

THE AMERICAN PRESS DURING THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR: RACE, RECONCENTRATION, AND PATERNALISM

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In 1901, special agent Charles M. Pepper was commissioned by the US Department of Commerce to write a report on the economic conditions in Cuba and Puerto Rico. In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, the United States directly controlled Puerto Rico, and, following the passing of the Platt Amendment, displayed complete dominance over the island of Cuba. Pepper's mission was simple; to survey the populations of both islands and assess their capacity for economic development. In doing so, Pepper inadvertently revealed a great deal about the American conception of race in Cuba. While describing the population of Cuba, Pepper explained the racial heritage of the Cuban citizens, and determined in what manner their mixed Latin and African ancestry affected them. First, Pepper identified the different racial groups within Cuba. Most notably to him were the creoles, native-born people from Spain. This term could potentially refer to either whites or blacks, but was generally used to denote whites of Spanish descent.¹ Next, Pepper mentioned that the revolutionary Cubans hated the Spanish "yet they [have] everything in common".² Pepper observed that Cuban music, culture, food, and even their wells are all descended from the Spanish tradition, and

¹ Charles M. Pepper, "The Spanish Population of Cuba and Porto Rico," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 18 (Jul., 1901): 166-167, accessed August 21, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1009888>.

² *Ibid.*, 168.

because of this ancestry, he did not believe the present animosity between the two races would persist. Finally, Pepper claimed that Cubans were “the most peaceful people in the world”.³ In fact, it was only because of their “Negro infusion” that they had any tendencies towards aggression and revolt.⁴ Pepper viewed the Cuban people as a mixed race, with both African and European heritage. They were neither fully Afro-Cubans nor creoles, but something in between.

But this did not signify that Pepper believed the Cuban people were racially equivalent to white Americans; instead, Pepper dwelled upon the perceived negatives of Cubans to argue that they did not deserve independence. These negative traits were developed from the mixed racial heritage of the Cuban people. He noted that the Cubans were duplicitous, simple, and that the white men of Puerto Principe were “stronger physically and more responsive mentally than in other parts of Cuba”.⁵ Per Ada Ferrer, Puerto Principe was “a sparsely populated district dependent economically on cattle ranching [with] a free population that was predominately white”.⁶ During the 10 Years’ War, Puerto Principe was one of the first parts of eastern Cuba to capitulate to Spain, which makes Pepper’s claims of superior white men of Puerto Principe even stranger. He also noted that while the Cubans have “qualities of endurance,” this often led to “apathy, lethargy, inertia [and] lack of the initiative faculty”.⁷ Not only did he believe the Cubans were both physically and mentally inferior to white men, he also thought that they possessed “the negative inclination to work”.⁸ But Pepper also postulated that this could potentially be the fault of the “management of the men rather than of abstract deductions regarding labor in the tropics”.⁹ Regardless, he thought that an American presence in Cuba could curtail the weaknesses of the population. Basically, Pepper argued that while the

³ Ibid., 172.

⁴ Ibid., 173.

⁵ Pepper, 169.

⁶ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 54.

⁷ Pepper, 173.

⁸ Ibid., 174.

⁹ Ibid.

Cubans may be influenced by their Spanish ancestry, they remain racially inferior to the American people.

Because of this, Pepper crafted the argument that Cuba was not yet fit for self-governance. Instead, he declared that “the American solution of the race problems in the West Indies” should be “to lead and guide”.¹⁰ Even though Charles Pepper wrote his report after the events of the Spanish-American War, he still talked about race in the same way as writers did before the war. Like the journalists of the *Omaha Daily Bee* and the *New York Times*, two sources I chose to utilize because of their respective local and national influence, Pepper talks of Cubans as if America has a moral responsibility to protect them. This sentiment will be defined as racial paternalism, and it was a key factor in motivating the American public towards war. Pepper also has a strong dislike for the Spanish, and uses racial language to justify it. He recalls the Black Legend of Spain, and notes that “there is in the Spanish nature an indifference to physical suffering, of which the Inquisition, the cruelties of the Conquistadores, the extermination of the native Indians, are the black monuments of history”.¹¹

During the war, American journalists covered the Spanish and the Cubans by these two distinct racial templates. In a speech by Senator Jacob Gallinger of New Hampshire, he summarizes the American view of the Cuban people succinctly. He proclaims that “our forefathers went to war because the mother country put a tax on tea... Cuba has ten thousand more reasons... and it deserves the sympathy and help of every true American”.¹² But he also believed that America would eventually control Cuba, expressing that, although the Cuban plight paralleled the birth of America, they were not a people of equal status. For the Spanish, the American press spoke only of their “inhuman misrule in Cuba” and their “thirsting for [American] blood”.¹³ In the aftermath of the war, America suddenly was forced to redefine Cubans, and Pepper did this by combining these two viewpoints.

But while American racial distinctions and the power of the press swayed public opinion, they were not enough on their own to

¹⁰ Pepper, 178.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹² “Time to Interfere,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Mar. 23, 1898.

¹³ “To the Bitter End,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1898.

drive the nation towards war. The destruction of the Maine and General Weyler's policy of reconcentration were perhaps the two most influential events in spurring America towards action, and both were highly covered by American reporters. Both local and national newspapers consistently bemoaned "the needs of the starving Cubans".¹⁴ They also mentioned the "increasing destitution of the unfortunate reconcentrados and the alarming mortality among them claimed earnest attention".¹⁵ When President McKinley decided to enter the war, his main motivations for action were to "put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation, and horrible miseries now existing [in Cuba]," and "the destruction of that noble vessel [which] has filled the National heart with inexpressible horror".¹⁶ According to the press, it was widely accepted that the crisis in Cuba was generated by "two chief factors... the destruction of the Maine... [and] the condition of the reconcentrados".¹⁷ While there were racial undertones in the reporting on the Maine, these themes were much more prevalent in the writings covering reconcentration. For this reason, I will focus on the coverage of reconcentration before and throughout the Spanish-American War, and the implications on race made throughout.

While the influence of the press and the devastation of reconcentration are both topics covered extensively by other historians, I analyze them from the specter of racial biases. In *The Press in Times of Crisis*, Lloyd Chiasson Jr. addresses the power of yellow journalism in guiding the American people towards intervention. He states that "the Cuban situation was an ideal and timely event that both newspapers [the *New York Journal* and *World*] launched onto during the three years between the beginning of the Cuban insurrection and the U.S. declaration of war upon Spain".¹⁸ Chiasson dissects the unfair coverage of both the Maine and reconcentration, but he does not dissect them by race. And while Ada Ferrer writes in length about Cuban racial conflict in *Insurgent Cuba*, she focuses

¹⁴ "American Relief for Cubans," *New York Times*, Mar. 8, 1898.

¹⁵ "The President's Message," *New York Times*, Apr. 12, 1898.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "The Reconcentrados," *New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1898.

¹⁸ Lloyd Chiasson Jr., *The Press in Times of Crisis* (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 106.

exclusively on the Cuban perspective. By focusing on the American biases towards both Cubans and Spaniards, I add to the historiography of the Spanish-American War.

Racial Purity in Spain, Cuba, and the United States

Throughout this paper, I will explore the differing ways in which race impacted the coverage of several key individuals involved in the Spanish-American War by both local and national news. These figures include the Spanish General Valeriano Weyler, professor Amos Hershey, Consul General Fitzhugh Lee, Senator Jacob Gallinger, and Cuban insurgents Jose and Antonio Maceo. The focus of this paper is to explore the implicit racial biases in the American press during the Spanish-American War. To do this, it is necessary to define the language in which both Cubans and Spaniards defined themselves during this period. In *Insurgent Cuba*, Ada Ferrer examines the way race is intricately tied to the Cuban independence movement. To fully comprehend the impact of race, and the raceless nationalism that emerged in Cuba, it is crucial to understand the many wars of the Cuban insurgency. On October 10, 1868, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, a prominent slaveholder in eastern Cuba, released his slaves and began the first armed Cuban insurrection against Spain. He addressed these men as “citizens,” and requested them to come help “conquer liberty and independence” for Cuba.¹⁹ By doing so, independence in Cuba was tied to abolition, and therefore race. Thousands of other slaves were released to fight against Spain, and mulatto men, such as Antonio Maceo, became prominent military leaders in the Cuban insurgency. But this did not signal that raceless nationalism had swept through Cuba, uniting creole, mulatto, black, and white under the banner of independence. Instead, racial division slowly tore apart the Cuban insurgency. And while the war began with a call for independence and abolition, it ended with the Pact of Zanjón, a treaty signed by the white elite leadership that gave Cuba neither.

Antonio Maceo refused to accept this treaty, and continued the war effort. This period is called the Guerra Chiquita, or the Little War, and was, like the 10 Years’ War, “a war over the roles and status

¹⁹ Ferrer, 15.

of slaves and former slaves in a new Cuban republic".²⁰ But the Little War was also about much more; Ferrer states that it was about "the exercise of black and mulatto political power within the nationalist movement and the republic it sought to erect".²¹ In the Pact of Zanjón, Spain granted freedom to all slaves who fought amongst the Cuban insurgents, but not for the slaves who stayed loyal. Because of this, the Little War attracted both "slaves who had earlier embraced the cause of abolition and independence... [as well as] slaves who had not taken part in the rebellion".²² The Cuban insurgency was now led by blacks, such as Jose Maceo and Guillermo Moncada, and composed of former slaves. This allowed Spain to portray the insurrection as a race war, and use racial fears to discredit the movement. The fear of another race war like the Haitian Revolution lingered in the minds of white Cubans, and they were discouraged from supporting Maceo and Moncada. Spanish officials intentionally defined their opponents as "black savages... wild animals who went barefoot and naked" to support this viewpoint.²³

In the aftermath of the Little War, Cuban independence activists were forced to address the power of racial fear and worked diligently throughout the next 15 years of peace to neutralize this threat. To do this, they crafted "a powerful image of the black insurgent as militarily able but as politically subservient to white leadership".²⁴ Jose Marti, perhaps the most prominent Cuban activist, wrote that "to dwell on the divisions of race... [was] to hamper the public good" and argued for a raceless nationalism and racial silence.²⁵ Other men, such as Juan Gualberto Gomez claimed that "those who refuse to see a black as their equal... those are the only ones in Cuba who carry out a politics of race".²⁶ These statements were made with one explicit purpose: to create a raceless Cuba and eliminate white racial fears. While racial tensions still existed in Cuba at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Cuban insurgents had

²⁰ Ferrer, 72.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 73.

²³ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁴ Ferrer, 89.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

managed to subvert the question of race, and instead unite themselves primarily by their national identity.

Neither America nor Spain viewed Cuba as a raceless nation, and this impacted both of their interactions with the island. For the Americans, the simplest way to explain their view of Cuba involves the skull of Maximo Gomez, a Cuban general. Gomez was a white man, and had been a participant in the ongoing discussions in Cuba over the appropriate role of the black Cuban insurgent and the concept of racelessness. A few days after peace had been struck with Spain, an American scientist came to Gomez's camp, and asked to measure the Cuban's skull.²⁷ Eventually, Gomez consented to the phrenologists demand, but this encounter showcases the perspective America had of Cuba. While the Cubans were attempting to confront the racial division of black and white, the Americans judged them by their own standards of civilization and development. The measuring of Gomez's skull shows that the United States viewed all Cubans as belonging to a lower racial status, and that the idea of Cuban racelessness was not embraced by America.

In *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930*, Joshua Goode tracks the development of racial theories in Spain, and how they differed greatly from elsewhere in Europe. While other European nations were obsessed with racial purity, Spanish anthropologists attributed Spanish historical success to their unique racial fusion. Per Goode, "Spain's racial problem became a question of both keeping the foreign elements out and also finding and nurturing the supposedly proper components together within Spain".²⁸ Following the Disaster, the Spanish name for the Spanish-American War, Spanish officials were forced to address why "despite overwhelming numerical supremacy" they still lost the war.²⁹ Drawing upon this unique Spanish notion of racial fusion, anthropologists argued that, at some point, the racial balance in Spain was distorted, and this led to military ineptitude. They pointed to Spanish fatalities to support their assumptions; while 20% of Spanish deaths were due to disease, this

²⁷ Ibid., 201.

²⁸ Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 97.

²⁹ Ibid., 121.

only accounted for 3% of American casualties.³⁰ Clearly, the proper Spanish racial fusion had somehow been diluted. While the Cubans attempted to transcend race, the Spanish perceived their intermingling with Spanish people as a key reason for the decline of the Spanish empire.

Reconcentration: The Barbaric General Weyler

In writing his report, Charles Pepper is confirming that the racially-motivated paternalism that helped guide America to intervene in Cuba remained after the war. But it changed in a significant way; before the war, Americans viewed the policy of reconcentration as both an atrocity and as a motivation to enter the war. To fully understand the impact of reconcentration on the American public, it is crucial to understand the timeline of the Spanish-American War. The Americans did not officially enter the war until April 25, 1898, two months after the destruction of the Maine. But the Cuban War for Independence, the third of the Cuban wars for liberation from Spain, began in 1895. Reconcentration was first implemented by the Spanish in February, 1896. For nearly three years, the American public was constantly bombarded with headlines covering the atrocities in Cuba. Chiasson calls this period “three years of sensational, and often inaccurate, news stories”.³¹ In an interview with Colonel Myron M. Parker, he stated “the condition of the reconcentrados in Cuba... passes the comprehension of a man accustomed to the usual phases of life”.³² He then proceeded to state the exact misfortunes he observed; “warehouses full of starving men and children... miles and miles [of] the charred stalks of the burned sugar cane... [and the] picture of desolation”.³³ Every day, the average American witnessed “reports of suffering and mistreatment occurring in Cuba,” and this definitively shaped their opinion towards the Spanish but also General Valeriano Weyler.³⁴

³⁰ Ibid., 122.

³¹ Chiasson, 106.

³² “Picture of Desolation,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Mar. 16, 1898.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Chiasson, 107.

Reconcentration was the predecessor of concentration camps, and was called “a crime against the human race itself”.³⁵ Weyler began the policy in a quest for efficiency; his goal was to separate the Cuban population from the already radicalized elements, to prevent support for the insurgency. Instead, he created zones of starvation and death for non-combatants, and was called “a vulgar combination of butcher and thief”.³⁶ Nicknamed ‘the Butcher,’ Weyler was already known as a cruel man before his involvement in Cuba, and had gained “this unenviable reputation in the last war,” the Third Carlist War, in which his brutality “made a record that twenty years have not effaced”.³⁷ Weyler was even heavily criticized by the press on non-military matters. Before America’s entry into the war in Cuba, Weyler was accused of fortifying Havana Harbor with both “torpedo and submarine mines”.³⁸ This was incredibly significant, for if this accusation was true, it would prove Weyler was definitively responsible for the destruction of the Maine. When he swore upon his soldier’s honor that he did not do this, the *Omaha Daily Bee* suggested that he had to prove “first, that he has any honor; and, second, that he is a soldier and not a butcher”.³⁹ Weyler was accused of destroying the Maine by not only the American press; he was also condemned by the international press, with this story spreading as far as New Zealand, showing the vast disapproval of his actions.

Weyler quickly became the scapegoat for the entirety of the horrors of reconcentration, and he did little to dissuade the press from blaming him. In *Press in Times of Crisis*, Lloyd Chiasson explores how the Cuban and Spanish military leaders interacted differently with the American press. Weyler, Chiasson remarks, was highly reluctant to interact with the media and “never succeeded in controlling news

³⁵ Amos Hershey, “Intervention and the Recognition of Cuban Independence,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 11 (May, 1898): 77, accessed August 21, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1009422>.

³⁶ “Weyler as a Type,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1898.

³⁷ “Fear of Gen. Weyler in Cuba,” *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1896.

³⁸ “The Mines in Havana Harbor,” *Hawke’s Bay Herald* (Hastings, NZ), Apr. 25, 1898.

³⁹ “Charges of the Press,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Mar. 7, 1898.

coverage of the revolt”.⁴⁰ The New York Times went as far to claim that Weyler “declared war on journalists,” and published several articles about the daring escapes of journalists from his savagery and repression.⁴¹ To push the narrative that Weyler was a tyrant who suppressed free speech, “hundreds of inches of space [were dedicated] to freeing Melton, a writer for the World”.⁴² Weyler’s hostility towards the press was a significant factor in the American media’s coverage of reconcentration and the Spanish-American War, especially when combined with the racial sympathy felt for Cuban citizens.

Cuban leaders, such as Maximo Gomez, were aware of this paternalistic compassion that American journalists felt towards the *reconcentrados*, and they used this to their advantage. On one occasion, Gomez “cut off a large amount of the food supply to the cities, [forcing] Cubans into his ranks or into the reconcentration camps to starve”.⁴³ The American reporters failed to understand the complexity of the issue, and instead blamed these deaths on the actions of the cruel Spanish officials. John Lawrence Tone, in *War and Genocide in Cuba*, explores both reconcentration and deconcentration. Deconcentration was a Cuban strategy that Tone called “a precursor to, and even a cause of, Weyler’s reconcentration”.⁴⁴ The Cuban insurgents uprooted people who lived near Spanish towns “as a way to eliminate them as props to the Spanish regime”.⁴⁵ Tone notes that this process was most extreme in Pinar del Rio, “where [Antonio] Maceo arrived in January 1896 and burned down half of the towns”.⁴⁶ Again, American journalists failed to understand the intertwined nature of reconcentration and deconcentration, and just attributed the destruction to the Spanish. Because of this biased coverage, there was “a well-justified worldwide outcry against such methods of making war, but all the blame attached to Weyler, while the Cuban

⁴⁰ Chiasson, 109.

⁴¹ “War on Correspondents,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1897.

⁴² Chiasson, 109.

⁴³ Chiasson, 108.

⁴⁴ John Lawrence Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 197.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

insurgents' role in reconcentration went unnoticed".⁴⁷ Tone also discusses the inaccuracy of American journalists, who reported widely inflated death counts. These correspondents claimed that 300 to 400 thousand Cuban citizens perished from the effects of reconcentration, but Tone suggests that it was a smaller, but still significant, 155 to 170 thousand.⁴⁸ The rampant misunderstanding surrounding Weyler and deconcentration can be contributed to both the sensationalist American press and the paternalistic sentiment held towards Cubans by the American public, which were generated by a feeling of racial superiority.

Colonel Paglieri: Conflict with the American Press

The Spanish were aware of the effect and power of the American press, and they despised it. In the *Omaha Daily Bee*, numerous articles were published detailing the hostilities between the Spanish military officials and the American journalists. An especially notable character in these articles was the Havana Chief of Police, Colonel Paglieri. Paglieri had a strained relationship with the press, and would frequently censor reports made by American correspondents that he believed were too offensive to Spain. The conflict between Paglieri and the American press reached a boiling point after the destruction of the Maine. The Maine exploded on February 15, 1898, killing 268 men, and the press insisted that this was the work of Spanish treachery. Colonel Paglieri maintained that this was false, and that the Spanish were not involved. Since then, it has been definitively proven that the Spanish were not responsible for the destruction of the Maine, but at the time, the destruction of the Maine "caused the public opinion, or rather the public feeling, of this country to settle in a determination that Spain must quit this hemisphere".⁴⁹ There was no doubt in the public's mind that the Spanish government was solely responsible for the Maine.

After a month of deflecting blame about the Maine, Colonel Paglieri finally broke and told his interviewer that "Spain has got

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁴⁸ Tone, 223.

⁴⁹ "Cuba and the Maine," *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 1898.

tired of you American correspondents- you *canaille*, you *piga*".⁵⁰ Later in the interview, he insisted that the papers had insulted "Gentlemanly Spain" with their unfair coverage.⁵¹ By stating this, Paglieri acknowledged the extensive reach of print media, and the substantial effect it had on international relations. When the Spanish attempted to expel Consul General Fitzhugh Lee because of his sympathy for Cuban *reconcentrados*, the underlying motivation was the "companionship existing between General Lee and correspondents of papers which have been decidedly unfriendly to Spain".⁵² In the interview with Paglieri, the journalist also noted that this animosity between Spain and America was at least partially perpetuated by the Spanish media, who call the Americans "a race... composed principally of fat pigs only to be stuck with Spanish bayonets".⁵³

Senator Jacob Gallinger: The Inhumanity of Spain

The American press attempted to be less transparent with their critiques of Spain, but they still possessed a distinct negative racial opinion of Spaniards. A racial divide existed between Spain and America, and both nations articulated this using the press. Charles Pepper expressed this when he spoke of the Black Legend of Spain: the conquistadors, the inquisition, and now reconcentration. The papers, both national and local, managed to critique the behavior of the Spanish in all types of publications. Perhaps one of the most blatant examples of this involves a congressional speech, made by Senator Jacob Gallinger of New Hampshire. Gallinger was a prominent senator and former physician, and "no man... during the McKinley administration enjoyed the confidence of the late President to a greater degree than did Hon. Jacob H. Gallinger".⁵⁴ Not only was he a highly influential politician, Gallinger was also a member of the "Cuban Commission," a group of politicians assembled by William Randolph Hearst because of their interventionist views towards

⁵⁰ "Charges of the Press," *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 7, 1898.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *The Successful American* 5-6, Press Biographical Company (1902): 406.

Cuba. These men then journeyed to Cuba, made a report that argued for annexation, and presented their case before Congress.

On March 23, 1898, Gallinger prepared to recount the horrors and devastation he saw in Cuba to Congress. But before the Republican senator was given the opportunity, several Democratic representatives intervened, and suggested peace. Senator Bacon, from Georgia, proposed a joint resolution “to preserve peace with all the nations of the world”.⁵⁵ After this, Mr. Hale, the chairman of the naval affairs committee reported that he had finished the bill providing relief for the survivors of the Maine catastrophe. While there was “a suppressed murmur of expectancy in the galleries... the measure was read and passed without a word of debate”.⁵⁶ After this, Gallinger began his speech. He first addressed Mr. Hale and proclaimed that “the brave men lost in the Maine disaster could not be atoned for with gold or silver”.⁵⁷ This was met with “a spontaneous wave of applause [which] the vice president had difficulty in restoring order”.⁵⁸

While Gallinger began his analysis of Cuba by referencing the Maine, the rest of his call for war was based on a critique of the Spanish people. Gallinger used the “beggary and death in Mantanzas,” which was caused by reconcentration, to further argue his point.⁵⁹ He declared that Spain was waging a “war of starvation and extermination... a war more cruel than the world has ever known,” and that a country desperate enough to “starve 400,000 of its people would do anything”.⁶⁰ Gallinger then proceeded to vividly describe the horrors he witnessed in Cuba. On his route to Mantanzas, he saw “wretched people in rags,” but it was not until he reached the city that he realized “the full extent of the suffering”.⁶¹ Gallinger repeated the words of Dante when describing the scene; “who enters here leaves hope behind”.⁶² Finally, Gallinger accused Weyler of devising “a scheme of human suffering and sorrow that put Dante’s Inferno to the

⁵⁵ “Time to Interfere,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 23, 1898.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ “Time to Interfere.”

⁶² *Ibid.*

shade and converted a contented, prosperous people into a herd of suffering, starving unfortunates".⁶³

Senator Gallinger plainly stated that "Spain has failed to meet the requirements of an advanced civilization".⁶⁴ The senate so profoundly agreed with this point that the author noted "Mr. Gallinger was interrupted by hearty applause from the galleries".⁶⁵ Clearly, Gallinger's opinion of Spain as a vastly inferior nation was held by his peers. In his speech, Gallinger provides the template for an American racial analysis of Spain. First, he focuses on reconcentration. He centers his argument around the idea that no civilized nation would allow such horrors to befall their own people. But Gallinger does not simply state that reconcentration is bad, rather, he vividly describes it to his captive audience, articulating every death he witnessed. Next, Gallinger proclaims that the people of Cuba were a "contented, prosperous people" before the actions of General Weyler.⁶⁶ By doing this, he is stating that the Cuban people have been degraded by the actions of the Spanish, and insinuating that they desperately need American intervention to again be successful. But by making this claim, Gallinger clearly displayed the effects that racial paternalism was having upon the American people. Gallinger critiques the Spanish, but he also dismisses the idea that the Cuban people could free themselves, and instead argues that America has a moral obligation to protect them. By crafting this argument in subtle racial terms, Gallinger is expressing his own racially paternalistic sentiments.

Gallinger was not alone in his criticism of the Spanish people; newspapers throughout America echoed his claims. At one point before America entered the war, the US government declared that all foreign aid sent to Cuba would be sent in American men-of-war, for the sake of expediency. The Spanish government saw this "peaceful and friendly mission... as an encouragement to sedition," and they requested that the US find other vessels to carry their supplies.⁶⁷ The press admitted that there was "an air of reason in this suggestion,"

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "American Relief for Cuba," *New York Times*, Mar. 8, 1898.

but also remarked that “there is an air of ungraciousness amounting to positive inhumanity”.⁶⁸ The Spanish had plenty of time to raise their concerns, the correspondent argued, and they had failed. As the writer saw it, the only accomplishment of the “Spanish action, coupled with the Spanish delay, will doubtless be that many Cubans will perish of starvation whose lives might have been saved”.⁶⁹ While both the American and Spanish governments were at blame for this controversy, the press shaped a narrative that placed all accusation at the inhuman Spanish.

While most critiques of Spain centered upon reconcentration, some journalists addressed the issue from other perspectives. For example, some writers examined the military inefficiency of Spain, and used this to argue that they were an inferior people. One article in the *Omaha Daily Bee* was titled “United States officers witness the performance and laugh in their sleeves at the Spanish gunners”.⁷⁰ The correspondent then proceeds to recount the entire embarrassing display for the Spanish military. Spain was attempting to display their immense superiority, but instead “spent at least \$10,000 and twenty-seven modern projectiles to show the naval authorities of the United States just how poorly Spanish artillerymen handle good guns”.⁷¹ Finally, the correspondent noted that while the Spanish troops began by making coarse remarks to the Americans present, eventually the “inefficiency penetrated even into their unexpert brains and they kept quiet”.⁷² Reconcentration was the central reason that the Spanish were inferior to Americans, but their repeated military failings provided additional support.

Amos Hershey: The Responsibilities and Failings of the American Government

While the American news frequently insulted Spain over the nation’s military ineptitude, the principle reason for the American public’s diminished racial view of Spaniards was reconcentration. The

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Shooting at a Mark,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Mar. 23, 1898.

⁷¹ “Shooting at a Mark.”

⁷² Ibid.

press used the tragedy of these camps to fuel their narrative of the war in Spain. Amos S. Hershey, a professor of political science at Indiana University, presented a slightly different version of this. He presented an academic perspective on the situation in Haiti, and while his exact opinion was not popularized, it was influential. He clamored for the United States to defend Cuba and humanity, and stressed the moral and legal obligations of the American government to act. He wrote that “we stand convicted in the eyes of the civilized world... whether we intervene at this late day or not, of negligence in permitting one of the greatest crimes of the nineteenth century to be perpetrated at our Southern Gate”.⁷³ Hershey is referring to the Monroe Doctrine, which stated that European powers needed to respect the Western hemisphere as the American sphere of influence. The Spanish-American War was the first conflict in which the American government truly enforced this policy, but Hershey thought the United States should have been more proactive. Hershey was harsh on the inactivity of the American government, and believed America had already failed in its duty as protector by allowing this atrocity to occur in Cuba. In this manner, Hershey was unique. While numerous other journalists and correspondents wrote about the failings of Spain, Hershey was one of the few who also blamed the American government for their continued lack of response to the travesties occurring in Cuba.

It is apparent from Hershey’s tone that he no longer viewed Spain as a civilized nation, but he also held a negative opinion of Cubans. While bemoaning the Cuban tragedy, Hershey took precious time to stress that Cubans are not equal in status to white Americans. He called the Cubans “a race which, whatever its shortcomings, is human and American”.⁷⁴ While the people of Cuba did not deserve reconcentration, Hershey did not believe they had earned equality either. Hershey’s entire article is an urgent call for President McKinley to declare war on Spain, and was published days before McKinley eventually did. Notably absent from Hershey’s plea is any mention of the Maine, which was commonly used as a symbolic rallying call for the pro-war movement. By neglecting to mention the Maine, Hershey is revealing that paternalistic sympathy for the Cuban people,

⁷³ Hershey, 77.

⁷⁴ Hershey, 79.

accompanied by a negative view of the uncivilized, inhumane Spanish, was enough to motivate some to action.

Consul General Lee and Lieutenant General Maceo: Comparing White and Black Heroes

Perhaps no two men articulated the different perspectives on race in America than Consul General Fitzhugh Lee and Lieutenant General Antonio Maceo. Both men were perceived as heroes during the Spanish-American War, but there was one significant difference; Lee was a white American, and Maceo was a Cuban mulatto. Lee was the nephew of the Confederate general Robert E. Lee, and served as a Confederate cavalry leader during the Civil War. Rather than being outcast for his Confederate roots, Fitzhugh Lee was celebrated for his strong American bloodline.⁷⁵ He was praised for being “courageous and possessed of tact and common sense,” and the *Pictorial History of Our War with Spain for Cuba’s Freedom* remarked that there “never was... a more genuine and typical American gentleman”.⁷⁶ The *Pictorial History* was written and compiled by Trumbull White, an American author who wrote several popular histories of exotic lands, in books such as *Glimpses of the Orient*, *Puerto Rico and Its People*, and *The War in the East: Japan, China, and Corea*. Lee was first appointed to the consulship in Cuba by President Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, but “the nation recognized that he was first an American and an interference with him on partisan ground would not have been tolerated”.⁷⁷ Because of this, the Republican President McKinley kept Lee stationed in Havana, and allowed him to continue his diplomatic mission on the island.

Before examining the contrast between Trumbull White’s portraits of Antonio Maceo and Lee, it is necessary to explore why White chose to include Maceo. The majority of the book is dedicated to white American heroes, so including Maceo was a bold decision. White dedicates a chapter of his work to Maceo because the mulatto insurgent leader was killed in combat, and “no event in the war up to

⁷⁵ Trumbull White, *Pictorial History of Our War with Spain for Cuba’s Freedom* (Evanston: Freedom Publishing Co., 1898), 240.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

that time caused such general satisfaction among the supporters of the existing government, both in Cuba and in Spain, as the death of Maceo".⁷⁸ The *New York Times* remarked that his death caused "excited students [to rush] through the streets [of Madrid], making demonstrations at the Government offices and at the United States Legation, and venting their feelings in cheers for Spain, her army, and Major Cirujeda".⁷⁹ While the Spanish were elated over the death of Maceo, the Cuban insurgents obviously felt differently, especially once it was revealed that Maceo was betrayed by his surgeon, Maximo Zertucha. General Weyler was responsible for this "hellish scheme," and the Cuban Junta decried that he was a "cold-blooded murderer" and controlled by his "bestly instincts".⁸⁰ This is yet another reason that the press despised Weyler. But it is crucial to recognize that White does not include Maceo because of his military endeavors. Maceo was one of the only black generals during the 10 Years' War, and played a significant role in the Little War. But both of these wars were portrayed as race wars, and compared to the Haitian Revolution. Because of this, White only celebrated Maceo for his death, not for his life.

While Trumbull White viewed Lee as a man "heartily admired... even by those most antagonistic to him," he describes Antonio Maceo in a notably different manner.⁸¹ Instead, White predicts that Dr. Zertucha betrayed Maceo "on account of his color" and that "the subordinate officers in the Cuban ranks did not show proper respect for him, or obedience to his commands".⁸² While White himself believes that Zertucha's opinion of Maceo is false, by placing it in his book, he is acknowledging that some people still held these views towards the insurgent general. This is especially noteworthy since throughout Maceo's career he was forced to address criticisms of his character based solely on his race, ignoring his past military successes.⁸³ After this, White explored the positive characteristics of Maceo. He recalled that Maceo "never drank wine, he never smoked,

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁷⁹ "Maceo's Death Confirmed," *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1896.

⁸⁰ "Letter from Cuba," *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1896.

⁸¹ White, 243.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 255.

⁸³ Ferrer, 59.

and that in a land where tobacco is as common as potatoes in Ireland".⁸⁴ Despite his "massive frame", Maceo was "neat, even to fastidiousness, in his dress" and "usually carried a cane".⁸⁵ In complimenting Maceo in this fashion, White was attempting to show that Maceo was an exception; he was different from the rest of the Afro-Cubans and mulattos. While they were inclined towards the vices of smoking and drinking, Maceo resisted; and while Afro-Cubans and mulattos were often depicted as savages, Maceo was an exceedingly well-dressed man.

White's method of praising Maceo is eerily similar to the language employed by the Cuban phrenologists who examined his corpse in 1900. Upon examining his skull to determine the "true nature of the mixed race insurgent leader," they determined that he was more like "modern Parisians" than "African blacks".⁸⁶ These scholars then confidently proclaimed that for "for a person of his race... Maceo had been a truly superior man".⁸⁷ While both Fitzhugh Lee and Antonio Maceo were celebrated for their exceptionalism, this took different meanings for each man. Lee was regarded as a great diplomat and American, and race had no negative impact on the way he was described. For Maceo, he was important because he succeeded despite his supposed racial shortcomings. This is an important distinction, and displays how race influenced the American people's opinion of political figures.

Fitzhugh Lee: Sympathy for the Cuban People

No politician embodied the conflict between the American and Spanish newspapers over the role of sympathy in war better than Consul General Fitzhugh Lee, who oversaw diplomatic relations with Cuba from 1896 to 1898. Apparently, Lee was so remarkably exceptional at his job that "never... did the Spanish authorities in that city omit any of the forms of courtesy".⁸⁸ While his autobiographer may have made that claim, this was far from the truth. Throughout

⁸⁴ White, 255.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁸⁶ Ferrer, 168.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ White, 243.

Lee's tenure, he clashed frequently with the Spanish government over numerous topics, mainly because of the immense paternalistic sympathy he felt towards the Cuban people. As Trumbull White recalls, "Spanish outrages... roused in him but two sentiments... sympathy and grief for those who suffered... [and] indignation and enmity against those who were guilty".⁸⁹ For this reason, one of Lee's chief missions in Cuba was to provide aid to *reconcentrados*, and by doing this, he emphasized that this support served as a weapon against "the more brutal Spanish organs".⁹⁰ It's crucial to note that Lee and General Weyler despised each other, which caused Lee, and most Americans in Cuba, to turn "exclusively to Cuban sources for intelligence about reconcentration".⁹¹ While Lee was motivated by his paternalistic sympathy for the Cuban people, his hatred for Weyler led him to consult biased information, and furthered his support for the *reconcentrados*.

But while Lee's heart was allegedly full of support for the Cuban independence movement, the Spanish papers presented a different narrative. Spain resented the sympathy shown by the American humanitarians, such as Consul General Lee, and on numerous occasions asked the United States to stop supporting Cuba. The *Omaha Daily Bee* wrote that "the Spanish press in Havana generally [try] to discredit the American Red Cross efforts, and to stop the arrival of American food in order to thus complete Cuban extermination".⁹² At one point, the Spanish attempted to have Lee fired, "based largely upon his sympathy for the Cubans".⁹³ The American government refused this request, and the Spanish attempted to avoid public ridicule by insisting it "was never put in the shape of a demand, but that it was merely a suggestion on the part of Spain".⁹⁴ In short, the press wrote that the Spanish resented Lee because of his sympathy, but this was not Spain's only grievance with the Consul General. The Spanish also frequently accused Lee of "the

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁹⁰ "Cuba and the Maine," *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 1898.

⁹¹ Tone, 223.

⁹² "No Ill Feeling Toward Lee," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Mar. 7, 1898.

⁹³ "Haughty Dons Back Down," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Mar. 8, 1898.

⁹⁴ "Haughty Dons Back Down."

improper distribution of American charity".⁹⁵ Another article reflects on the Spanish coverage of America, noting that "the Havana papers, commenting on American charity, accuse unknown persons of fraud and smuggling".⁹⁶

This sympathy expressed by Lee, whether sincere or not, had racial undertones. But while Lee's opinions of the Cuban people were partially obscured by the press, he proudly displayed them in his book, *Cuba's Struggle Against Spain with the Causes of American Intervention and a Full Account of the Spanish-American War*. He identifies the five racial classes within Cuba; white Cubans, black Cubans, colored Cubans, the Spanish, and foreigners. Of these groups, he claims that the white Cubans are "the owners of the soil" and "a class educated and refined".⁹⁷ But Lee is quick to assure his audience that white Cubans are not equal to white Americans, for they "lack the energy of more northern nations".⁹⁸ The black Cubans "are laborers... [and] quite illiterate," and Lee claims that during their slavery they "were in many respects treated better by Spanish laws than were their masters".⁹⁹ For the colored Cubans, Lee calls them a "mixed race... descended from African slaves and... the negroes who came with the first Spaniards to Cuba".¹⁰⁰ And while these men are "better laborers than the same class of natives in the other West India islands," Lee still believes that they are inferior to both white Americans and white Cubans.¹⁰¹ He writes that they "are not numerous enough or strong enough morally or physically to cause them... to Africanize the island".¹⁰² This is a recurring theme in his book; he also states that "all fear of negro domination in the island may be dismissed as idle".¹⁰³

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ "Charges of the Press."

⁹⁷ Fitzhugh Lee and Joseph Wheeler, *Cuba's Struggle against Spain with the causes of American Interovention and a Full Account of the Spanish-American War* (New York: American Historical Press, 1899), 617.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Lee, 617.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 77.

Lee's attempt to diminish American black panic echoed the writings of early Cuban nationalists. Throughout the 10 Years' War and the Little War, the Spanish government described black and mulatto Cubans as "a threat to civilized white society," and preyed upon this fear to diminish white support for the independence movement.¹⁰⁴ During the period of peace before the Cuban War for Independence, nationalist writers such as Jose Marti and Manuel Sanguily "constructed a war of mutual redemption and a black insurgent who, grateful for that redemption, protected rather than endangered the nation".¹⁰⁵ By doing this, they assured their audience that Cuba would not be another Haiti, and promoted the idea of racelessness. While Lee also argued that the black and mixed population posed no threat to 'Africanize' the island, he did this while still believing in racial classes. Rather than proposing that the Cuban races could transcend their differences, Lee stated that the white Cubans would always possess the island. Consul General Lee saw Cuba in explicitly racial terms and felt sympathy for the suffering *reconcentrados* he perceived as inferior.

Racial Division among the Cuban Insurgents: The Death of Jose Maceo

While Lee divided the Cuban people into five separate racial classes, most journalists treated the Cubans as a mixed race, except for distinct moments when they chose to highlight the perceived racial tensions in Cuba. A notable example of this involves the death of Jose Maceo, the brother of Antonio Maceo. He was killed in July, 1896, before the US intervened in the conflict, and had fought against Spanish rule for decades. But the cause of his death was contested; while we know now he died in conflict with Spanish troops, the American press alleged that he was murdered by his own troops while attempting to start a race war. The article reports that Jose's killing signaled that "a race war has broken out in the insurgent ranks between the whites and the blacks".¹⁰⁶ The author also claimed that Jose had been illicitly seizing weapons intended for General Calixto

¹⁰⁴ Ferrer, 83.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁰⁶ "Jose Maceo Murdered," *New York Times*, July 15, 1896.

Garcia, a white Cuban insurgent leader, because of his jealousy of Garcia's "superior authority".¹⁰⁷ Finally, the journalist connected this story with the recent court-martialing of Manuel Gonzales and his subordinates, indicating that there was a pattern of "trouble between the blacks and whites".¹⁰⁸ Gonzales, the Provincial Treasurer, along with his followers, were accused of shorting the cattle tax, and were punished by death. The journalist then noted that "Gonzales and the other men shot by Gomez were negroes".¹⁰⁹ Despite the inaccuracy in the reporting of Jose's death, this article still shows that there was a debate among the American people on the racial identity of the Cubans, especially before the war. While some Americans perceived Cubans as an inferior mixed race, but suffering a plight similar to that of the revolutionary Americans, others divided the populace of the island into a binary of black and white.

Conclusion

The influence of the American media during the Spanish-American War in mobilizing the interventionist movement is widely acknowledged. But the way these correspondents utilized race when addressing both Spaniards and Cubans to mold their narrative of war is frequently ignored. For the Cubans, this conversation centered around a combination of sympathy and racial paternalism. The American media frequently compared the situation of the Cuban insurgents to the American revolutionary movement, and because of this, declared that the Cuban independence movement was deserving of American sympathy and support. While the Cubans were consistently associated with the Revolutionary imagery, there was another, far more impactful reason why they were portrayed as sympathetic figures. Combining the substantial body count with the sensationalism of the press, reconcentration was a well-covered topic in the United States, and helped further craft the image of the sympathetic Cuban. Reconcentration impacted the racial perception of the Spanish; the American people perceived them as inhuman savages, incapable of civilization. But this sympathy for the Cubans

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

was not alone; it was combined with intense feelings of racial paternalism. The Americans largely viewed the Cubans as a suffering people, but they did not believe they were capable of caring for themselves. This portrait of the suffering Cuban was combined with American ideas of race to argue that while the Cuban people did not deserve reconcentration, their African and Spanish heritage made them unfit for self-governance. As Charles Pepper wrote, for all that had happened to the Cuban insurgents, they still required “the helping hand of the United States”.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Pepper, 177.

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