



Eduardo Abela (1889–1965) is a fantastic example of how censorship can be circumvented and without losing intensity in satire and criticism of an illegitimately established power. Abela is better known in Cuba for his character “El Bobo” (The Fool) than for having been a renowned painter of extensive work, who worked on the Cuban theme and the search for a national identity through painting. But he is best known for his character “El Bobo”, who appeared in 1926 for the first time and lasted (with some interruptions) until May 1934, a year after dictator Machado's fall, who was forced to abandon the country on August 12th, 1933 in the face of a very serious economic crisis, the intensity of the revolutionary attacks and the withdrawal of US support. Soon after, another would come with the name Batista and a worse memory. And then the revolution starts again. El Bobo's character comes from the colonial times, from 1895 when "El Bobo Weekly" was published in Havana, in which the articles are signed "El Bobo de Batabanó ", " El Bobo de la yuca ", " El Babieca's fool ". The popularity of these characters comes to the 1940s with the well-known guaracha (picaresque Cuban song) “El Bobo de la yuca”. (Adelaida de Juan, 1999).

If anything distinguished the vignettes of “El Bobo” from others that appeared before, such as those of “Liborio” or later, such as those of “El Loquito”; it was the very rich symbolism that allowed, on one hand, to avoid the censorship (although not always, since its appearance was vetoed on several occasions) and, on the other hand, connecting with the social mass that saw in “El Bobo” a speaker with which to express their frustrations and yearnings in relation to Machado's dictatorship.

In the vignettes from “El Bobo,” the main character generally appears with an interlocutor (the godson and the professor), mostly commenting on current events in which satire was introduced.

“The ball” is among the most used symbols as a representation of "the lie" the Cuban people are told, but they do not believe, they do not swallow it and, for that reason, "El Bobo" always wears a "scarf", garment which serves to protect the throat from the cold, especially when someone has swallowing troubles (the balls, of course). Another



of the symbols most used by Abela was that of "the candle" lit to the saint, which according to its final position after burning (upright, tilted, fallen) and size meant the successes or defeats of the revolutionary movements against Machado.

The burning candle was a request to a saint (the departure of Machado). And so the symbols that ordinary people recognized as the flag, "El Bobo" carried as a representation of national unity against Machado, followed one another. The vignettes of "El Bobo" by Abela functioned as a coded message that he sought to circumvent the prevailing censorship and reach the recipient without having lost the intended ideological burden. As a result of a specific period, once Machado fled the country, "El Bobo" also had to disappear. During almost a year, the cartoons of "El Bobo" lasted, from the departure of Machado until May, 1934. There were government formulas, coups, overthrows, etc. Abela was deeply tired, a disappointment led him to end his character and even leave Cuba with a position at the Cuban consulate in Milan.