

The thwarting of Cuban autonomy.(The U.S. and Cuba, An Ocean of Mischief)

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The Spanish-American War of 1898 ushered in a period of regional distrust against the US where as before it was seen as the oldest sister nation in the Caribbean. The war also thwarted efforts towards pan-American cooperation that started at the Pan-American Conference in 1899. The US did not go to war against Spain to give independence to Cuba and establish a representative government in its society. America believed in the universal superiority of its institutions and found the weak monarchies of Europe as highly contemptible.

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Competing National Myths

The United States emerged from the Spanish-American War in 1898 as a world power. But much was assumed in that war which was not true, for instance, the need to Christianize the Philippines (a Catholic nation since the sixteenth century), or to introduce Cuba and Puerto Rico to representative government (both islands had been represented in the Madrid parliament since 1878, and been granted home-rule and universal suffrage early in 1898). Kipling's injunction to the United States to "take up the white man's burden" was also preposterous, since the majority of Cubans and Puerto Ricans at that time were white by any standards except perhaps the American "one drop rule." Finally, eighty years after the Americans Named the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana harbor on Spanish perfidy, a meticulous study by U.S. Admiral Hyman Rickover confirmed, as did the Spanish commission's own report of 1898, that the coal bunkers of the battleship were dangerously close to the magazine, and that a spontaneous combustion had caused the explosion.

Although that "splendid little war," as Secretary of State John Hay would call it, made the United States the hegemonic power in North America and the Caribbean, it also inaugurated an era of hemispheric mistrust where before the United States had been seen as the oldest sister nation. The Spanish-American War halted a promising move towards pan-American cooperation begun in 1889 at the pan-American conference. It has been said that this war came about partly because of a wave of confidence in the United States of its manifest destiny which took the form of a crude belief in the universal superiority of "American institutions," a lofty contempt for the "effete monarchies" of Europe, and a strong sense of the righteousness of any aggressive action that the republic might undertake. The slogan "Remember the Maine" was invoked many times after the war with Spain to warn the public against complacency in international relations. Perhaps the Maine should be remembered today to remind ourselves how honorable individuals can succumb to superficial knowledge and prejudice.

Cuban historian Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring debunked the myth that Cubans owed their independence to the United States in his monograph *Cuba no debe su independencia a los Estados Unidos* (Havana, 1950). But in the course of refuting the notion that the Spanish-American War was a crusade to help Cubans straggling for freedom, he fashioned his own myth of a Cuban Liberation Army on the road to victory. He was instrumental in the official proclamation by the Cuban Academy of History of a "Spanish-Cuban-American War," a concept that ignored the fact that the U.S. government never granted belligerent status to the Cuban Liberation Army, that the U.S. armed forces marginalized the Cuban army as soon as they were established in Cuba, and that, for all practical purposes, the intervention of the United States in Cuba was only one operation in a war that began at Manila Bay in April 1898, although the United States claimed that it went to war with Spain because of the three years' war of independence taking place in Cuba since February of 1895.

From what one reads in journalist George Bronson Rea's *Facts and Fakes about Cuba* (New York, 1897), the Cuban Liberation Army was crumbling by mid-1897. It is documented that the Cuban insurgent troops who welcomed the Americans into eastern Cuba in June of 1898 were underfed and under-armed. The *Times* of London reported on February 14, 1898, that troops were being raised in Spain and that a flotilla of torpedo boats was being assembled. Used in the Cauto River, the latter would have facilitated the access of fresh government troops in eastern Cuba, where the insurgents were still strong. Cuban historiography interprets the unilateral cessation of hostilities by government troops after April 1898 as a sign of demoralization in the "Spanish" army, obviously unaware of the official unilateral cease-fire decreed by the Spanish governor-general on orders from Madrid on the ninth of that month. Madrid had agreed to that cease-fire at the request of Pope Leo XIII, in the hope of preventing a war with the United States. The high morale of the government armed forces (not all of them Spanish-born) was shown by their military bravery during

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the siege of Santiago de Cuba against the overwhelmingly larger forces of the United States assisted in turn by a sizable number of Cuban insurgents.

Contrary to the Cuban war of independence of 1868 (the Ten Years' War) - a just war begun after Cuban hopes for reform had been dashed by the Madrid government - the war of independence of 1895 began at a point when the Madrid government had granted reforms in response to the political agitation of the Cuban home-rule party and out of concern for the split of the pro-government Partido de Union Constitucional. This war was planned by the Partido Revolucionario Cubano in the United States, and although in 1898 it had been going on for three years, that was not necessarily because the majority of the inhabitants of Cuba wanted independence by force. Undoubtedly the insurgent leaders Maximo Gomez and Antonio Maceo were brilliant strategists, and enough Cubans wanted independence badly enough to fight for it. But Cuban insurgent forces were never considerable, which is why they adopted hit-and-run guerrilla tactics in the first place. They did boast of considerable support in the eastern region of Cuba, but not in the more populated and economically developed western part of the island, even after governor-general Valeriano Weyler passed the repressive laws that alienated many Cubans. According to Rea, the majority in western Cuba were not in favor of war. Using information in the 1899 census of Cuba, one author has estimated that less than a third of the adult population of Cuba at that time was favorable to independence by force of arms.(1)

In May 1898, with Spain and the United States at war, governor-general Ramon Blanco wrote to Gomez, the commander in chief of the Cuban Liberation Army, proposing an alliance between government forces and the Cuban Liberation Army against the Yanqui common enemy, and the answer he received was this: "I have written to President McKinley and General Miles thanking them for the American intervention in Cuba." Not all officers in the Cuban Liberation Army, however, shared Gomez's desire for U.S. intervention. Enrique Collazo, who quotes that fateful letter exchange in his book *Los americanos en Cuba* (Havana, 1905), says that Blanco's proposal should have been discussed, and that a last-hour arrangement between Madrid and the Cuban autonomous government should also have been discussed by the civil government of the Cuban Republic in Arms before accepting, unconditionally, the armed intervention of the United States in Cuba. He quotes a letter of May 1, 1898, from the insurgent commander of eastern Cuba, General Calixto Garcia, to the vice president of the Cuban Republic in Arms, Dr. Domingo Mendez Capote, where the former admits that as a working civil government, the Cuban

autonomous government was more effective than the Cuban Republic in Arms.(2) But the temptation of victory, even at the cost of the occupation of Cuba by a foreign army, was too great for the Cuban insurgents.

Autonomists, Insurgents, and U.S. Intervention

The Cuban autonomous government established in Cuba in January 1898 is the forgotten factor in most accounts of the war of independence that ended with the intervention of the United States. Those accounts that do refer to it (with few exceptions) describe the home-rule party as an opportunistic group of Cuban landowners and job-seekers. A close look at the background of the members of the cabinet of the autonomous government, however, shows a roster of professionals, scholars, and men of integrity. They were also courageous. The last governor-general of Cuba, Adolfo Jimenez Castellanos, commended them for their willingness to remain at their post and continue administering the two-thirds of Cuba not under U.S. occupation until December of 1898, even though serving under the Spanish flag endangered the future of anyone planning to remain in Cuba. By the time U.S. troops landed in eastern Cuba there was a fully constituted autonomous government on the island, with an elected Chamber of Deputies and the equivalent of a senate.(3) Whatever individual former members of the Cuban home-rule party (Partido Liberal Autonomista) may have said or done after 1898, the fact is that this party was the Cuban political group that opposed the United States intervention in that fateful year.

Political parties had been formed in Cuba after the Pact of El Zanjón of February 1878, which ended the first war of independence and granted Cuba representation in the Madrid Cortes (parliament). The first modern Cuban party was the Partido Liberal founded that year. In 1881 this party added home-rule to its platform and changed its name to Partido Liberal Autonomista. The members of this party were not loyalists so much as nationalists who believed in a distinct Cuban nationality and sought to extend to free non-European members of that society the same economic, social, and cultural advantages enjoyed by Cubans of European ancestry.(4) These Autonomistas wanted political, economic, and social changes, but they also wanted to avoid armed conflict for at least three reasons. First, they feared that given its heterogeneous composition Cuban society would be torn apart by a war of independence. Secondly, they were weary of military leaders who, on account of the weakness of Cuban civic society, might seize power. Thirdly, they did not want to give an expansionist United States the pretext to intervene in Cuba as a mediator. Above all, they were opposed to the annexation of Cuba by the United States, because

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they were comfortable with their Spanish origins and knew that representative government and other modern political concepts were not exclusively Anglo-Saxon creations.(5)

Ten years after its founding in 1881 the Partido Liberal Autonomista had not obtained home-rule for Cuba, but it had brought to Cuba important reforms such as the implementation of the Spanish Constitution of 1876, and laws safeguarding freedom of speech, of the press, and of association. In 1891 they supported the appeal to the Spanish Supreme Court by Don Juan Gualberto Gomez, a separatist journalist sent to prison because he had printed in his newspaper *La fraternidad* an article entitled "Por que somos separatistas." The Autonomista member of Parliament Rafael Maria Labra defended Gomez, and the Spanish Supreme Court ruled in his favor.(6) Gomez returned to Cuba in triumph, and stayed there until he was deported for participating in the uprising of February 1895. By 1892 the Partido Liberal Autonomista was known as the party of the Cubans.(7) The Afro-Cuban leader, Don Martin Morua Delgado, would say in his bi-weekly *La Nueva Era* that Afro-Cubans had no option but to join the Partido Liberal Autonomista. In places as remote as the small city of Holguin in eastern Cuba, a New York Times reporter found an active Autonomista following in 1894.(8)

In 1891 the Partido Liberal Autonomista decided to abstain from participating in parliamentary life in protest against the abuses of power by the Conservative Minister of Overseas Provinces Romero Robledo, and the denial of universal male suffrage to Cuba and Puerto Rico when it was established in the other provinces of Spain. The strength of the Partido Liberal Autonomista was revealed by the magnitude of the abstention in Cuba - of 21,680 registered voters, 13,893 abstained. The Liberal government that took office in Madrid in 1892 considered itself incapable of governing Cuba without the Autonomists, and courted them back with a new electoral law fairer to the Cuban electors and the promise of governmental reforms. Don Antonio Maura, the Liberal Minister of Overseas Provinces, drafted a plan of reforms for Cuba that almost amounted to home-rule. This project was opposed by the Conservative elements in the Spanish parliament, rallied by the Partido de Union Constitucional of Cuba, the self-proclaimed loyalist party of Cuba whereupon Maura left the ministry. At last, the Cuban Buenaventura Abarzuza was able to win the Cortes to a modest plan of reforms in February 1895, a few days before the separatist uprising of February 24 in Cuba.(9) Unfortunately the plan was put on hold by the Conservative government that took office after the uprising, thus confirming the arguments of people like Jose Marti, who said that Spain was incapable of reforms.

After the death of Marti, the Cuban independence promoter and mastermind of the war, in May 1895, the Cuban Revolutionary Party, which he had founded in the United States, fell under the influence of Tomas Estrada Palma, a naturalized U.S. citizen, and became a lobby for U.S. intervention in Cuba.(10) Gonzalo de Quesada, Estrada Palma's trusted man in Washington, said to an American author, who asked him his views on the annexation of Cuba to the United States, that this topic was to be discussed after Spain had been driven from Cuba.(11) Some Cuban historians who admit the annexationist sympathies of many self-proclaimed Cuban independentism will say that those were former members of the Cuban home-rule party who had fled the island after the outbreak of war in 1895, intimating that all other exiles were supporters of complete independence for Cuba.(12) It seems, however, that as soon as Marti left the United States in early 1895 the Cuban Revolutionary Party delegations in New York and in Washington were raising loans and making commitments that would have compromised the independence of Cuba even in the event of her becoming independent from Spain without U.S. intervention.

American intentions toward Cuba in 1898 are still the subject of controversy, because the intervention was brought about by a complex series of events and acted out by individuals and groups who either were not fully aware of the consequences of their actions or were deliberately trying to conceal their purposes. Much evidence exists to support charges of obfuscation and bad faith against the U.S. government and its Consul General at Havana, Fitzhugh Lee. President McKinley was especially two-faced. He and his secretary of state would communicate through their officers in cryptic terms with Cuban insurgent leaders in the United States, the Spanish government, and the U.S. Congress.(13) In Havana, Lee encouraged Cuban insurgents not to negotiate with the autonomous Cuban government or the Spanish governor-general of the island.(14)

In the fall of 1897 the McKinley administration pressed the Spanish government to recall General Weyler - the infamous Spanish governor-general of Cuba since February of 1896 - and to grant home rule to Cuba, thereby giving the impression that there would be no further demands and that the United States only sought peace.(15) At the same time, McKinley sent people whom he trusted to talk to Cuban insurgents, questioning their views about a U.S. intervention in Cuba.(16) In January 1898, after a riot in Havana, Lee reported to Washington that the Cuban home-rule government established two weeks earlier had failed, and requested the presence of U.S. warships in Havana for the protection of American

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lives.(17) In April 1898 McKinley finally proposed to Congress to intervene in Cuba for the sake of the liberty of Cubans, but only a month earlier he had hinted that the United States was willing to pay \$300 million for Cuba. The deal could not be closed, because the Spanish queen, Maria Cristina of Hapsburg, let the American minister know that she preferred to abdicate her regency and return to her native Austria rather than sell the patrimony of her son. In her own fashion, this Austrian princess grasped the notion that nations are not sold like cattle - an attitude one might have expected the president of a great republic to share.(18)

Cuba and Cubans in U.S. Opinion

One of the most influential elements bringing about a war between Spain and the United States in 1898 was the press, which kept Cuba in the popular imagination from the outbreak of the rebellion in 1895 and fanned popular animosity towards Spain, especially after the explosion of the Maine in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898. The result was the arrogant joint resolution of the United States Congress passed on April 19, which gave Spain three months to leave Cuba and declared it the will of the United States to occupy the island. Four days later Spain declared writ. Throughout that period the general accord in the United States was that the Cubans were an oppressed people fighting for their freedom from a congenitally creel monarchy that had invented the Inquisition, and much has since been written about the championing of "Cuba libre" in the American press. What has not been generally known is that there was a gradual change of tune in the jingoist jingles of the American press following the first encounters between U.S. troops and the Cuban insurgents they claimed to support.

After the first landing of U.S. soldiers at Daiquiri on June 16, 1898, the Cuban insurgents began to be described as bloodthirsty, cowardly, or useless.(19) It seems that the marriage of minds between the freedom-loving people of the great republic of the North and the Cuban insurgents whom it had idealized as freedom fighters did not survive their first encounter. Americans became less admiring of Cuban independence when the time came to accept Cubans as a freedom-loving American people with the right to self-determination, after the war that the United States justified as a crusade to help Cubans become free of Spanish despotism. The American attitude after an armistice with Spain was declared in August 1898 was typified by the answer that an American general gave when asked when Cuba would be independent. Cubans, he said, were as fit for independence as gunpowder was for hell.(20)

On February 15, 1995, the U.S. Congress opened the commemoration of the centenary of these events. The Florida congressman leading the affair referred to the explosion of the Maine as "the killing of defenseless American soldiers and officers," and to the Spanish-American War as "that little glorious war with Spain that brought freedom to Cuba, Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam."(21) In math, Spain had not blown up the battleship (or its government would hardly have proposed a neutral commission to examine its remains - a proposal that the United States refused), and the Spanish-American War did not bring freedom to the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam, but rather a different colonial metropolis, while Cuba became a protectorate of the United States. What is more, if the intent of the United States was to force Spain to grant independence to Cuba, it had no need to attack, occupy, and hold every single Spanish domain in the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. Furthermore, once General Weyler was relieved of his command, his policy of forced resettlement of the rural population into towns ended, and a thriving autonomous Cuban government was established, the charge of despotism against the Spanish regime in Cuba became groundless. One may even argue that in 1898 there was more freedom for non-whites in Spanish Cuba than in many of the United States that presumed to teach Cubans how to be free.

Rebecca J. Scott and Aline Helg have written extensively about the struggle for civil rights of Afro-Cubans during the last two decades of Spanish Cuba.(22) Philip Howard argues that because of the political and social activities of Afro-Cuban groups, the government in Cuba had, by 1893, tried to alter the legal status of Cubans of African ancestry and their relationship with other members of Cuban society.(23) The removal of institutional racial barriers offered them the possibility of a better future, although the social, political, and economic restrictions remained. Afro-Cubans closed ranks and forced the government to address their concerns, obtaining a decree desegregating schools in 1879 (before the end of slavery in Cuba), another declaring their right to use public places and first-class railway cars in 1880, and still another forbidding discrimination in theaters in 1885.(24) The author of an article in the New York Times Illustrated Magazine of June 5, 1898, about the United States Colored Regulars going to Cuba said that white southerners at the time would call any African-American a nigger, no matter whether he be a college graduate, soldier, or roustabout on a steamboat.(25) Ironically, those despised African-American soldiers were going to liberate the people in a country where universal (male) suffrage was being exercised, and where a two-decade struggle for civil rights had been capped with the granting to people of African ancestry of the right to bear the honorific "don"

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before their names.(26)

The Cuban Autonomous Government and Cuban Nationalism

Important reforms had thus taken place in Cuba between 1878 and 1898. These reforms were mostly reactive, but the lack of a grand plan of reform by the Madrid government does not mean that the acts it took were not important or that there was no connection between them. The abolition of slavery (1880-1886) and the proclamation of universal suffrage (1898) were advocated by Afro-Cubans who wanted their civil rights, and by the Partido Liberal Autonomista, whose major concern was home-rule for Cuba. After 1890, economic reforms were advocated by the Partido Liberal Autonomista and its antithesis, the loyalist Partido de Union Constitucional. These reforms were not too late to make Spanish-type society in Cuba one in which the relations between the races were, if elusive, evidently less tense than in other regional societies including the United States.

It is likely that without American intervention in 1898 home-rule would have been accepted eventually by all in Cuba - just as the leftist guerrillas in Central America came to accept the U.S. notion of representative governments for El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala in the 1990s. The political reforms of this period allowed the development of a political life in Cuba, with strong political parties, and clear rights and possibilities.(27) U.S. intervention only disrupted the evolutionary process that was occurring in Cuba under the Spanish crown. By instead giving outward support to an insurgent movement dominated by military men, it paved the way for the caudillismo that captured the Cuban Republic in 1902 on the strength of its role as an ally and protege of its "generous" American champion.(28) Indeed, through the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution of 1902, and the economic Treaty of Reciprocity of 1903, the United States actually hampered the Cuban civil government and the independent development of the Cuban economy.(29) This author is not the only one who thinks that an autonomous Cuban state under the Spanish crown offered the best hope for a peaceful solution of the problems of Cuba.(30) According to the English historian Hugh Thomas, constitutional evolution between 1878 and 1895 in Cuba compares most favorably with that in Jamaica and the other islands of the British West Indies at the same time. Lord Thomas concluded that in the worst of cases an autonomous Cuban state would have preserved the island and her people from the disconcerting and ambiguous experiences of U.S. intervention and military role afterwards.(31)

The Autonomists wanted Cuba to be a self-governing colony within the Spanish nation, which they saw as the wellspring of the Cuban. Indeed, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, two-thirds of the Cuban adult population were Spaniards or descendants of Spaniards, and of the other third a majority were Hispano-Africans or Hispanized.(32) Francisco A. Conte, one of the prominent publicists of the Partido Liberal Autonomista, was a strong critic of those who wanted Cuba to be annexed to the United States partly on that account.(33) Rafael Montoro, the Minister of Economy of the autonomous Cuban government, saw Spain as a guarantee that Cuba would evolve into a prosperous and educated society without falling into the grip of U.S. domination.(34) Eliseo Giberga recognized the problem posed for Cuban independence by the influence of the United States, and thought that Cuba without Spain would have to have the friendship of a powerful European nation in order to balance off her powerful neighbor.(35) In his Manifiesto to the president of the United States, dated March 31, 1898, Prime Minister of the Cuban autonomous government Jose Galvez made a stand against U.S. intervention.(36) Whatever he did after the insurgent generals Gomez and Garcia had welcomed American intervention in Cuba, he was not responsible in any way for bringing it about, or creating the conditions that made the protectorate under the Platt Amendment a lesser evil than annexation.

Rather, it was the Cuban insurgents who, by refusing to make peace with the Cuban autonomous government and by welcoming U.S. intervention, legitimized the presence of the United States in Cuba, and confirmed the American claim that the war with Spain was a liberal crusade and not a land-grabbing operation. Some of them seem to have wanted Cuban independence from Spain only. In 1896 Gonzalo de Quesada, representative of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in Washington, co-published a book on Cuba in which he wrote, "Owned by the United States, Cuba would be tremendously prosperous and would save this country [the United States] from importing from any other nations sugar, tobacco, oranges, and other things now largely imported."(37) General Gomez wrote at least twice to the U.S. president, asking for intervention in Cuba.(38) On August 26, 1898, shortly after the declaration of an armistice between the United States and Spain, Gomez wrote to Estrada Palma a letter which praised the United States as the benefactor of Cuba.(39) On March 14, 1901, in a letter to Gonzalo de Quesada, Estrada Palma himself expressed his pleasure for the United States intervention in Cuba, because before it took place he had thought the second war of independence was going to end like the Ten Years' War (with a pact short of independence from Spain).(40) The unconditional acceptance of U.S. intervention by the insurgents, and the

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above testimony of two men who knew the real possibilities of victory (or defeat) of the cause of Cuban independence in 1898, suggest that the autonomous government under the Spanish monarchy was still in control of the island when the United States resolved to interfere in the internal affairs of that friendly power on the grounds that it had ceased to govern Cuba effectively and posed a danger to American national security.

Most of the prominent Cuban insurgents who cooperated with the American authorities during the occupation derived their cultural and ideological preferences from the U.S. institutions where they had studied.(41) Because of the influence of those U.S.-educated Cuban insurgents with American business and professional leaders, as much as because of the legal constraints to Cuban independence embodied in the Platt Amendment, Cuba's first twentieth-century political system operated under the shadow of the United States. On account of that amendment, from 1902 to 1933 Cuba and the United States were engaged in an imperial relationship which polarized politics in the island, limited the autonomy of its power centers, and because the threat of requesting U.S. intervention was successful enough to become a political resource for those out of power, had the unintended effect of increasing political uncertainty.

The Autonomous Government and Economic Independence

Although until 1898 Cuba was a dependency of the Spanish monarchy, its economy had developed since the last quarter of the eighteenth century with long-term independence.(42) To be sure, disputes with the government occurred over tariffs, access to foreign markets, and other matters of considerable importance, but Cuba's colonial status did not seriously hinder the development of its economy. That economy was quasi-monocultural, but it was a Cuban-born elite that pioneered its export-orientation. It has been argued that "had the island been an independent nation, controlled by this elite, economic development patterns, and the process of class formation would not have been very different at all."(43) Cuba was not dependent on Spain for its development, unlike the French and English colonies of the Caribbean which depended on capital and entrepreneurship from their metropolis. Although through the "Cuban debt" and other dubious accounts in the annual budget, the Madrid government siphoned out of the island more than was just, the Cuban economy was controlled by an elite of the Cuban-born and European Spaniards settled in the island.(44)

It is true that after 1878, when the first Cuban war of

independence ended, considerable American capital began to be invested in Cuba. Due to the development of beet sugar in Europe (including Spain) during the 1870s, the U.S. market became practically the only one with the capacity to absorb the quantities of sugar produced in Cuba by the 1880s (perhaps the largest single producer of sugar in the world). A long-term policy to deal with this situation would have been economic diversification, but the immediate need for a market of the sugar-dominated economy of Cuba was met by the Spanish government in its 1891 Foster-Canovas Treaty with the United States(45) which allowed the privileged importation into Cuba of U.S. products in return for the opening of the American market to raw Cuban sugar and tobacco leaf. Free of duties, U.S. manufactured goods soon drove most Spanish manufactures and foodstuffs out of the Cuban market.(46) Cuban producers of soap, cosmetics, leather goods, and alcoholic beverages were affected negatively by the internal tax levied by the government in order to offset the revenue losses at the Cuban customs house. But the Treaty of 1891 also saved the critical Cuban sugar industry, and the fortunes of the Cuban institutions and individuals associated with it.

In 1891 many observers saw the signing of the Foster-Canovas Treaty as tantamount to the economic annexation of Cuba by the United States.(47) Some saw that development as beneficial for Cuba, because they hoped it would lead to the political annexation which they thought would make Cuba free. Juan Bellido de Luna expressed such hopes in the newspaper *El Porvenir* published in New York by the Cuban exile Enrique Trujillo.(48) In Washington, Florida Senator Call proposed in Congress that the United States should purchase Cuba. Rafael Montoro and other members of a commission in Havana wrote a report on the Foster-Canovas Treaty concluding that it would make the Cuban market a preserve of U.S. manufacturers and producers of commodities unless treaties on terms of reciprocity were signed with other powers or the tariff structure for Cuba were revamped in the direction of free trade.(49)

Authority to negotiate economic treaties with foreign governments (although subject to approval by the Madrid parliament) was one of the reforms which the Cuban Partido Liberal Autonomista sought, and it was granted with autonomy to Cuba in the fall of 1897.(50) In the spring of 1898 the Cuban autonomous government sent a representative to the United States to sign a reciprocity treaty. That similar treaties would have been negotiated with other nations eventually in order to counterbalance the influence of the United States in the Cuban economy can be assumed given the fact that Montoro was the minister of the economy of the autonomous government.

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The scorched-earth warfare inaugurated in 1895 by the insurgent generals Gomez and Maceo devastated the Cuban economy. When the United States occupied the island in 1898 its representatives there found only one-fifth of the sugar mills functioning. Sugar output had dropped from 1,035,000 tons in 1894-95 to 218,000 tons in 1897, and American General Leonard Wood reported in 1900 that only 102 of 570 mills were operating. A naive reader might think that this was the best time to redirect the Cuban economy away from its over-dependence on sugar, but postwar Cuba was in ruins and starved for capital that only the United States could provide. Thus, the war begun by Jose Marti in 1895 to liberate Cuba from Spain did not bring about the creation of a diversified economy in which small holders predominated, but rather an acceleration of the trend toward mergers of sugar manufacturing operations into fewer and larger plants (centrales) and foreign ownership of Cuban enterprises and landed property. Within a short time after the 1898 war, U.S. citizens and corporations owned a larger share of the sugar industry than either Cuban-born or Spanish-born citizens. In addition to the loss of control by Cubans of their own economy under the U.S. military occupation born of the Marti revolution, the end of Spanish sovereignty in Cuba was followed in the early years of the Cuban Republic by the securing of Cuban economic dependence through a reciprocity treaty with Washington more onerous than the Foster-Canovas Treaty signed by Madrid in 1891. Furthermore, as Louis A. Perez Jr. has argued, the conditions created by the economic transformation of Cuba after 1898 were less favorable to small farmers than those existing in Spanish Cuba.(51)

Conclusions

A careful analysis of documentary sources contradicts the long-held view that in 1898 the United States won independence for Cuba and brought representative government to a society where it was unknown. Cubans had representation in the Cortes since 1878. Universal suffrage was implemented in 1898 for election of officers to the autonomous government and deputies to the Cortes.(52) And even though U.S. officials had contempt for the Cuban insurgents, the American intervention against both Spain and the Cuban autonomous government legitimized the insurgent generals' claims to leadership in an "independent" Cuba. The result was that three of the first five presidents of the Cuban republic of 1902 were former insurgent generals, while the moderate civilian elites who had rallied around the autonomous government were discredited.(53) Ironically, the economic destruction brought about by the insurgent generals in the name of Cuban independence only assured U.S. domination of the Cuban economy. Fatefully, the

insurgents' desire for power, and their hatred for the Spanish monarchy and the Cubans who did not share their views, drove them to collaborate with a foreign nation to thwart the emergence of a truly autonomous Cuban state and instead create a dependent Cuban Republic whose contradictions gave rise to the Castroite revolutionary state that today claims legitimacy based in the fact that under it alone has Cuba become a truly independent nation-state.(54)

It may be objected that blaming McKinley for Castro is a stretch. While U.S. economic interests did become dominant in Cuba after 1898, that domination was reversed by the late 1930s, by which time American control of the sugar and transportation industries had declined from 60 to 30 percent. What is more, the despised Platt Amendment was revoked twenty-five years before Castro came to power. Fidel Castro himself was a professed admirer of the United States and courted The New York Times, and his popularity might be sought as much in the corruption of Fulgencio Batista's Cuban political culture in general.

Nevertheless, even after the Platt Amendment was abrogated, the United States continued to exercise an inordinate influence in Cuba. Events from 1898 to 1933 fostered a dependent mentality in Cubans at all levels of society that worked in two ways. On the one hand, the United States was seen as the liberator of Cuba from Spain, as a secure market for Cuba's main exports, and as the source of desirable consumer goods, fashions, and ideas. On the other hand, many Cubans felt that nothing could be done in Cuba without Washington's approval, resented the arrogant behavior of some Americans (like the sailors who urinated on the monument of Jose Marti in Havana in the 1950s), and believed that the United States had frustrated the Cuban revolutionary movements in 1898 by "stealing victory" from the Liberation Army, and again in 1934 by refusing to recognize the government of Ramon Grau San Martin. Indeed, Batista's own behavior (he fled Cuba because he concluded that he had lost the support of the United States, without which nothing was possible in Cuba) is an example of that dependent mentality.

The intent of this essay is not to present the United States or the McKinley administration as perfidious agents of imperialism. Rather, the intention has been to present the events leading to United States intervention in Cuba in 1898 and its aftermath in their full complexity. The traditional perception of the Weyler regime as harsh was correct, but Weyler was sent to Cuba because of the terroristic activities of the Cuban insurgents. The U.S. government was also correct in telling the Spanish government that America was a free country and could not

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prevent the Cuban Revolutionary Party from carrying on its propaganda activities. But the queen regent of Spain was right when she confronted U.S. Minister to Spain Stewart L. Woodford in January 1898, telling him that if the U.S. government truly wanted peace in Cuba it should let the Cuban insurgent generals know that they were not going to receive its assistance, for it was naive to expect Gomez and Garcia to give up so long as the United States loomed as a prospective supporter of their cause. It may be argued that the actions of the U.S. government in Cuba were based on the reports sent by its consuls, and consul General Lee's reports were always negative about Spanish progress in pacifying the island and presented annexationism to the United States as the will of the best elements of Cuban society. But Washington should have suspected the accuracy of the reports of someone who was declaring the failure of home-rule in Cuba before it had been established, and whose undiplomatic activities in Cuba were notorious. Most unfortunate was the American refusal to accept the Spanish suggestion for a joint commission to investigate the explosion of the Maine.

The lapidary statement, repeated in so many books and articles like an incantation to chase away questioning, is that home-rule was granted to Cuba too late. But the implementation of a Cuban autonomous government from January to April 1898, the election in that month of a Cuban Chamber of Deputies and its working for four months, even when Havana was suffering a blockade, suggest that the autonomous government was a working institution. According to General Garcia himself it was more representative of the Cuban people than the civil government of the Cuban Republic in Arms. The autonomous government was elected by universal suffrage, a fact later used as a precedent by those protesting against the restrictive electoral laws passed by the U.S. military government for the election of a Cuban constitutional assembly in 1900.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The thwarting of that genuine Cuban state development process seems to be the saddest and most influential result of American intervention. For Cuba it led to independence in the most ambiguous circumstances, and to an unhappy relationship with the United States that ended acrimoniously under the present autocratic, but undeniably nationalistic and independent government of Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz.

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