

LATIN AMERICA AND THE QUESTION OF CUBAN INDEPENDENCE

In a famous account of his travels, titled *El destino de un continente*, the Argentine writer Manuel Ugarte describes his somewhat disconcerting encounter with the Cuban ex-president José Miguel Gómez while traveling through Latin America during the 1920s. Ugarte, a committed advocate of *panhispanismo*—the idea that Spanish America was and should be unified by its shared Spanish heritage, especially in light of the “threat” from Anglo-Saxon culture—had come to Cuba to give a series of lectures. Shortly after one of his presentations, the Argentine was introduced to Gómez, who took Ugarte to task for his criticism of Cuba’s close relationship to the United States. “You reproach us,” Gómez said, “for not defending our legacy of Spanish civilization, but what have all of you [Latin Americans] done to encourage us, to support us, to make us feel that we are not alone?”¹ Taken aback and made suddenly self-conscious by the accusation, Ugarte concluded that the Cuban was admonishing him for failing to uphold the very principles he was espousing in his lectures. “It seemed as if, through the voice of her representative, all Cuba was saying, ‘It is not we who broke the link; it was you who broke it in allowing it to be cut.’” After some time and much thought, Ugarte came to the realization that “Cuba was not alone responsible for the Cuban situation. Some responsibility was also borne by Latin America.”² Through his encounter with Gómez, Ugarte was forced to recognize the limitations of framing what he referred to as the “Cuban situation” exclusively in the context of a cultural war between the United States and Spain. Indeed, the ex-president’s challenge inspired him to reconsider Cuba’s nineteenth-century struggles with both Spanish colonialism and U.S. imperialism in a distinctly inter-Latin American context.

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1. Manuel Ugarte, *El destino de un continente* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Patria Grande, 1962), p. 65.

2. *Ibid.*

Like Ugarte, early scholars of the Cuban independence period examined the wars almost exclusively in relation to the decline of Spanish power in Cuba and the rise of U.S. imperialism.³ However, a number of contemporary historians have criticized this de-centering of Cuba in its own story and worked to do justice to internal factors that affected the independence movements and their aftermaths. They have generated a series of excellent studies, emphasizing among other things the relationships between independence and emancipation, gender and revolution, race and nation, and anarchism and insurgency.⁴ The recent re-examination of the 1895 War of Independence by John Lawrence Tone is especially noteworthy for its commitment to analyzing the Hispano-Cuban conflict on its own terms and not as a footnote in a larger story of the transfer of imperial power.⁵ There are also a number of new works that, while maintaining the importance of the U.S.-Cuba relationship, emphasize the transnational aspects of that relationship rather than its instances of high diplomacy or imperial treachery. These include Kristen Hogonson's *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, Lillian Guerra's *The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba*, and Rodrigo Lazo's *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States*.

Recent work on the Cuba-U.S. relationship includes studies of U.S.-based émigré communities, which take a new approach in that they acknowledge the roles of émigrés other than the most famous ones. It is true that the United States has been home to the largest Cuban émigré community in the Americas

3. There are dozens of fine texts in this category. The seminal work is that of Louis Pérez Jr., from his older *Cuban Between Empires, 1878–1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998) and *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999) to his latest work, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). Also indispensable is the work of Philip S. Foner, especially *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of U.S. Imperialism* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972). See also Lillian Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Ibrahím Hidalgo de Paz, *Cuba 1895–1898, contradicciones y disoluciones* (Havana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 1999); and Mildred de la Torre, *Conflictos y cultura política: Cuba, 1878–1898* (Havana: Editorial Política, 2006).

4. Here the seminal work is from Rebecca Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Joan Casanovas, *Bread or Bullets: Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998); Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Teresa Prados-Torreira, *Mambisas: Rebel Women in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005). For studies of Cubans in the United States, see Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Enrique López Mesa, *La comunidad cubana de New York: siglo XIX* (Havana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2002); Gerald E. Poyo, *With All, and for the Good of All: The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1989); and Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).

5. John Lawrence Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba, 1895–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). For another recent reconsideration of the war, see Ismael Sarmiento Ramírez, *Cuba: la necesidad aguza el ingenio: cultura material del Ejército Libertador de Cuba, 1868–1898* (Madrid: Real de Catorce Editores, 2006).

and several of the most active.⁶ But it is also true that sizable communities of émigrés lived elsewhere in Latin America. Cuban communities in Latin American countries were smaller and far less concentrated than those in the United States, but they were no less engaged in following and debating the war effort and in organizing revolutionary clubs that included nationals of the countries in which they found themselves, as well as Cuban expatriates.⁷

Thus, while recent scholarship has brought fresh approaches to the study of the Cuban independence struggles, a transnational perspective that takes the rest of Latin America into account is still lacking. In this article, I use the correspondence exchanged between the head of the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC) and the representatives appointed to advance the party's interests in various countries to explore the trajectory and fate of the Cuban independence cause in Latin America.⁸ I argue that these letters illuminate several facets of the Cuban émigré organizing effort and give us important clues about the extent and impact of the Cuban independence movement in Latin America. First, the breadth and scope of the correspondence demonstrates a concerted and significant effort to galvanize broad support for Cuban independence, an effort that is overlooked by many scholars. Between 1895 and 1898, the head of the party sustained regular correspondence regarding political and tactical matters with representatives in at least 19 Latin American countries.⁹ Second, the letters trace

6. Many histories of Cuban émigrés in the United States are essentially biographies of prominent figures like José Martí, Tomás Estrada Palma, Gonzalo Quesada, Antonio Maceo, and others. For studies of Cuban émigré communities in the United States, see Poyo, "With All, and for the Good of All"; Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires*; Greenbaum, *More Than Black*; Lazo, *Writing to Cuba*; López Mesa, *La comunidad cubana de New York*; Laura Ramos, *Translating Empire: José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2008); and Rodolfo Sarracino, *José Martí en el Club Crepúsculo de Nueva York: en busca de nuevos equilibrios* (Guadalajara: Editorial Universitaria, 2010).

7. Several studies consider inter-Latin American relations in the era of Cuban independence. See Jürgen Buchenau, *In the Shadow of the Giant: The Making of Mexico's Central-American Policy, 1876-1930* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996). Many Latin American scholars have also considered the relationships between Cubans and Latin Americans and the experiences of Cubans in Latin America during the independence process. The only survey work on the topic is Sergio Guerra Vilaboy, *La América Latina y la Guerra de Independencia de Cuba, 1895-1898* (Caracas: Ed. Ko'eyu', 1999). Interest in Latin America and the Cuban question has been particularly strong in Mexico. Some significant works are Salvador E. Morales Pérez, *Espacios en disputa: México y la independencia de Cuba* (Mexico: SRE, 1998); Laura Muñoz Mata, ed., *México y el Caribe: vínculos, intereses, región* (Mexico: Instituto Mora, 2002); Rafael Rojas, *Cuba mexicana: historia de una anexión imposible* (Mexico: SRE, 2001); Leticia Bobadilla González, *La revolución cubana en la diplomacia, prensa y clubes de México, 1895-1898: tres visiones de una revolución finisecular* (Mexico: SRE, 2001); Margarita Espinosa Blás, *La política exterior de México hacia Cuba, 1890-1902* (Mexico: SRE, 2004); Guadalupe Álvarez Lloveras, *México y la independencia de Cuba, 1824-1836* (Mexico: Instituto Politécnico Nacional, 2008); and Carlos E. Bojórquez Urzaiz, *La emigración cubana en Yucatán* (Mexico: Ediciones Imagen Contemporánea, 2000).

8. This correspondence can be found at the Cuban national archive in the collection Archivo de la Delegación del Partido Revolucionario Cubano en Nueva York (1892-1898). A limited selection of the letters was published in a five-volume series titled *Correspondencia diplomática de la delegación cubana en Nueva York durante la Guerra de Independencia de 1895 a 1898* (Havana: Imprenta "El Siglo XX," A. Muniz y hno. 1943-1946). I have consulted both original documents in the archive and volumes 1, 2 and 4 of the published series.

9. These are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Mexico.

the organizing efforts of individual representatives, charting their successes and failures in great detail and offering a keen sense of the strategies they employed in particular social and political contexts and the obstacles they faced. Indeed, the letters reveal that far from confining their attention to empowered elites, the representatives and their collaborators had direct impact on diverse social sectors, including middle classes, workers, and artisans. Third, the letters reveal the evolution of the delegates' own responses to the challenges of seeking moral, material, and diplomatic support for the Cuban insurgency in Latin America at a time when, for reasons I will turn to shortly, Latin American solidarity was no longer popular in official spheres. Although a comprehensive explication of any single case study that would demonstrate the full impact of the "Cuban Question" in Latin America is beyond the scope of this article, I hope here to stake the ground for my approach to the work of the émigrés and to sketch out the possibilities it contains.¹⁰

The PRC was established in 1892 to coordinate the disjointed forces working for Cuban independence, both inside and outside of Cuba. By 1895, the party had successfully organized the support of Cuban expatriates living across the Americas (and in a few communities in Europe) behind the Cuban insurgent army and a new military campaign for Cuban independence. Local leaders of the émigré communities were at the forefront of this effort. Although some PRC representatives were sent to Latin American countries as emissaries, most were chosen from among the existing emigre communities. These men had two seemingly conflicting responsibilities. On one hand, they were to urge Cubans and sympathizers to support the war effort through the donation of money, arms, and supplies and to help arrange for their transport. On the other hand, they were instructed to pressure foreign governments to intervene with Spain on Cuba's behalf in an effort to end the war diplomatically and save the island from the ruinous effects of Spanish and Cuban battle tactics, especially the burning of sugarcane fields.¹¹ In other words, they were expected to foment and sustain the military campaign against Spain while simultaneously finding ways to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the Spanish. The correspondence between the head of the PRC and the local representatives during the war years helps us understand how these men managed a delicate balance as they scoured the continent looking for support. In approaching this daunting task, the representatives drew from experience. The Cuban independence movement had garnered Latin American diplomatic support in the 1860s and 1870s, so why not now? Going door to

10. For a complete case study, see my Ph.D. dissertation *Cuban Émigrés, Mexican Politics and the Cuban Question, 1895–1899* (Berkeley: University of California, 2007).

11. See Tone, *War and Genocide*, and Sarmiento Ramírez, *Cuba: la necesidad aguza el ingenio*. Older relevant works include Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War*.

door in one country after another, Cuban émigrés pleaded their case, grounding their efforts in a tradition of Latin American solidarity that had found its greatest expression at the time of the first Cuban independence war (the Ten Years' War, 1868–1878), when a majority of Latin American nations had praised the movement as the final defeat of Spain in the Americas.¹²

But the 1890s were not the 1860s or 1870s, and by the late nineteenth century the fight against Spanish colonialism—once the bedrock of Latin American solidarity—no longer seemed broadly relevant. Three factors explain the change. First, the tenor of Spanish-Latin American relations changed significantly after 1870, as Spain sought to rebuild relations with her former colonies.¹³ Second, a new threat to Latin American sovereignty was emerging on the horizon: the United States had demonstrated a growing interest in Latin American affairs during the nineteenth century and especially in the Cuban situation. Third, the success of mineral and agricultural exports in the late nineteenth century, by now entwined with political and ideological changes that justified authoritarian or oligarchic rule throughout Latin America, had diminished the dictators' and oligarchs' interest in championing Cuba's cause, which according to many had become synonymous with the pursuit of social justice and racial equality.¹⁴ This translated into tacit support—in some cases open support—for Spain during the Spanish-Cuban conflict and especially during the Spanish-Cuban-American war.

Denied the political support they had enjoyed during the Ten Years' War, Cuban revolutionaries struggled to build Latin American solidarity in a new, and ultimately hostile, hemispheric political climate. Their responses to adversity were stubborn and creative. Capitalizing on the fact that they were not recognized diplomats, and therefore not constrained by certain codes of conduct, PRC representatives devised their own organizing strategies, drawing the atten-

12. Spain's more aggressive and interventionist policies in the mid-nineteenth century had encouraged Latin American statesmen to see the Cuban movement as the continuation of the struggles waged by Latin Americans against Spanish colonialism during the nineteenth century. In this context, defeating Spain in Cuba became a matter of national and hemispheric security.

13. There are many good studies of Spanish-Latin American relations in the nineteenth century. One of the most comprehensive is Isidro Sepúlveda Muñoz's book *El sueño de la madre patria: hispanoamericanismo y nacionalismo* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Hispánicos e Iberoamericanos, 2005). For the specific case of Mexico, see the following studies: Agustín Sánchez Andrés and Raúl Figueroa Esquer, *México y España en el siglo XIX: diplomacia, relaciones triangulares e imaginarios nacionales* (Mexico: Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, 2003); Antonia Pi-Suñer Llorens, *Una historia de encuentros y desencuentros: México y España en el siglo XIX* (Mexico, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2001); and Aimer Granados, *Debates sobre España: el hispanoamericanismo en México a fines del siglo XIX* (Mexico: Colegio de México, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, 2005).

14. The links between the rise of positivism, scientific liberalism, and social Darwinism in Latin America and the official and widespread refusal to aid or recognize the Cuban revolutionary struggle have not been sufficiently studied. A few works by Mexican scholars have explored the position of the Porfirian elite on the Cuban question. These include Salvador E. Morales Pérez, *Espacios en disputa*; Laura Muñoz Mata, ed., *México y el Caribe*; Rafael Rojas, *Cuba mexicana*; Leticia Bobadilla González, *La revolución cubana*, and Margarita Espinosa Blás, *La política exterior*.

tion of many non-elites, including those typically alienated from power like students, artisans, and workers. The objective was to inspire a shift in public opinion so powerful that it would move political elites to recognize the legitimacy of the Cuban insurgency. At the same time, these Cuban émigrés participated in illegal activities, partnering with Latin American sympathizers to move arms, financial contributions, and donations of various kinds to Cuba. Although Latin American political elites were moved by neither the pro-independence sentiments of the émigrés nor those of their own citizens who joined the PRC organizations, it would be a mistake to dismiss the effort as failed. As a result of the PRC representatives' organizing strategies, Cuban affairs became the concern not only of Latin American political elites, but also that of students, teachers, artisans, and workers across the continent, thus creating one of the earliest broad-based international solidarity movements in Latin America.¹⁵

The letters exchanged between the head of the PRC and the delegates record the dedicated efforts of these revolutionary émigrés to forge Latin American solidarity from the ground up, but a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the Cuban movement in unofficial circles is beyond the scope of this article. Here, I focus on how the letters enable us to observe the evolution of the representatives' understanding of the limits and possibilities of Latin American solidarity during three years of arduous organizing. Initially optimistic that Latin Americans would stand together behind the insurgent cause, the émigrés' hope gave way to disbelief and disillusionment as their efforts to convince the region's statesmen to change their position on the Cuban movement met with defeat again and again. Meanwhile, as Latin American political leaders' position against Cuban independence hardened between 1895 and 1898, the United States was demonstrating a growing interest in Cuba. As Latin American statesmen remained impassive, the PRC representatives felt they had little choice but to embrace the nation that seemed to be their only ally, the United States. The letters they wrote during 1898 reflect a radical shift in their outlook, as they grappled with a deep sense of betrayal and resentment toward their fellow Latin Americans, especially the political leaders. At the same time, the letters expressed sincere gratitude for the widespread support of the Latin American people, and as such they help us understand a forgotten moment in the history of Latin American solidarity movements—a moment marked by the flourishing of a particular kind of Latin American solidarity, below the level of official politics. They also illuminate the shifting continental politics of the late

15. Although the Cuban independence movement enjoyed much popularity and official support in the 1860s and 1870s, awareness of the movement and the war was considerably more widespread in the 1890s. This was in large part due to the growth of émigré communities, the formal organization of the PRC, and the coverage of Cuban affairs in newspapers of wide circulation. A comprehensive study on this inter-Latin American solidarity movement has yet to be done.

nineteenth century and help explain why those, who had been the greatest champions of Latin American solidarity, became firm supporters of the U.S. intervention after 1898.

In what follows, I explore first the relationship between Latin American solidarity and Cuban independence in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century to demonstrate the degree to which the defense of Latin American sovereignty was bound up with the liberation of Cuba. I then examine Cuban political organizing in Latin America during the 1890s to counter the prevailing notion that the Cuban Revolutionary Party was singularly focused on influencing the United States. Next, I consider the obstacles that the Cuban émigrés faced as they worked to build Latin American solidarity for the Cuban cause at the end of the century. Finally, I analyze the responses of the same émigrés as they came to terms with the failure of their efforts. I contend that an examination of the PRC representatives' experiences (including their failures), when placed in the context of historical trends, gives us a unique opportunity to chart the rise and fall of Latin American solidarity in this period and among different groups in Latin America. I complement my reading of the correspondence among members of the Cuban Revolutionary Party with essays published by the revolutionary émigrés, manifestos issued by Spanish patriotic organizations, Latin American newspapers (Mexican and Colombian), and Spanish consular records. These sources enrich my reading of the letters, enabling me to obtain a clearer and more nuanced understanding of both the experiences of the émigrés and the significance of their inability to secure diplomatic support for the Cuban independence movement abroad.¹⁶

THE CONTINENTAL FIGHT FOR *CUBA LIBRE* (1820s–1870s)

Collaborations between Cubans and Latin Americans that aimed at liberating Cuba from Spanish rule spanned the nineteenth century and were rooted in an anticolonialism born of the early independence wars. Between the 1820s and 1870s, the greatest threats to Latin American sovereignty came from Europe, especially Spain. As independent states struggled with colonial legacies, and a colonized state struggled with the specter of independence, many Cubans and Latin Americans found common cause in anti-Hispanism. Dislodging Spain from Cuba became a central goal for those who hoped to ensure Latin American independence.

16. The Spanish manifestos and consular records were consulted in Madrid at the Archivo General de la Administración (hereafter AGA) and at the Biblioteca Nacional de España. Mexican newspapers were consulted at the Hemeroteca Nacional in Mexico City. All other materials are published or microfilmed and available in the United States.

As they conspired to liberate Cuba in the early 1820s, Cuban and Spanish-American patriots wove the struggle for Cuban independence into the fabric of an existing discourse of continental solidarity. In this discourse, the idea of unity was rooted in an older sense of continentalism inherited from the colonial period, and its foundational moment was the rising up of Spanish Americans against Spanish colonial rule in the early nineteenth century. Simón Bolívar's Congress of Panama in 1826 was the first concerted effort to shape the idea of continental unity. The call for unity at the congress reflects Bolívar's conviction that Spanish Americans stood the best chance to protect their independence if they banded together. At this point, Cuba and Puerto Rico became central pre-occupations for circum-Caribbean countries like Colombia and Mexico, who feared Spain would use the islands as bases for a reconquest.

As it turns out, those fears were not unfounded: Spain made several attempts to regain a foothold in the Americas during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Concerns about preserving the independence of the new republics inspired a series of collaborative projects to liberate the islands, organized by Latin Americans. In addition to Bolívar's ultimately thwarted plan to oust the Spanish from the Antilles in 1826, Cubans and Latin Americans had organized two earlier plots to liberate Cuba, both failures: the *Soles y Rayos de Bolívar* conspiracy (1823), which drew direct inspiration from Bolívar, and a plot organized in Mexico by the *Gran Legión del Aguila Negra* (1824).¹⁷ All three involved the collaboration of Cubans and Latin Americans and thus reveal the degree to which Cuba's independence had become synonymous with Latin America's well-being. Although these early conspiracies failed, the fate of the Spanish Antilles would concern most Latin Americans who articulated projects for continental unity throughout the century. Thus, in the 1820s, the idea of unity was defined by the drive to protect newly independent states from foreign, especially Spanish, aggression. Cuba remained an uncomfortable reminder of a looming threat.

Spain did not renew efforts to reestablish control over her former colonies until the middle of the nineteenth century. During the 1860s, Spain re-incorporated the Dominican Republic, backed the French intervention in Mexico, occupied the Chíncha islands off Peru, and bombed the Chilean port of Valparaíso. In response to Spain's aggression, the Chilean government (with the support of Peru) sent a representative to the United States in 1865 to organize a plot to liberate Spain's Caribbean colonies. As a symbol of Spanish power in America,

17. Regarding the *Gran Legión del Aguila Negra* plot, see documents in the collection *México y Cuba: dos pueblos unidos en la historia*, 2 vols. (Mexico: Centro de Investigación Científica Jorge L. Tamayo, 1982). See also Roque E. Garrigó, *Historia documentada de la conspiración de los Soles y Rayos de Bolívar* (Havana: "El Siglo XX," A. Muniz y hno, 1929).

Cuba was a perfect target. Thus, aiding in the liberation of Cuba and later sympathizing with the insurgents who rose up in arms against Spain became an almost sacred duty among Latin Americans, intensified by the echoes of Spain's aggressive foreign policy during the early postcolonial period. Indeed, when Cuban insurgents rose up in arms against Spain in 1868, Latin Americans were quick to express their support for the Cuban insurgency. In 1869, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela all formally recognized the insurgents as belligerents.¹⁸ By 1872, most countries in Latin America had followed suit.

In 1874, General Mariano Ignacio Prado, hero of the Battle of Callao and three-time president of Peru, delivered a speech that demonstrates the degree to which defending Cuban independence had become the duty of every Latin American: "The oppression of Cuba is the dagger of tyrannous monarchy lodged in the heart of republican America. The indolence of her brothers is a crime that will be condemned by history. . . . Peru, a country of free men, cannot, without tarnishing her glories . . . be indifferent to a people who fight to win their rights."¹⁹ Prado's definition of the Americas as a constellation of republics with certain rights, among which is the right to be free from monarchical rule, is a frank expression of what James E. Sanders has recently referred to as the uniquely "American republican modernity" that held sway in Latin America through the middle of the nineteenth century. This particular view of modernity was fundamentally political, as it championed republicanism and democracy over monarchy and aristocracy; it was also America-centric, as it argued that the Americas stood as a proud model for Europe and the rest of the Atlantic world.²⁰ Similar sentiments were expressed by other liberal statesmen, including Benito Juárez of Mexico and Eloy Alfaro of Ecuador.²¹ The climate of support was replicated in many countries during the 1860s and 1870s in demonstrations staged to express support for the insurgents. Even in Argentina, where the government had refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Cuban insurgency, meetings were organized, flags and banners were waved, and speeches pronounced in favor of *Cuba Libre*.²² Throughout Latin America, there was jubilant support for Cuba and the central premise of continental solidarity continued to be the defense of the Americas against European incursions.

18. Guerra Vilaboy, *La América Latina*.

19. Manuel Márquez Sterling, *La diplomacia en nuestra historia* (Valencia: F. Sempere y Compañía, 1910) p. 116.

20. James E. Sanders, "The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Contesting Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 46:2 (2011), pp. 104-127.

21. See Adalberto Santana and Sergio Guerra Vilaboy, eds., *Benito Juárez y Cuba* (Mexico: Miguel Angel Porrúa, 2007).

22. Hilda Sabato, *The Many and the Few: Political Participation in Republican Buenos Aires* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 132. For more on Cubans in Argentina see the recent work by Enrique López Mesa.

The expressions of support for the insurgents in Peru, Argentina, and other countries during the 1860s and 1870s cannot be explained without taking Cuban émigré activities into consideration.²³ Those Cubans played a central role in interpreting and fomenting that solidarity. Although there were isolated groups of Cubans in Latin America before the 1860s, expatriate communities had grown significantly during the Ten Years' War, as thousands of Cubans were forced into (or chose) exile because of their political beliefs and activities in favor of Cuban independence. Others left the island to escape the hardships of war, effectively becoming refugees. Largely middle-class intellectuals and professionals, as well as members of the insurgent army, these early émigrés settled mostly in the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean region. During that war and the inter-war years (1878–1895), many Cuban émigrés remained committed to the independence struggle. In addition, a handful enjoyed access to powerful statesmen of the period, ensuring that their opinions were heard in presidential palaces. Take, for example, Pedro Santacilia, a Cuban and the private secretary of Benito Juárez, president of Mexico. By all accounts, Santacilia, who also happened to be the president's son-in-law, influenced Juárez's decision to support the insurgents in 1869.

Other examples abound. During the 1870s, the Cubans José Joaquín Palma and Rafael María Merchán became, respectively, the private secretaries of Marco Aurelio Soto, president of Honduras, and Rafael Nuñez Moledo, president of Colombia. Like Santacilia, Palma and Merchán were involved in the 1868 uprising in Cuba, and all three were forced to seek refuge abroad due to their revolutionary activities. Palma was an editor of the first revolutionary newspaper and a signatory of the Guáimaro constitution of 1869. Like Palma, Merchán and Santacilia were men of letters and all three were forced to leave Cuba because of their incendiary publications and involvement in insurgent conspiracies. Their travels took them to Europe, the United States, and Latin America, and each soon took up residence in a different Latin American country. Like Santacilia, Palma and Merchán used their advantageous positions to aid the Cuban cause in whatever way possible.²⁴

23. For more on the connections between Cuba and various Latin American countries during the 1860s and 1870s, see works on Mexico and Cuba by Salvador E. Morales Pérez, Laura Muñoz Mata, Rafael Rojas, Leticia Bobadilla González, Margarita Espinosa Blás, Guadalupe Álvarez Lloveras, and Carlos E. Bojórquez Urzaiz. See also Ramón Sánchez Parodi et al., *José Martí y Eloy Alfaro: luchadores ineludicables por la libertad de nuestra América Latina* (Quito: Miraflores, 2003); José Antonio Quintana García, *Venezuela y la independencia de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Pablo de la Torriente, 2005); and Julio Le Riverend Brusone et al., *Cuba-Colombia: una historia común* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional, 1995).

24. José Joaquín Palma skillfully used his connections with President Soto to help several members of the insurgent army, including Máximo Gómez, situate themselves in Central America after the treaty of Zanjón ended the Ten Years' War. Rafael María Merchán's contributions during these years were of a more literary nature. He continued to work as a journalist, writing for one of the most important pro-insurgent newspapers in Latin America, the *Estrella de Panamá*. During the 1890s, Merchán also published numerous essays about Cuban politics and several books of

It is impossible to understand the effusive and widespread support for Cuban independence in the first half of the nineteenth century without giving due weight to the general climate of hostility toward Spain in Latin America. However, we must also recognize the rapid expansion of Cuban émigré communities and the role they played in harnessing and directing those sympathies. When the last independence war began in 1895, the émigré revolutionaries hoped that those who succeeded statesmen like Marco Aurelio Soto, Benito Juárez, and Mariano Ignacio Prado would extend a hand to Cuba, just as their predecessors had in the 1860s and 1870s.

REVIVING REVOLUTIONARY ANTI-COLONIALISM

By the early 1890s, Cuban émigré communities in the Americas had grown significantly. Frustrated by the outcome of the Ten Years' War, many of the original exiles remained abroad in protest. To these established communities were added new émigrés and refugees from diverse backgrounds and circumstances who had left Cuba for various reasons, including the renewed outbreak of war in 1895. Hardly a unified force, Cubans in Cuba and in exile were divided along political, class, and racial lines, and they continued to be so until the creation of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892. José Martí, the architect of the last war of Cuban independence, created the PRC in order to bring Cubans together to lay the groundwork for a new declaration of war against Spain.²⁵ Martí articulated an anticolonial discourse that hinged on the importance of being Cuban, an identity that would subsume other race- or class-based affinities, and on the singular pursuit of independence, a position that rendered any other political solution (for example, annexation or autonomy) unacceptable. Martí sincerely hoped that the revolution would bring about the birth of a new society, free of the racial strife and social inequalities that he had observed in both the United States and Latin America.

To realize this dream, Martí knew he needed to harness the power of the émigré communities throughout the Americas. To this end, he encouraged the new members of the PRC outside of Cuba to organize into political clubs that would be ruled by larger representative bodies, or *cuerpos de consejo*. Cubans were instructed to work within these structures to gather as much financial and material support for the independence war as possible in their adopted countries.

poetry. Another PRC representative and a poet of considerable notoriety himself, José Joaquín Palma published several books of poems and is remembered fondly in Guatemala for writing that country's national anthem.

25. There are hundreds of books and articles published on José Martí. Some of the more noteworthy and most recent are Laura Ramos, *Translating Empire*; Alfred López, *José Martí and the Future of Cuban Nationalisms* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006); and Deborah Shnookal and Mirta Muniz, eds., *José Martí Reader: Writings on the Americas* (Melbourne: Ocean, 2007).

After Martí's untimely death at the start of the 1895 war, the Cuban provisional government, working with Tomás Estrada Palma, the newly elected leader of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, began to move the priorities of the PRC toward diplomacy. Less an idealist than Martí, Estrada Palma was not willing to wage a war against Spain at any cost, nor did he subscribe to Martí's project of social transformation. As a member of the Cuban landed elite who was also a committed *independentista*, Estrada Palma was dedicated to winning Cuba's freedom, while minimizing the economic destruction caused by war.²⁶ In his opinion, Cubans needed to look only as far as Mexico, Central America, and South America (or even to their own ill-fated mid-century independence movement) to appreciate the economic, political, and social dislocation that followed in the wake of an independence war. Indeed, by 1896, it was clear that what John Lawrence Tone has called "total war," initiated by the Cuban insurgents in order to beat Spain, would leave Cuba's economy in shambles.²⁷

Tomás Estrada Palma's commitment to diplomacy and his determination to protect elite interests have made him infamous among scholars. While Martí is portrayed as a dedicated warrior for social justice and racial equality and a true defender of Cuba's independence, Estrada Palma is often made out to be a social reactionary who helped engineer not one but two U.S. interventions in Cuba.²⁸ While I am not an apologist for him, I contend that constructing a dichotomy that casts Estrada Palma as a villain and Martí as a hero leads to a simplistic and narrow interpretation of the former's actions and obscures important information about the quest for a diplomatic solution to the war. For example, few scholars emphasize the fact that the PRC's campaign for diplomatic support was not limited to efforts with the United States; it was in fact continental in scope. This omission is largely due to Martí's rejection of diplomacy in Latin America. Despite his famous essay "Nuestra América," Martí lacked confidence in Latin American unity (especially among elites) in the 1890s.²⁹ Although in hindsight Martí's suspicions seem especially prescient,

26. This observation has been made by many scholars, including Philip S. Foner, Louis Pérez Jr., and, more recently, Lillian Guerra.

27. The idea of "total war" hinged on the destruction of Cuba's sugar economy, which was meant to cripple the Spanish war effort. Tone notes that Cubans pioneered this strategy in the Ten Years' War and then implemented it again at the end of the century.

28. Lillian Guerra has shown in her latest book that Martí's discourse was so vague that in the twentieth century he was taken up by Cubans with radically opposed political projects. Although his commitment to social justice need not be questioned, it is becoming increasingly clear that his political discourse was pragmatic. His genius lay in his ability to unite Cubans, not in his ability to lay out a clear plan for social transformation.

29. In the years before the formation of the party, Martí spent time in both the United States and Latin America, especially Mexico and Guatemala where he was personally attended by José Joaquín Palma. It is here among other places that Martí honed the Latin American consciousness evident in the most famous of his essays, "Our America." However, it seems that Martí himself recognized the shifting politics and the reluctance on the part of Latin American countries to alienate Spain. In short, he was skeptical about the possibilities of building solidarity

Estrada Palma had a strong precedent on which to base his own decision to advance the Cuban cause through diplomacy. After all, émigré Cubans had successfully pursued diplomatic strategies to raise support for the insurgency in Latin America during the Ten Years' War.

In a letter to fellow Cuban Arístides Agüero y Betancourt in 1896, Estrada Palma makes plain his commitment to diplomacy in both the United States and Latin America, rejecting the idea that one should be privileged above the other: "I do not doubt that the recognition of belligerency rights by the United States would be fortuitous; however, I do not believe that the initiative [in Latin America] should be subordinated to this circumstance." A little later he added, "It would be pleasing and opportune to hear the voices of the states of South America resonate now that we have such an advantageous [military] position."³⁰ Indeed, in March of 1896 spirits were running high as news spread of the insurgent invasion of western Cuba.³¹ Estrada Palma hoped that the military successes of Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo would dispel concerns that Cubans were incapable of defeating the Spanish. In addition, a show of Latin American solidarity seemed especially important at a time when diplomatic efforts in the United States seemed to be stalled. When Estrada Palma wrote the letter to Agüero y Betancourt in March, the U.S. senate and house of representatives had passed a resolution supporting Cuban belligerency rights, but President Grover Cleveland had made no statement regarding it. "Cleveland's sentiments are unknown," Estrada Palma wrote despairingly.³² In the second half of 1896, it was still unclear what the United States' position on Cuba would be.

PRC campaigning in Latin America depended almost exclusively on the émigrés who had been appointed to represent the Cuban republic in arms.³³ These men, some of them veterans of the previous war, scoured the continent between 1895 and 1898, harnessing and extending sympathies where they found them. The prime mission entrusted to these representatives was the recognition of Cuban insurgents as belligerents: rather than asking for official sanction, the PRC sought recognition of belligerency rights. They argued that, due to the size and organization of the insurgent army and the existence of a provisional govern-

there. Martí was nothing if not sage, but he was only one among many émigrés, some of whom—like the men whose correspondence I have analyzed here—truly believed that they could obtain support from Latin America.

30. Estrada Palma to Agüero y Betancourt, March 16, 1896, CD vol., Vol. 1, pp. 14–16.

31. Tone, *War and Genocide*, pp. 150–151.

32. *Ibid.*

33. The PRC clubs and organizations established under the leadership of José Martí were now responsible to a new cadre of representatives appointed by Estrada Palma and approved by the provisional government. The intention was to impose a centralized structure in which the representatives bore the responsibility for both diplomatic labors and the collection of material resources for the war effort. The transition was not necessarily easy, and the new system produced power struggles and conflicts in more than a few places. The older cadre were faithful followers of Martí, whereas the new appointees were largely friends and associates of Tomás Estrada Palma.

ment, the revolutionaries were qualified to be considered belligerents and were entitled to the rights and protections that this status would afford them. Requesting belligerency rights instead of formal recognition had two benefits. First, Latin American countries had already granted the insurgents the status of belligerents in the 1860s and 1870s. Second, while it signaled support for the Cuban cause, the recognition of these rights did not technically constitute a violation of the neutrality to which all countries in Latin America had bound themselves. While there was some potential for concrete benefits from the conferring of belligerency rights, Cubans were most interested in the demonstration of moral solidarity constituted by the act of granting them. If they could marshal the widespread moral solidarity of Latin American states (something that did not seem inconceivable in 1895), it might be possible to pressure Spain to negotiate an end to the war. Cubans demonstrated a mix of historical awareness and contemporary political savvy, not only in their choice to emphasize belligerency rights but also in the way they sought to achieve them.³⁴

Tomás Estrada Palma began to appoint official party representatives in key countries in Latin America as early as September of 1895. Mexico was an obvious first choice. Not only had Mexico been the first state in Latin America to recognize the legitimacy of the Cuban struggle in the 1860s, but it was one of the most politically stable, prosperous, and influential countries in the region. Convinced that Mexico was the key to the rest of Latin America, it was here that Estrada Palma installed his first agent. Nicolás Domínguez Cowan was one of the most established and respected members of the Cuban émigré community in Mexico City and he moved in some of the city's most important elite political circles.³⁵ Domínguez Cowan's initial reports were filled with enthusiasm and hope for the fate of the Cuban cause in Mexico. However, fearing that his request for belligerency rights would be rejected by the government, Domínguez Cowan devised a plan whereby the proposal for special status would be made by several Mexican deputies, while he and the Cuban émigré community remained in the shadows. Domínguez Cowan was confident that "the moral effect" of his plan "would resonate all over the Americas."³⁶ Like Estrada Palma, he assumed that Latin Americans would follow Mexico's lead.

34. There were concrete benefits to the recognition of belligerency rights, though these were seen as secondary by the PRC leadership. For example, if belligerency rights were granted by the United States or Latin American nations within the circum-Caribbean, Cubans would be entitled to protection as they entered neutral ports and would be permitted to buy and ship munitions freely to Cuba. Although the granting of those rights by South American countries was unlikely to benefit Cuba directly due to the sheer distance that separated the island from most of the nations of the continent, granting the rights would have been extremely pertinent as a sign of moral solidarity that could exert pressure on Spain to end the war.

35. See Muller, "Cuban Émigrés, Mexican Politics."

36. Nicolás Domínguez Cowan to Tomás Estrada Palma, August 9, 1895, Correspondencia Diplomática de la Delegación Cubana en Nueva York Durante la Guerra de Independencia de 1895 a 1898 (hereafter cited as CD), Caja 82, Exp. 13720.

However, despite widespread popular support, Domínguez Cowan proved unable to convince enough members of the political elites to support his plan. This was an upset that Estrada Palma initially refused to accept. In 1896, he sent the secretary of the PRC, Gonzalo Quesada, to Mexico with explicit orders to deliver a message directly to the president. In the message, Estrada Palma addressed Porfirio Díaz as “the chief of the most powerful Latin American nation in the new world” and asked him directly to use his “influence with the other governments of free America, so that all or some of them take collective action to convince Spain to grant Cuba her independence.”³⁷

Díaz had already evidenced the leadership qualities that Estrada Palma attributed what came to be known to him. Just a month before Quesada’s arrival, he had proclaimed what came to be known as the Díaz Doctrine in response to U.S. secretary of state Richard Olney’s efforts to obtain a universal endorsement of the Monroe Doctrine. Díaz announced that he would support the Monroe Doctrine if, and only if, the responsibility for defending the hemisphere fell squarely on the shoulders of all Americans.³⁸ This was a radical gesture that demonstrated Mexico’s adherence to an idealistic form of inter-American solidarity in which all states mutually respected and defended each other’s sovereignty. In so doing, Díaz spoke for and in defense of Latin America and Latin Americans. It seems plausible that Cuban émigrés interpreted Díaz’s call to all Americans to defend the hemisphere against attacks from foreign aggression as a statement made by a man who would not deny Cubans his support. Also, there are other reasons that Estrada Palma might have had confidence in his appeal. He knew that Porfirio Díaz had provided some aid to José Martí in 1894 when the latter paid a special visit to Mexico as part of the preparations for the uprising of the following year.³⁹ Perhaps he would repeat the generous offer. Estrada Palma was also aware that Díaz had fashioned himself as the heir to Benito Juárez, former president and popular hero of the mid-century civil wars, who had also been a supporter of Cuban independence. Estrada Palma strategically inserted references to the president’s predecessor in the letter in the hope that Díaz might seek to emulate Juárez’s support for Cuban independence.

In 1896, Estrada Palma sent a similar solicitation of support to the president of Ecuador. If he had hoped that Díaz would honor Juárez’s commitment to Cuba, Estrada Palma had no reason to fear that Eloy Alfaro, who had himself been an avid supporter during the earlier Cuban conflict, would turn his back

37. Estrada Palma to Porfirio Díaz, May 1896, CD vol.1, p. 36.

38. Buchenau, *Shadow of the Giant*, p. 42.

39. The only evidence we have of this meeting is a letter written by Martí indicating that he was pleased with the outcome. Martí does not specify the kind of support furnished by the president. For details, see Alfonso Herrera Franyutti, *Martí en México: recuerdos de una época* (Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1996).

on the insurgents. During the 1860s, Eloy Alfaro, then in exile in Central America, had met with Cuban émigrés including Rafael María Merchán, along whose side he worked at the newspaper offices of the *Estrella de Panamá*. Years later, as Alfaro planned his own liberal revolution, he kept company with many émigré Cubans including José Martí, from whom he drew great inspiration.⁴⁰

Another reason that Estrada Palma might have approached the president of Ecuador was the fact that Eloy Alfaro had already made a significant gesture of support for the Cuban cause. On September 19, 1895, the Ecuadoran leader had sent a letter to the queen of Spain expressing his sincere desire to see an end to the Spanish-Cuban conflict.⁴¹ While Alfaro's gesture was laudable, it was just one petition made by a relatively weak state and was therefore easily ignored. Conscious of the failure of the effort, Estrada Palma urged the president to attempt to convince two or more other countries to petition Spain together in a show of strength. The primacy placed on collective and concerted gestures in Mexico and Ecuador also guided the labors of the revolutionary émigrés in the Pacific republics, Central America, and the Caribbean.⁴²

Although Estrada Palma set the agenda for the representatives' diplomatic labors, the émigrés themselves were expected to respond to local conditions. Given that Estrada Palma's petitions to presidents and other collaborative projects spearheaded by representatives in South America had failed to move political leaders, the émigrés concentrated on maneuvering behind the scenes to convince political elites to bring the Cuban question before their congresses. We have seen that this strategy was employed in Mexico, but it was also favored by José Payán in Peru and Arístides Agüero y Betancourt in Chile, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Reports from Central America and the Caribbean provide evidence that directly and indirectly pressuring political elites was a central strategy there as well.⁴³ While the representatives did enjoy some success—the belligerency question was presented to representative bodies in Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Bolivia during the 1890s—the motions generated little more than heated discussion.⁴⁴ Unable to move pres-

40. Sánchez Parodi et al., *José Martí y Eloy Alfaro*.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

42. PRC representatives working in Chile, Bolivia, and Peru were in constant contact and worked to coordinate their organizing efforts between 1895 and 1898. Evidence of their collaborations can be found in their letters to Tomás Estrada Palma.

43. See volumes 1, 2, and 4 of the *Correspondencia diplomática de la Delegación Cubana en Nueva York durante la Guerra de Independencia de 1895 a 1898* (Havana: "El Siglo XX," A. Muniz y hno. 1943-1946). Here and elsewhere in the article I have consulted the above-referenced published collection of letters between Estrada Palma and his representatives in Latin America. For my work on Mexico, I use original documents consulted in the Archivo Nacional de Cuba.

44. The belligerency petitions in these countries are discussed in the following documents: Enrique B. Barnett to Tomás Estrada Palma, March 31, 1898, CD vol. 4, p. 172; Arístides Agüero y Betancourt and Nicolás

idents or to obtain a majority of votes among senators and deputies, Cubans turned to the people.

The fact that the PRC representatives were not formally recognized diplomats gave them freedom to engage in a variety of creative organizing activities. They addressed literary elites, students, journalists, artisans, and workers in the hope that they could generate enough pressure to influence statesmen. To this end, Arístides Agüero y Betancourt created propaganda organizations in Buenos Aires, Peruvian solidarity associations in Lima, and student clubs in Montevideo and Santiago. Nicolás de Cárdenas y Chappotín claimed to have given lectures at student, worker, and artisan associations in Peru.⁴⁵ Similar strategies were employed in Mexico, where students and journalists filled out the ranks of Cuban independence supporters.⁴⁶ Despite the unfriendly official climate in Argentina, Manuel Ugarte recalls taking to the streets as a young student to express his support for the insurgents.⁴⁷

Encouraged by the potential of this new strategy, Estrada Palma urged Agüero y Betancourt to intensify his efforts to influence public opinion, arguing that “the truth will shine through, and the attitude of the popular masses, who have been moved and influenced through healthy agitation, will have an effect on those in power.”⁴⁸ Several months later he wrote to Nicolás de Cárdenas y Chappotín in Peru advising him not to be disheartened by the indifference of the government. In fact, the indifference of Latin American governments made it all the more important to “work near them and in the sphere that surrounds them in order to conquer the forces that are contrary to us. This way, the Latin American governments, inspired by public sentiment, will unite and defend the Cuban cause.”⁴⁹ A week later, Estrada Palma sent a similar note to Joaquín Alsina, the PRC representative in Costa Rica. “We are interested in forming opinions and influencing public spirit so that in a given moment our influence will be felt in official spheres.”⁵⁰ Although incredibly idealistic, it is clear that there was a genuine hope that a “healthy agitation,” one that would arouse “public sentiment” and “public spirit” across Latin America, was sufficient to

de Cárdenas y Chappotín to Tomás Estrada Palma, August 22, 1895, CD vol. 2, p. 19; Agüero y Betancourt to Estrada Palma, October 21, 1896, CD vol. 2, pp. 62–65; Agüero y Betancourt to Estrada Palma, February 12, 1897, CD vol. 2, pp. 85–86; Agüero y Betancourt to Estrada Palma, no date, CD vol. 2, pp. 93–96; Joaquín Alsina to Estrada Palma, July 8, 1896, CD vol. 2, pp. 178–179; and Domínguez Cowan to Estrada Palma, September 9, 1895, CD, Caja 82, Exp. 13720.

45. See Agüero y Betancourt and Cárdenas y Chappotín to Estrada Palma, September 10, 1895, CD vol. 2, p. 22 and Agüero y Betancourt to Estrada Palma, October 16, 1895, CD vol. 2, pp. 27–29.

46. See Muller, “Cuban Émigrés.”

47. Ugarte, *El destino*, p. 55.

48. Estrada Palma to Agüero y Betancourt, March 16, 1896, CD vol. 1, p. 14.

49. Estrada Palma to Cárdenas y Chappotín, June 3, 1896, CD, vol. 1, p. 48.

50. Estrada Palma to Alsina, June 11, 1896, CD vol. 2, p. 55.

combat diplomatic neglect. And the strategy seemed to be making a difference in at least one country, the United States, where popular solidarity for the Cuban insurgents abounded.⁵¹

The success of the émigrés' efforts to influence public opinion can be gauged by the rapid growth of the popular solidarity movement. For every comment in the PRC agents' correspondence regarding the failure of their efforts to move statesmen and elites, there is another lauding the dedication of the "*pueblo*" to the cause. For example, Nicolás de Cárdenas y Chappotín and Aristides Agüero y Betancourt noted in August of 1895 that in Panama "the *pueblo* is ours."⁵² Writing less than a month later from Lima, Agüero y Betancourt observed that "there is great enthusiasm and sympathy among the people for our cause."⁵³ By early February 1896, the same representative proudly reported that "We have the whole *pueblo* of Chile on our side and almost all of the newspapers."⁵⁴ A month later, Tomás Estrada Palma himself acknowledged that in Latin America "as a general rule the people favor us while the government remains indifferent or impassive."⁵⁵ In September of 1897, José Antonio Frías reported that, "the Dominican people are our committed allies."⁵⁶ In that same year, Rafael María Merchán published a small book in which he described the widespread support for the Cuban cause in Colombia. "Philanthropic associations have been founded in the most populous cities and the smallest hamlets. Each of these associations sends funds collected for the insurgents from among rich and poor, women, men, the elderly, the youth and foreigners."⁵⁷ "The name of Cuba," he writes "is on everyone's lips; her triumphs bring joy to all social classes and her misfortunes are felt as if they were personal tragedies."⁵⁸ While Merchán's comments may be somewhat exaggerated, other sources corroborate the widespread popularity of the Cuban cause. Evidence of the intensification of the movement can be found in the dramatic increase in the number of solidarity clubs for Cuban and Latin American collaboration (from four to 40 in Mexico alone between 1895 and 1898), the considerable space dedicated to articles and poems favoring Cuban independence in widely circulated Latin American newspapers, the increase in financial contributions, and the hundreds of letters from

51. This solidarity was manifested in both the U.S. and Latin America press. John Lawrence Tone mentions the press campaigns in support of *Cuba Libre*, but several dissertations produced between the 1930s and 1970s also examined the impact of the Cuban question in the U.S. press. See the dissertations by George Washington Auxier, Mark Matthew Welter, Joseph E Wisan, Mary Ann Mans, and Joseph Ezra Wisan.

52. Agüero y Betancourt and Cárdenas y Chappotín to Estrada Palma, August 22, 1895, CD vol. 2, p. 19.

53. Agüero y Betancourt to Estrada Palma, September 3, 1895, CD vol. 2, p. 21.

54. *Ibid.*, February 2, 1896, CD vol. 2, p. 35.

55. Estrada Palma to Agüero y Betancourt, March 19, 1896, CD vol. 1, p. 14.

56. José Antonio Frías to Tomás Estrada Palma, September 7, 1897, CD vol. 4, p. 97.

57. Rafael María Merchán, *Colombia y Cuba: suscripción para auxilio de los enfermos y heridos del Ejército Libertador Cubano* (Bogotá: La Luz, 1897), p. 46.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 46–47.

admiring Latin Americans addressed to the PRC. Other manifestations of support by Latin Americans included the donation of weapons, supplies, and hand-sewn insurgent flags.⁵⁹ Also, the reports of Merchán, Agüero y Betancourt, and Domínguez Cowan contain numerous references to Latin Americans who were eager to enlist in the insurgent army.

Between 1895 and 1898, the PRC's representatives in Latin America focused on promoting Latin American solidarity in the interest of furthering the Cuban cause. As we have seen, their efforts fared well in certain sectors and poorly in others. The fact that the Cuban struggle captured the imagination of so many middle- and working-class Latin Americans testifies to the strength and vitality of Latin American solidarity at a popular level; however, the inability of the émigrés to create a groundswell in presidential palaces indicates a certain abandonment of this ideal by the elite. All the while, Latin American presidents and ministers remained deaf to the urgings of both the émigrés and their own citizens; no Latin American state recognized the belligerent status of the insurgents and few made any gesture, overt or subtle, in favor of the revolutionaries. Although it became clear relatively early in the war that the movement would not make real political gains in Latin America, Tomás Estrada Palma's support for the émigrés' labors and the representatives' own committed and creative organizing strategies demonstrate the depth and scope of the PRC campaign to win Latin American support.

CUBA AND THE CHANGING TIDES OF THE 1890S

As we have seen, the belief that Cuba's fate was intimately tied to that of Latin America emerged in the early nineteenth century and quickly became doctrine for Cuban revolutionaries and their sympathizers during the Ten Years' War. However, the ground shifted as the century went on. Two critical changes between 1870 and 1895 proved to be obstacles to Cuban émigré organizing in Latin America: the rising prominence of the United States in hemispheric events and the shifting relations between Spain and Latin America. These changes were to some extent interconnected. Spain's reconciliation with its former colonies must be seen in part as a response to the spread of U.S. influence in Latin America, just as Latin American statesmen's embrace of Spain must be understood in the context of emerging fears of U.S. expansion. To make matters worse, the

59. For more information on Cuban political clubs in Mexico, see Bobadilla González, *La revolución cubana*, and Muller, "Cuban Émigrés." For listings of financial contributions and opinion pieces coming from Latin America, see newspapers like the *Estrella de Panamá*, *El Americano* (Chile), *Diario del Hogar* (Mexico), and *Patria* (New York City). See also the *Archivo de la Delegación del Partido Revolucionario Cubano en Nueva York (1892-1898)* in the Archivo Nacional de Cuba for letters from Latin Americans addressed to Tomás Estrada Palma and other miscellaneous materials regarding Cuban political clubs in Latin America.

rise of positivism and social Darwinism among Spanish and Latin American elites made them suspicious of revolutionary movements with platforms for social transformation. Even though his successor Estrada Palma was no radical, many Latin Americans saw Martí with his passion for social equality as the guiding spirit of the movement. Martí's transformative ideas worried those elites who were proponents of more authoritarian forms of rule and those influenced by racist ideologies. In the context of Latin America's renewed relations with Spain, increasing suspicion of the United States, and growing distrust of revolutionary change, Cubans were unlikely to generate much political support among their fellow republics at the end of the century.

The concerns of Latin American statesmen about the growing commercial and cultural influence of the United States during the 1890s were not unfounded. The U.S. proposals at the first Pan-American conference in 1889 constituted a bold attempt to establish commercial hegemony in the region.⁶⁰ Re-invoking the Monroe Doctrine, pan-Americanists advocated for closer commercial ties between the United States and Latin America on the basis of hemispheric or American unity, broadly defined. These proposals embodied the same ambiguities for which the Monroe Doctrine is famous.⁶¹ Although presented as mutually beneficial to the United States and to Latin America, it was clear that the former would play a central role in the "protection" of the hemisphere so that it could become and remain the main beneficiary of the new commercial arrangements. When Porfirio Díaz proclaimed his doctrine in 1896, he was taking a firm stand against the kind of U.S.-directed pan-Americanism exhibited in the U.S. arbitration of the border conflict between England and Venezuela in 1895.⁶² Expressions of a more aggressive interest in Latin America also extended to Cuba, which had long been coveted by the United States. Not only did the United States actively oppose collaborative projects to liberate Cuba from the 1820s onward, but it made several attempts to purchase or annex the Spanish colony.⁶³ In this context, Latin Americans like Porfirio Díaz interpreted

60. For relatively recent studies of pan-Americanism, see David Sheinin, ed., *Beyond the Ideal: Pan-Americanism in Inter-American Affairs* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000) and Millery Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier: U.S. African Americans, Haiti, and Pan Americanism 1870-1964* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2010).

61. Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

62. This border conflict involved Venezuela and Britain and was fought over the dividing line between Venezuela and British Guiana. Venezuela appealed to the United States for support in this matter beginning in the 1870s. The U.S. government finally demanded that Britain submit the dispute to arbitration, citing the Monroe Doctrine as the source of its authority. Britain reluctantly accepted the U.S. arbitration under the vague threat of war, and the dispute was ultimately settled in Britain's favor in 1899. The significance of this event is profound because Britain's acceptance of the arbitration constituted a tacit acceptance of U.S. dominance in the hemisphere, thus paving the way for U.S. intervention in Latin America in the twentieth century.

63. For more on U.S. interests in Cuba, see Louis Pérez Jr.'s work and John Lawrence Tone's recent publication, *War and Genocide*.

the U.S. recognition of Cuban belligerency rights in 1896 as a sign of dubious generosity. By the time the extent of U.S. involvement became clear, many Latin American statesmen had become open supporters of Spain. In a dispiriting letter to Estrada Palma in May of 1898, Aristides Agüero y Betancourt wrote, “Uruguay is hostile to the Yankees and will not recognize us. . . . Argentina and Chile are hostile to Washington and we have lost much ground here. . . . Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador are frank supporters of Spain.” Writing from Peru, Agüero y Betancourt observed that “public opinion is hostile to us ever since the Yankees intervened.”⁶⁴

If the threat posed to Latin America by the United States increased in the late nineteenth century, that represented by Spain receded. Between the 1870s and 1890s, Spain fundamentally re-envisioned its relationship to the Americas, beginning with the extension of formal recognition to all ex-colonies.⁶⁵ As it became clear that Spain would not regain its lost empire, the Spanish concentrated on retaining control over the remaining colonies, preserving Spain’s cultural legacy in the Americas, and extending its commercial relations with Latin America.⁶⁶ This new relationship between Spain and the Americas was rooted in the development of panhispanismo. As recent historians have observed, panhispanismo, the Hispanic ideal of continental and transatlantic unity, was not in fact a product of the “Disaster” of 1898, but a distinct project developed years before.⁶⁷ One important vehicle of this new ideology in Latin America was the Unión Iberoamericana, an organization established in Madrid in 1885 to extend cultural and commercial relations with Spain’s former colonies and Brazil.⁶⁸ Among the institution’s principal objectives were the creation of enduring bonds with Latin American commercial elites and the establishment of close relations with government officials. Within two years of its creation, the Unión had established branches throughout Latin America.⁶⁹ The popularity of the Unión Iberoamer-

64. Agüero y Betancourt to Estrada Palma, May 22, 1898, CD vol. 1, pp. 15–16.

65. The most concrete manifestation of the new relationship was the recognition of the independence of the former colonies and the establishment of diplomatic relations, a process that was not complete until 1894 when Spain formally recognized Honduras. Relations between Spain and Latin America were strong enough in the 1890s that in border disputes during this decade between Bolivia and Peru, Colombia and Ecuador, Peru and Ecuador and Mexico and Guatemala, governments entrusted arbitration to Spain. In his official correspondence, Agüero y Betancourt described how the selection of Spain as arbiter for South American border disputes frustrated his organizing efforts. Discussion of the Mexico-Guatemala arbitration appears frequently in the correspondence of the Spanish foreign minister, which can be found at AGA, Alcalá de Henares, Spain.

66. For more on Spain’s relationships with its existing and former colonies in the nineteenth century, see Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006); Isidro Sepúlveda Muñoz, *Sueño de la madre patria*; Agustín Sánchez Andrés and Raúl Figueroa Esquer, *México y España en el siglo XIX*; Antonia Pi-Suñer Llorens, *Encuentros y desencuentros*; and Aimer Granados, *Debates sobre España*.

67. See Schmidt-Nowara, *Conquest of History*.

68. See Sepúlveda Muñoz, *Sueño de la madre patria*.

69. The union established branches in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina.

icana among Latin American commercial and political elites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries testifies to the organization's vitality and its role in the development of panhispanismo. A Mexican student journalist writing in 1895 recalled the excitement generated by the establishment of a local chapter of the organization in Mexico: "The extension of social, economic, scientific, literary, and artistic relations between Spain, Portugal, and the American Republics . . . was, in effect, a noble endeavor which was met with gestures of genuine enthusiasm and attracted more and more devotees."⁷⁰

If we take the popularity of the Unión Iberoamericana as a reflection of the positive relations that were developing between Spain and her former colonies in the late nineteenth century, it is not surprising that Spaniards and their supporters found the outbreak of insurgency in Cuba in 1895 and the widespread support for the rebels in Latin America deeply troubling. Indeed, the rebellion itself struck at the heart of Spain's effort to foment panhispanismo. The Spanish press and Spanish consular officials in Latin America during the 1890s depicted the Cuban rebellion and popular support for the insurgency as an affront to Spanish honor and to the *raza latina*.⁷¹ It threatened the core assumptions of panhispanismo, especially the idea that Spanish Americans (including Cubans) were all bound by and indebted to Spain. In the early stages of the war, the members of the Unión Iberoamericana in Madrid issued a call to Latin Americans and Spaniards living in Latin America: "It is our duty to enliven Spanish patriotism so that the Spanish flag is never wrenched from the Americas, whose discovery has been a source of triumphs for noble Iberia."⁷² Aside from the affront to Spain and the betrayal of panhispanismo, Spaniards and their supporters also worried that the insurgency would make Cuba more vulnerable to a U.S. takeover, and that once Cuba was occupied, the rest of Latin America would be fair game for the United States. Hence, the concern that Spain's flag might be "wrenched" from Latin America.

In October of 1895, Rafael María Merchán wrote to Estrada Palma about a conversation he had had with the president of Colombia, Manuel Caro. The president had revealed his greatest fear regarding the fate of Cuba: "that once independent, Cuba would fall to the blacks or to the United States."⁷³ It is clear that this fear influenced Caro's position on the insurgency. Indeed, the idea that

70. Daniel M. Islas, "La Unión Ibero-Americana y sus resultados prácticos en América: embriaguez de imaginación," *Continente Americano* (December 8, 1895).

71. Recently, many historians of Spain and the Spanish immigrant community in Latin America have characterized the attitudes of Spanish representatives and elite immigrants as racist and paternalistic. See Aimer Granados, *Debates sobre España*.

72. Published manifiesto, 1895. AGA, fondo: 54, Caja 9942.

73. Merchán to Estrada Palma, October 31, 1895, CD vol. 2, pp. 118–119.

Cuba would not be able to survive as an independent nation and would become another Haiti, a territory of the United States, or both was widespread.⁷⁴ This fear was in no small measure due to the aggressive propaganda of Spanish immigrants residing in Latin America, many of them tied to the Unión Iberoamericana or to various other patriotic juntas, who worked tirelessly to discredit the movement by resurrecting old fears (another Haiti) and exacerbating new ones (a U.S. takeover). The fear that Cuba would be overrun by blacks resonated with the Latin American elites, who like Manuel Caro were deeply influenced by social Darwinism.⁷⁵ They considered the insurrection, in which black men fought alongside white men and black soldiers were in positions of power, a frightening specter that could only lead Cuba into barbarism. As we have seen, Spanish immigrants and their Latin American sympathizers reasoned that the chaos into which a Cuba run by ex-slaves must inevitably descend would only lead to a U.S. occupation of the island.

The fear of a black Cuba was exacerbated by a general distrust of revolutionary social change in late nineteenth-century Latin America. After decades of civil wars and social upheavals, most Latin American elites championed “order and progress” (the positivist banner) over revolution and social change. The spectacular economic growth stimulated by the second industrial revolution made elites even more committed to creating a stable political environment friendly to foreign investment. Mexico is a case in point. The Díaz regime, which remained in power for 33 years, used multiple and often violent strategies to ensure order and promote progress. In the context of the Cuban movement, this meant aggressively repressing Mexican sympathizers of the independence cause who criticized the government for its inaction.⁷⁶

If Latin American elites supported the Cuban independence struggle in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, it was because of the rampant hatred for and distrust of Spain, concern about the role that the United States might come

74. For recent literature on the impact of the Haitian revolution in the Caribbean and beyond, see Doris Garraway, *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008); David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Martin Monro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw, *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804–2004* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008); Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Matt Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

75. For more on the impact of scientific racism and eugenics in Latin America, see Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America 1870–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) and Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

76. An extended discussion of the impact of Cuban émigré politics on Mexican students and journalists and of the repression both groups were subject to at the hands of Spanish immigrants and Mexican authorities can be found in my Ph.D. dissertation.

to play in Latin America, and the revolutionary ethos of the time, which cast Cuban independence as one in a long line of legitimate anticolonial struggles in the Americas. As we have seen, the fundamental changes in hemispheric politics that occurred in the last third of the nineteenth century conspired to doom PRC initiatives in Latin America in the 1890s. The rise of U.S.-directed pan-Americanism and panhispanismo reflected the increased polarization of hemispheric politics, a process that rendered earlier forms of Latin American and continental solidarity obsolete in elite circles. Indeed, as far as empowered elites were concerned, the Cuban movement had become in many senses a relic, as had the mid-century ideal of Latin American solidarity that undergirded the widespread official support for Cuban independence in the 1860s and 1870s. As the years passed and as one door after another was closed, even the most stalwart of Cuban émigrés began to come to terms with the reality that Cuba was truly destined to struggle toward independence without the official support of its sister republics.

CUBA ALONE: “*CASI SOLA HA LUCHADO*”

The indifference toward Cuba in Latin American official circles directly affected how the PRC representatives reacted to the events of 1898. We should not be surprised to find that most of the representatives working in Latin America accepted U.S. intervention. Some did so more reluctantly than others, but none outwardly opposed U.S. involvement. I argue that it is impossible to understand the responses of the Cuban émigrés to the U.S. military occupation of Cuba unless we put them in the context of three years of failed organizing efforts. As he waited in vain for a response from the president of El Salvador to his heartfelt petition, PRC representative Esteban Borrero lamented in 1898 that Cuba had been forced to fight abandoned and alone (“*Cuba Americana . . . inerme, casi; casi sola ha luchado*”).⁷⁷

As Latin American statesmen watched the United States determine the fate of the island in 1898, émigrés like Borrero, Palma, Merchán, Agüero y Betancourt, and Cárdenas y Chappotín, some of whom had experienced an age in which Latin American solidarity seemed indestructible, expressed bitter disappointment in their sister republics. As we have seen, these sentiments are present in their correspondence from as early as 1895, which suggests that their resentment developed over the course of the three years.

Despite the discouraging reports and his own waning sense of confidence, Tomás Estrada Palma urged the PRC representatives in Latin America to inten-

77. Esteban Borrero to Rafael A. Gutiérrez, April 9, 1898. CD vol. 2, p. 223.

sify their organizing efforts through the summer and fall of 1896. But over that period the tone of his letters changed from hopeful to disillusioned. In a letter to Domínguez Cowan in Mexico he wrote, "The conduct of the Hispanic American republics with regard to us is strange. We are ashamed to see them sacrifice our rights, which are also their rights, at the behest of the Spanish."⁷⁸ In a letter to Joaquín Alsina in Costa Rica, the head of the PRC scolded Latin American statesmen, calling them egocentric and ignorant of the lessons of their own past.⁷⁹ Estrada Palma assumed that Latin Americans shared certain identical "rights," which they bore a specific historical responsibility to defend. His words here echo those uttered by Mariano Ignacio Prado of Peru in 1874 when he urged solidarity with the earlier Cuban insurgency. This assumption permitted Estrada Palma, as it did Prado before him, to cast Latin American indifference as a shameful betrayal. In August of 1896, he wrote to Nicolás de Cárdenas y Chappotín, then in Paris, about the possibility of sending a delegation of three Cubans to Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Two of the three émigrés abandoned the project for personal reasons, leaving Cárdenas y Chappotín as the sole representative. In their correspondence regarding the visits, Estrada Palma warned Cárdenas y Chappotín about the unfavorable climate "of outright hostility to the Cuban cause in Argentina . . . and the rising influence of the powerful Spanish community."⁸⁰ While he approved Cárdenas' voyage, he also discouraged the representative, sure that the effort would amount to nothing. Approximately two months later, Estrada Palma sent another representative to South America, not because he expected that the mission would succeed but because "we must extend awareness of the origins and goals of our fight for independence so that we will not be accused tomorrow of a lack of diligence."⁸¹ This comment is telling. Estrada Palma no longer believed that Latin American states would change their policies; he just wanted to make sure that they did not claim ignorance in the future as a way of justifying their inaction.

If Estrada Palma was ashamed of Latin American statesmen's refusal to defend common "rights," the PRC representatives had even stronger responses to the failure of diplomacy. In September of 1895, Nicolás Domínguez Cowan expressed to Estrada Palma his concern about the Díaz government's refusal to risk alienating Spain in order to help Cuban insurgents. "Mexico has shaken off the yoke of the oppressive metropolis, but the pressure of the Spanish element still weighs heavily here," he wrote.⁸² In December of the same year, Rafael María Merchán described Colombia as "a fragment of sixteenth-century

78. Estrada Palma to Domínguez Cowan, June 6, 1896, CD vol. 1, p. 51.

79. Estrada Palma to Alsina, June 11, 1896, CD vol. 1, p. 55.

80. Estrada Palma to Cárdenas y Chappotín, August 21, 1896, CD vol. 1, p. 72.

81. Estrada Palma to Agüero y Betancourt, October 19, 1896, CD vol. 1, p. 89.

82. See Muller, "Cuban Émigrés."

Spain.”⁸³ He wrote this in response to the government’s refusal to curb the efforts of the Spanish minister to impede a collection taken up by a group of sympathetic students. Three years later, José Joaquín Palma reported that during the presidency of José María Reina Barrios, Guatemala was “a Spanish province.”⁸⁴ Then, he appraised the relations of Spain and Latin America in general:

[T]he Spanish government employs the same tactics with some Latin American presidents that the *conquistadores* did with the Indians, beads for some and bells for others, a military plaque here and the great cross of Isabel the Catholic there. It is with these trinkets that [the Spanish] attract and dazzle them, converting them into instruments of the most vile injustices.⁸⁵

According to Palma, Reina Barrios had received so many Spanish honors that his chest resembled a Spanish cemetery. While these comments seethe with anger and resentment, the émigrés were not simply exaggerating their claims to excuse their failures. As we know, elite Spanish immigrants enjoyed a privileged place and close relations with empowered elites in many Latin American countries. Furthermore, there is ample evidence that Spanish ministers and consuls were able to act with impunity, repressing and curbing Cuban émigré activities in many Latin American countries.⁸⁶

While Merchán, Palma, and Domínguez Cowan were dismissive and disdainful, Arístides Agüero y Betancourt’s response to rejection was more perplexed. In a letter to Estrada Palma written in April of 1896, Agüero y Betancourt reflected on what he deemed “an inexplicable phenomenon.”⁸⁷ He observed that while Latin American countries possessed a strong sense of national pride and professed to believe in inter-American brotherhood, they refused to support the insurgency because they believed that angering Spain would be contrary to their national interests. Like his fellow representatives throughout the continent, all of whom complained of the Spanish influence in Latin America, Agüero y Betancourt wondered whether the republics of the south were truly independent. He could not reconcile their national pride and professed solidarity with their refusal to support the insurgency. From his vantage point, the only possible explanation was that Spain continued to hold sway over her former colonies. More important for our purposes than debating the relative “independence” of

83. Merchán to Estrada Palma, December 24, 1895, CD vol. 2, p. 124.

84. José Joaquín Palma to Tomás Estrada Palma, March 18, 1898, CD vol. 4, p.7.

85. *Ibid.*

86. Perhaps the best evidence of these collaborations can be found in Salvador E. Morales Pérez and Agustín Sánchez Andrés, *Diplomacias en conflicto: Cuba y España en el horizonte latinoamericano del 98* (Mexico: Centro de Investigación Jorge L. Tamayo, 1998). There is an extensive discussion of the collaboration between José Brunetti y Gayoso, the Spanish foreign minister in Mexico, and the Díaz government in my Ph.D. dissertation.

87. Agüero y Betancourt to Estrada Palma, April 26, 1896, CD vol. 2, p. 43.

Latin American nations in the 1890s is the fact that Cuban émigrés interpreted the failure to stand in solidarity with Cuba as evidence of compromised sovereignty. Denying Latin American independence became one of the ways that revolutionaries came to terms with the failure of their missions.

On April 19, 1898, the same day that the U.S. Congress cautiously declared Cuba's right to be independent, Esteban Borrero, PRC representative in Central America, sent a letter to President William McKinley on behalf of the Cuban community in Costa Rica. He wrote: "In the midst of the constant persecution that Cubans have suffered, forced as they were to emigrate to save their lives, the United States has been our best, if not our only refuge, and the school in which we have learned to be free; thus, Washington has been dearer to us, perhaps, than Bolívar."⁸⁸ It is impossible to understand Borrero's acceptance of the U.S. intervention without taking the "apparent betrayal" of the Cuban insurgent cause by "Bolívar's America" into consideration. Borrero's praise, while most likely sincere, is laced with a deep sadness at the failure of Latin American solidarity. Just a month earlier, he had written to the president of El Salvador, Rafael Gutiérrez: "Cuba, stained with the blood of the final battle, lifts her eyes toward the free states of America as if she were searching for her place in the home that Bolívar made for all." Given this letter, Borrero's letter to McKinley is startling. He had also assured Gutiérrez that Cubans would not accept help from a "foreign hand": "Bled dry, still gasping and badly injured but triumphant, [Cuba] offers Latin America her hard-won laurels. . . . This crown does not belong to Cubans alone. . . . it is a vestige of the laurels with which destiny crowned a free America. . . . [Cuba] never wanted nor did she ever fear that a foreign hand would crown her!"⁸⁹

In response to those Colombians who had turned their backs on Cuba after the U.S. intervention, Rafael María Merchán took Borrero's sentiments a step further to propose that it would be Cuba, with the help of the United States, that would liberate Latin America. In a pamphlet published in Colombia in May of 1898, Merchán articulated his disdain for that action and his full support for the U.S. intervention.⁹⁰ Referring to the impending conflict between Spain and the United States, Merchán stated that when forced to choose between "the brother who injures us and the stranger who saves us from fratricidal war," the choice is obvious.⁹¹ Likening the Spanish general Valeriano Weyler to the bibli-

88. Esteban Borrero to Tomás Estrada Palma, April 19, 1898, CD vol. 2, p. 247.

89. Borrero to Estrada Palma, April 23, 1898, CD vol. 2, p. 227.

90. There is a discussion of this pamphlet in a letter from Merchán to Estrada Palma, June 11, 1898, CD vol. 2, pp. 143-144.

91. Merchán, *La redención de un mundo* (Bogotá: La Luz, 1898), p. 14. In a letter to Estrada Palma, Merchán stated that he had written the essay in response to several *españolistas* who had expressed their desire that Spain win the war against the United States. Merchán to Estrada Palma, June 11, 1898, CD vol. 2, p. 144.

cal Cain because of his fratricidal policies, which had caused thousands of civilian deaths in Cuba in 1896, Merchán asks how the Spanish could uphold a doctrine of Hispanic brotherhood while committing such atrocities. The Spanish, he argued, were seducing Latin Americans with empty rhetoric. Juxtaposed with the brutal civil war in Cuba, the promotion of panhispanismo seemed to him shallow and dishonest. Toward the end of the essay, Merchán chided Latin Americans for forsaking their ideals, forgetting their history, and allying themselves with their former oppressor. Continuing the biblical metaphor, he proclaimed that the only thing that could make Cain's betrayal worse would be for Abel to celebrate his own demise at his brother's hand: "All that remains is for Abel to appear before the world, a model of gratitude, admiring the greatness of his family bloodline, as he dies."⁹²

According to Merchán, Latin Americans had a choice—and they chose to be agents of fratricide. Figuratively turning his back on Latin America, Merchán addressed the last words of his essay to the citizens of the United States. "Members of the Union," he wrote, "we would be proud to join our forces with yours and help you defend the rights of the American republics so that their independence will not be seized from them by Europe; we relish the opportunity to be the guarantors of the liberty of our sister nations."⁹³ Not only did Merchán, who had spent years trying to convince Colombians to support Cuban independence, throw in his lot with the United States but he was ready now to fashion himself and other Cuban revolutionaries as the guarantors of a Latin American independence that had clearly been compromised.⁹⁴

In 1909, approximately ten years after the war, the Cuban journalist Manuel Márquez Sterling noted that his compatriots regularly referred to the independence movement as "a case apart," one which had nothing to do with "the common problems of Spanish America." Indeed, Cubans often talked about achieving their independence "amid the most terrifying traps and disloyalties."⁹⁵ This sense of betrayal permeates Gómez's challenge to Ugarte in 1920, which in turn echoes the sentiments of scores of Cuban émigrés who had worked to reinvigorate Latin American solidarity between 1895 and 1898. The émigrés' reactions to the U.S. intervention ran the gamut, from the measured expressions of gratitude that Agüero y Betancourt offered to the U.S. consul in Lima to Merchán's anger as he announced to his Colombian readers that the United

92. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

94. What makes Merchán's about-face even more striking is the fact that in the interwar years he was a committed *autonomista* who favored Spain's continued rule in Cuba provided that Cuba was granted a status equivalent to that enjoyed by other Spanish provinces.

95. Márquez Sterling, *La diplomacia*, pp. 8–9.

States and Cuba together would truly liberate Latin America. Among Merchán, Agüero y Betancourt, and Borrero, none had ever been a proponent of U.S. intervention. Their about-face can be explained only if we take into account the hundreds of miles they had traversed, the countless hours they had spent building solidarity, and the pain of their realization that both were in vain.

CONCLUSION

The idea that “Cuba was not alone responsible for the Cuban situation,” and that “some responsibility was also borne by Latin America” seemed novel to Manuel Ugarte in 1920 as he reflected on his encounter with José Miguel Gómez.⁹⁶ The implication that Latin America had betrayed Cuba complicated a story particular to a post-1898 world in which many Latin Americans had come together with Spaniards in defense of their common Latin heritage and in response to the menacing cultural influence and imperialist pretensions of the United States. The outcome of the conflict with the United States in 1898, especially the extension of U.S. power in the Caribbean, seemed in the long view to justify the refusal of Latin American statesmen to support Cuban independence in the 1890s. At the same time, the defeat of Spain in the war made the ideology of panhispanismo less threatening to Latin Americans, who no longer saw their former colonizer as a danger to Latin America. Indeed, Ugarte, who admitted to having been an enthusiastic supporter of the insurgents in his youth, echoed the conservative arguments of the opponents of Cuban independence when he dismissed his “protesting in the streets” as misguided romantic yearnings for what was ultimately “an impossible national ideal.”⁹⁷ In hindsight, Latin America’s betrayal of Cuba in the 1890s came to be interpreted as a necessary sacrifice for the greater good of the *raza latina*; at the same time, Cubans were chastised for not adequately “defending their legacy of Spanish civilization.”⁹⁸ Gómez’s challenge to Ugarte was truly unsettling because it forced the latter to reconsider the role that Latin America’s indifference may have played in the outcome of the Cuban conflict and thus challenged the notion that Cubans were alone responsible for the U.S. intervention and takeover of Cuba.

It has been generally accepted that the Spanish-American War came to overshadow the Cuban insurgency in the early twentieth century. Less explored until recently are the ways in which the tendency to frame late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century inter-American relations as a tug-of-war between Panhispanismo and pan-Americanism obscures the role that Latin Americans played

96. Ugarte, *El destino*, p. 64.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

in hemispheric politics, especially in relation to the Cuban question. Such a view has led many historians to gloss over the history of Latin American involvement in Cuban affairs between 1868 and 1898, as well as the political mobilization of hundreds of Cuban émigrés and their Latin American supporters throughout the Americas during this period. In this article, I have attempted to recover stories of a handful of resourceful and dedicated emissaries who went to great lengths to revive Latin American solidarity during the 1890s. Their actions were motivated by a commitment to a concept of transnational unity that is clearly distinguishable, though not entirely separate from, both panhispanismo and U.S.-directed pan-Americanism.

It has been my aim to bring this alternative concept to the fore by demonstrating that the current of Latin American solidarity, which can be traced back to the early 1800s and which many believe was supplanted by the dominant ideologies of panhispanismo and pan-Americanism, was very much alive in the hearts and minds of Cuban revolutionary émigrés and their supporters. If this study aids in the rediscovery of a buried and ultimately defeated ideal of Latin American solidarity that galvanized many workers, students and other middle-class citizens, it also reveals how and why many Cuban proponents of the ideal abandoned their beliefs. Frustrated with the inability to effect real change in Latin American official circles between 1895 and 1898, Cubans—reluctantly, begrudgingly, and defiantly—embraced the United States.

Once Manuel Ugarte's eyes were opened to the fact that Latin Americans bore some responsibility for Cuba's "situation," a whole world of possibilities revealed itself. In a fit of dreamlike inspiration reminiscent of the youthful idealism he had displayed in the streets of Buenos Aires as he marched for Cuban independence during the 1890s, Ugarte wrote in 1923:

What would happen if after having consulted with her sister republics of the south, Cuba were to enter into business with the French, buy locomotives in Germany, and hire Japanese officials to organize her army and that, in response to the inevitable protests of the North American minister, instead of cowering, she were to answer that, as an homage to the good faith of the United States, Cubans wanted to demonstrate to the world that the promises of twenty years ago had been fulfilled, that she was the master of her own will and that, far from weakening the bonds that tie her to the United States, this would strengthen them. Interventions and bombings would certainly be discussed, but even the most powerful nation would not dare incur universal disapproval by committing *ex abrupto* a tremendous injustice, *especially if all of Latin America were to make its moral solidarity felt.*⁹⁹ [Emphasis is mine.]

99. Ugarte, *El destino*, p. 68.

What Ugarte proposes in the passage above is hardly innovative. In fact, it was precisely this solidarity that Cuban revolutionary émigrés struggled so hard to obtain, believing that it could secure Cuba's independence in the 1890s. While the obstacles between Cuba and independence (or, after 1898, between Cuba and full sovereignty) had changed, the solution Ugarte and others perceived had not. As he dreamed of ways to free Cuba from a new colonial domination, Ugarte drew on a century-old tradition rooted in the idea that Latin Americans had a responsibility to liberate and defend Cuba. As he left the island, Ugarte noted that the youth of Havana were setting up Latin American associations in order to continue to propagate his call for unity. One wonders if these young students were aware that they too were part of a long tradition, heirs to the many Cubans who, between 1820 and 1898, had crisscrossed the continent raising the banner of Latin American solidarity.

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