

= Ostend Manifesto =

The Ostend Manifesto , aka Ostend Circular , was a document written in 1854 that described the rationale for the United States to purchase Cuba from Spain while implying that the U.S. should declare war if Spain refused . Cuba 's annexation had long been a goal of U.S. slaveholding expansionists , and was supported by a faction in Cuba itself . At the national level , American leaders had been satisfied to have the island remain in weak Spanish hands so long as it did not pass to a stronger power such as Britain or France . The Ostend Manifesto proposed a shift in foreign policy , justifying the use of force to seize Cuba in the name of national security . It resulted from debates over slavery in the United States , Manifest Destiny , and the Monroe Doctrine , as slaveholders sought new territory for slavery 's expansion .

During the administration of President Franklin Pierce , a pro @-@ Southern Democrat , Southern expansionists called for acquiring Cuba as a slave state , but the breakout of violence following the Kansas ? Nebraska Act left the administration unsure of how to proceed . At the suggestion of Secretary of State William L. Marcy , American ministers in Europe ? Pierre Soulé for Spain , James Buchanan for Great Britain , and John Y. Mason for France ? met to discuss strategy related to an acquisition of Cuba . They met secretly at Ostend , Belgium , and drafted a dispatch at Aix @-@ la @-@ Chapelle . The document was sent to Washington in October 1854 , outlining why a purchase of Cuba would be beneficial to each of the nations and declaring that the U.S. would be " justified in wresting " the island from Spanish hands if Spain refused to sell . To Marcy 's chagrin , Soulé made no secret of the meetings , causing unwanted publicity in both Europe and the U.S. The administration was finally forced to publish the contents of the dispatch , which caused it irreparable damage .

The dispatch was published as demanded by the House of Representatives . Dubbed the " Ostend Manifesto " , it was immediately denounced in both the Northern states and Europe . The Pierce administration suffered a significant setback , and the manifesto became a rallying cry for anti @-@ slavery Northerners . The question of Cuba 's annexation was effectively set aside until the late 19th century , when support grew for Cuban independence from Spain .

= = Historical context = =

Located 90 miles ( 140 km ) off the coast of Florida , Cuba had been discussed as a subject for annexation in several presidential administrations . Presidents John Quincy Adams and Thomas Jefferson expressed great interest in Cuba , with Adams observing during his Secretary of State tenure that it had " become an object of transcendent importance to the commercial and political interests of our Union " . He later described Cuba and Puerto Rico as " natural appendages to the North American continent " ? the former 's annexation was " indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself . " As the Spanish Empire had lost much of its power , a no @-@ transfer policy began with Jefferson whereby the U.S. respected Spanish sovereignty , considering the island 's eventual absorption inevitable . The U.S. simply wanted to ensure that control did not pass to a stronger power such as Britain or France .

Cuba was of special importance to Southern Democrats , who believed their economic and political interests would be best served by the admission of another slave state to the Union . The existence of slavery in Cuba , the island 's plantation economy based on sugar , and its geographical location predisposed it to Southern influence ; its admission would greatly strengthen the position of Southern slaveholders , whose way of life was under fire from Northern abolitionists . Whereas immigration to Northern industrial centers had resulted in Northern control of the population @-@ based House of Representatives , Southern politicians sought to maintain the fragile balance of power in the Senate , where each state received equal representation . As slavery @-@ free Western states were admitted , Southern politicians increasingly looked to Cuba as the next slave state . If Cuba were admitted to the Union as a single state , the island would have sent two senators and nine representatives to Washington .

In the Democratic Party , the debate over the continued expansion of the United States centered on

how quickly , rather than whether , to expand . Radical expansionists and the Young America movement were quickly gaining traction by 1848 , and a debate about whether to annex the Yucatán portion of Mexico that year included significant discussion of Cuba . Even John C. Calhoun , described as a reluctant expansionist who strongly disagreed with intervention on the basis of the Monroe Doctrine , concurred that " it is indispensable to the safety of the United States that this island should not be in certain hands . " likely referring to Britain .

In light of a Cuban uprising , President James K. Polk refused solicitations from filibuster backer John L. O'Sullivan and stated his belief that any acquisition of the island must be an " amicable purchase . " Under orders from Polk , Secretary of State James Buchanan prepared an offer of \$ 100 million , but " sooner than see [ Cuba ] transferred to any power , [ Spanish officials ] would prefer seeing it sunk into the ocean . " The Whig administrations of presidents Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore did not pursue the matter and took a harsher stand against filibusters as Venezuelan Narciso Lopez , with federal troops intercepting several expeditions bound for Cuba . When Franklin Pierce took office in 1853 , however , he was committed to Cuba 's annexation .

= = The Pierce administration = =

At Pierce 's inauguration , he stated , " The policy of my Administration will not be controlled by any timid forebodings of evil from expansion . " While slavery was not the stated goal nor Cuba mentioned by name , the antebellum makeup of his party required the Northerner to appeal to Southern interests , so he favored the annexation of Cuba as a slave state . To this end , he appointed expansionists to diplomatic posts throughout Europe , notably sending Pierre Soulé , an outspoken proponent of Cuban annexation , as United States Minister to Spain . The Northerners in his cabinet were fellow doughfaces ( Northerners with Southern sympathies ) such as Buchanan , who was made Minister to Great Britain after a failed bid for the presidency at the Democratic National Convention , and Secretary of State William L. Marcy , whose appointment was also an attempt to placate the " Old Fogies . " This was the term for the wing of the party that favored slow , cautious expansion .

In March 1854 , the steamer Black Warrior stopped at the Cuban port of Havana on a regular trading route from New York City to Mobile , Alabama . When it failed to provide a cargo manifest , Cuban officials seized the ship , its cargo , and its crew . The so @-@ called Black Warrior Affair was viewed by Congress as a violation of American rights ; a hollow ultimatum issued by Soulé to the Spanish to return the ship served only to strain relations , and he was barred from discussing Cuba 's acquisition for nearly a year . While the matter was resolved peacefully , it fueled the flames of Southern expansionism .

Meanwhile , the doctrine of Manifest Destiny had become increasingly sectionalized as the decade progressed . While there were still Northerners who believed the United States should dominate the continent , most were opposed to Cuba 's annexation , particularly as a slave state . Southern @-@ backed filibusters , including Narciso López , had failed repeatedly since 1849 to 1851 to overthrow the colonial government despite considerable support among the Cuban people for independence , and a series of reforms on the island made Southerners apprehensive that slavery would be abolished . They believed that Cuba would be " Africanized , " as the majority of the population were slaves , and they had seen the Republic of Haiti established by former slaves . The notion of a pro @-@ slavery invasion by the U.S. was rejected in light of the controversy over the Kansas ? Nebraska Act . During internal discussions , supporters of gaining Cuba decided that a purchase or intervention in the name of national security was the most acceptable method of acquisition .

= = Writing the Manifesto = =

Marcy suggested Soulé confer with Buchanan and John Y. Mason , Minister to France , on U.S. policy toward Cuba . He had previously written to Soulé that , if Cuba 's purchase could not be negotiated , " you will then direct your effort to the next desirable object , which is to detach that island from the Spanish dominion and from all dependence on any European power " ? words Soulé

may have adapted to fit his own agenda . Authors David Potter and Lars Schoultz both note the considerable ambiguity in Marcy 's cryptic words , and Samuel Bemis suggests he may have referred to Cuban independence , but acknowledges it is impossible to know Marcy 's true intent . In any case , Marcy had also written in June that the administration had abandoned thoughts of declaring war over Cuba . But Robert May writes , " the instructions for the conference had been so vague , and so many of Marcy 's letters to Soulé since the Black Warrior incident had been bellicose , that the ministers misread the administration 's intent . "

After a minor disagreement about their meeting site , the three American diplomats met in Ostend , Belgium from October 9 ? 11 , 1854 , then adjourned to Aix @-@ la @-@ Chapelle for a week to prepare a report of the proceedings . The resulting dispatch , which would come to be known as the Ostend Manifesto , declared that " Cuba is as necessary to the North American republic as any of its present members , and that it belongs naturally to that great family of states of which the Union is the Providential Nursery " .

Prominent among the reasons for annexation outlined in the manifesto were fears of a possible slave revolt in Cuba parallel to the Haitian Revolution ( 1791 ? 1804 ) in the absence of U.S. intervention . The Manifesto urged against inaction on the Cuban question , warning ,

" We should , however , be recreant to our duty , be unworthy of our gallant forefathers , and commit base treason against our posterity , should we permit Cuba to be Africanized and become a second St. Domingo ( Haiti ) , with all its attendant horrors to the white race , and suffer the flames to extend to our own neighboring shores , seriously to endanger or actually to consume the fair fabric of our Union . "

Racial fears , largely spread by Spain , raised tension and anxiety in the U.S. over a potential black uprising on the island that could " spread like wildfire " to the southern U.S. The Manifesto stated that the U.S. would be " justified in wresting " Cuba from Spain if the colonial power refused to sell it .

Soulé was a former U.S. Senator from Louisiana and member of the Young America movement , who sought a realization of American influence in the Caribbean and Central America . He is credited as the primary architect of the policy expressed in the Ostend Manifesto . The experienced and cautious Buchanan is believed to have written the document and moderated Soulé 's aggressive tone . Soulé highly favored expansion of Southern influence outside the current Union of States . His belief in Manifest Destiny led him to prophesy " absorption of the entire continent and its island appendages " by the U.S. Mason 's Virginian roots predisposed him to the sentiments expressed in the document , but he later regretted his actions . Buchanan 's exact motivations remain unclear despite his expansionist tendencies , but it has been suggested that he was seduced by visions of the presidency , which he would go on to win in 1856 . One historian concluded in 1893 , " When we take into account the characteristics of the three men we can hardly resist the conclusion that Soulé , as he afterwards intimated , twisted his colleagues round his finger . "

To Marcy 's chagrin , the flamboyant Soulé made no secret of the meetings . The press in both Europe and the U.S. were well aware of the proceedings if not their outcome , but were preoccupied with wars and midterm elections . In the latter case , the Democratic Party became a minority in the United States Congress , and editorials continued to chide the Pierce administration for its secrecy . At least one newspaper , the New York Herald , published what Brown calls " reports that came so close to the truth of the decisions at Ostend that the President feared they were based on leaks , as indeed they may have been " . Pierce feared the political repercussions of confirming such rumors , and he did not acknowledge them in his State of the Union address at the end of 1854 . The administration 's opponents in the House of Representatives called for the document 's release , and it was published in full four months after being written .

= = Fallout = =

When the document was published , Northerners were outraged by what they considered a Southern attempt to extend slavery . American free @-@ soilers , recently angered by the strengthened Fugitive Slave Law ( passed as part of the Compromise of 1850 and requiring officials

of free states to cooperate in the return of slaves ) , decried as unconstitutional what Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune labeled " The Manifesto of the Brigands . " During the period of Bleeding Kansas , as anti- and pro @-@ slavery supporters fought for control of the state , the Ostend Manifesto served as a rallying cry for the opponents of the Slave Power . The incident was one of many factors that gave rise to the Republican Party , and the manifesto was criticized in the Party 's first platform in 1856 as following a " highwayman 's " philosophy of " might makes right . " But , the movement to annex Cuba did not fully end until after the American Civil War .

The Pierce Administration was irreparably damaged by the incident . Pierce had been highly sympathetic to the Southern cause , and the controversy over the Ostend Manifesto contributed to the splintering of the Democratic Party . Internationally , it was seen as a threat to Spain and to imperial power across Europe . It was quickly denounced by national governments in Madrid , London , and Paris . To preserve what favorable relations the administration had left , Soulé was ordered to cease discussion of Cuba ; he promptly resigned . The backlash from the Ostend Manifesto caused Pierce to abandon expansionist plans . It has been described as part of a series of " gratuitous conflicts ... that cost more than they were worth " for Southern interests intent on maintaining the institution of slavery .

Buchanan was easily elected President in 1856 . Although he remained committed to Cuban annexation , he was hindered by popular opposition and the growing sectional conflict . It was not until thirty years after the Civil War that the so @-@ called Cuban Question again came to national prominence .