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The Making of a Revolution

BY RAMON EDUARDO RUIZ

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2.

The Roots of Cuban Nationalism

Through all of Castro's gyrations, the only constant has been his determination to free Cuba from American influence (which he equates with domination) even at the eventual cost of submitting his country to the Soviet Union. It was not Castro's predilection for Communism but his pathological hatred of the American power structure as he believed it to be operative in Cuba, together with his discovery of the impotence of Cuba's supposedly influential classes, that led him eventually into the Communist camp. Only from that base, he thought, could he achieve his goal of eliminating American influence.

PHILIP W. BONSAL
United States Ambassador to Cuba, 1959–60

[I]

An aggressive, vocal, anti-American nationalism shaped the character and direction of the Revolution of 1959.

The origins of Cuban nationalism dated back to nineteenth-century colonial discontent with Spanish rule. After 1898

nationalist sentiment grew rapidly. According to Philip W. Bonsal, the desire to free Cuba from American tutelage was based on the conviction that "the fate of Cuba . . . was not in Cuban hands." That conviction became the salient feature of the militant nationalism of the first Cuban-born generation of the 1920's. Both Spain and America helped to foster Cuban nationalism, but, of the two, the United States was essentially responsible for the jingoistic nationalism that characterized the Fidelista movement.

[II]

The histories of Cuba and the United States had been intertwined almost from the inception of American independence in 1783. Early American solicitude for Cuba stressed strategic factors. Less than a hundred miles off the Florida coast, Cuba lay in the strategic Caribbean. Cuba must remain in friendly hands. While a weak Spain posed no threat, French or British control endangered American interests. Further, policy-makers in Washington believed that Cuba would fall into their lap if Spain lost the island, and they therefore blocked foreign efforts to liberate the island and frowned on Cuban sentiment for independence.

Prior to the Civil War, the United States had occasionally expressed a desire to acquire Cuba; if this could not be accomplished, the Department of State was content to allow the Madrid government to rule the island. While Southern expansionists wished to purchase Cuba to increase the slave territory of the United States, sectional politics thwarted this aim. A hot debate on the Cuban question continued until the Civil War erupted. The Northern victory at Appomattox

silenced the expansionists' cry—though President Ulysses S. Grant made one more half-hearted effort to purchase Cuba. Shielded by the new American military might, Cuba need no longer belong either to Spain or to the United States. It could be independent.

American involvement in the island's affairs continued, however, because a vocal and militant band of Cuban insurgents refused to accept Spanish rule. The bloody Ten Years' War, the first of the struggles against the mother country, erupted in 1868, but unable to vanquish Spain alone, the rebels sought aid abroad, especially in the United States. Americans smuggled arms into Cuba for the insurgents, congressmen voiced their support, and President Grant even suggested that the United States recognize Cuban rebel belligerency. Retaliating, Spain restricted the rights of Americans on the island. In the meantime, lives were lost and millions of dollars of property damaged in Cuba. Washington urged concessions, including the emancipation of the slaves, and eventually compelled a compromise which brought the conflict to an end in 1878. Spain emancipated the slaves, but failed to keep its promise of home rule for Cuba. These half-way measures satisfied no one. Little was done to quiet local demands for self-government, and the bickering between Spain and the United States dragged on until fighting broke out again in 1898.

José Martí opened the final battle for independence in 1895. The United States stayed aloof diplomatically but Spanish attempts to quench the fires of rebellion and Cuban rebel activity in New York and Florida made strict neutrality impossible. A Cuban government-in-exile operated in New York, where Martí made his headquarters, while the Cuban Revolutionary Party solicited funds, recruited men, purchased arms and munitions, and enlisted ship captains for an invasion of the homeland. Spanish consuls in American cities complained that there were Cubans in troop-training centers drilling for the approaching Armageddon, a complaint amply

justified later when Martí and his band of fighters landed in Cuba from American ports. All in all, some sixty Cuban expeditions had escaped the vigilance of American officials by 1898. Many of the early patriots acquired American citizenship—and still participated in the battle to free their former homeland. Heading the list of patriots who acquired American citizenship was Tomás Estrada Palma, subsequently first president of the Cuban Republic. Edwin F. Atkins, a sugar planter, noted in his *Sixty Years in Cuba* that nearly all the members of the rebel junta in New York were naturalized American citizens.

No single motive explains the participation of the United States in the Spanish-American War. Popular sympathy for the rebels, Spanish "atrocities," American dreams of world prominence, the need to protect the projected canal across Central America, American interests in Cuba, and the sinking of the battleship Maine—all encouraged American intervention. Of the wars waged by the United States, the Spanish-American proved least costly in lives while only the Mexican War was more profitable. In return for an empire that embraced the Philippines, mid-Pacific islands, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, fewer than one hundred American lives were lost. To Theodore Roosevelt, who undoubtedly voiced the sentiment of his countrymen, "It wasn't much of a war, but it was the best war we had."

Roosevelt's frivolous quip would have angered the Cuban patriots. Cuba had been fighting Spain for nearly three decades and, since 1895, had been engaged in an ugly war with no quarter given on either side. Thousands of Cubans had perished in the bloody conflict to free their homeland; millions of dollars of local property had been pillaged and burned to the ground. To quell the uprising, the Spaniards had herded thousands of Cuban families into vast compounds described by American newspapermen as concentration camps. Cuban historians claim that Spain's retaliatory tactics demonstrate that the insurgents were winning their war and

that, in time, they would have defeated the Spaniards had not the United States intervened. No Cuban patriot, insist the historians, asked the Americans to join the struggle; they were uninvited allies.

With Cuba free from Spain, the Americans turned their attention to the job of formulating diplomatic ties with the island and preparing the Cubans for the challenge of self-government. The United States and Cuba were not ready for either task. Ambiguity dictated the American response and the Cubans were politically immature. During the four centuries of colonial rule, they had been given only a limited voice in local matters, and had been without a legislative body of their own until 1897. No sense of social responsibility had motivated either the masters or the colonials. In the absence of self-rule, the Cuban drive for autonomy relied on terror and violence. Further, the Cubans won their independence from Spain despite the protests of local property-holders who predicted mob rule. And some of the insurgents justified their fears. In turn, the Spaniards had sacked the island before departing. Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, the noted Cuban historian, spoke of a *colonia superviva* that survived the fall of the mother country to frustrate and undermine the dreams of the patriot fathers.

Formal relations between Americans and Cubans began during the era of American occupation of the island. Once the fighting was over, an American military government was established, first under General John R. Brooke and then Leonard Wood, a physician and colonel in Roosevelt's Rough Riders who had earlier supervised United States occupation in Oriente Province. An admiring American scholar declares that Wood "combined sound discipline with a lively imagination" while another compares him to Britain's Lord Curzon as a colonial administrator. A thorough housekeeper and a stern taskmaster, Wood demanded absolute obedience. His political and social accomplishments were impressive: a rural police force to replace the motley band of insurgents;

a reformed judiciary; a system of municipal government; honest and efficient tax collection; separation of Church and State; construction of highways, roads, and public works; and the eradication of disease.

Nevertheless, the occupation spelled trouble. Bickering and misunderstanding between Cubans and Americans flared immediately, for the Cubans quickly strained the patience of their "liberators." Atkins wrote that Americans judged Cubans an inferior and garrulous people who should be taught a lesson. "I hear that the soldiers are exasperated," he said, "and . . . waiting a chance to sail into the Cubans." He reported that many American army officers spoke "plainly about affairs here and are very much disgusted." One American commander concluded that the patriots were "a lot of degenerates, absolutely devoid of humor or gratitude." In the meantime, Atkins and other planters on the island—Spaniards, Americans, and wealthy Cubans—supported the occupation officials. However, the insurgents, who awaited the chance to govern themselves but saw their liberators settle down as conquerors, had their own interpretation. To them—to cite the diplomat, journalist, and gentleman scholar Manuel Márquez Sterling—Wood was the enemy and the occupation a blot on the history of Cuba. This judgment typifies Cuban historical and popular opinion that the evils of the occupation far outweighed the tangible benefits left behind by Wood and his collaborators.

[III]

The occupation over, the Americans left Cuba in native hands —but with a Platt Amendment that permitted Washington to intervene in local affairs. In any attempt to explain the rise

of Cuban nationalism, the story of the Platt Amendment supersedes all others. This Amendment, which the State Department and the Senate of the United States imposed on Cuba in 1902, severely curtailed the island's political and economic independence. Further, it encouraged a fear and distrust of the United States bordering on the pathological and transcending the limits of the traditional Spanish suspicion of American motives and policies. One must explore carefully the Cuban's interpretation of the Platt Amendment if only to understand his distrust of the United States and his dream of some day escaping American tutelage, an aspiration shared by his leaders from the patriots of independence to Castro.

Drafted by Elihu Root, Secretary of State in the cabinet of Theodore Roosevelt, the Platt Amendment dictated the norms of Cuban behavior considered proper by the American government. The intent, writes Hubert C. Herring, was "to make . . . [the Cuban Republic] a safe and tractable neighbor." The Amendment limited the authority of the Cuban government to negotiate international treaties and to borrow funds from abroad, and claimed coaling and naval stations on the island for the United States. In short, the Platt Amendment converted Cuba into an American protectorate. "Cuba consents," said one clause of the Amendment, "that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty." In other words, the Cubans were told in 1902 to incorporate in their constitution commitments which were diametrically opposed to the Teller Amendment of 1898, in which the American Congress had promised "to leave the government and control of the Island to its people."

The United States abrogated the Platt Amendment in 1934, but scores of Cuban intellectuals and their legion of followers, among them Fidel Castro, neither forgot the

humiliation of three decades nor forgave American policy-makers for the misdeeds of their predecessors. The crime of the Platt Amendment, said Miguel Angel Carbonell, was to instill in Cubans a national inferiority complex on the day their Republic was born.

The Platt-Teller contradiction illustrates the ambiguities of the American view of Cuba. United States policy-makers had been of two minds in the days of the Spanish-American War. They wanted an independent Cuba, but with strings attached: the island was free (the Teller promise), but it was also an American protectorate (the Platt Amendment). That contradictory interpretation represented the inevitable result of an historical pattern.

In turn, the Cubans themselves were far from unanimous in their desire for independence, or of one mind on what they wanted of their northern neighbor. In the beginning, they were divided on the question of whether they preferred freedom from Spain, greater local autonomy, or annexation by the United States. To the stubborn patriot, freedom could not be compromised. "Of Spain," to quote the irascible mulatto warrior, Antonio Maceo, "I expect nothing; for Spain has always scorned us; but neither do I hope for aid from the United States." He preferred to fight Spain alone rather than call on his powerful neighbor for help. But according to Edwin F. Atkins, a strong sentiment for annexation pervaded Cuba. In his opinion, the "better class Cubans feared independence," while Leonard Wood, Chief of the American occupation forces, reported that bankers, businessmen, professionals, and clerics demonstrated no enthusiasm for independence. According to Atkins, who is essentially correct in his interpretation, Cuban sentiment on the question of independence split along racial lines. The rebel chieftains who wanted total independence commanded the support of Negroes and mulattos, but a majority of the white property-owners, who looked to American rule for protection, opposed

the idea of total independence. In that conflict of opinion the United States was viewed as the potential savior of the whites by one Cuban group and therefore as the enemy of Afro-Cubans by those in the other political camp.

Annexationist sympathies eventually disappeared, yet some members of the old Cuban colonial élite never adopted the Republic as their own. Because annexationist sentiment had a strong appeal in the nineteenth century, it bears closer scrutiny—for the Cuban wish for union with North Americans added another dimension to the Cuban concept of the United States. The role that the United States should play in the island's affairs became an increasingly controversial question.

On the question of union, Cuban feeling reflected the interests of local groups. Before the victory of the North in the Civil War, the question often depended on the issue of slavery, since the native slavocracy was the island's most powerful voice until the late nineteenth century. As long as the Spanish masters permitted the lucrative exploitation of slavery, local planters had little inducement to espouse annexation. But attempts to limit profits, either by American tariff action or a Spanish decision to abolish slavery, rapidly aroused the planters' interest in an alliance with the United States. In the opinion of Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, author of the monumental *Azucar y Población en las Antillas*, pro-union sentiment reflected the planters' need to preserve slavery on the island in the face of Spanish threats to abolish it. Fearful of the impact free Negroes would have on government and society, the planters sought protection in union. Meanwhile, Cuban foes of slavery generally opposed union with the United States.

After Appomattox, the protagonists reversed positions. Because abolitionists and reformers turned northward for aid and sympathy, annexation became the goal of those who had opposed union before. Among them were many Cubans who,

after attending school in the United States, returned home determined to erect a second American paradise on the island. To prevent the growth of this pro-union attitude among students, Spain even banned study in the United States. But annexationist feeling was not confined to the young. Its supporters included a number of notable precursors of independence: Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros, Narciso López and, momentarily, Estrada Palma.

Annexationist sentiment expressed the psychology of a people at odds with their colonial masters, but lacking a clear sense of nationality, of *patria* or *Cubanidad*. True, the annexationist movement was the labor of a relatively small and favored group which, on the whole, lacked ties with the majority of the population. But beyond that, as Guerra y Sánchez concluded, the desire for union with the United States also reflected a strong sense of "national inferiority." Bereft of self-confidence, the Cuban worshipped foreign idols, asking outsiders to provide his economic well-being, his government, and even his culture.

That plea for union with the United States was of native origin, but the Cuban ultimately came to resent the idea and the god he had wooed. The truth could not be expunged from Cuban history, but it was inevitable that intellectuals should later decry that chapter in their country's history. For the ghost of the annexationist movement survived to dampen national ardor long after the dream of annexation faded as a serious alternative. In attempting to live down the past by denouncing the annexationist sentiment of his forefathers, the Cuban nationalist eventually condemned not only his own people but Americans as well.

The role of the United States was more than that of an innocent bystander in the drama then unfolding. In the opinion of Enrique José Varona, the patriot philosopher who joined José Martí in the quest for independence and who became the intellectual mentor of an entire generation, Cuba

had been "the obsession of American statesmen" ever since the days when the territorial limits of the United States had reached the banks of the Mississippi River. With New Orleans in their hands and a stake in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, American diplomats began to deal with the Cuban question as if it were a domestic matter. In their drive for independence, therefore, Cubans had to recognize that the United States and not Spain alone had an interest in their plans for the future. Cuban historians stress that this interest became self-evident after the United States blocked the Mexican-Colombian project to free Cuba in 1823.

Prior to that time, Cubans had looked to Spain and, on occasion, to their sister Spanish-American republics for a settlement of their political status. After the United States interposed itself, informing the patriots that it expected them to live under Spanish tutelage, the insurgents concluded that the answer to Cuba's future could be found only in Washington. But their attempts to win freedom there brought no positive results until the South was defeated in the Civil War. American policy favored Spanish rule on the island, or a union of Cuba with the United States. The decision to work for a settlement of Cuba's political status through the United States proved judicious only after Washington accepted the idea of a free Cuba, envisaged in terms of a protectorate and a commercial alliance. But again, to cite Varona, the United States held the trump cards, a fact no Cuban could ignore.

It should not be concluded, however, that Cuban reactions to American intervention in the battle against Spain were consistent. They veered in unpredictable ways, especially in the years immediately following independence. Cuban attitudes ranged from moral approval of intervention to violent, outraged rejection of the American role in 1898.

In general, Cuban attitudes reflected the political beliefs of the time. Conservatives frequently expressed approval of American military intervention in 1898, while liberals were

hostile. But the exceptions make this generalization risky. Ultimately, however, pro-interventionist sentiment virtually disappeared and, regardless of politics, Cubans rarely defended the American intervention of 1898.

Cuban opinion on the Platt Amendment offered no unanimity of thought, for that opinion embodied not merely condemnation of American intervention in 1898, but diverse Cuban views on the importance of independent, domestic leadership. Conservative businessmen, sugar planters, and those Spaniards who remained in Cuba after 1898, most of whom favored close ties with their neighbor to the north, generally took a dim view of the concept of total independence for Cuba. The fall of the Estrada Palma administration in 1906 led these Cubans to advocate a strong American supervisory role in Cuba. In their opinion, Cubans lacked the preparation for self-government—as the collapse of the Estrada Palma administration demonstrated. To avoid costly and bloody civil strife, Cuba needed American advice and supervision. Further, the Platt Amendment's stress on law and order encouraged foreign investment, without which, they believed, there was no bright future for Cuba. Peace, stability, and economic development came in a capsule, with the Platt Amendment. Thus, in terms of practical politics, the Conservative Party voiced less criticism of the Platt Amendment than the Liberal Party, which was usually hostile. But given the "apolitical" nature of local politics, opinion on the Platt Amendment did not always mirror party loyalties.

In a similar manner, intellectual opinion on the Platt Amendment and on American foreign policy for Cuba ranged from acceptance to ambivalence to outright hostility. Few Cuban intellectuals defended this policy, but some fatalistically accepted the inevitability of America's role in Cuba. Enrique José Varona even convinced himself that Cubans should be grateful to their liberators because American sol-

diers had fought to break the shackles that bound the island to tyranny. A peaceful, orderly, and progressive Cuba, the product of commercial and diplomatic ties with the United States, would mean the triumph of American political ideals on the island. True, said Varona, the United States occupied Cuba, but the occupation originated in the inability of the Cubans to vanquish Spain alone. In addition, American intervention prevented the Spaniards from laying waste the island and thus saved Cuba for civilization. In Varona's opinion, the Americans arrived in Cuba as the spokesmen for Cuban independence and, after Cuban independence was won, departed from the island. As a reward for their contribution and their interest, Americans deserved a place in the Cuban constitution: logic demanded that they impose a Platt Amendment. To deny the American stake in Cuba or to think of Cuba as an isolated island in a far-off corner of the world was unrealistic. Cubans must embrace American tutelage willingly and happily, for the United States was their benefactor. In turn, the United States had a moral obligation to guarantee the peace and progress of Cuba. Since liberty and justice represented the goals of both peoples, the Platt Amendment, which promised to make the goals a reality, discouraged conflict between the two countries.

Opposed to Varona's interpretation was a view which laid the blame for American intervention on the doorstep of those Cubans who failed to live up to their share of the bargain. In the opinion of the veteran diplomat, Cosme de la Torriente, local malpractices compelled the United States to invoke the Platt Amendment improperly—responsibility for "prostitution" of the Amendment rested on Cuban shoulders.

At another extreme stood popular opinion of the Platt Amendment. To the majority of Cubans, the Amendment was the *coyunda insoportable*—the yoke of colonialism. The phrase expressed all the rancor and bitterness of a suppressed people. Through no choice of their own, Cubans had lost the

right to rule themselves. America had cast itself in the role of tutor, and its interference, charged historian Herminio Portell-Vilá, inevitably favored weak, corrupt, and tyrannical Cuban regimes, never the popular will. No matter what went awry, Cuban politicians could always blame the United States. Had Cubans been left to their own devices, they could have recognized their own mistakes and worked to create a free and independent society.

Portell-Vilá and other Cuban historians denied that the chronic political problems of the pre-1934 era were uniquely Cuban, claiming they were common to all emerging nations —even to the America of George Washington's time, as the events of the Whiskey Rebellion demonstrated. Cuba's difficulties furnished proof not of incapacity to govern but of political inexperience, which only self-rule could provide. Nor was revolution, that cardinal sin to the fathers of the Platt Amendment, a subversive idea, for, given the character of Cuban politics, revolution represented the essence of democracy. In a land where elections meant little, how were the people to change their government? To deny the right of revolution was to build a wall between the politicians and the people, blocking the possibility of achieving a free society.

The Platt doctrine ignored that truth, while at the same time offering the Cubans a facile way out of their domestic difficulties. But reliance on the United States eventually engendered among Cubans a loss of faith in their Republic and in their own nationality. As the poet and critic Felix Lizaso noted, Cubans could not resolve their own problems without fear of outside interference. Thus the ideal of nationality was weakened and corrupted by the self-indulgent nature of politics and the tarnished reputation that captive institutions acquired in the popular mind. Anything that favored the propagation of the ideal of nationality, of *Cubanidad*, which by implication refuted the Platt doctrine, Cuban intellectuals judged patriotic. The net effect of United States

interventionist diplomacy was moral and psychological. The Cubans saw themselves as a captive people, Lizaso concluded, and the Platt Amendment as a limitation on their liberty. That, and not the actual loss of political rights, was the crux of the problem.

The State Department's proclivity to define loosely the Platt Amendment aggravated the situation. The Americans, Cuban critics charged, converted a pledge to safeguard local institutions into a policy to protect American investment—from the Cubans themselves and from outside competition. If intervention was indeed inevitable, said these Cubans, the United States could at least obey the letter of its own commitment which, as defined by Elihu Root, was "not synonymous with intermeddling or interference with the affairs of the Cuban government." To cite the sociologist-historian Fernando Ortiz, whose *Contrapunto Cubano del Tabaco y del Azucar* in English translation is read widely in the United States, the commitment did not endorse illegitimate, incompetent, and sanguinary government in Cuba.

At no time was the intensity of Cuban resentment of American diplomacy exhibited more fully than during the Constitutional Convention of 1901, which debated whether to include the Platt Amendment in the national charter. Despite Washington's instructions, which warned the Cuban delegates that their only choice was to endorse the Platt Amendment, a prolonged and acrimonious struggle split the delegates into two camps. Neither group backed the Amendment, but the majority recognized that Cuba must either bow to the American fiat and thereby win limited independence, or reject it and continue under foreign military rule. The minority was prepared to fight on until "victory or death."

In the end the Cubans ratified the Platt Amendment because no alternative existed, but an agonizing debate and two votes were necessary before the inevitable prevailed. The first vote carried by a majority of one (fifteen to fourteen)

with two delegates absent. Cuban historians believe that the absent members planned to cast negative votes, but did not want to lend their names to the tragic farce. So, while grown men, many with tears in their eyes, voted in favor, others bearing some of Cuba's most illustrious names cast negative votes. After the vote one delegate, General José Lacret, enshrined his name in Cuban history by shouting: "Cuba is dead; we are enslaved forever"—a sentiment that undoubtedly expressed popular feeling. But worse was still to come; for the Cubans modified the Platt Amendment before voting and hedged on their promise to accept it. Washington promptly rejected their version and compelled them to meet again. This time, by a vote of sixteen to eleven, the Platt Amendment was added to the Cuban Constitution.

No Cuban nationalist has ever forgotten that humiliation. On the eve of independence, the Cuban had confronted truth: in theory he was a free man, but in practice he was a vassal of the United States. It was out of such experiences that Cuban attitudes toward the United States evolved.

The Cuban had to live with the Platt Amendment for three decades. The debate over the Platt Amendment plagued politics until 1933, for all political parties took a stand on the doctrine. In his campaign against Estrada Palma in 1901, General Bartolomé Maso had privately condemned the doctrine but dared not make his views public, fearing, according to some Cuban historians, American reprisals. To combat the Platt Amendment Cubans founded a number of organizations. In 1909 a Liga Antiplatista was established in Havana; the Sociedad Cubana del Derecho Internacional, which dated from 1915, carried on an unrelenting campaign against the doctrine. These were the forerunners of many groups that in one way or another attacked "the humiliation of 1901."

Abroad, the Platt Amendment dogged the Cuban diplomat's footsteps, a constant reminder of his country's colonial status. The Platt Amendment was particularly galling to Cuban

pride at international gatherings. In the eyes of foreign diplomats, the politician-diplomat Carlos Márquez Sterling asserted, Cubans were only half-independent, citizens of a country with limited rights. To no one's surprise, therefore, Cuban diplomats worked diligently to erase this blot on their nation and, in so doing, invented ingenious interpretations to circumvent the Platt dictum. That of the senator and jurist José Manuel Cortina, which defined the Platt Amendment as "contractual" in character, deserves special attention.

Cortina presented his thesis in a pamphlet entitled *Ideas Internacionales de Cuba,* in which he rejected the assumption that to accept the Platt Amendment as a bilateral contract was to formalize Cuba's dependent status. The reverse was true, he said: since the Amendment was an international agreement sanctioned by the legislative bodies of two countries, to endorse it was to guarantee and strengthen the island's independence. Cortina's purpose was to invert the terms of the Platt Amendment, to give international recognition to the fact that any actions which infringed upon or destroyed the independence of Cuba were based on a false interpretation of the doctrine. If the goal of the contract was to maintain Cuban independence, and if Cuba had endorsed the doctrine with that understanding, violation of that independence was tantamount to violation of the Amendment.

Cortina's ingenious interpretation was but one of numerous attempts to circumvent the Platt Amendment. That the influential Senator, a spokesman for the sugar industry which stood to gain from the industry's ties with the United States, should have joined the critics was no surprise to students of Cuban affairs, for the Platt Amendment, by restricting sovereignty, created a psychological problem felt deeply by every Cuban, regardless of his politics. To be free of the Platt Amendment and thereby of the United States was the national dream. The poet Enrique Hernández Miyares expressed that sentiment when he wrote:

Upon my return from distant shores
With my saddened soul in mourning,
Solicitously I looked for my flag . . .
And saw another flying beside it!
Where is my Cuban flag,
The most beautiful flag of all?
This morning I saw it from the ship,
And I have never seen a more sorrowful thing!

* * * * * * *

Although I see it flutter sadly and limply,
I live for the day when the sun, in all its brilliance,
Will illuminate it alone—alone—
On the plains, on the seas and on the peaks of mountains!

The Platt Amendment left an indelible imprint on the Cuban mind. From the day it was imposed on Cuba, no Cuban was free to choose the path of his country's future. He felt himself bound to the United States, a conviction that survived even the abrogation of the doctrine. Whether justified or not, he convinced himself that he lived at the mercy of his powerful neighbor. As the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz has noted in *El Deber Norteamericano,* the Cuban found himself irresistibly drawn to the subject of the island's ties to the United States, and to what should or could be done to alter or improve them.

Individual responses emerged in a kaleidoscopic pattern, said Ortiz. Some Cubans attempted to get Washington to modify its policies, others wooed United States investors in order to obtain the material benefits of American progress, while others sought a treaty of commercial reciprocity. Cubans of different sympathies joined hands with American financial interests to exploit their fellow-Cubans—

spending millions of dollars on propaganda to mask their motives. Some tried to persuade American intellectuals of the need to support Cuba's right to self-determination. Others asked Washington to intervene diplomatically or militarily to prevent or to uphold political change in their homeland. In summary, said Ortiz, Cubans openly or indirectly accepted American tutelage, uncompromisingly opposed that tutelage, or learned to live with it without losing their sense of personal dignity or engaging in polemical denunciations —making, therefore, the best of a bad situation.

[IV]

Whether by accident or design, during the Platt era Cuba fell into the hands of politicians friendly to America. Estrada Palma, the first president of Cuba and a long-time resident of the United States, is remembered by critics for his desire that Americans "guarantee" the internal peace of his country. A politician of the Moderate Party, Estrada Palma won the presidency with the support of the well-to-do in his campaign against General Maso, a Liberal and the popular choice. As President, he acquiesced to American demands for naval and coaling stations, but fortunately for Cubans, the United States occupied only Guantánamo. That base alone, nevertheless, kept alive friction between the two countries.

Estrada Palma enjoyed three favorable presidential years, then plunged himself and the United States into difficulties. Honest and well-intentioned but vain and ambitious, he re-elected himself in 1906 despite protests of the Liberal opposition. Civil strife erupted immediately, but Estrada

Palma refused to compromise, confident that the Americans would rush to his rescue. Unable to quell the Liberal revolt that burst out, he invoked the Platt Amendment and asked the United States to intervene. President Theodore Roosevelt hesitated momentarily but, when Estrada Palma reported that rebels threatened to burn and pillage foreign property, sent troops to Cuba. Estrada Palma then resigned, leaving Roosevelt to solve the problem. So began the years of intervention and the use of American troops as an alternative to confronting issues which, if handled properly, might have led to political stability.

To restore peace and order, Roosevelt sent William Howard Taft, his Secretary of War and a presidential hopeful, who arrived in Havana in September 1906 and left early in October—delighted to have rid himself of the Cuban problem with his political reputation still intact. His successor was Charles E. Magoon, a midwestern city politician who spoke no Spanish and who ran Cuba as if it were Chicago. A tireless worker who wanted to please, Magoon granted "hundreds of petitions a day, entertained lavishly, and ironically," remarks Hudson Strode in his *Pageant of Cuba,* "achieved a contemptible reputation which very nearly wiped out the excellent impression of American administration. . . ." Cubans remember Magoon for his offers of well-paying jobs with nominal duties—the notorious *botellas,* "nursing bottles full of rich milk for the political babies." He launched a gigantic public works program for the unemployed and built 600 kilometers of roads—more than the Spaniards had constructed in four centuries—but Cuban and foreign entrepreneurs made immense fortunes on public-works contracts.

International difficulties between the United States and Cuba were in the embryonic stage. From 1909 when Magoon left the island in the care of the Liberals, until 1933 when the structure assembled in the days of the Platt Amendment

collapsed temporarily, the United States acted as the arbiter of Cuban affairs. In 1912 American troops helped to quell an uprising in Cuba—over the protests of President José Miguel Gómez; and four years later American troops again landed in Cuba—in answer to a plea from President Mario García Menocal (1912–20), who had studied in American schools, earned a degree in engineering from Cornell University, and managed the largest of the Cuban-American Sugar Company properties. García Menocal's frauds in the 1920 election compelled Washington to intervene once more and to appoint a State Department adviser for the incoming Cuban administration.

President Alfredo Zayas (1920–24) had to contend with General Enoch Crowder, sent by the Woodrow Wilson administration to unravel the Cuban tangle. Crowder told Zayas what to spend, lectured him on the necessity for public honesty, and selected an "honest cabinet" for him. Shorn of real authority, Zayas found himself depicted in a Cuban newspaper cartoon, pen in hand, asking: "Which name shall I sign, Crowder or Zayas?" The Cubans, meanwhile, split into groups of "interventionists" and "noninterventionists." Interventionists—the minority—believed the transformation of Cuba's structure would come only with American advice and consent, while noninterventionists—vociferous critics of the Platt Amendment—opposed Crowder and condemned American "meddling" in Cuban affairs. Faced with a financial crisis brought on by the collapse of the sugar bonanza, Crowder solved Cuba's difficulties by borrowing from New York banks. Ultimately, Zayas shook himself free of his protector, but not of the public debt left behind by his policies.

Until 1933 American policy under the Platt Amendment was relatively unhindered in Cuba, for few of the Cuban leaders or parties, after all, had really voiced the sentiments of the people. The State Department, its representatives in

Cuba, and American troops and warships had usually arbitrated quarrels between rival bands of politicians. The American interventions had wounded the national pride of a minority of Cubans, albeit the most literate and public-minded; but the net effect of two decades of such practices was to encourage the growth of a sense of nationalism among a larger and larger segment of the population. By the late 1920's the people disturbed by the role of American diplomacy in Cuban affairs which, in their opinion, had prostituted local politics, included not merely intellectuals and the militant nationalists of the past but students, professional men from socially prominent families, and countless members of clandestine labor organizations. Strong critics of the Platt Amendment, the new nationalists demanded not only the transformation of Cuban society, but a radical alteration in the island's ties with the United States. Nothing less would satisfy their aspirations.

American policy under the Platt Amendment, more than any other single factor, was responsible for both the rise of the new nationalism and for much of its anti-American tenor. The era of limited Cuban protest to intervention, sanctioned by the Platt Amendment, ended with the struggle against the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado, the man elected to succeed Zayas. A protector of American investment in Cuba, Machado received both diplomatic and financial support from the United States until his downfall in 1933.