación and of one of the most valuable acknowledgments it has received: "All Brothers between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five may receive, for \$15, a brief course on Catholic and social culture at the Colegio de Belén under direction of the A.C.U., covering Apologetics, Sociology, History of Civilization, Literary Composition, and Oratory."

Moreover, the National Director of Caballeros Católicos of Cuba, committed to the absolute necessity of forming men capable of "reorienting their ends and strengthening their tenets," agreed to carefully select those Brothers who, thanks to their inclination, enthusiasm, and perseverance, were possible directors of future campaigns, and offered to cover the cost of the brief courses. Because, said Dr. Arenas, "if out of our Unions thirty potential men of Catholic action turn up, and if thanks to the coursework it were possible to form fifteen good men for those very Unions, "Could you imagine the benefits that would ensue?"

This pact and the letter from the President of Caballeros Católicos are the best witness and the most convincing proof of the value of

the formation system developed by Fr. Rey.

In 1939 the only three professionals of the Agrupación in the interior of the Republic were elected presidents of Caballeros Católicos in their respective locations. Four years later the number grew by one. Another three formed Unions in their places of residence, three formed schools for laborers, and one was a member of the National Directorate.

This collaboration continued over time and in 1954 a number of agrupados got together with Caballeros Católicos to engage in apostolic work via formation seminars and Catholic outreach.

The year 1936, during which the University never opened its doors, marks the highpoint of intellectual activity at the Agrupación. The latter gives birth to various organizations and works with renewed determination.

To get an idea of the environment that permeated the Agrupación at the time, it is sufficient to review the weekly schedule:

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. Mass; 10:00 a.m. Postulants' Meeting (2nd and 4th Sundays); Aspirants' Meeting (1st and 3rd Sundays); 10:00 a.m. Journalists' Circle; 11:00 a.m. Literary Academy

Monday: 6:00 p.m. Biochemistry Classes; 6:00 p.m. Historical Research Seminary Meeting; 6:00 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Cueva del Humo; 8:30 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Las Yaguas; 9:00 p.m. Classes on General Theory of the State

Tuesday: 6:00 p.m. German Classes; 9:00 p.m. Social Studies Circle

Wednesday: 6:00 p.m. Biochemistry Classes; 6:00 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Cueva del Humo; 8:30 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Las Yaguas; 9:00 p.m. Medical Circle; 9:00 p.m. Roman Law Classes

Thursday: 6:00 p.m. German Classes; 6:00 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Cueva del Humo; 8:30 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Las Yaguas

Friday: 6:00 p.m. Biochemistry Classes; 6:00 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Cueva del Humo; 8:30 p.m. Classes for Laborers, Barrio Las Yaguas; 9:00 p.m. Journalists' Circle; 10:00 p.m. History of Philosophy Classes

Saturday: 3:00 p.m. Biochemistry Laboratory at Belén; 5:00 p.m. German Classes; 5:00 p.m. Literary Composition Classes; 6:00 p.m. "Guardia;" 6:30 p.m. Meeting of Teachers of Schools for Laborers (1st Saturday); Religious Culture Meeting (2nd Saturday); Meeting of Secretaries (3rd Saturday)

But it is not just the number of activities that gives a special mark to this phase that lasts until 1938, but rather the quality of the presenters and the erudition of their contributions. While Ataulfo Fernández Llano made familiar the figures of Maritain, Kelsen, and Henri Bergson, Lázaro centered on the most intricate philosophical problems and Guy Pérez Cisneros expounded on Modern Art. The lessons of Fr. Galán on Biochemistry were attended by professors joining in as students. Fr. Labor taught the Theories of Freud; and Fr. Rubinos offered outstanding lessons on Preceptive Literature. At the same time, José Ignacio Lasaga, Angel Fernández Varela, and Marino Pérez Durán, who in spite of their young years had already acquired a maturity that elevated them to that of teachers, offered seminars.

It is safe to say that no other organization in Cuba at that time offered a like program of cultural activities.

Towards the end of 1935 a gentlewoman that wanted to maintain anonymity had gifted Fr. Rey \$100 to purchase a statue of the Virgin Mary to replace the copy of Murillo's Inmaculada that graced the Chapel's altar. Fr. Rey, who disliked immensely the polychromatic plaster images that populate our churches, preferred a work carved in wood, made by a Cuban artist, and directed various agrupados toward that end. One of these, counseled by Luis de Soto, Professor of History of Art at the University of Havana, recommended sculptor Carlos Era, to whom the work was entrusted.

The idea of Fr. Rey, which the sculptor failed to bring to the work, was to create a "Sedes Sapientiae," an advocacy of Virgin Mary very much in concert with the spirit of the Agrupación. Era could have taken inspiration from the Romanesque or Byzantine styles, as representation of a dogmatic ideal that would have been better served by the hieraticism of either of those styles, more appropriate to expressing abstraction than the naturalist one opted for. His conception was so removed from the original idea that the term "Sedes Sampientiae" was never used again with regard to the image.

Before it was delivered to the Agrupación the sculpture was exhibited at the XVIII Fine Arts Pavilion, where it garnered third place.

Finally, the statue was blessed on Mothers' Day, Sunday, May 10 followed by a solemn seminar on the Virgin Mary offered by the Literary Academy.

Since then agrupados have placed at its feet their successes, failures, pains, joys, projects, and fears, and before her, in the silent shadows of the chapel, they open their hearts and pour out their most intimate thoughts, anointing her with a patina of love that has

transformed her into “the Virgin of the Agrupación.” And it is before her that the Guardia de Honor²¹ is held every Saturday to the Queen of Heaven, begging the Mother of God, river through which graces flow abundantly, to assist in bringing new endeavors to safe harbor.

Nine days after her enthronement in the chapel, the first baptism was celebrated there, that of agrupado José M. Mariñas’ son.

In July of that year the Agrupación initiated a movement of national scope perfectly in concert with its ends, the redaction of a “Moral Guide to Movies” that, due to the circumstances, would take many years to bear fruit under external direction, yet with its efficient collaboration.

The birth of this initiative was the submission by Fr. Rey of a document signed by 90 agrupados to the Archbishop in which, following the direction of the Holy Father, they committed not to see movies classified by ecclesiastical authorities as offensive to dogma or morality. In view of this, Monsignor Ruiz, who in fulfillment of the Encyclical “*Vigilanti Cura*” planned to create in the dioceses of Havana and Pinar del Rio an office on moral standards for films, as the Supreme Pontiff recommended, decided to found it and name Fr. Rey as its director.

Initially, the office limited itself to publishing a page entitled, “Guía Moral del Cine²²”, disseminating it on a monthly basis, reproducing the classifications established by the Hierarchy of the United States, without any active participation in the censoring of the films. This subordination was the cause of its initial failure, for the unpunctual arrival of the list of censored movies obviated the efforts made, ultimately leading to aborting the effort until a few years later when it was reborn, this time under the direction of the Federación and based on entirely different premises.

In addition, 1936 saw the start of another campaign at the Agrupación called to increasing renown, that of Christian marriage

celebrations with veiled Masses. They were extremely rare if not nonexistent before that time; they used to be held after 9 p.m. with all the characteristics of purely social events and were sometimes the cause of real scandals in churches. Fr. Rey promoted them initially among agrupados and, for the bride, a veil was made with a felt emblem of the Agrupación appended to it that was later gifted to the couple. Little by little the custom was adopted outside the Agrupación and there are many marriages celebrated that way today.

It is proper to attribute the initiative to the Agrupación, as well as the share of merit it deserves in destroying a poor custom deeply ingrained in our culture.

The year 1937 stands out for the number of brief courses offered by agrupados to other institutions. In addition to those given to Caballeros Católicos, April saw the inauguration of Study Circles at the Marist Brothers' Champagnat School where, under the direction of Fernando Azcárate, the highlights of Christian sociology were presented. In the Brotherhood of Catholic Laborers Lasaga, Rasco, and Surís offered courses on Proselytism, Oratory and Literature; and at the Free Schools of the Salesians, a cycle of conferences on hygiene were held under the direction of Armando Ruiz Leiro, Juan Simón, and Frank Barrera.

At year's end, the owners of the house asked for the house back, and the Agrupación was obliged to look for a new one. It was not then as easy to find a fitting building near the University as it was the first time around, for the situation had changed, rents had risen, as had the number of agrupados that now reached one hundred fifty-four. The best opportunity to come up was house number 305 on 25th Street, between L and M in the Vedado neighborhood, where the Agrupación moved in on the 4th of December.

Eight days after that Fernando Ascárate took possession of the presidency, but the Agrupación was only able to take advantage of

three months of his wholesome character, culture, spirituality, forthright criteria, and personal charisma, for on March 19 he shipped out to Spain to enter the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus. Carlos Martínez Arango took on the responsibilities that were left unattended.

The house on 25th Street was small and a poor fit for the needs at the time, creating obstacles for all activities, to the point where some had to be cancelled.

The lack of space was such that issues of "*Esto Vir*" during that time were full of jokes about it, and it was necessary to borrow facilities for large events; like consecrations of new agrupados that, to make matters worse, rose to one hundred ninety-eight in 1938 and had to take place in the Domestic Chapel of the Fathers of Colegio Belén, and the Feast of Christ the King had to be limited to a Mass at which the President read a general consecration of the Agrupación.

The end result of all this is a year without relief, a period of transition in which, albeit free from decadence, is only fair to accept as not comparable to prior ones.

The Agrupación of that time is like a young man that has grown too fast and no longer fits in clothes that hamper his freedom of movement, but whose health is very good. An indicator of this can be found in the number of communions, which that year summed two thousand six hundred; in 1937, four thousand eight hundred, and in 1938 rose to ten thousand four hundred.

A result of the inconvenience that hampered works, but also of a return to normalcy in university life, the latter of which absorbed the greater part of the agrupados' time, was the discontinuation of the push increasingly directed towards transformation of the Agrupación into a center of high culture.

Had these factors not reared their faces until two or three years later, it is possible that the Agrupación's character today would be

entirely different from what it is.

In any case, that phase of intense intellectual nurture served to form the group and with the passage of time has been the backbone of the institution and of the mentors who have transmitted its spirit to successive generations.

Another end result of the smallness of the house was that Fr. Rey started to move quickly to acquire money to purchase a lot where the Agrupación could erect its definitive headquarters, something he was able to announce at the Mass of September 11, 1938 thanks to the acquisition of a lot in San Miguel, between Mazón and Basarrate, very close to the house vacated the previous year.

The Agrupación that had started seven years before in the halls of the Anunciata, charging monthly dues of twenty cents to those who could pay them, was now owner of a plot of land where, with the assistance of Divine Providence, it would erect its social center.

VII

GRADUATION AND MATRIMONY

The year 1938 is of utmost importance to the Agrupación as it faced and overcame two of the weightiest problems that normally arise in the life of an agrupado as such and, hence, are major internal obstacles on the road to achieving the very purpose of the Agrupación.

The first, paradoxically, is graduation; the other, matrimony.

The year 1938 is the first in which agrupados graduated and, although not the first in which there were marriages (a couple had already been celebrated at the Agrupación), it was the first time these became common.

Even though a few agrupados had graduated and married by that time, Fr. Rey had limited external actions to professionals since the ideation of the original plan, as the Agrupación was in fact an institution of unmarried students whose entire life was centered on their formation and needs. But when seven of its members graduated that year, becoming the first group to complete their studies, something the Agrupación had been awaiting anxiously, it had the very rare virtue of recognizing instantly the transcendence of that milestone for its future, and immediately started to organize itself in light of new opportunities open to it.

The new Doctors were honored in order to acknowledge the importance of that moment and an Alumni Study Circle was

inaugurated, as were sessions of Spiritual Exercises exclusively for professionals.

"We have arrived," Riego writes in "*Esto Vir*" "at the difficult stretch of the road, and we are committed to set out on it with a clear vision of our duty." And Carlos Martinez Arango comments:

"The Agrupación is becoming an adult...because it is acquiring the needed tools to perform work that so many of us have meditated upon and dreamed about so much. Because the time is coming when we will be able to realize the ideas that we have been transplanting from pages of the Gospels onto the fibers our hearts."

No one was kept from the knowledge that if the Agrupación's aim was the personal perfection of its members, then according to the ideals of the Institution, it should also project itself onto the social sphere; and that students, due to their age and incomplete formation, are not normally the ones to take on the leadership roles reserved for professionals.

It was clear to all that university years are for spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic formation and that the task of exerting influence at a national level was proper to alumni.

Thousands of testimonies at the time attest to this widespread conviction. "*Esto Vir*" affirms that to reach this stage, "the Agrupación has been training a long time for this," and it says elsewhere, "the Agrupación took one of the most important steps in its history on the last day of this just past month of July."

"It was the consecration of a few agrupados finishing their studies with the term just ended, and the formation of an Alumni Section in the Agrupación."

The words of Fr. Rey were even more definitive: "God, our Father, who has so visibly protected our Agrupación through many

difficulties, will not deny his support on its most vital one, the very objective of the Agrupación, our budding Professionals Section."

He writes on January 1, 1951, "The Professionals among us represent what we set out to do."

"May this letter, esteemed Professionals, welcome into our history the era of Professionals in the Agrupación."

"Professionals without a spirit of self-sacrifice and worse, unfaithful to our rules and regulations, would represent the utmost failure for our Agrupación to those of us who have expected so much from it, and the greatest deception to the many others who love us, protect us, and set their hopes on our works for the future of the Church and of our Homeland."

"In the Agrupación, we look upon our Professionals as the end result of our efforts, as the fruit hoped for from our labor, and as role models to aspire to for those now starting out."

According to the plans of the Founder, professionals are burdened with the greatest onus. He always did all he could to direct them towards the desired end of the Agrupación, but following the shakeup of 1942, he doubled his efforts to retain the chosen ones and to perfect their formation.

In 1948, when it seemed that the planned actions of professional agrupados was about to burst forth at any moment, Fr. Rey's concern turned to construction of a site tailored to them, with meeting and reading rooms, etc. Toward this goal, he thought of constructing a hall at the current site of the Residence, with doors leading out to a terrace atop the gallery that runs along Mazón until the corner at San Miguel, abutting the oldest part of the house. The costs would have come to some five or six thousand pesos and would have been gifted to him for the silver anniversary of his ordination, but during the time when money was being raised some

discerned that it was not the proper moment to do so, and Fr. Rey supported the decision.

Fr. Llorente, in perfect harmony with the ideals of Fr. Rey and sharing identical points of view regarding agrupados, convinced that the Agrupación could only achieve its ends through the efforts of its professionals and desirous of seeing that day arrive, began to mull over the problem as soon as he was named Director and insisted to the Board on a need for them to turn the Agrupación into the Catholic cultural center of Cuba, via conferences, contributions to newspapers and magazines, preferably on current events like education, morality, sciences, etc., to capture the imagination and influence Cuban thought.

In this, Fr. Llorente, as had Fr. Rey, adhered to the purpose of the Agrupación since its foundation, hence to the thoughts of the Pope who, addressing professional Marian sodalists, had exhorted to them: "You, whom Divine Providence has blessed and continues to bless through full participation in such highly intellectual formation, have the obligation to level the path for many hearts and to bring an end to this pernicious divorce; to reestablish contact, renew ties, and assure full communion of the worlds of knowledge, that is, to high university science, and to the light revealed by Christ."

As Fr. Rey had commented regarding the passage from "*Quadragesimo Anno*" in which Pius XI highlighted the need to choose from among each class those who could convert their peers, that "the first and immediate apostles to the students should be other students; and the apostles to the world of science and professionals should be professionals and scientists."

Thus was drafted a plan to follow which gave the Agrupación its character and physiognomy and, as explained Angel Fernández Varela at the Apostolic Assembly of 1943, "a professional agrupado is the ripened fruit of a student agrupado" and it is desirable that its members, except when it comes to the apostolate appropriate to

university years, not work until after graduation once they are fully formed and prepared for successfully undertaking more important activities.

It follows, then, that professionals in the Agrupación should not work exclusively on behalf of students. It is right and just for them to assist the Director with the formation of the younger ones, especially those called to do so, always forging ties of friendship and frequent contact with them; yet professionals are called to work on the apostolate for which they were formed; at the end of the day, that is the true end of the Agrupación and not formation itself.

The primary focus of the professional agrupado should be to attain the highest possible level he is capable of in his profession, thus fulfilling God's will, which was his destiny and obligation to reach; moreover, because only those at the forefront of their respective professions can hope to influence their environment and also fulfill the will of God that directed him to lead his peers on their way to eternal salvation.

Regarding this duty, Fr. Rey wrote, "The primary apostolate of agrupados is to be good professionals" for, at the end of the day, they, the best from each class, are instruments of which the Agrupación avails itself to achieve its ends.

According to this, the professional agrupado is obliged to actively engage in an apostolate appropriate to his condition, born out of the Agrupación as the vehicle to later influence society through him.

Theoretically at least, the number of professionals in the Agrupación should greatly exceed the number of students. This, and the purpose for which the Agrupación was created, achievable only via the former, calls on them to instill its character and truly make it an institution of professionals in which students are formed and prepared. It is crucial to remember that the student phase is transitory and that, if the Agrupación aims to build something strong

and long-lasting it cannot do so on a moving base of short duration, nor can it limit its purpose to caring for the younger ones, turning it into a mere extension of Catholic schooling, something like advanced religious and moral training that, once it bestows the title of perfect father of a family, it leaves the graduate behind, as the University does with regards to academic subjects, leaving the alumnus alone to "put them into practice in life."

The professional agrupado is not, nor can he in any way be, like that man "of little subject" of annotation 18 of the Book of Spiritual Exercises who, at the end of the first week, is sent home after "being offered some examinations of conscience and ordered to confess more often than before in order not to cede ground gained." The day that happens, the Agrupación would have failed miserably.

Even cursory exposure of a stranger to the spirituality of the Agrupación will leave him with the awareness, if nothing else, that the Agrupación's professional apostolate is its dynamic center and sole means of expression.

Clear proof of this is that once formation of an agrupado comes to an end he needs, most urgently, to undertake the works for which he has been preparing for years, or risk frustration and separation. This is because formation must come to an end at some point and the man must devote himself to works immediately or become a contemplative. If he continues on, absent one of those two things, he will turn into a monster, and the Agrupación loathes that outcome and is committed, therefore, to form perfectly balanced and harmonious agrupados. Hence, given the nature of the Agrupación, the alumnus agrupado that has assimilated its spirit cannot be offered any other alternative but apostolate work or separation. This, too, calls on the Agrupación to organize external works so as to fill that need of the professional agrupado as soon as he leaves the university classroom.

Hence, the work intended for the professional agrupado, who is expected to be the ideal role model for a Catholic Intellectual, must be fitting to the formation received and to the ideals inculcated; in other words: an intellectual apostolate, an outward expression of his spiritual life, which is the only suitable type of work for him.

Fr. Rey relied on the professional agrupado by the mere fact that he was one, to be fully formed scientifically and religiously, and, hence, at one with the idea that this is the position God wants him to take on, so that in the practice of his profession, spiritualized by supernatural beliefs and carried out in conscientious submission to Divine Will, he will carry it out in favor of his own sainthood and in the special way that God had reserved for him for all eternity. It is not only a perfect priest and perfect monk that attains sainthood, for in Heaven there are many souls that have attained it as perfect lawyers, perfect doctors, perfect politicians, or perfect bankers, because the infinite perfection of God encompasses an infinite number or archetypes that, in any case, are not required for the achievement of sainthood.

This truth is applicable to all men, but more so to professionals, being a select group that leads the destiny of humanity today, and even more so the professional agrupado, obliged to excel in his career, for one cannot be a Catholic professional, much less an agrupado, and practice one's profession solely focused on one's personal holiness, for fear of risking it and even placing in great danger salvation itself.

Contemplative orders exist for him who wishes perfection but does not feel a call to action; they are necessary for the spiritual economy of the Church, yet a Catholic professional that wants to stay in the world has no other alternative but to engage in an intellectual apostolate. If this were not the case, what would be the meaning of the parable of the talents? Does it not call for something beyond strict practice of a virtue turned on itself?

What did Jesus mean when he spoke of the light of the world that is not to be put under a bushel, but upon a stand and give light to all the house? Is not the commandment for the formed clear enough, to teach to all the nations?

The answer to these questions is, for an agrupado, akin to the one who asks himself, before "Christ our Lord present and placed on the cross" at the end of the Exercises' mediation on the three sins, the essence of the life of the Agrupación; and not because a life of action may not yet be in full bloom has it ceased, even for an instant, to be the center of his thought.

Just like every agrupado, the Agrupación also needed a formation phase prior to the dynamic phase, a phase that did not conclude with the first graduates. Those on whom it fell to sacrifice accumulated energy, to turn it into cooperation with the Director in the consolidation of the particular physiognomy of the Institution, without completely renouncing works proper to the Institution that, although far short of those others the Agrupación will undertake at the opportune time, were able to make contributions over the past twenty-five years.

The famous article, "The static Agrupación and the dynamic Agrupación," published in "*Esto Vir*," on January 1943, which has echoed so much within the Institution, and whose author remained incognito by request of Fr. Rey, choosing in this way to underline the authority of its subject matter, yet giving the impression that he may have been the author, zooms in on this problem with clear vision: "One day, perhaps in the not too distant future, the Agrupación will break out of its chrysalis, out of its gestating body."

When that day comes, our lives will be dynamic not static, and it will be the right day, an appropriate one. If we wish to be born to a life of public works prematurely, lacking a long formation phase, we risk going from chrysalis to cadaver."

"The Agrupación is a laymen's association cast in the mold of St. Ignatius and, like he at Manresa, is living in a static phase, precursor to a dynamic one that will characterize it and set it apart."

"In tomorrow's Agrupación, dynamic and outwardly focused, there will only be room for the best."

"An active Agrupación, enterprising, committed to the conquest of the Homeland for God."

"Sodalist in formation at the static Agrupación, do not assume that this is your home base on life's road. You are laboring intensely at Manresa with all your abilities, with all your soul, and with all your heart in order to go somewhere."

"And shame to the Agrupación if that were not the case! For then we would be eternal novices in an unrealized priesthood, embryos in perpetual gestation, perennial fields that have not even given birth to as much as a mouse."

This is why Angel Fernández Varela writes: "The A.C.U. is not, the A.C.U. is being." And the Apostolic Assembly of 1943 clearly states that the Agrupación is "preparation for what it will be," it heralds that "we will have more sublime ends," for "youthful chests are not content with this," and "leaders' minds guide them to be leaders;" but this takes time, it warns, as "the apostolate from the cathedra, from the seat in Congress, the most intimate one between doctor and patient, the most difficult one between manager and laborer; demands methodical, slow, and enthusiastic formation."

The formation phase of the Agrupación has been long. Diverse obstacles, most foreign to the institution, braked its outward momentum on various occasions, leading some to fear that so many difficulties would dampen the dynamism of the agrupados that, upon finding the Agrupación fully grown and with lesser but more than enough activities, might be content with her and might renounce to go beyond the walls of its house, thus frustrating God's plans.

To counter that possibility, Fr. Roman Galán delivered a famous talk on crystallization, employing a simile relating to the chemical process, through which he alerted the agrupados of the danger of adopting the attitude of the Lord after Creation, that is, contemplating their work, finding it good and resting.

The Agrupación, he said, should always remain in a soluble state, in constant evolution, never crystalizing, in order to retain the ability to react, avoiding contentment or backward looks, but rather looking ahead, fighting each day with ever greater mettle and with intent to attain the ideal of perfection and social outreach no matter what, without rest nor discouragement.

But such fears do not seem in play today when one takes the vigorous pulse of the Agrupación, ever more ready and more impatient to enter the arena. Trial runs have been attempted on various occasions that show how far it could go, and various works proper to the Agrupación's purpose are progressing very successfully. On the other hand, one day, the right one, thanks to its very nature, it will break the dykes, and jump over every obstacle in pursuit of the mission it has been entrusted. That day is close by. "It is time to act," said the Pope, and his voice, which has always been heeded, will not go unheard by the Agrupación this next time.

And then the actions of the Agrupación, manifested via the intellectual apostolate of its professionals, will seem to others like spontaneous and isolated individual acts, or like a collective and premeditated movement, according to the need; but in either case it will follow an in-house plan conceived as an organic whole, meticulously drafted and rigorously obeyed.

It will not matter if the name of the Agrupación resounds at that time, self-promotion is not essential, only that it be the apt and docile instrument of Divine Will in order to influence the people of Cuba and direct it towards God.

This is why the formation of the professionals in the Agrupación is of fundamental importance. It could do nothing without it.

The essence of a problem arose in the Agrupación in 1938 when the number of extant initial graduates did not yet allow for taking action, yet Fr. Rey clearly perceived that without action, retention was extremely difficult. In order to come up with a solution, positions and tasks were devised that, though falling short of definitive actions, were nevertheless akin to them but, in spite of them, a good number of alumni have been lost precisely because the works for which they were formed were not found at the right psychological moment.

When the number of alumni grew, the problem took on characteristics of a vicious cycle: interest was lost without activities, and so they distanced themselves, yet without a sufficient number of professionals it was not possible to commence activities.

Today, when there are numerous professionals in the Agrupación, and the phenomenon of the students' enthusiasm parallels that of the golden years of 1934 to '38 and of 1941, the solution appears closer than ever, and consists of accelerating the gradual march of events that for years have been slowly propelling agrupados to action, and to break into the arena and do what they have been sufficiently prepared to do via formation and in numbers.

The second problem of 1938, graver than the first and more difficult to solve, has to do with the marriages of agrupados.

In October 1947 Fr. Rey writes about this topic in "*Esto Vir*": "For years, ongoing experience has taught us that arrival of marriage impacts the ranks of the A.C.U."

"Happy is the congregant that comes across a Catholic woman of firm convictions, solid piety and accepting of our spirit."

“In short, with very few short-lived exceptions, we can vouch that as a Catholic and as an agrupado he has been saved for the balance of his life. On the other hand, pity to him who comes across a frivolous and selfish woman, incapable of understanding the tranquility and goodwill that a model agrupado can bring home. The passage of time (in months, not years) will soon clarify to the best agrupado that, when it comes to the conquest of evil from the time of Eve until our time, wives are omnipotent; even if eventually, like the one in Paradise, they celebrate their omnipotence with tears.”

This problem is studied in depth in the previously cited article, “The static Agrupación and the dynamic Agrupación,” where one finds the reasons why wives can become impassable obstacles on the way to continuing in the Agrupación, or can hinder the efficiency of the agrupado’s actions within it: “The agrupado, if possible, should select a wife with an eye on his future life of action, sacrifice, and even risk. A steadily good companion wife during peaceful and tranquil days in which everything flows smoothly, without rough spots or edges, without vicissitudes or difficulties, yet ignorant of the opposite reality becomes, to be clear, a drag, a load, a ballast.”

“She will be like a brake, hindering the agrupado’s dynamic apostolic activities once he wishes to be faithful to the evolutionary process that he must necessarily and inexorably follow in the Agrupación.”

“The wife of the agrupado should be chosen as would a companion for an apostle-in-making: good for easy days and for difficult ones, for abundance and scarcity; for relaxation and for activity.”

“The woman that weds an agrupado without assessing the transcendence of the future works of the man she takes on for life, is not worthy of being his wife, for he will not always be a good family man, gentrified and tranquil. The Agrupación forms its sons to be more than rearers of children for Heaven. The wife should be in accord with what the Agrupación expects from her husband.”

“The wife of the agrupado should have sufficient grace to accept all that God has in store for her husband, given his state and condition. That calls for profound Catholicism, solid piety, clear-eyed vision of her mission as companion to an apostle.”

“A woman that does not know how to suffer when her novice-agrupado attends a Study Circle or participates in a session of Spiritual Exercises, or in any way hinders the formation of her companion, is not the wife of an agrupado. She is what we have already said, a load, a ballast, a drag.”

“That is why we say: the wife of the agrupado, if met during the static phase of the Agrupación, should be judged with the dynamic phase in mind.”

The root of the problem is that possible wives of agrupados, except in very rare cases, do not share the spirit of the Agrupación, nor have or are capable of having the same spiritual formation, nor his focus on the apostolic life, nor his sense of sacrifice.

Absent the rigorous selection process employed in the Agrupación, and absent intense formation, it is not possible to ask of them to share ideals from the start that he assimilated over years of work; hence, in light of the absolute certainty of what has been mentioned regarding the obstacle that an apostolic life can be to an uncomprehending wife, it is also true that given the extremely high spiritual level expected of the ideal agrupado, it will be very difficult to find a wife capable of harmonizing with his lifestyle right from the start.

The solution to this gravest of problems consists in finding the means to enable the wives of agrupados to begin acquiring a dose of congregational spirituality, sufficient to comprehend the apostolic attitudes and activities of their husbands and nudging them in the execution of the goals of the Agrupación.

There have been various trial-runs along these lines, but not all successful.

The agrupados as a group, regardless of differences that may exist among them, whether of age, social class or economic position, have a common denominator: the university. The Agrupación has worked on them for many years through a unifying force of spiritual and intellectual formation, creating common ideals and identical points of view about the most basic challenges, and about the obligations this approach creates in each and every one of them, individually and collectively.

That unity is turned into incredible charity that turns the interactions among agrupados into true familial conviviality.

Their wives lack all this. Each one of them continues being part of their class, their education, their social circle; and the miracle of fusion that occurs among agrupados does not occur among their wives, nor is it logical to expect it to occur naturally.

There is no doubt that to bring about assimilation of the spirit of the Agrupación it is necessary that wives participate in its life in some way, that they meet among themselves, though this is precisely where true practical difficulties begin.

At first, when married agrupados were few, all married couples at the Agrupación began to get together periodically but unfortunately, as the number of couples grew, the differences among the wives led to failure. Years later, a new attempt was made to form small kindred groups that formed around gatherings that occurred daily in Arnaldo Aponte's house due to one of his illnesses, akin to the Groups of Our Lady that have been so successful in France and later introduced in Cuba by Catholic Action.

Each one of these groups is made up of some six married couples that knew each other for some time and got together weekly in one or another's home to read a religious book and openly discuss it.

Once all the homes have been visited, they hold a meeting at the Agrupación with the Director, who clears up any questions that might have arisen during the previous weeks or addresses a topic of general interest. Friendships within groups are strengthened this way, and wives grow closer to the Agrupación, becoming, over time, its most able auxiliaries.

It seems that this is the path towards a lasting solution, though it is still far from a total solution, given the disparity between groups, a total of ten, and that of the married couples of the Agrupación.

Promotion among the newlyweds, easier than among older couples, could make it possible that one day all, or at least the majority of agrupado couples, belong to groups, and the difficulty would be overcome.

Beyond this, celebrations like Sacred Family, conferences and Apostolic Assemblies, to which wives are invited and without doubt brought closer to the Agrupación, other and different non-compulsive activities could be found to continue to endear the Agrupación to them.

In any case, the aspirant knows that he will confront this problem one day, that it is important to prepare for it, and that his girlfriend could very well become his first outward apostolate, making true the promise he will make that says: "I will always understand, as the Church understands, that a sodalist is a Sodalist for life; and thus, if I marry, I will explain it to my future wife before the wedding; to completely avoid the possibility of difficulties that might get in the way of reasonable fulfillment of my duties as Sodalist later on."

To make these points clear, once and for all, Fr. Rey distributed the circular dated January 1, 1942 where he told agrupados in precise and conclusive fashion that if they thought, when they graduated and married, that their duties would decrease to having their name on the rolls, to payment of dues and to showing up at the official

celebrations once or twice a year, they were wrong; if this were to happen, the Agrupación would be obliged to expel them for the common good and success of the Institution "for which they earlier sacrificed."

VIII

1939 — 1952

On February 2, 1939 the Archbishop of Havana, Monsignor Manuel Ruiz, assisted by two agrupado priests, Jesuit Chisholm, and secular cleric, Fr. Boza Masvidal, blessed the cornerstone of the ACU's social building in the assembly hall of the Anunciata.

At first there was hardly enough funding to build the first floor, but Divine Mercy availed herself of the magnanimity of friends of the A.C.U. and soon there was enough to erect all three floors.

Donations were so numerous and generous that Fr. Rey remarked at the inaugural celebration that they were, more than anything else, a monument to the sympathy that Havana residents felt for the Agrupación.

While construction was underway the number of agrupados grew so much that life at the house on 25th Street became impossible; so much so that it was necessary to move to the new building before it was completed and on August 8 the Agrupación relocated itself as well as it could into the first two floors, the only ones fit to occupy, postponing the official inauguration until the rest was ready.

On Sunday the 27th of that very month the first Mass was celebrated in the new chapel, donated by Segundo and Jorge Casteleiro who, "beyond generosity itself, have splurged great interest, time, effort, solicitousness, and love so that the 'Abode of the Master' would reflect the thinking and feeling of the A.C.U."

Similarly, the library was gifted by Mrs. Rosalia Fernández Quevedo, widow of Bidegaray, who had earlier donated her husband's law books collection.

The move of the collection of law books left it in disastrous conditions due to the fact that it had been piled in a corner of the house on 25th Street during our entire stay there. It was necessary to reclassify and order it and create index cards that facilitated the search for textbooks. This effort lasted a full year under the care of Agustín Jover, who reported extensively on the work in August 1940.

The building was finally inaugurated officially on December 14, 1939 at 9 o'clock at night, presided by His Holiness' Nuncio Monsignor Giorgio Caruana.

The theme of the celebration was the "Influence of the Eucharist on the progress of the Church," presented by Francisco Ferrán, Alfonso Matas, and Angel Fernández Varela, and was attended by a very large number of agrupados, family members, supporters, and friends of the Agrupación.

Following the great joy of inauguration, agrupados experienced their first great loss, the death of Fr. Román Galán in June 1940. Without doubt, the loss of that priest, full of science and apostolic spirit, sage researcher, erudite, intelligent, ingenious, simpatico, true master, and true friend, was an irreparable loss, as he was very young at the time of his death, when his assistance to agrupados could have been priceless.

An event of enormous transcendence for the future of Cuban Catholicism occurring then that contributed significantly to its expansion and for which the Agrupación had long hoped, was precisely one of the top reasons why its outreach was suddenly brought to a halt, delaying the execution of apostolic projects just when it seemed the time had come to launch them and was also the reason many agrupados who could have been paladins of the

Catholic cause were frustrated when they did not see, at the opportune time, the possibility of taking up the tasks for which they had been training, instead ending up distancing themselves from the Agrupación and losing their militant spirit, feeling condemned to inaction.

At the Eucharistic Congress of Camagüey in January 1941, the Cuban Ecclesial Hierarchy announced its decision to organize Acción Católica²³ in Cuba.

Fr. Rey, who had always been interested in Acción Católica and its expansion abroad, talked about it to agrupados incessantly, always devoting a talk to it during each session of Exercises.

Back in 1933 he had been studying the idea of creating an

“Asociación del Estudiantado Católico Cubano²⁴,” intended to serve as a foundation for the Hierarchy to officially establish Acción Católica when it deemed it advisable, and for that exact purpose and heeding the instructions of Archbishop of Havana, Monsignor Ruiz, he had joined with the most numerous association of men across the breadth of the Republic: the Asociación de Caballeros Católicos²⁵ de Cuba, which, according to the words of the Prelate, would one day make up Branch A of the Acción Católica Nacional.

Even before the latter’s official creation, the Agrupación believed and acted since its foundation like it was engaging in Catholic action, while preparing the ground for its future formation. That is how Juan Suárez expressed it on February 23, 1933 to the Uruguayan Catholic Youth Secretariat: “A little more than two years ago we commenced our Catholic Action exclusively within the university, believing that if we did not first shape men apt for such an organization, an enterprise of that magnitude could not completely fulfill the needs of true Catholic Action.”

Monsignor Ruiz confirmed and encouraged similar convictions repeatedly, one time in writing on January 5, 1938 in a letter to the President of the Agrupación: "I am happy to count among my auxiliaries committed men that for love of God and neighbor labor assiduously in works of true Catholic Action."

Moreover, Pius XII had written to Fr. Daniel Lord in 1940 that the "spirit of fraternal solidarity engaged in the glorious redemptive mission of the Universal Church will best serve to coordinate, as our previous and fondly remembered Predecessor ardently desired and planned, the efforts of various autonomous associations devoted to apostolic works, and thus consecrating, in a manner of speaking, their cordial collaboration in progressing the cause of Jesus Christ."

Furthermore, on September 4 of that very year, in an address to Italian Catholic Action, he went beyond this and said that Marian Sodalities, just as other Catholic Action organizations, were part of the official Cooperation in the Hierarchical Apostolate of the Church without surrendering any of their own spirit or internal organization, but rather coordinating in perfect harmony with other entities of Catholic Action.

It was natural, then, that the news from the Hierarchy in the Eucharistic Congress of 1941 filled Fr. Rey and agrupados with joy, as they saw realized ten-year-old, anxiously awaited aspirations for which they had been preparing intensely over that time. Although Monsignor Ruiz had died in early 1940, the Agrupación did not believe his absence would impact matters in any way and assumed it would be invited to participate not only in Acción Católica Cubana, but also in its organization, particularly when it came to university students and professionals, given the norms from the Roman Pontiff and the words of the deceased Archbishop.

These expectations seemed at first confirmed when José Ignacio Lasaga was named coordinator of the National Secretariat and Secretary of the National Junta. But that was the end of it, for as our

Acción Católica took shape, it drew inspiration from the Spanish one, where secular clergy abound, and adopted its approach of rigid centralization within parish groups, without taking into consideration the dearth of clergy in our country at the time that by adopting the Spanish ideal in its totality, unfit for our circumstances, excluded the powerful assistance residing within Marian Sodalties and, hence, within the Agrupación.

In spite of pontifical norms, Acción Católica Cubana did not acknowledge that Marian Sodalties were also Catholic Action and requested that all congregants enroll in its ranks individually and look to it for direction on what works to pursue.

Fr. Rey, who always saw the essential purposes of Marian Sodalties very clearly and who said repeatedly that it would be best for the Agrupación to disappear before giving up such ends, defended his position against all odds, firmly and valiantly, and was later vindicated by the "*Bis Saeculari Die*" Apostolic Constitution, which confirmed that the Agrupación Católica Universitaria is a Marian Sodality taken to its ultimate conclusion.

During 1942 and 1943 the Agrupación made repeated efforts to get close to Acción Católica, to the point of inserting a paragraph in the Rules for the Board of Directors stating: "The Secretary of External Affairs shall take the utmost care with the relationship with Acción Católica, making sure they are as cordial as possible."

That approach drew an invitation from the Junta de Acción Católica de Cuba to name two delegates in an effort to organize a Parroquial Junta that, once formed, held one of its conferences in the Agrupación's assembly hall, where Frank Barrera lectured on "Conditioned responses and their influence on the character and custom of men;" and the formation in 1943 by agrupado professionals and members of the Federación de Juventud Católica²⁶ of the Acción Católica de Varadero and Victoria de las Tunas groups.

By the end of that year it appeared to the Agrupación that its attitude had succeeded in smoothing any rough edges and putting to rest any possible suspicion that, far from attempting to direct or in any way mold Acción Católica, the Agrupación only wished to cooperate and contribute to common goals for the conquest of the kingdom of God and to obey the instructions of the Pope that Marian Sodalities and Acción Católica work together.

Based on this a letter was sent November 7, 1943 to Monsignor Valentín Zubizarreta, Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, and President of the Conference of Bishops, asking for a meeting of minds with Acción Católica that could put an end to the useless isolation to which the Agrupación had been condemned and to the absurd division it cleaved within the Catholic ranks so in need of unity in order to confront the enemies that accost the Church from all quarters.

Unfortunately, the referenced letter did not garner as much as an acknowledgment of receipt.

As had Monsignor Ruiz, his successor on the archbishopric cathedra of Havana, Msgr. Manuel Arteaga, acknowledged at the Apostolic Assembly of 1943 that the Agrupación "has always been and done Catholic Action." But in spite this definitive declaration, the situation did not improve.

On September 1944 it was deemed proper to declare the position of the Agrupación with utmost clarity, and this was done by Fr. Gustavo Amigó in an article published in "*Esto Vir*" entitled "Agrupación Católica Universitaria and Acción Católica." "We," stated one of its paragraphs, "have also for some time, since the start of our works, felt the unavoidable, august voice of the Vicar of Christ in our deepest being and have tried to find our humble place in that universal movement of militant Catholicism so amenable to us because of our nature as a Marian Sodality for university students to

form Christians and apostles through Science in order to win battles on behalf of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ that is the Church.”

“Providentially, Pius XI and his successor Pius XII have clearly marked our path. According to the Gospel, where our Master teaches that ‘in my Father’s house are many rooms,’ Acción Católica does not come to absorb nor to centralize, but rather to support and to coordinate.”

“We have, therefore, the supreme mandate to persevere in our ranks without undoing anything. But we do have the additional and grave duty of coordinating with Acción Católica, enrolling within its authorized organisms as a group: our Agrupación has already done that, sincerely and decidedly, just as we have also generously supplied some of our members to perform work requested of us.”

“... We wish to renew our promise to collaborate cordially in order for our ranks to sincerely help the great universal struggle for the kingdom of our common Master and Teacher, under the orders of a Hierarchy chosen for his Church by God.”

Eager to settle the inconceivable situation, Fr. Rey asked two persons at different times during 1945, the last one on December 25, to approach the higher ranks of Acción Católica and present the Agrupación’s request. Although contact was made, it was fruitless.

The Agrupación’s position was fully confirmed by the Pope the following year during the visit “ad limina” of the Bishop of Macau, to whom he said, “Some may think that the new Acción Católica organization has come to displace Marian Sodalties. That is certainly not the case: the will of the Holy Church is that Sodalties multiply and spread everywhere, true to their spirit and nature.”

And on August 20 of that very year, Fr. Estaliso Olundain, S.J., Director of the Spanish Conference of Marian Sodalties, delineating a position vis à vis Acción Católica that seemed to resolve the Cuban conflict, said: “It is extremely satisfying for us to see your diligent

and cordial collaboration with Acción Católica, appropriately carried out through collective enrollment of Marian Sodality and the Federation itself, without need for individual enrollment of congregants.”

“And attaining collaboration, often exhibited by our predecessor and recalled by us, never absorption and destruction, but rather coordination of efforts, working towards that same sublime ideal, the holy cause of Jesus Christ and his Church.”

“Then, with hearts brimming with saintly enthusiasm, continue on as you have, promoting spiritual life and works with great zeal; for these are, as we have said on previous occasions, the essential elements of any authentic Marian Sodality... The Church is counting on you and fully trusting in you.”

Initial collaboration took place at the University, though without acknowledging the Agrupación’s work as Acción Católica, when all four Catholic organizations there — two Acción Católica and two Marian Congregations — formed a Central Committee in November composed of their presidents and two conciliar priests with the intention of coordinating and working as one in everything common to Catholic university student apostolates.

“*Esto Vir*” consigns the news with joy: “With true pleasure, we note the coming about of this fraternity of associations, so often recommended by the Supreme Pontiff, and we make ours his belief that by meeting and working together we might sincerely come to love one another and unite in a uniquely Christian fashion that plurality of hues that, according to that same pontifical mind, contributes to grow, beautify, and solidify true and far-reaching Church apostolates.”

Encouraged by this outcome, Angel Fernández Varela offered up the Agrupación to the Archbishop of Havana, Cardinal since 1945 and present at the annual Apostolic Assembly: “Use us as your own.

Choose the very best. I have been joined tonight in our joyous celebration by Science, Knowledge, Prudence, the gift of men, Arts and Letters. Professors and doctors, lawyers and engineers await their ears' delight from your generous lips. Tell them that the Church counts on them. Invite them to strive to become their very best.

Finally, at the start of December, when Acción Católica had drafted interim rules and regulations for Related Associations through which they could control them completely, they were sent to the Agrupación with an invitation to join up under said bylaws.

The President of the Agrupación wrote back on the 5th of that same month asking for membership and noting that: "Although not requested, we take advantage of this opportunity to provide you with a few suggestions regarding the rules and regulations."

"It seems to us that if the Conferences of Acción Católica are the ones to select apostolate activities for related Associations (Art. VIII), and the latter do not have any of their members participating in the conferences, except when invited by the Conference and then in a merely advisory capacity (Art. IX), in spite of the use of the pontifical word coordination, what we really have is subordination. Now then, the Pontiff has never exhorted on behalf of obedience at the Conferences of Acción Católica, but rather coordination within a Christian spirit of mutual charity and benevolence."

"Of course, Marian Sodalties will not have any difficulty with Rules and Regulations provided that, as should be understood, Articles VIII and IX do not restrict Article V, which states: 'Related Associations shall keep their particular physiognomy and autonomy under direction and responsibility of their management bodies, as it relates to achievement of particular ends set out in their own rules and regulations;' whenever Marian Sodalties, as well as Acción Católica, have, not only with regard to their particular, but more so their essential purposes as indicated by the Roman Pontiff, all types of

external apostolates, we wish to march as one with other groups of Acción Católica, in perfect coordination with them.”

The letter did not please Acción Católica, which again failed to reply regarding the proposed relationship.

The first event along these lines took place on April 18, 1947. It was the collective Pastoral of the Dutch Episcopate, headed by Cardinal Juan de Johng which, like many other documents that could be cited, confirmed that the Agrupación’s position was correct: “Big changes have been introduced in the field of lay apostolate,” states the Pastoral, “in fact, 1922 opened the era of Acción Católica to the world at large, and it has come to regulate and direct our path with respect to organization of lay apostolates.”

“Moreover, the course of these past years has given rise to new youth organizations that have included religious formation in their curricula.”

“Hence, we declare that the endorsement and acknowledgment granted by us in 1915 continues in full effect to this day.”

But the most important and truly transcendental event that occurred that year was the proclamation of the Apostolic Constitution “*Bis Saeculari Die*” on September 27 by Pius XII, delineating clearly, precisely, and conclusively the relationship between Marian Sodalities and Acción Católica.

In this final document where he refers to the ideal Sodality, he so faithfully captures the Agrupación Católica Universitaria that it seems as if he was inspired by it, and he declares once and for all with “pleno iure,” with full rights, that Marian Sodalities are truly and legitimate Acción Católica.”

“Marian Sodalities,” states the Holy Father in the Apostolic Constitution just cited, “considering their rules, aim, and works, possess all the traits that characterize Acción Católica, given that the

former, as proclaimed by our fondly remembered Predecessor, Pius XI, is nothing other than "the apostolate of the faithful who consecrate their activities to the Church and in some way help Her to fulfill its pastoral office." Consequently, he solemnly declares that, "Marian Sodalties may be called Acción Católica with full rights, inspired and protected by Our Lady," without contradiction regarding their organization nor distinguishing characteristics that are and will be, as they have been to this day, the tutor and warrantor of their splendid Catholic formation."

Having resolved the issue Pius XII establishes the means to put it into practice and, therein, confirms what the Agrupación maintains: "In order to render true and complete cooperation to the hierarchical apostolate, the particular norms of the Sodality should not be changed nor modified in order to continue to evince such cooperation."

"In conclusion, Marian Sodalties must be considered akin to other associations of apostolic character, regardless of whether they form a federation or collectively attach themselves to a primary nucleus of Acción Católica. As for the rest, it is true that sodalists shall offer their collaboration and support, under the authority and endorsement of Sacred Shepherds, to any other association without need for individual sodalists to sign up in the different organizations."

All this had already been stated by Pope Pius XII and his predecessors and is why the Agrupación, always faithful to the voice of the Pontiff, had not wavered in its position, but what it could never imagine, and this is precisely the novelty of "*Bis Saeculari*," is that the Holy Father declares that He is Master of Marian Sodalties, that operate under the direction of the Society of Jesus and, hence, are Hierarchical because: "they are... by privilege under our immediate authority, delegated by us to the General of the Society of Jesus."

A few days before "*Bis Saeculari*" was proclaimed, a telegram from Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, Substitute of His Holiness' State Secretariat, sent in name of the Pope to the Congress of Marian Sodalities in Italy, celebrated between September 10 and 12, anticipated the spirit of the Apostolic Constitution when it stated: "side by side collaboration with Acción Católica (by Marian Sodalities), autonomous, but very much fraternal."

But, just as if "*Bis Saeculari*" were not sufficient, Pius XII returns to the theme of autonomy in a radio-message to the Congress of Marian Sodalities in Barcelona on December 7: "It is necessary to avoid the error (the Pope refers to it as error, being more direct than usual) that some, motivated by good zeal, may desire to standardize activities for the good of souls and subject them all to a common approach, but with a myopic mindset foreign to the Church's tradition and the tender spirit (one must not overlook that these are words of Pius XII) born from the doctrine of St. Paul: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit (1Cor 12:4)."

The impact of "*Bis Saeculari*" on the world was immense and Germany was among the first countries to answer the call of the Pope, resolutely obeying his instructions when Monsignor Wolker, National Director of the German Federation of Catholic Action Youth, declared at the end of December: "There are still some who, ignorant of this true unity, wish to confound it with the artificial uniformity of a single organization."

"Let this be the conclusion: We proclaim that 'Unity' which makes us strong; that unity which Jesus Christ called for at the last supper: 'Ut unum sint.' But in such unity we also wish to respect holy liberty and thus protect the form and character particular to each association, just as Bishops and even the Supreme Pontiff have so often told us to do."

Finally, at the start of 1949, Acción Católica drafted a decree initiative regulating the role of Marian Sodalities that cooperate with

it. The initiative displeased Fr. Rey greatly, who succeeded in modifying it, although even the second draft failed to please him, because it still departed from the spirit of "*Bis Saeculari*." Eventually there was a third version that also failed to please him, but Vice-provincial Fr. Calvo persuaded him to leave things as they were and to stop requesting changes.

The Decree signed on May 13, 1949 declares that Marian Sodalties, associations united with Cuban Catholic Action, but without modification to their constitutions or norms in order: "To offer true and complete cooperation to the Hierarchical Apostolate are to follow the directives of the National Conference of Cuban Catholic Action in accordance with the disposition of the Hierarchy, which will coordinate the activities of said associations for the benefit of ordering the internal apostolate" and, also, for those apostolate activities that require "collaboration and support" of all Catholic forces.

The President or Delegate of the National Confederation of Marian Sodalties in Cuba will be part of the Cuban National Conference of Catholic Action, and the former will also have representation in the Diocesan and Parochial Conferences. Moreover, Marian Sodalties will provide financial assistance through payment of collective annual dues set by the National Conference, based on number of members.

In truth, the second part of the Decree, the dispositive part, not only marginalizes Marian Sodalties, left with nothing but what they couldn't be denied – the moniker of Catholic Action – but it subordinates any exterior action by the former to the latter.

In effect, discussions over the various drafts of the Decree led Acción Católica to ignore the Agrupación, giving it freedom of action and dissipating, for a time, any hope for unity or action.

Differences of opinion over this question were not limited to Cuba, indeed, the Society of Jesus called a Conference of Promoters of

Sodalities, celebrated in Rome from the 15th to the 22nd of April 1950, because of the situation Acción Católica created in many countries when it tried to place Marian Sodalities under its direction and activities. The Conference was attended by 72 representatives of differing Jesuit provinces, Fr. Rey among them.

The Conference opened with a most beautiful praise of Marian Sodalities in a letter from His Holiness to the General of the Society of Jesus in which Pius XII explains passages from "*Bis Saeculari*" that had raised questions for some Catholics in various countries: "There" (in *Bis Saeculari*), the Pope states, "we declare that these qualities do not, in any way, impede Marian Sodalities from calling themselves Catholic Action in their own right, under the inspiration and protection of Our Lady; indeed, they confer clear import to the group of Catholic Action organizations and, what is more, makes them most useful and nearly indispensable. This is because Marian Sodalities, as can be seen from their history and their nature, possess a particular aptitude to sound out these most beautiful notes: first, a note of sanctity, a veritable and solid sanctity, the most appropriate to the state of each sodalist; then a note of Christian formation, by which each sodalist turns into an example for peers, both in family and social life; finally a note of complete and perfect obedience to and respect for Christ and his Church under the auspices and guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Things have improved somewhat in recent years and offer hope that we might achieve mutual understanding someday and that collaboration between both organizations might be complete. By 1951, members of the Agrupación and of the Federation offered joint conferences on chastity that were well received in Havana and in the interior of the Republic; and in 1954, taking advantage of the recommendations of the Pope in his opening remarks at the First Congress of World Federation of Marian Sodalities, in which he exhorted for work in favor of the greater Glory of God through higher selection standards, greater union with the Hierarchy, and greater cooperation with other apostolic associations, the Agrupación

put into effect a policy of rapprochement, whose first fruits were the participation of Julio Morales Gómez and Angel del Cerro in the homage offered to José Ignacio Lasaga for being elected President of the World Federation of Marian Sodalitys, and a banquet in honor of the residents of Hogar Católico Universitario²⁷, presided by Brother Victorino, Fr. Zabala, OFM, and Frs. Llorente and Barbeito.

Getting back to 1941, a time when the Agrupación felt self-confident and secure, for during its first nine years of existence it had never ceased to move ahead day by day and, hence, when reminiscing on its successes, it could look at an endless horizon with great optimism.

Starting on March 10 and in this vibrant state the Agrupación attended a series of six conferences by Fr. Foyaca on the social question at which he proposed promulgation within our homeland of the Church's social teaching, as presented in the Papal Encyclicals on the subject.

Agrupados had reached a point where they needed action, hence, without vacillation they accepted an invitation to start a movement perfectly aligned with the purposes of the Agrupación, named "Democracia Social Cristiana²⁸," which became one of the most interesting experiments attempted by it.

As a start, the conferences of Fr. Foyaca were published in book form, thanks to the initiative of an agrupado who provided part of the required funding.

The Social Studies Circle was immediately formed and, from the onset, got very busy compiling bibliographic data, drafting papers, and training future speakers.

Finally, on October 6, 1941 the campaign for which those young professional men had been preparing got underway when they selected the Chapel at Yaguas as the initial point of departure for a

twelve-point program, with four talks given during each of three consecutive nights. "Points" said Francisco Pérez Vich, one of the most enthusiastic paladins of the Christian Social Democracy, "capable of sweeping with overwhelming force an entire people thirsty for social justice."

After this first successful event came conferences at the Anunciata for Catholic laborers and others with more experience attending evening classes in Jaruco, Guanajay, Santa Cruz del Norte, and Jovellanos.

Members of other Catholic institutions started signing up: Caballeros Católicos in Cuba, Knights of Columbus, Anunciata, and Catholic Youth Federation. The Agrupación, for its part, gave itself over completely to this campaign not only speaking at the meetings, but also taking responsibility for all organizational and secretarial tasks. By November 22, 1942 membership was so high that it was possible to celebrate the movement's first assembly at the Theater Auditorium, organized by Dr. Abel Terube Tolón, national head of Christian Social Democracy, supported by all the Catholic associations and presided by the Archbishops of Havana and Santiago de Cuba and by the Bishop of Camaguey, attended by an immense public, including representatives from all social classes.

The "Christian Social Democracy," initiated and at first directed exclusively by agrupados, who quickly gave it national scope, proves the limitless possibilities of the Agrupación and shows what it can become in the future when members set out organically and symbiotically to conquer Cuba for Christ.

Another notable event of April 1941 confirms that the Agrupación had developed itself sufficiently to commence its works: José Ignacio Lasaga earns the position of associate professor at the Chair of Logic and Theory of Knowledge at the University of Havana, becoming the first agrupado to teach at our highest learning institution. The number of agrupado professors has grown to eight at the University

of Havana, sixteen at Santo Tomás de Villanueva, two in Santiago de Cuba, one in Puerto Rico, one at Williams College in Massachusetts, U.S.A.; an additional four at Secondary Studies Institutes, and twenty-one professors and a director at one of the private schools.

At the time the Agrupación was founded, due to the political situation, the University of Havana played an important role in the future of Cuba.

Therefore, due to the enormous influence that professors had on formation of the leadership class, Fr. Rey made the conquest of the University a paramount objective in pursuit of the ends of the Agrupación, believing it to be the best place from which to influence Cuban thought. He inculcated this into agrupados for many years, forming them especially for that purpose, which explains why there was always a strong bias in favor of the teaching profession and why it was considered among its most characteristic apostolic tasks.

Given circumstances at the time, Fr. Rey was not in favor of founding Catholic universities, considering them too great of an economic burden. He thought the foundation of Catholic Sodalities close to each university most convenient to infuse the latter with their spirit, while members tried to occupy the greatest possible number of professorships, thus converting State universities into Catholic universities.

He writes to Manuel Artime about this: "I believe that rather than creating Catholic universities, so difficult to support economically and full of challenges when it comes to the number of clerics required, it is better for Catholics to conquer professorships, for on the day all professors at a State university are Catholic we will have a Catholic university paid for by the State."

With the passage of time the course of events decreased the importance of the University as a decisive element for the destiny of Cubans; this, and slow turnover of professorships, forced Fr. Rey to

make corrections to the principal objective the Agrupación should pursue, though without forsaking the university ideal, a magnificent apostolate because of the influence it can exert on a country's thinking.

Hand in hand with preparations to carry out the professorship strategy and closely and naturally related to them, the Agrupación has always been very interested in everything related to education in Cuba, for this is one of the principal foundations on which evangelization of our people should rest.

Responding to an invitation from the Knights of Columbus in early 1939 the Agrupación was represented on the radio program, "Pro-Patria y Reafirmación Nacional²⁹" by Manuel Luis del Riego, who expounded on the theme: "Catholicism and its educational work in Cuba." The following year it participated in similar sessions in Havana, Camagüey and Matanzas, where the speakers were Angel Fernández Varela and José Ignacio Lasaga. That same year it organized a telegram campaign targeted at the Constitutional Convention in order to prevent imposition of secularism in private schools.

On May 25, 1941 it was in charge of maintaining order, perfectly carried out, at the session "For Homeland and School" celebrated at the National Theater, where the speaker was Angel Fernández Varela. It was attended by an unprecedented number of people that filled the theater, the portals of Centro Gallego, and even Central Park. This event proved that the majority of Cuban people are intrinsically Catholic and only need leaders and organization in order to have their sentiments tilt the scale in a direction most favorable to the Church.

Not content with a show of numbers and following the direction of the Supreme Pontiff who entrusted, particularly to Marian Sodalties, the struggle against atheism propagated by communism and that Fr. Rey, always attentive to the Pontiff's call had, in turn, entrusted to

his foundation on July 1936, the Agrupación continued a campaign against pro-communist bias in the Constitutional Convention. To that end, the Agrupación asked C.I.D.E.C.³⁰ and Pax Romana for any information they could provide about private schools in the countries of participants to the forthcoming Congresses that both organizations were going to celebrate in Bogota.

“Closer to home: the secretary of the Agrupación, Raul Piñeiro, writes to absent agrupados that Catholics are engaged in a campaign against communism, with greater effort if possible, since the head of that party was named president of the commission on primary education, a clear threat to religious schools.”

“In the past few months — writes Angel Fernández Varela in a letter to the Secretary of the C.I.D.E.C. — an active anticommunist campaign motivated by the official acceptance this doctrine has garnered, particularly in the regulation of education, consumes members of the Agrupación, which are primarily responsible for the campaign.”

With the danger forestalled, agrupados took charge of the Federation of Catholic Schools. Marino Pérez distinguished himself notably in this effort, as he was elected President of the Federation multiple times. Moreover, as already indicated, he was the effective organizer of various national and international congresses celebrated in Cuba on the subject, helped by other agrupados, and he has also represented our country various times at similar events abroad.

Even though the Agrupación has a soft spot for the teaching apostolate, because it is one of the most fruitful and appropriate to its mission, the effort of its professors was fragmented due to a lack of coordination that cried out for teamwork.

Towards this end, forty of its professors met on June 2, 1951 in the First Congress of Professors of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, to study the primary problems of Primary, Secondary, and University

education in both public and private institutions, and adopted resolutions that promised optimal results.

Yet, back in May 1941, three conferences for professors of the Agrupación are offered. The first, under the direction of José Ignacio Lasaga, was entitled "The capital problem in the Psychology of animals," the second, led by Félix Chediak, in-house lawyer for the Audiencia de La Habana, spoke on "The Marxist thesis on the interpretation of history;" and in the third Angel Fernández Varela, President of the Agrupación, gave a dissertation on "The problem with teaching and its rights."

The year 1941 is witness to yet another outward-focused effort of the Agrupación. As if other activities were not enough, it attempted to breach a new sector, one of the most important and essential for the attainment of its ends, the press.

If the Agrupación is intent on influencing public opinion, in forming the people and bringing Cuban society to Christ, few vehicles are more appropriate to that end than journalism. Indeed, since its foundation, Fr. Rey was clear on the importance of the press on the apostolate task and always took care that agrupados were formed in order to one day use the press as a vehicle for their ideas and, once university teaching was abandoned as the principal objective of the institution, he concentrated his efforts to directing the principal activities of his work in pursuit of that particular apostolate path.

Since the founding of "*Esto Vir*" in June 1931 the idea was conceived of forming some agrupados for Catholic journalism. Those agrupados who have become redactors of our great newspapers were trained in that very internal publication. Beyond those who wrote regularly, and animated by great zeal, many other agrupados have filled newspaper columns with formation articles and current events reporting, for example the one on November 1946 in which Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla made a valiant and brilliant defense of Cardinal Arteaga in response to revolutionary organs that attacked

him for his Circular published on the inauguration of classes at Santo Tomás de Villanueva.

In 1934, one of the most difficult moments of our republican life, José Ignacio Lasaga founded a newspaper entitled "Futuro," aimed at the student world, the very vortex of the storm, where one could see that Catholic studentship was very much alive, thought it disappeared once normality returned to the University.

The year 1935 saw the appearance at the Agrupación of a magazine dedicated to schools, entitled "Amanecer³¹," and another that aspired to be the print outlet for indigent neighborhoods named "Sin Trabajo³²,"

published thanks to the efforts of the Journalism Study Circle led by Fr. Rubinos. "Sin Trabajo" was not only sold in the neighborhoods it targeted but, given that its writers had experienced apostolic conversions and become true newspapermen, it was also sold on buses, at theater exits, and in the interior of the Republic, raising circulation of the April issue to twelve thousand copies. Paradoxically, "Sin Trabajo" came to an end due to the excessive work obligations of its writers.

After disappearance of that magazine, the literary Academy published a page in 1941 for just a short while, entitled "Pa'lante³³." That same year an attempt was made to branch out journalistically with

"Siempre³⁴ " magazine, which aspired to be the preeminent Catholic weekly of Cuba. Fr. Rey took great interest in the project and devoted long hours to study and discussion recommending that at first, to reconnoiter the territory, only four pages be published. However, overeager writers were not pleased with anything less than sixteen. The inaugural issue appeared on September 16 and was received warmly by a rather large portion of the public. It ran for four months without interruption until one of our principal

newspapers decided to merge the two enterprises in order to publish a magnificent magazine of greater circulation and economic import.

The publishers of "Siempre" were enthused with the project, which never came about, and all but Angel Fernández Varela moved over to the newspaper as writers, so he alone wrote the text of the last few issues. The rigor of the job and lack of resources drove Fr. Rey to recommend he give up the effort.

Again, in January 1944, this time with even greater enthusiasm as well as better results, the Agrupación took on the press apostolate via "Lumen." The intention was to create an international circulation, premier, scientific Catholic magazine of the Agrupación and of the Church in Cuba. It lasted until 1951 but disappeared due to obstacles it encountered trying to attain the desired quality, which called for a core of researchers dedicated to full-time redaction.

Before "Lumen" disappeared, the Agrupación doubled its efforts on another technical publication: "Lumen Médico."

Even though "Lumen" was the most fitting face of the Agrupación in the journalistic field it was not, however, the most apt instrument for attaining its purposes, because it aimed too high and only appealed to a limited number of readers. If "Siempre" could have stayed on track, evolving to higher levels once it became solvent, perhaps not as high as "Lumen," it could have been one of the ideal vehicles to establish a beachhead for attainment of the Agrupación's objectives, as there is nothing better to influence and direct the thinking of a country than a serious magazine, well written, easy to read and accessible to all, where Catholic principles could be applied to important current events, whether art, literature, science, economics, social issues, domestic or international politics.

The year 1948 gave birth to a biweekly publication of four pages entitled "Acción Cubana" that, although directed by agrupados, was not an organ of the Agrupación. It was a collaboration with members

of the Federación and of Caballeros Católicos. It had a political viewpoint and was closely linked to an organization by the same name that we will discuss below.

The final great hope of Fr. Rey in the field of journalism was the purchase of "El Mundo," offered for six hundred fifty thousand pesos; four hundred thousand pesos were raised but, just when the balance seemed within reach and the deal at hand, some of the interested agrupados pulled back leaving Fr. Rey no option but to renounce a dream that if realized could have been a most powerful force in defense of the Church and the most apt imaginable instrument to carry out the mission of the Agrupación.

The year 1953 saw the launch of the festive "Esto Ver³⁵;" and towards the end of 1955, fruit of the enthusiasm and impatience of the last batch of students, came "Esto Virito," work of aspirants, and "El Debate," ripe fruit of research, of explored possibilities, of tempered concerns and eagerness to work, intended to "capture in these four pages the best and most select thinking of Cuban youth in a sincere effort to orient the direction of our Homeland" because we "live convinced that the influence of materialistic doctrines, whether liberalism or communism, has squelched the great destiny that our country's liberators envisioned for it; it imposes a return to a spiritual and transcendent conception of life," and a prerequisite for this is "a Catholicism aware of its elevated and unique spiritual mission, a fighting Catholicism, with social initiatives, fierce, ever ready to struggle for the cause of God that is also the cause of the people." "El Debate' is to be a command post, a national Catholicism frontline trench," "beyond and above partisan politics."

Looking back to consider the breadth and reach of activities at the Agrupación in 1941, with its campaign in favor of "Democracia Social Cristiana," "Pro-Patria y Reafirmación Nacional," "Por la Patria y por la Escuela³⁶," and the publication of "Siempre" magazine, one is amazed at the vigor attained only ten years after its foundation.

The bright outlook of that year gave rise to much hope, and persuaded Fr. Rey to jettison the dead weight of agrupados that had fallen short and were incapable of joining the new era that seemed in sight.

Before doing so he sent them a circular on January 1, 1942 advising them to "please understand that if you continue on this path you will not be able to remain in the Agrupación, even though your past contributions will make your absence extremely painful for us," and he ends by making vows that "sad days might be avoided, when we will feel obliged to cry over the absence from our side of some that we have so often taken an interest in and frequently fraternally embraced at our congregational home."

The Agrupación, which at the time did not suspect that events would test its patience in just a few more years, started to reach out, yet was forced to strengthen discipline and started by eliminating agrupados that for one reason or another had lost their spirit and were not prepared to submit to the apostolic action it demanded. Hence, on this and subsequent years, rules and regulations grow in number and restrictiveness, membership losses are large, about which Fr. Rey writes, "Far from backing off or diminishing through these amendments the principles on which our institution stands we, on the contrary, attempt to reaffirm and perfect them evermore."

Since the Director required assistance to promote and coordinate the tasks that loomed ahead, in the month of August Fr. Gustavo Amigó, S.J., was assigned to them and, thanks to his vast culture, enthusiasm, and deep knowledge of the environs, tendered most efficient collaboration.

In perfect harmony with the spiritual development of the Agrupación and its desire for reaching out beyond itself, mid-December of that very year of 1942 sees a surprising physical expansion that would not abate before eventually reaching proportions that no one could have envisioned at the beginning. The first step beyond the original

house was acquisition of the abutting parcel of land between it and the corner of San Miguel and Mazón.

Fr. Rey immediately summoned a group of ladies to collect sufficient funds to purchase another contiguous parcel of land that the Agrupación owned by year's end and where it planned to build a residence for students.

The twelfth anniversary of the foundation was celebrated on March 4, 1943 with a concert by the Marine band under direction of Captain Armando Romeu, composer of the music for the Agrupación's hymn, with lyrics by José Ignacio Lasaga, first heard on that occasion at which the flag in its current form fluttered for the first time.

Everything seemed to confirm the confidence Fr. Rey had in the imminent start to the dynamic phase of his works and contributed to an ever-growing number of agrupados outgrowing the chapel on the first floor and forcing the construction of an altar at the end of the Assembly Hall, separated from the latter by a curtain that could be drawn to create another chapel with much greater capacity than the original one. This second altar was consecrated on June 10 by Bishop of Camagüey, Monsignor Enrique Pérez Serante, assisted in the ceremony by Frs. Hernández, Rey, and Amigó.

Sergio Alvarez Mena took possession of the presidency earlier than usual that year, normally in December, on the 29th of September.

The first Apostolic Assembly of the Agrupación was celebrated in October, presided that time by Archbishop of Havana, Monsignor Manuel Arteaga. It was a formidable summary of all its activities, "an inventory of our outreach efforts propagating the Truth and the Good that Our Lord Jesus Christ pours on his Church," as Fr. Amigó stated in his remarks, making this initial Assembly one of the most interesting ones yet celebrated.

In 1945, Fr. Rey, with confidence gained from an absolute knowledge of Catholic dogma and morals and a wholesome character that made him avoid scrupulous revulsions and unjustified fears, freed to act in the best way for the cause of God, decided that just because Masons celebrated the Cena Marciana there was no reason to allow them to do it exclusively, so, starting on the January 28, the doctors of the Agrupación adopted a similar event, using it to launch their Medical Congress.

Marino Pérez Durán took possession of the presidency in September of that year. In November the Board of Directors resolved to establish an apostolic work named Agrupación Católica Pre-Universitaria for young men from the Institutes. The purpose of these Pre-Universitarias is to commence instilling the spirit of the Agrupación in potential future agrupados; they continue to operate with excellent results to date in various private schools and some institutes in the interior of the country.

The first titles of “Maestros³⁷ de la Agrupación” were granted at the Apostolic Assembly of 1945, establishing a hierarchy within which model agrupados are recognized. The first to receive this honor were Ataulfo Fernández Llano and José Ignacio Lasaga.

Marino Pérez Durán would explain the attributes of the award at the following year’s Assembly speech: “it certifies that the sodalist has been exemplary for ten consecutive years with neither lapses nor inconsistencies; possesses an outstanding Catholic formation, including participation in all required coursework offered at our facilities; cooperates in formation of younger agrupados, leads study circles or apostolic work; lives an exemplary and intensely Catholic life of constant apostolate, with always measured and steadfast judgment and attitudes, a model Christian among Christians that aspires to be a model and a man of Christ among men that seek Christ and wish to be with Him.”

That year's "*Esto Vir*" displays increased maturity, there is more substance in its central articles, presaging a growing uneasiness evermore oriented towards politics. It is still a movement in germination, but with a vitality that makes one think of rapid development.

The Agrupación, aware of its purpose since it was founded in 1931, started to broach the political arena, at first delving deeply into socialist and communist doctrines in order to know the ideologies, tactics, and dangers of the opposing camp and then positing, from time to time, general norms that improved judgment and began to inform thinking on that field.

Ataulfo Fernández Llano was of great help to Fr. Rey in the political formation of agrupados through Study Circles, short courses, and conferences.

Fr. Rey understood this task to be essential for men destined to lead the country and is why since the beginning, just as he dedicated himself to shaping them spiritually and culturally, he also dedicated himself to preparing them for possible public life. That is the reason why, in accordance with what Pontiffs pointed out to Catholics, he condemned, particularly among agrupados, total abstinence from politics and maintained that religion cannot ignore a matter so grave and upon which man's temporal and eternal wellbeing depends. He taught that Catholics are obliged to take an interest in it and to strive for the common good by all means possible, affirming that when religion abstains from taking part in politics the former will end up being attacked by the latter and then the victim will not have options besides martyrdom or arms; concluding that if Catholics do not get ahead of events they will end up being dragged by them, befalling upon those that do not want to get their hands dirty dealing with others considered below them morally, for, at the end of the day, it will be the enemy who takes over the field.

“Perhaps,” pens Valentín Arenas, Jr., in the July 1947 issue of *Esto Vir*, “if we understood the importance of politics in the life of a nation, if we thought about how politics invades everything, intervenes in everything, oversees everything, perhaps then we would understand our mistake (in not taking part in it).”

“... No one doubts that political forces play a transcendental role in the lives of all peoples, that politics rules, politics leads, and everyone else is limited to following. We, too, need political force, ethical, as progressive as any other, but grounded on Catholic and Cuban principles. It is not a whim, it is not a wish, it is a necessity to possess the effective arms we now lack but our enemies already own.”

“... we must start by losing our fear of politics. It is necessary to pull that veil, that curtain of smoke, that taints everything related to that magical word that some do not want to see and others cannot stop seeing.”

In brief, this was the thinking of Fr. Rey on the subject, and he wished to form a nucleus within the Agrupación of action-prone men with an intense supernatural life, specifically trained to one day become agents capable of leading the masses.

This objective ties in with the purpose of the Agrupación and the apostolates most suited to it, those most appropriate to attain the desired goal: to influence Cuban thinking in order to return it God, which are: the priesthood; professorship, along with all scientific activities, even if they are not taught directly from the cathedra; the press; and politics.

In this concept of Fr. Rey, as in all his others, there was nothing abstract or theoretical. He aspired to establish practical and concrete objectives for the future action of agrupados in the country's politics, to such an extent that he often repeated that the empty space next

to the bust of Martí in the patio was reserved for the bust of the first agrupado who occupied the Presidency of the Republic.

Fr. Rey understood the obligation of Catholics to involve themselves in politics, not necessarily to form a party, but rather to promote, maintain, and defend Catholicism's ideals, making sure not to ignore any licit means within reach: the press, radio, cinema, television; and to shed any scruples against politicking within existing parties not opposed to the principles of the Church, with the objective of using them to reach public office and from there defend the fundamental interests of religion and conquer true freedom of action in order to make possible the salvation of souls.

"It is a grave error to leave public matters in the hands of non-Catholics," said Pius XII, and the Agrupación, echoing his voice, attempts to inculcate that idea in the minds of its members, illuminating them about the limitless possibilities for political activity in the apostolic field, when it is practiced for solely supernatural ends, and about advantages for the nation, also limitless, from a purely temporal point of view.

"*Esto Vir,*" practicing its formational mission, guided the thinking of agrupados by showing them throughout this time the proper position to take on the matter. A good example of it was the article entitled: "What the Pope thinks," that drawing from the Encyclicals provided the thinking of Pontiffs on the subject, emphasizing the onus on Catholics under "the law of social charity to strive with all force for the life of the Republic to be guided by Christian principles," and clarifying the difference between the conduct of Catholic Action as such, and those of its individual members – the former has to abstain from politics, and the latter should engage in it.

One result of this doctrine in 1946 was the first step taken by the Agrupación in the political arena, and its first success, which was truly clamorous.

In the Spiritual Exercises session led by Fr. Rey starting on February 21 of that very year, upon completion of the second week, in the talk following the meditation, Three Binaries, he strictly advised that: "he who has a political vocation should follow it."

Angel Fernández Varela heeded that advice, for Fr. Rey had encouraged him since 1938 to follow that path, and now ran as a candidate for Representative of the province of Havana and won over other candidates in his party with an unprecedented landslide of 17,500 votes.

The idea caught on like wildfire and in 1947 the entire Agrupación boiled over with that new initiative.

In May, Marino Pérez Durán stepped down from the Presidency to run for Representative in upcoming elections, heeding rules established by the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of our country that state: "Presidents of Catholic Action shall not actively participate in politics." For the balance of the presidential term he was replaced by Carlos Martínez Arango, who wrote about the resignation in the June issue of "*Esto Vir*": Marino, just like Angel, was born with vocation and aptitude for politics at the feet of the Teacher, so He might use them as He sees fit. He wishes to be another pioneer out of the new mold of politicians so needed by our Homeland: a Catholic politician. That is, one who sees politics as secondary, accidental, as just a tool in the hands of Providence to develop a Catholic apostolate, as others have done in Law, Medicine, or the Priesthood."

Just as Marino Pérez Durán ran for office, Melchor Gastón ran in the province of Matanzas.

During that year everything at the Agrupación revolved around politics, seen by Fr. Rey as a most powerful weapon in the fight for the conquest of the kingdom of Christ. In the Agrupación's First Congress on the Humanities, Lasaga presented a work on the moral principles that govern politics, ultimately covering the relationship

between it and Catholic Action; and at the Second Engineering Congress of the Agrupación, a study on and information about a project of the House of Representatives regarding Agrarian Reform, under the tutelage of Angel Fernández Varela, Secretary of the Commission designated to present the proposed law, was circulated among agrupados. The technical reports were drafted by a joint effort of members of the Law Circle.

Lastly, highlighting the principal activity of the year, the Apostolic Assembly of 1947 selected as its theme: "Politics as an apostolate," considering its relationship with Catholic Action in light of the Encyclicals.

The Nuncio, presiding over the Assembly on this occasion, said that: "The environment the Pope envisions reigns at the Agrupación."

"Acción Cubana," from that same time, is the most interesting political movement to be born in our Institution.

It started elsewhere, but by agrupados intent on taking advantage of opportunities at hand from any political party so as to later form their own. At the onset, many people who were not agrupados joined their primitive nucleus, including about one hundred women.

Following the failure to purchase "El Mundo" and unable to gird up apostolic action by the Agrupación in the press arena, Fr. Rey decided to place greater effort behind politics and turn the primary focus of the Agrupación to that arena. In pursuit of that objective and with the assistance of the agrupados belonging to "Acción Cubana," he formed a circle focusing on politics as an apostolate, led by him and studying anything and everything that could, theoretically and practically, contribute to forming politicians, making the crux motivation of its members the answer they gave to San Ignacio in the Spiritual Exercises when he asked: "What am I doing for Christ," and to which they answered "I am doing politics."

When the Hierarchy found out about "Acción Cubana," he was advised that Cuba already had various political parties within some of which the group could serve without the need of starting a Catholic one.

On a similar vein, he spoke with Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla following the appearance of his signed article in "*Bohemia*" magazine repeating the ideas expressed in a conference given over "Universidad del Aire" supporting the creation of a Christian Democratic party that, like the ones in Europe tackling the problems of Germany and Italy, would solve Cuba's problems.

Concurrent with this activity some agrupados, alarmed by fear of possible complications for the Agrupación, forced Fr. Rey to prohibit meetings of "Acción Cubana" within the confines of the Agrupación, but by then Fr. Rey was no longer involved unless they dealt with matters of the greatest importance, although he kept up to date and, of course, approved and encouraged them.

At that point it was decided to invite some Catholic non-agrupados to join "Acción Cubana," but these conditioned participation on not serving in any existing parties they considered tainted and incessantly insisted on the formation of a Catholic party, which agrupados did not agree to because the Hierarchy was opposed to it and insisted that those from outside the Agrupación leave.

"Acción Cubana" lasted until 1952, by which time it had accumulated great influence that portended a great future for it.

An independent and wholly student movement arose in parallel, maintaining close contact with "Acción Católica."

Already by 1934, when the University reopened for the first time since the Agrupación was founded, the latter attempted to gain influence within academic circles.

The work done then at that University against communism and in favor of sound doctrine and order was extremely effective, if hidden, due in large part to the efforts of a few agrupados who aided the rightist groups at the universities in their successes.

The first attempt at collective action took place in 1948 for the University Student Constitutional Convention that was to regulate and organize the working of student organizations.

The Agrupación and the University Catholic Federation united to work together to try to heal the general malaise and, although largely unsuccessful, evidenced the importance of a union and how much could be accomplished through organized and disciplined action.

Given this some agrupados, inspired by the principles of "Acción Cubana," organized a university movement named "Pro Dignidad Estudiantil³⁸." Members of other Catholic organizations joined them quite quickly, as well as students who did not belong to any, but that shared the same ideals.

"The personal stature, wholesome approach, and moral asset of those from the P.D.E., along with a constructive program" led to a quick start that for the first time placed the student flock before a doctrinal disjunctive laid out in real and objective terms.

The movement was fiercely attacked, not only by the opponent student party, but also by the press, that in spite of years lamenting the state of our primary teaching center, now that there was a plan to mend it tagged the group as Falangist, reactionary, divisive, Catholic, etc., saying the same things that, as if memorized by rote, are repeated ad nauseam all around the world each time a Catholic attempts to leave the Sacristy, and that is the first thing Catholics need to learn to disregard if they want someday to stand up for their rights.

The environment at the university got tenser by the day until December 10, 1946, the university's election day, when a true battle broke out among students on campus and many were hurt. The clash was of such magnitude that both sides calmed down and a period of academic normality reigned being, at the end of the day, a triumph for Pro Dignidad Estudiantil.

Since the heads of the movement were in the senior year of their respective careers, there was a lack of leadership to organize and direct the movement the following year, bringing it to an end on that day of failed elections.

In 1946 the Agrupación relived the experience of 1932, but this time with complete ease and free of anxiety.

Fr. Rey left for Spain on March 20 to attend the Pax Romana Congress, returning on August 15. During his absence, states Benigno Villadoniga in his article "Absence and Presence," "The Agrupación has managed by itself; it has carried on with its activities normally; it has made decisions, some of them very important ones, it has admitted and turned away members, it has grown, lived, and fructified and in each and every instance of that living, of that fructifying, as if by some strange sortilege, the presence of Fr. Rey has been felt and thousands of kilometers have not separated us; as if in each instance his voice arose to enlighten, to discuss, to guide."

The Agrupación was in training for very painful days and now, as later, it showed that it had congealed into one piece within the molds of its formation.

That year, in October, it received with enthusiasm the appearance of St. Thomas of Villanueva University. Not only was it two agrupados – Jorge Casteleiro and Marino Perez Duran – that warmly supported and encouraged the initiative prior to its founding, but rather that its birth was a triumph in the battle that the Agrupación had

assiduously fought in favor of freedom of education, making the occasion a very personal one.

The Apostolic Assembly was celebrated on October 22 of the year Cardinal Arteaga took office. The Agrupación has always treated him with the greatest deference, awarding him the first ever Congregant of Honor medal distinction.

Brother Esteban Aguado, a great help, arrived in 1947 to replace Brother Jacinto Iglesias in support of Fr. Rey and later Fr. Llorente. Brother Aguado jumped into the Agrupación with both feet and from day one became just one more agrupado, and one of the more beloved ones.

President Armando Ruiz Leiro took office on October 21, inaugurating the three-year presidential terms, and the Consejo ratified the first section of the Constitution of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria on November 30 in Camaguey, presided by Rafael Santa Maria.

The primary happening of 1948 was the blessing of the cornerstone for the St. Ignatius of Loyola Spiritual Exercises House in the Calvario. Fr. Rey had been pondering a project to found a Spiritual Exercises House. He wrote about this topic on March 23 of that year to Fr. Pedro Lazaria, founder of the Esclavas de Cristo Rey, nuns devoted to operating this sort of institution, asking under what conditions and also asking for house plans acceptable to them, given that he envisioned having one in Havana.

Later on, in 1947, Fr. Ray considered adding a wing to the Agrupación where agrupados could do Spiritual Exercises; finally, he resolved to foment a fundraising organization, successfully presided by Jorge Casteleiro, that eventually managed to erect a building next to the Society of Jesus' Novitiate in Calvario. This Exercises' house, which soon became one of the most important steps in the process of Catholicizing the people of Cuba, is one of the Agrupación's most

beautiful fruits, and for which it takes credit, not only for the idea and the sizable help it gave the fundraising effort, but also for a good proportion of the number of men that make use of it annually, thanks to the amount of promotion it conducted. Today this Exercises' House is directed by an agrupado: Fr. René León.

Before the end of 1948, an initiative of Virgilio Acosta with the steady support of Father Baldor, then Rector of Belén, led to the start at the Agrupación of Vocational Conferences, which successfully continue to this day, to offer future university students from Catholic, secular, and official institutes a little bit of light regarding their choice of career. They cover required aptitudes, influence of the social environment, job outlook in our country, etc., and field trips to the San Lorenzo School Dispensary's Testing Cabinet, Calixto García Hospital, Superphosphate Factory, Supreme Court, House of Representatives, a Law Practice or Architect's Office, a construction site, a distillery, etc.

The topics at the Conferences are: Choosing a Career; Sciences; Humanities; A Woman's Choice of Career; Engineering; Pharmacy; Optometry; Dietetics; Law; Medicine and Dental Surgery; Philosophy and the Humanities; Architecture and Business Administration.

In addition to the battery of interests test, there was the occupational and intelligence Alport & Vernon Projection, and personal questionnaires followed by interviews with professional counselors.

This activity, appropriate for the Agrupación, destined by its founder to instruct and lead, marks the beginning of a concern for the formation and proper counseling of Cuba's future intellectuals.

These conferences are held, in proper Agrupación style, at Sagua, Camagüey, and Santiago de Cuba. The University CESU Committee held the conference at Havana University in 1955 and the Federation did the same in 1956.

The year 1949 saw the construction of student dormitories in a building addition at the Agrupación.

The year 1950 started off with the pain caused by the death of Ataulfo Fernández Llano, one of the men that most contributed to forge the spirit of the Agrupación. His learned culture, his steadfast values, the wholesomeness of his character and his boundless love for the Agrupación made him a true teacher of young men that passed through it and one of the most valued aides Fr. Rey ever had.

Fr. Rey excused himself anew on April 10 to travel to Rome for the Congress of Promoters of Marian Sodality, from which he returned on June 9.

During that time, Brother Aguado was left in charge of everyday matters and Carlos Martínez Arango and Alvaro Ledón of matters of greater import.

The new altar was inaugurated in July, along with the remodeling of the second floor Chapel, gifts of Jorge Casteleiro, who took possession of the presidency in October.

His abundant generosity and extraordinary organizational skills characterized this presidential period, destined to successfully overcome the greatest crisis in the history of the Agrupación.

In August 1951, Fr. Pedro Prada, S.J., was made Subdirector of the Agrupación and he commenced work with great determination although, unfortunately, health reasons cut short his tenure in December.

That year on In Albis Sunday, at three o'clock, the Agrupación won the Holy Year Jubilee among the churches chosen by Cardinal Arteaga; and in October it celebrated its Apostolic Assembly on "Problems of Workerism in Cuba."

The social question, always of concern to Fr. Rey, worried him more and more, and may have been one of the reasons he gave special attention to politics, which he wanted to impregnate with the Church's social doctrine, aspiring for that activity, accepted supernaturally as an apostolate by agrupados, the way in which his institution would manifest itself in the world and influence the environment.

Given his state of mind, it is natural that Fr. Lombardi, when he passed through Havana in the month of December, caused such an impression and awoke in him enthusiasm for theories that he considered inspired by the Holy Father himself.

As a result of that visit, Fr. Rey, Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla, Angel Fernández Varela, Ignacio Warner, and Manuel Artime departed for Bogota where Fr. Lombardi had previously invited representatives from the north of Hispanic America for the purpose of coordinating ideas and plans to bring about what he named a "Crusade of Love."

Dr. Rubén Darío Rumbaut, who also attended the conference as representative of "Acción Católica Cubana," comments that Fr. Rey was "agile, alert, tireless, surprisingly youthful, as he spoke with us about 'Mundo Nuevo' between sessions."

His encounter with Fr. Lombardi was very impactful and reanimated all his energies, hopes, and perkiness of youthful years, yet the intensity of his enthusiasm and the exaltation on hearing the broad plans, which he better than anyone there could fathom and feel, produced in his very logically structured and wholesome spirit a profound commotion that drove him to reassess the progress made to date at the Agrupación, and conclude that it was necessary to give it greater social focus.

"The time has come," he was wont to say in those days, "for the Church's social struggle, and we must start by imparting a social conscience among our Catholics."

He returned to Havana on January 7, most concerned over this idea and immediately began to draft new plans of action which he never completed and never got to share with anyone.

His obsession is manifest in the words he uttered regarding the meeting in Bogota at the last session of the Ascetic Study Circle he attended, during the time between his return and his death, at the January Retreat of Fr. Ayala on "Fecund Apostolates;" and in his last Sunday talk, in which he spoke about "a society that takes pride in its egotistical materialism and that, scathed by exploitative liberalism, trounces social justice and brings misery to millions of joyless human beings." By these lightning-like snippets one can divine the tempest that agitated his soul but, regretfully, we will never know the projects that he ideated to turn the initiative into practice.

And, as if the meeting in Bogota had not caused him enough anguish, a series of problems, all grave and some very complex, awaited his return to Havana and touched intimately his affectivity, causing serious concerns and fears concerning the prospects for some of his dearest illusions; thus affecting the peace of mind required to properly assess the positive results of his works to date, as he tried to steer the path Fr. Lombardi set out.

These obstacles and unpleasantness became the crown of thorns that topped off a history of abnegation and sacrifice throughout his life.

Because of those disappointments, his last days are like his personal Prayer at Gethsemane, where the Lord tested him before bestowing Glory, depriving him of all consolation and making him experience the sour taste of fragility, impotence, and fickleness of human events. That fabulous man, capable of shaking a whole nation with his titanic strength and turning himself into the prime cause of its Catholic renewal, whose powerful influence divided the religious history of Cuba into two eras, when in his profound humility he

asked himself if he had done what was required, he did not find an answer to the doubt that exalted him, because of the desolation he traversed and that, embracing his soul, prepared him for the vision he so desired throughout his whole life.

Had he not died, the irrefutable splendor of reality would have dissipated the impression produced by that meeting in Bogota, but the Lord called him before he had time to quiet the anguish and lighten the burden on his spirit in this life.

The diary of the Agrupación tells the story of that saddest of days.

“On the morning of the 12th (of February 1952) Fr. Rey celebrated Mass and had breakfast as usual; at 11:30 Bro. Aguado called on him to go to Reina for lunch, but he answered that he was thinking of staying at the Agrupación for the day, as usual.”

And on the 15th of that very month, also from Puerto Rico, he wrote, with phrases that all agrupados current and future should keep in the most intimate part of their hearts, what today seems to be his farewell to the Agrupación from the everlasting Glory where he intercedes incessantly for it:

“I will never forget you, not as the Agrupación nor as individuals. I commend you to God every day.”

“Crescite et multiplicamini et replete terran et subjicite eam”.

On the day of Fr. Rey’s death, President Casteleiro called for an Extraordinary Board Meeting at 9:30 p.m. at which he reported that all necessary arrangements had been made for the burial, which would be at 5 p.m. the following day, 13th of February.

It was also agreed that since Vice-provincial Fr. Calvo would close the wake in the name of the Society of Jesus, José Ignacio Lasaga should do it on behalf of the Agrupación.

The Consejo assumed governance from that point forward, collectively replacing the person of the Director in all the duties previously accorded him.

On February 14 at 9:30 p.m. the Extraordinary Consejo met again, attended by all past presidents and by Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla. At that time Casteleiro explained that Fr. Vice-provincial had tasked them to deliberate on and propose to him the person that should succeed Fr. Rey, for the final authority was his.

A discussion then ensued on the qualities that the person chosen to fulfill the responsibilities of Director should have: excellent formation, ability to successfully direct Exercises, great piety, excellent health, able to support the weight of the Agrupación and, naturally, admirer of the founder in order to continue the work as he had envisioned it.

The matter was thoroughly discussed until one in the morning when the session came to an end, agreeing to solicit counsel from the priests that directed the Society of Jesus.

On Friday the 15th, again at 9:30 p.m., the Consejo reconvened with members only, excluding those others that had been invited to the Extraordinary Consejo.

“Overwhelmed by the sudden death of Fr. Rey, Director of the Agrupación, but with responsibility to carry on its work, the Consejo accepted Carlos Martínez Arango’s proposal to:

Meet every Thursday at 9:30 p.m. until the new Director is on board.

Have each Managing Consejo member review his own duties, admirably enumerated in the treatise penned by Fr. Rey for the Consejo, and fulfill all duties by putting them into practice, and getting in contact with each corresponding member of the Student Managing Consejo, basing their position and counseling him on the rightful duties of their position.”

Also discussed was the need to maintain normal conditions in all the activities of the Agrupación and to that end the President was charged with visiting Fr. Bercedo for the purpose of celebrating the following Saturday's Guardia and the Sunday Mass and, at an appropriate time, asking for another priest to hear confessions.

In addition, it was also agreed that, following Mass, Carlos Martínez Arango should speak to agrupados about the continuance of the Agrupación following the death of Fr. Rey, assuring all of the work that the Managing Consejo was realizing to move forward and exhorting them to not lose faith at this critical moment.

On that occasion Martínez Arango said that, "We must keep up with all the activities of the Agrupación, just as Fr. Rey conceived them."

"We must fulfill our congregational duties, each his own, with the care and attention of he that offers personal homage to whom we owe so much, and who from Heaven takes satisfaction in the effort of each one of us as we fulfill each of those duties."

"Until now, Fr. Rey and the Agrupación, although two, were for us the same thing, but from this point on, even though our understanding falter and our hearts rebel, we must start getting used to disassociating Fr. Rey and the Agrupación, the person from his work."

"From his work, planned by him to outlive him."

"From his work, envisioned by him too grand to last for only the length of one man's lifetime."

"Life ends, it is the hard reality of mortality. But for us agrupados there must not be any doubt in our understanding that He who in his divine and inscrutable Providence took him from us will also give us his successor."

“He who, like him, will serve as a bridge, as a link to the One who Fr. Rey always considered true Director of the A.C.U., Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and to his Blessed Mother, Mary Immaculate, our Patron.”

The third Extraordinary Consejo was celebrated that very Sunday the 17th at 10:30 a.m. and Casteleiro gave an update about the conversations held with a few priests of the Society of Jesus. With the matter was discussed, it was agreed to recommend Fr. Amando Llorente, S.J. and a commission made up of Casteleiro, Martínez Arango and Lasaga was charged with drafting a letter to Fr. Calvo, communicating the decision he had requested of the Consejo.

The Extraordinary Consejo, meeting for the fourth time on the following day, approved the text of the letter; and that very night the Professionals Circle continued the cycle of conferences offered by Marino Pérez Durán on the “French Revolution and its consequences,” reinstating the normal march of the Agrupación with that activity.

Finally, on Sunday the 24th, the Vice-provincial announced to the President that Fr. Llorente had been named Director and he arrived at the Agrupación the following day, meeting that very night for the first time with the Managing Consejo to address a number of pressing matters.

As with all things at the Agrupación, the actions of Divine Providence were clearly at work in the selection of Fr. Llorente, showing itself through a series of happenings over the years that eliminated all other possible candidates, erstwhile bringing Fr. Llorente closer to an end that he never suspected.

His specialization at Oxford was on the leadership of youth organizations, and his fortuitous assignment to the House of Spiritual Exercises of Calvario that put him in close contact with agrupados, to many of whom he was already providing spiritual direction before Fr.

Rey's death, are mere steps on the path that Providence had first set out for him when she put him in contact with our Founder.

In his book, "*Formation of the Chosen*," so thoroughly read by Fr. Rey, Fr. Ayala asserts that "successors of spiritual works always need solidarity with those that preceded them," and Fr. Llorente acquired that spirit without even noticing it, to the point that as the Consejo's Circular to agrupados of February 29, 1952 said, "his complete commitment to the work of Fr. Rey, with whom he shared affinity of sentiments and projects, had the new Director of the A.C.U. arrive with ample knowledge of the ideas and initiatives that seethed in the great heart of our much missed founder."

The friendship between Fr. Llorente and Fr. Rey started when the former was maestrillo at Belén and he attended a session of Exercises offered by Fr. Rey to the Belén community. Fr. Llorente was impressed by the personality of Fr. Rey and went to speak with him following one of the meditations and in that conversation, which was very long, the Director of the Agrupación insisted that he come to work in Cuba following his ordination and also invited him, on various occasions, to get in contact with agrupados.

Years later, Fr. Llorente returned to Havana assigned to serve as Prefect of the Colegio de Belén, but a series of circumstances led to him being given the responsibility for the House of Spiritual Exercises of Calvario, where he renewed and deepened his relationship with Fr. Rey.

Each time he directed the agrupados in Exercises, Fr. Rey had Fr. Llorente take his place during some meditations, and they also used to talk at length about the Agrupación, once lasting until five in the morning during which Fr. Rey confided in him all his projects.

As time went on Fr. Rey's affection for Fr. Llorente grew, and he gave increased attention to the Director of the House of Exercises. He not only seemed keen on shaping his successor, but also wanted Fr.

Llorente to strengthen his relationship with the Agrupación, and, not content with just substituting him in some meditations, he entrusted Fr. Llorente with a session of Spiritual Exercises for older agrupados. When Fr. Llorente took his final vows on February 2, 1952, and contrary to common practice at the Society of Jesus, Fr. Rey insisted on speaking at the ceremony, attended by many agrupados, and delivered a speech full of emotion before the start of Mass, it was like handing power over to he who forty-five days later would be the new Director of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria.

Thanks to friendship, to sharing of ideals, to affinity of character, to paternal affections of Fr. Rey for Fr. Llorente, and to the admiration Fr. Llorente had always felt for Fr. Rey, the succession took place without a step being lost or a need to make any abrupt changes, and the Agrupación was able to continue on its way without altering by even one iota the direction it set upon at the time of its founding.

IX

1952 — 1956

On Sunday, March 2, Fr. Llorente was introduced to the Agrupación as its new Director. "In the barque of the A.C.U.," he said in a speech he gave on that occasion, "attacked from without, as all works of Christ are, and awash from within by fears of the present and doubts for the future, with an experienced helmsman that steered it since birth through a thousand reefs and hidden dangers while never running aground, no one would dare come aboard and take charge of the wheel if he failed to see that Christ commanded it, sometimes in silence, sometimes dormant, but always alert to the sound of our impotent plea to respond to the storm and rebuke the winds and the sea."

"Overcoming natural fear of personal impotence, as Peter had to in order to walk on the waters of the Tiberias holding on to Jesus' hand, or even on the immovable rocks of the Tibor, I tell you, dear agrupados, that I am here before you full of confidence and full of optimism."

"An optimism based primarily on three columns."

"The first, held fast by the word of God: I am here because God wishes it so."

"... For every Jesuit there is a Nineveh and a Tarsus. A Tarsus, going where one wants to, but leading to certain failure. And a Nineveh, where Christ wants one to go and leading always to success, because God is there."

“... The second is every one of you. Columns carved by the artistic hand of Fr. Rey de Castro. Out of granite, because he knew about stones. He did not pick sand, he picked hard stone. He picked marble, because he knew that only out of marble can long-lasting statutes be carved: for eternity. Those columns are the ones on which my hopes rest: all of you.”

“... And the third column is Fr. Rey de Castro, still with us. I am not saying he is among us, for he is in Heaven, as we all know, and he remains the born Director of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria. I say he is with us, because he is in the head of each of you, and when it comes time to do anything important the judgment of Fr. Rey de Castro will inform the decision and all will ask: Fr. Rey de Castro is here with us, how would he think about this?”

“... With such hopes... who is not joyous, who is not optimistic, who does not think that the Agrupación Católica Universitaria must carry on...? And it must carry on triumphantly, because the foundation on which it rests is eternal, as is the Church’s foundation.”

“Therefore, in this first Hello I have one thing to say: I have been named Director of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria and I am confused, because everyone I have shaken hands with and embraced so far has used a single phrase to respond to my greeting — Father, unconditionally at your orders... unconditionally at your orders... This says a lot. And it is why I must respond to all of you with — Agrupados, unconditionally at your orders... unconditionally, because from this moment on it is God’s will that my prayers be only for you; that my priesthood be only for you; that my thoughts be only for you; that my illusions be only for you; that my labor, my health, my life, be only for you. Who would be so blessed to be able to give it all up in this trench of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria — as Fr. Rey de Castro did — in this ‘avanzada³⁹’ of the army of Christ the King?”

In no time and with that energy so his own that appears to be inexhaustible, Fr. Llorente began work and, in short order, gave birth to new initiatives at the Agrupación.

For an opportunity to get to know the younger agrupados and to start their formation as soon as possible, he organized a series of field trips that immediately had the desired effect.

In April he started with modifications to the entrance, a meeting room, a Subdirector's office, lavatories, etc., and all were completed by September.

In August he continued the outward push, irrepressible at the Agrupación, and encouraged the founding of one of the aptest vehicles ever created there to achieve its particular purpose: the Catholic Psychiatric Institute. It got its start when a few agrupado professionals who practiced Psychiatry and related sciences decided to work together and formalize a "de facto" scientific cooperation that had existed among them for some time.

To this day it is manned by members of the Agrupación, whose spirit gave birth to it, whose sap vivifies it and is, and aspires to continue to be, fruit of the Agrupación.

The Institute has conducted valuable studies and investigations that have been known, partly through various publications and Congresses and soon, when a sufficient number of cases have been documented, through a collection in a volume destined to stir great interest in the scientific field. It will cover the Psychotherapeutic technique that members of the Institute have been practicing, in line with Catholic dogma and morals, specified in the first Article of the Institute's Regulations Summary that declares its purpose: "The scientific nurture of Psychiatry within Catholic norms, the professional development of its members, and the betterment of psychiatric practice in Cuba."

It is directed by a Board of Governors responsible for admission of new members, by invitation only.

A solid stake in the ground around which the entire organization revolves, is that its members maintain a dual Catholic-Scientific bar at the highest possible level. A product of that objective, one of the published works that stands out, was a collaboration between Carlos Martínez Arango and José Ignacio Lasaga on Psychotherapy, based on the T.A.T (Test of Thematic Apperception), which opens wide vistas not only with regard to the refutation of Freudian concepts, unsustainable within Catholic morals, it also follows a similar constructive apostolic line that complements an earlier one, also by Martínez Arango and Lasaga, published in the Journal of Psychology to warm praise by great masters of American Psychiatry.

It is necessary to also point out that among the tasks realized by the Institute one of the most notable, because of its novelty and enormous transcendence, was the brief course on ideas of Psychiatry for Spiritual Directors, which was widely acclaimed. It is hoped that it will be repeated periodically due to the help this knowledge offers to the field of spiritual direction, as certain ideas of Psychiatry are indispensable to a spiritual director wishing to contribute to close collaboration among psychiatrist, priest, and clinical psychologist, the most noted characteristic of that movement.

The possibilities open to the Catholic Psychiatric Institute are endless and despite natural resistance to new ideas that promise to challenge established thinking, its influence starts to be felt outside the Psychiatric field as evidenced by the fact that many of its principles have been incorporated into the culture of some institutions like religious orders established in Cuba, which have adopted a psychiatric exam as part of their candidate admissions process.

Fr. Llorente adopted the planning and promotion of the Via Crucis, celebrated with growing success by the Agrupación at the Calvario on Good Fridays amidst great enthusiasm; and he introduced solemn yearly commencements at the University by celebrating Holy Spirit Masses at which the Maestros of the Agrupación and the agrupado university professors, dressed in cap and gown, pledge to defend the doctrines of the Catholic Church from modern errors, following the Syllabus formula.

On November 3 he inaugurated the new meeting room, a portrait of Fr. Rey painted by Cossio, a gift from Jorge Casteleiro, and a commemorative plaque on the death of the Founder at the location where it occurred, now found in the meeting room due to modifications to the building. This was followed by the annual Apostolic Assembly presided by Cardinal Arteaga that included presentation of a most important work entitled, "Protestantism in Cuba," an exhaustive study of the doctrines, development, outreach, etc., of each Protestant sect in our country, the best source of information available on the subject.

And as if all of the above weren't enough, at the end of 1952, on December 3, Fr. Llorente announced the purchase of the house abutting the Agrupación, located at Mazón 63, between San Rafael and San Miguel.

Fr. Francisco Barbeito, S.J., was named Subdirector of the Agrupación in the month of September of that year.

The agrupados who knew him before that date knew of his great love for the Agrupación to which he had always been ready to assist, whether subbing for Fr. Rey during his absences, celebrating Sunday Mass on many occasions when the Director only delivered the homily, or recommending the very best high schoolers of Belén to him, and who had fond memories of his frank and loyal friendship and of his clear, germane, and compelling counsel, received the news with great joy. Since that time he, along with Fr. Llorente and

Bro. Aguado, make up a trio lovingly called by agrupados “the priests⁴⁰” and none of them takes for granted the affection, respect, and gratitude they merit for countless reasons.

The first anniversary of Fr. Rey’s death was commemorated on December 14, 1953 by placing the first stone for the Fr. Rey de Castro, S.J. School Dispensary, in Yaguas that, thanks to the efforts and generosity of Ramón Barcia, was inaugurated the following February 8, erected as a memorial in honor of the Agrupación’s founder.

The house on the corner of Mazón and San Rafael was purchased in May with a gift made by an agrupado for half its price and, after modifications, was inaugurated as a residence in December. Another house was purchased during the month of August on Mazón, between San Miguel and San Rafael, which was demolished, thus bringing under the Agrupación’s ownership the entire length of the square block facing Mazón.

While the previous year had witnessed the foundation of the Bureau of Information and Propaganda (B.I.P.), it did not start publishing pamphlets until May 1953. This work, thanks to the means it employs and the objective it pursues, is most appropriately aligned with the ends of the Agrupación. Fr. Llorente has great hopes for its future and does not shortchange it of personal attention, despite daily growth in workload and other new initiatives.

It was founded to gather information on topics of interest to Catholicism, to hold conferences on controversial issues and to publish pamphlets that promote Catholic doctrine. It was divided into three principal branches: one on Statistics, designed to gather data about various activities that in some way might be of interest in the defense and propagation of Catholicism, such as Protestantism, Masonry, Spiritism, Communism, etc., and aspiring to create the best secretariat in Cuba for all these subjects, and to make the

Agrupación the fount from which all who desire such information might drink.

Another branch made up of teams of speakers offered conferences on religion, education, sociology, philosophy, etc.

And last, a branch devoted to Publications of well written, accessible, simple but solid pamphlets on dogma, morals, and apologetics.

In 1953 Fr. Llorente and René de la Huerta, President of B.I.P., traveled to the United States to study at "Queen's Work" in St. Louis, Missouri, a Jesuit organization devoted to publication of Catholic propaganda pamphlets adapted to local needs.

By that year, B.I.P. had 5,000 subscribers and had published 89,000 pamphlets that in 1954 grew to 145,000 and in 1955 to 400,000, with 50,000 sent to Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Panama and Nicaragua. The main subjects covered to date have been chastity, marriage, the veracity of the Gospels, Catholicism and Protestantism, the social question, the theory of evolution, the Mass, etc. And, most importantly, recompilation works: the study conducted in 1952 on Protestantism in Cuba, a survey fielded in 1953 about the religious beliefs of the Cuban people, after a survey done by the North American magazine "*The Catholic Digest*," and a validation done in France by the French Institute of Public Opinion. More than 60 interviewers were sent out over the entire national territory with the task of interviewing a set number of persons of given age, race, sex, and economic status in the town or towns assigned. This was the approach used to carry out a total of 4,000 interviews, considered a "representative sample" of the religious thinking of the complete Cuban population. The questionnaire covered everything from the belief in the existence of God, to opinions of the interviewee about Masonry and divorce. An additional question tried to zoom in on what the person "considered wrong" about the Catholic Church. The findings were shared at the Apostolic Assembly celebrated in January 1954, which

coincided with another very important event taking place in Havana at that time: the V Interamerican Congress on Catholic Education. The survey, a brilliant job of social psychology and the first ever done in a Hispanic American country, created great interest among foreign visitors.

The last job of this type was done in 1955, concerning the religious views of University of Havana students.

Huerta presented it at the Pax Romana Congress, celebrated in England, where it garnered much praise, and it also became the theme of the Apostolic Assembly of 1956.

Manuel Maza took over the presidency on January 11, 1954. He was one of the agrupados most representative of the formational ideal of the Agrupación: balanced, serene, humble, educated, energetic, active, full of apostolic zeal, with a clear idea of duty and an unending devotion to the institution he presides.

That year Fr. Llorente traveled to Rome to participate in the First Congress of the Worldwide Federation of Marian Sodalitys. It served to "confirm the position our A.C.U. held abroad and on which the Congress, in a manner of speaking, had always had its international eyes."

The Agrupación had never received such acknowledgment before. Not only was it proposed as a model for all other Marian Sodalitys around the world but, in addition, an agrupado, José Ignacio Lasaga, was elected to preside over the Worldwide Federation for five years.

The mustard seed was already a copious tree sprouting new branches daily, the B.I.P. with its publications and surveys; the Catholic Psychiatric Institute; the Fr. Rey de Castro School Dispensary initiative; the ever growing Marriage groups; the School in Lisa; the purchase of houses with numbers 1168, 1124 and 1174 on San Rafael Street that filled out the rear perimeter of the Agrupación; the donation by the Gastón family of a field in Coronela

for the construction of a new Spiritual Exercises House; the building of a grotto for a statue of the Immaculate in the patio to commemorate the Marian Holy Year; everything gave witness to God's special protection and confirms, beyond hope, a certainty about the glorious destiny Divine Providence has reserved for the Agrupación Católica Universitaria.

That was the momentum that started the year of 1955. The Apostolic Assembly was celebrated on February 3 which, following a perennial tradition of love and fidelity to the Supreme Pontiff, was dedicated to Pius XII in honor of the sixtieth anniversary of his consecration to the Virgin as Marian Sodalist.

In June the Nuncio of His Holiness blessed the first stone of the Exercises House destined to commemorate the silver anniversary of the Agrupación, chosen as the very best monument and aptest to express its spirit, forged in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola; and to link the name of the Marian Pope to the date being celebrated it was decided to give the House the name of Pius XII, in order to make clear the Agrupación's characteristic submissive devotion and fealty to the Holy Father.

The building was nearly complete eight months later, one of the best of its kind anywhere in the world, built by the agrupado architect Jorge Echarte with much of the credit for timely completion due to the admirable efforts of Ramón Barcia, a most efficient collaboration Fr. Llorente had on such an endeavor.

On the day of St. Ignatius, July 31, even though he had yet to finish High School, Jorge Suárez Gastón was consecrated at a special ceremony because of his participation in the activities and spirit of the Agrupación and his proximity to entering the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus thus becoming, along with his sister Lourdes, the first children of agrupados with religious vocations.

That very year the Agrupación participated in the exposition sponsored by U.N.E.S.C.O.'s Youth Associations Committee that took place in the Palace of Fine Arts, showcasing there one of the most interesting sections exhibiting publications, graphics, and photographs describing the activities of the Institution. The year 1955 also saw the start of new apostolates, increasingly fitting to the purpose of the Agrupación: In cooperation with "Rosa Mística⁴¹," a female university Marian Sodality founded by Fr. Rey, it broadcast a Sunday program on television entitled "Man and God," because it was deemed one of the appropriate vehicles for spreading Catholic values in the modern age; and the first cinematographic project of apostolic content was entitled "Marriage."

A new organization born that year is called to exert great influence on the thinking of university students, the Center for Mathematics Research, created by agrupado professors in the mold of the Center of Medical Studies. Its purpose is to offer instruction on all key subjects of Engineering, Architecture, and Business Sciences, following up with additional courses for those careers.

It started to operate on August 28 with 50 students, offering freshman-year and some sophomore-year classes for the aforementioned careers, planning to add future ones year by year until the program is complete.

The new push Fr. Llorente has given to the Agrupación is evident by the growth in activity. The residence serves seventy-seven students from the interior of the country and, in 1955, ninety-two aspirants applied for admission, it was an excellent group, so full of ideas, concerns and ambitions that a Managing Board had to address the issues.

Students in their final two years before graduation, and professionals can be found among them, so deserving of attention because of their energy, seriousness, spirituality, and consuming impatience to surrender themselves to action.

It had been many years since the Agrupación last faced such a spectacle. From these groups young professionals might emerge that, mentored by elders with greater experience, will finally turn the Agrupación outward. The year 1956 might turn out to be a decisive year, for it exhibits the enthusiasm of the Golden Age of those feverous days between 1934 and '38, and the aggressiveness of 1941 when the Agrupación attempted to commence the conquest of Cuba for Christ.

Today's spirit is akin to that of those days, but the means at hand are greater and formation more developed.

The only thing the Agrupación needs is to coordinate its works, to give them an organic constitution, to prepare a plan, and to march into battle. One can feel that internal desire that might take shape at any moment and that presages the triumph that Divine Providence has in store for it.

The first twenty-five years in the history of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria come to an end on March 4, anniversary of its foundation, with the inauguration of the Pius XII Exercises House.

What can an agrupado say at this juncture?

Intone the Magnificat, then keep silent, as Fr. Llorente did at the Guardia of that precious Saturday.

There are the Exercises Houses, the Agrupación's, the Schools, the Dispensaries, the Academies, the publications, the Study Circles, the indigent neighborhoods, the battles, the dreams, the sacrifices, the triumphs, and the failures, all rising like a majestic symphony to God's Throne to proclaim: thank you, thank you, thank you. They are the only ones with voice to speak on that day. We have to keep silence, lay aside words in the thunderous silence of his infinite Love that called us to the Agrupación and allowed us to celebrate this day.

The tone of "*Esto Vir*" changed completely in 1946 as it proclaimed the transformation taking place in an Agrupación that made efforts to start its definite dynamic phase. From that point until 1952 it devoted its life to seething and turning, agitated by birth pains. It is the time during which it claimed a Government Minister, two Sub-Secretaries, a House Representative, three newspaper men of note; in which two agrupados set off on a new course in the field of Psychiatry, in which another leads in the study of atomic energy in Cuba, and yet another⁴² obtains from the Holy See the appointment of the first Cuban Cardinal; in which "Acción Cubana" has decisive impact on one of the most important political events of the time; in which things seemed disposed to allow a glimpse of the full realization of the Agrupación's ideal: to influence Cuban thought and direct it toward Christ.

Although it had not yet started to act officially, it already exerted appreciable influence on its environment. The Spiritual Exercises introduced and promoted by it had transformed the face of our Catholicism, and the witness that flowed incessantly from the word and examples of agrupado priests, professors, newspapermen, politicians, professionals, and businessmen impregnated a great portion of the conscience of the country.

Directly or indirectly, to a greater or lesser extent, its influence reached from Council of Ministers to doctor's office, from House of Representatives to University, from pulpit to the press, from the congregation to a meeting, from home to school, its effort paralleled that of Acción Católica, and the result of both was that slowly, without knowing why, they started to change values, new topics of conversation were introduced, alternatives were once again offered for settled old questions; men started to fill churches, to proclaim themselves Catholic, to overcome fetishes and idols; the priest went outside the sacristy, entered houses, and appeared on radio and television; religious associations multiplied and Cuban Catholicism learned to raise its voice and to energetically defend the tenets of the faith.

If this is the outcome of isolated and individual action by agrupados pushed irresistibly towards apostolate by the specific formation they received, where will the Agrupación reach when it decides to join all its dispersed forces and undertake the conquest of the end for which it was created?

The instrument has been completed, everything is ready, all that remains is the start of organic, coordinated, and disciplined action.

The Agrupación's period of formation, during which external action is left to the individual whims of agrupados, has come to an end, the moment of truth has arrived, now initiative must come from it, it must draft the plan, it must give the orders, and it is the duty of members to make its idea their own and to contribute, according to their abilities, to make it a reality.

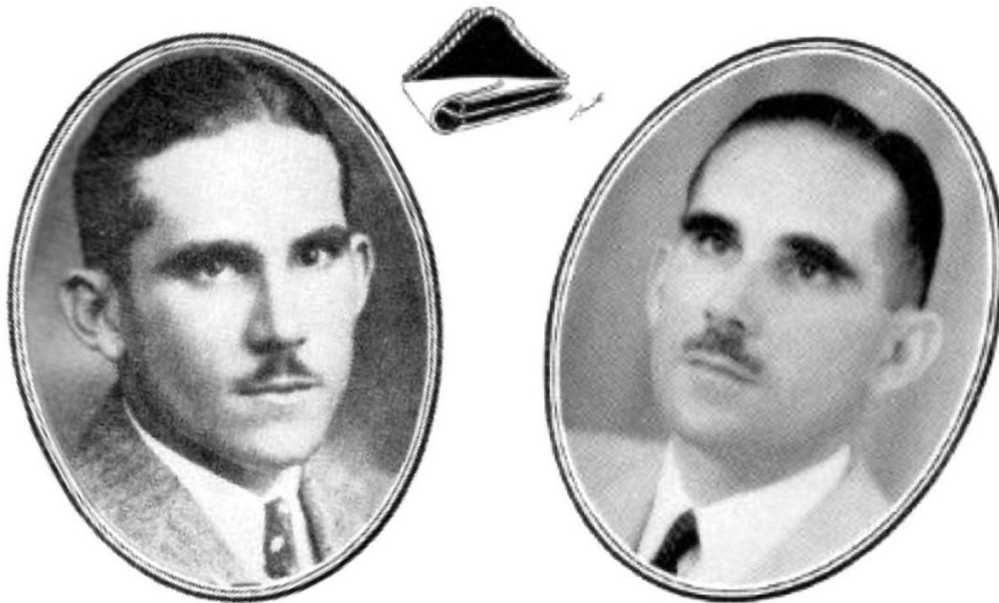
The first part of the parable is now history and judging by the extraordinary providences with which God has always assisted the Agrupación, the second part is prophesy. The mustard seed already germinated, it became a plant and grew to become a robust tree; but the birds of the sky have yet to nest on its branches: the Cuban people have yet to learn to look to her for the light that guides, the word that teaches, the force that protects. This is the task that awaits the Agrupación in the phase that is now starting.

It is true that in the first phase it has overcome numerous battles, but much is left for her to do in Cuba. The static Agrupación has already completed its assignment and the Jubilee Year that serves to divide two eras wants to mark the birth of the Dynamic Agrupación, the true one, the one destined by God to occupy a position of spiritual leadership through which it can return to Him the thought and heart of our people.

Havana, 1956

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MIGUEL FIGUEROA Y MIRANDA⁴³



Miguel Figueroa y Miranda was born in the city of Matanzas, Cuba, on March 26, 1907. Son of Miguel Figueroa y Hernandez and Maria Teresa Miranda y Cordova, he belonged to a renowned family in Cuban society. His paternal grandfather, Miguel Figueroa y Garcia, was a noted politician during the second half of the XIX century. Attorney by profession, he helped found the Liberal Party (Autonomist) in 1878 and on various occasions attained, through popular support, representation of Cuba as delegate before the Spanish Courts. Favoring abolitionism, Figueroa y Garcia participated significantly in the legislative debate that resulted in the end of the slave trade in Cuba. One of his sons, Francisco Figueroa y Hernandez, was part of the Cuban Liberation Forces during the war of independence started in 1895, dying in the conflict at the young

age of seventeen. Figueroa y Miranda also had lineage that linked him to Cuba's independence on his mother's side. One of his uncles, Luis Rodolfo Miranda, was Colonel in that war. Likewise, his father, also an attorney, veered towards a judicial career and was judge on the Supreme Court of the Republic. Immersed in that family tradition Miguel Figueroa y Miranda lived his early years surrounded by an environment propitious for appreciating the virtues of public service.

Educated at La Salle, he later studied Law at the University of Havana where he also took courses directed towards a doctorate in Philosophy and Letters, since he had special affection for the humanities and the world of letters, evidenced in 1935 when his long essay, *The baroque sentiment of the work of Lopez de Vega*, garnered Spain's first place in Havana, commemorating the three-hundredths anniversary of the work of the celebrated Spanish poet and playwright. Nevertheless, he found his true professional passion in diplomacy, career that he started in 1937, year of his marriage, when he was named to the post of Third Class Secretary to the Cuban Embassy in Rome, Italy. Following various promotions and designation as Charge d'affairs from Cuba before the Holy See, Miguel Figueroa y Miranda had to move with his family (two children had already been born, Miguel and Mara Teresa) to the interior grounds of Vatican City, for Cuba and Italy had severed diplomatic relations due to the entry of Cuba into the Second World War. It was in 1944 that Rome was liberated by the Allied forces. He returned to Cuba the following year when he continued to work in the State Department. Of the various positions he would occupy in the ensuing years, the ones that stand out are his designation as Chargé d'Affairs of Cuba to the Dominican Republic during 1947 and 1948, a period of large and dangerous tension between the two Caribbean countries; responsibility over the Department of European Political Affairs at the State Department; as well as leadership, as Ambassador of the Diplomatic Academy "Gonzalo de Quesada," post that he held until dismissed by the revolutionary government in October 1960.

Once exiled and following fruitless efforts to find work in international institutions like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the PanAmerican Union (now organization of American States or OAS) that could avail themselves of his professional diplomatic skills, Miguel Figueroa y Miranda obtained a position as Assistant Teacher in Miami's Citrus Grove Middle School. This position, however, would not last long, for around 1965 the funds to finance the program were drastically cut and layoffs were announced among the Cuban assistant teachers. Faced with this situation and given that his eldest son had established himself in Puerto Rico, Figueroa y Miranda moved to the Caribbean island to once again search for work. Shortly after devoting himself to this task he found an opportunity to return to Academia in the Humanities Department of the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras, recruited to fill an open position in that department and location.

He retired in 1975. Nevertheless, retirement did not put an end to his intellectual activities. He was a voracious reader that devoured all the books that crossed his hands, even those that bored him. He was very disciplined. Moreover, during this period he took time to write his memoirs concerning his stay in Rome and the Vatican at the start of his diplomatic career. When he died on September 8, 1993 he was reading an extensive biography of Pope (now Saint) Paul VI. He got as far as page 384.

¹ Belen Jesuit Preparatory School ([back](#)).

² Privileges and powers Popes granted to a King to direct Church matters in their new territories ([back](#)).

³ There is an inconsistency between this date and that cited by Juan Antonio Rubio Padilla in the opening "Genesis of the ACU." ([back](#)).

⁴ Cohort or class of the Anunciata ([back](#)).

⁵ In Spanish "Intimidación de vida." ([back](#)).

⁶ Love is demanded ([back](#)).

⁷ Note that at that time Masses were celebrated in Latin, not in the vernacular. ([back](#)).

⁸ Parroquia del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús y San Ignacio de Loyola, Havana, Cuba ([back](#)).

⁹ Patronato Pro-Casa de Ejercicios ([back](#)).

¹⁰ Calvary House ([back](#)).

¹¹ One of the eastern-most provinces of Cuba ([back](#)).

¹² Translator's note: In a spirit of humility, the author excludes the name of the mentioned Secretary who was, indeed, the very author of this work. ([back](#)).

¹³ Translator's note: Figueroa would end up writing a book on his experience at the Vatican during WWII, "Dos años de reclusión en el Vaticano." ([back](#)).

¹⁴ Translator's note: A diplomatic office, usually below the rank of embassy ([back](#)).

¹⁵ "Ideario de José Antonio Saco" ([back](#)).

¹⁶ The Parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Ignatius of Loyola, commonly called "La Iglesia de Reina" or The Church on Queen; Queen or "Reina" being the frontal street name. ([back](#)).

¹⁷ One of Cuba's most important newspapers. ([back](#)).

¹⁸ University Student Sodality of the Immaculate and St. Peter Canisio ([back](#)).

¹⁹ Advisor to the Federation of Cuban Catholic Youth ([back](#)).

²⁰ Catholic Gentlemen ([back](#)).

²¹ Guard of Honor ([back](#)).

²² "Moral Guide to Cinema" ([back](#)).

²³ Catholic Action ([back](#)).

²⁴ Catholic Association of Cuban Students ([back](#)).

²⁵ Catholic Gentlemen Association ([back](#)).

²⁶ Catholic Youth Federation ([back](#)).

²⁷ University Catholic Home ([back](#)).

²⁸ Christian Social Democracy ([back](#)).

²⁹ Pro-Homeland and National Reaffirmation ([back](#)).

³⁰ Convención IberoAmérica de Estudiantes Catolicos or Iberian-American Convention of Catholic Students [\(back\)](#).

³¹ Daybreak [\(back\)](#).

³² Jobless [\(back\)](#).

³³ Fo'ward [\(back\)](#).

³⁴ Always [\(back\)](#).

³⁵ Esto Ver, play on name of "Esto Vir", meaning "Look at this"; and Esto Virito, another play on words, meaning "little" Esto Vir. [\(back\)](#).

³⁶ For Homeland and School [\(back\)](#).

³⁷ Teachers or, preferably, Masters [\(back\)](#).

³⁸ Pro Student Dignity [\(back\)](#).

³⁹ Small, select group of soldiers that reconnoiter and spearhead a battle [\(back\)](#).

⁴⁰ "Curas" in the original Spanish version. A "cura" is officially a parish priest, while these three Jesuits, and Jesuits typically, are priests that belong to a religious order, though they, again typically, do serve parishes as well. [\(back\)](#).

⁴¹ Mystic Rose [\(back\)](#).

⁴² A humble reference to this History's author himself. [\(back\)](#)

⁴³ Taken from "El Exilio en Inverno — Miguel Figueroa y Miranda, Diario del Destierro", de Miguel Figueroa de Cárdenas, Ediciones Callejón (2008), with permission. Continues on the back cover. [\(back\)](#).