

A “Splendid Little War”: The United States, Imperialism, and the Spanish American War

American History
Trinity School

Cuba



Revolution in Cuba

- Last major European colony in Latin America
- US: economic interests
- Strategic interest for any country interested in a Central American canal
- 1880s: Spanish control became especially harsh
- 1895: Cuban people launched revolt against Spain
- Spain cut off rebels from civilian supporters
 - “Reconcentration camps”
 - Death from starvation, disease

Fanning the Flames

- New York *World*:
- *“Blood on the roadsides, blood on the fields, blood on the doorsteps, blood, blood, blood! The old, the young, the weak, the crippled—all are butchered without mercy. Is there no nation wise enough, brave enough to aid this blood-smitten land?”*

Intervention: Broad-Based Support

- Stop the carnage
- Protect U.S. investments
- Expansionists supported intervention
- Populists petitioned Congress to support the Cuban people in seeking independence from colonial rule
- Election of 1896: both parties endorsed Cuban independence

Journalism and War



The USS Maine



- Feb. 15, 1898, 9:40 pm, Havana Harbor
- Sudden explosion lit up the sky
- Crew of 355: 260 dead
- Unknown cause

Yellow Journalism & The Maine

\$50,000 REWARD.—WHO DESTROYED THE MAINE?—\$50,000 REWARD.

EDITION FOR GREATER NEW YORK.

NEW YORK JOURNAL

AND ADVERTISER.

NO. 3,372. TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1902.—16 PAGES. PRICE ONE CENT.

\$50,000!

\$50,000 REWARD!

For the Detection of the
Perpetrator of
the Maine Outrage!

The New York Journal tender offers a reward of \$50,000 cash for information furnished to it exclusively, which will lead to the detection and conviction of the person or persons who perpetrated the crime which resulted in the destruction of the Maine, of the United States Navy. The \$50,000 cash reward is offered for the person or persons who furnished information to the Journal which will lead to the detection and conviction of the person or persons who perpetrated the crime which resulted in the destruction of the Maine, of the United States Navy. The \$50,000 cash reward is offered for the person or persons who furnished information to the Journal which will lead to the detection and conviction of the person or persons who perpetrated the crime which resulted in the destruction of the Maine, of the United States Navy.

W. A. REBERT.

Assistant Secretary Roosevelt
Convinced the Explosion of
the War Ship Was Not
an Accident.

The Journal Offers \$50,000 Reward for the
Conviction of the Criminals Who Sent
258 American Sailors to Their Death.
Naval Officers Unanimous That
the Ship Was Destroyed
on Purpose.

\$50,000!

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W. A. REBERT.



NAVAL OFFICERS THINK THE MAINE WAS DESTROYED BY A SPANISH MINE.

Longsight, Havana, Jan. 25. (The Journal's special correspondent at Havana, cables this) is the nerve question at issue. Forwarded in the cable report that the Maine was destroyed and that her crew killed by a Spanish mine or a sunken torpedo. This is the opinion of several American naval authorities. The Journal's cable report, however, was based on the report of the Spanish government, which stated that the Maine was destroyed by a Spanish mine. The Journal's cable report, however, was based on the report of the Spanish government, which stated that the Maine was destroyed by a Spanish mine. The Journal's cable report, however, was based on the report of the Spanish government, which stated that the Maine was destroyed by a Spanish mine.

Hidden Mine or a Sunken Torpedo Believed to Have Been the Weapon Used Against the American Man-of-War—Officers and Men Tell Thrilling Stories of Being Blown Into the Air Amid a Mass of Shattered Steel and Exploding Shells—Survivors Brought to Key West Scout the Idea of Accident—Spanish Officials Protest Too Much—Our Cabinet Orders a Searching Inquiry—Journal Sends Divers to Havana to Report Upon the Condition of the Wreck.

MAINE

EXTRA No. 9

NO. 101, N. E.

NEW YORK JOURNAL

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1905.

MAINE

EXTRA No. 10

PRICE ONE CENT

CRISIS IS AT HAND

253 KNOWN TO BE LOST

CABINET IN SESSION; GROWING RELIEF IN SPANISH TREACHERY.

DE LUME, IN PANIC, FLEES

Maine Destroyed by an Outside Attack, Naval Officers Believe.

Censored Dispatches from Havana Say a Shot Was Heard Before the Ship's Magazines Blew Up.

Washington, Feb. 16.—The Spanish cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

While the United States is in a position to attack the island of Cuba, the United States is in a position to attack the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

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Portion of the Cuban Navy in Havana Harbor

EXTRA NIGHT EXTRA.

MR. KINLEY SUSPICIOUS OF SPANISH PLOTS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16.—The United States cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

SPECIAL SPENDING AUTHORIZED

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SPANISH MAY BE HELD

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16.—The United States cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

ENGLAND BELIEVES IT TOLD PLAY

London, Feb. 16.—The United States cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

UNITED STATES PROBABLY TO ATTACK

Washington, Feb. 16.—The United States cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

THE TRAGEDY

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PARADES IN MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor, Mich., Feb. 16.—The United States cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

RECEIVED IN MICHIGAN

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CHURCHES APPREHENSIVE

Washington, Feb. 16.—The United States cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

SHAME AT ENGLAND

London, Feb. 16.—The United States cabinet today discussed the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba, and the possibility of the United States attacking the island of Cuba.

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MAINE

US Declares War

- April 25, 1898: U.S. declares war on Spain
- Teller Amendment (Apr. 20, 1898)
 - US could not annex Cuba
 - Intervention = leave “control of the island to the people”
 - Attached to the war resolution
 - Most interventionists were not imperialists
- Congress refused to approve
 - Hawaiian annexation
 - Canal in Latin America

Becoming an Imperial Power

- War with Spain created opportunity to occupy Philippines
- McKinley's rationale for occupying Philippines
 1. Strengthen US political and commercial position in East Asia
 2. Filipinos "poorly suited" to self-rule
 3. Germany or Japan might seize if US did not
 - #2 and 3 were new & unprecedented justifications for US intervention

The March of the Flag

- Albert Beveridge, Senator from Indiana (1899–1911)
- “March of Flag” campaign speech, 1898:
 - “Duty” and “destiny” to spread American Christian capitalism overseas
 - “The ocean does not separate us from lands of our duty and desire—the oceans join us. . . . Cuba not contiguous? Porto Rico not contiguous! Hawaii and the Philippines not contiguous! The oceans make them contiguous. And our navy will make them contiguous.”
- Reconceptualized Manifest Destiny to int’l context
- Expanded frontier thesis beyond US borders

Philippine-American War

- Feb 4, 1890 (two days before US signed Treaty of Paris):
 - Fighting broke out between American forces and Filipino nationalists
 - Filipinos: independence, not a change in colonial rulers.
- Philippine-American War lasted 3 years
 - Dead: 4,200 American and 20,000+ Filipino combatants
 - 200,000 Filipino civilians died from violence, famine, and disease
- Philippines = American colony until gained independence in 1946

US Victory in Cuba

- Army finally landed in June 1898
 - Busy in Philippines
- Small regular army + militias, volunteers
 - Rough Riders: cavalry unit of cowboys & eastern dandies led by T. Roosevelt
- July 3: US Navy destroyed obsolete Spanish squadron
 - Isolated Spanish army; guaranteed defeat
- US then seized nearby Spanish colony of Puerto Rico
- August 12, 1898: Spain signed armistice

Hawaii

- President McKinley:
 - “We need Hawaii just as much and a good deal more than we needed California. It is Manifest Destiny.”
- New York *Sun*
 - “To maintain the flag in the Philippines, we must raise our flag in Hawaii.”
- July 1898: Congress approved annexing Hawaii
 - Welcomed by white minority
 - Protests by native people; annexation without consent

Treaty of Paris

- Spain agreed to
 - Accept Cuban independence
 - Cede Puerto Rico and Guam to US
 - Cede Philippines to US (separately decided)

Roosevelt Corollary

- 1823: Monroe Doctrine
 - Western Hemisphere was now closed to Europe
 - No additional European colonization or interference
- 1904: Roosevelt Corollary to Monroe Doctrine
 - US had right to intervene if a European country threatened or attempted to seize a country in the Western Hemisphere
 - US sphere of interest extended beyond national borders



As the U.S. entered the
20th century . . .

“A Splendid Little War”

The World's Policeman?



U.S. Enters 20th Century

- Expanded Manifest Destiny to int'l context
- Expanded frontier thesis to int'l context
 - Beveridge: what does “contiguous” really mean?
- Isolationist to Imperialist
 - Colonies, annexed territory outside contiguous US

