José Martí

Martí

MARTYR OF CUBAN INDEPENDENCE

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He wanted to say good-by to his mother before his departure. He sent Martín Herrera to bring her to him at Key West. But Doña Leonor could not go. Almost blind, she was about to be operated on at that very time. On November 18, when Martí was about to return to New York, he wrote from Key West to her doctor, an old schoolmate:

"Take good care of her for me, for now, you see, she has no son. The son that nature gave her is using the last years of his life in an effort to save his greater mother."

During those final moments difficulties arose at every step, events accumulated, things were done and a moment later seemed to be undone. Financial difficulties increased. Everything cost twice the estimated sum, and they had only enough resources for the expenses predicted. In order to satisfy demands, allay suspicions and face unjust attacks he could not have a moment of calm. Instructions were put into final form. A plan was formulated and communicated to the Island through Juan Gualberto Gómez, a plan which did not reveal the three expeditions in preparation but was "related with it in regard to timing and places." It was accepted according to a declaration signed by Collazo, in the name of the province of Oriente, Mayía Rodríguez representing Gómez, and Martí.

The *Amadís* would sail to meet Maceo, carrying machinery and workmen for an imaginary Dr. Mantell of Santiago de Cuba. John Mantell, his son, who was none other than Manuel Mantilla, would be on board, as would Patricio Corona, as harbor pilot, with sufficient money to meet emergencies. As soon as the boat appeared it would take on five or six friends of Mr. Mantell and continue its journey. That was how Martí planned Maceo's expedition. In order to convey Máximo Gómez, another boat was prepared on which Martí would go, accompanied by Mayía Rodríguez. After they left a third ship would go to Las Villas, with exactly the same preparations and resources. Serafín Sánchez would be in charge of this expedition.

Martí had not revealed the details of these preparations to anyone. His dealings with Mr. Borden, who owned a dock in Fernandina, Florida. and could freight the ships

without arousing suspicion, were kept in absolute secrecy. The time came for the ships to be handed over to the leaders designated by the respective groups. By a separate route the arms and munitions arrived in cars freighted up to Mr. Borden's own dock. No one could suspect a failure. Those were extraordinarily tense moments for Martí.

Patricio Corona was now informed about the expedition. Serafín Sánchez had designated a colonel of the last war, Fernando López de Queralta, to take charge of his ship. Manuel Mantilla and Patricio Corona were ready to leave, for the Lagonda was to sail first because of having farther to go, to Costa Rica. López de Queralta received his instructions without making any objections. All documents were in legal form. The ship was to pick up workers in the Antilles and take them to a port which would be indicated. On board, in a suitable place, a thousand pesos would be handed over to the captain in order that he take them to the coasts of Cuba. Only in the event of his refusal would they resort to force. At the last minute López de Queralta raised objections and refused to undertake the voyage under the conditions agreed upon. In conversation with the captain of a ship he revealed the true object of the expedition. Martí discovered the betrayal but tried to render it ineffective. He visited the ship brokers' office, conducted there by López de Queralta. He realized then, because the conversation was so public, that the plan was discovered. At the same time that this was taking place López de Queralta had sent his materiel to the indicated warehouse and dock declaring the shipment as military articles.

When the object of freighting the ships was revealed, the ship brokers complained to the government in Washington, and the plan was soon divulged. The *Lagonda,* already loaded at Fernandina, received an order for embargo and search. An order for confiscation was issued to the *Amadís* and the *Baracoa,* declared suspicious.

It was indeed a surprise for the representative of the Spanish government. It was also a surprise for the Cubans on the Island and the emigrants. The Washington representative of the Spanish Government could hardly recover

from his astonishment. He could never have conceived that an undertaking of such magnitude could be carried out by the Cubans with such efficiency and secrecy.

Martí hid in the home of Dr. Ramón Miranda, Quesada's brother-in-law, for several days in January, eluding the reporters who were looking for him everywhere in pursuit of sensational information.

21. "Now My Time Has Come"

The very secrecy with which Martí had proceeded made his position more difficult in the eyes of those who, out of prudence or discipline, had placed themselves under his orders without knowing the plans. When Mayía Rodríguez and Enrique Collazo, in hiding in a hotel in Jacksonville while they waited for the *Lagonda,* on which they were to sail, received news of the failure, they regretted bitterly their ignorance of the real state of the conspiracy, for they had limited themselves to hearing only what Martí told them, which was very little. Martí was staying at the Travellers' Hotel, in the same city, with another group of Cubans. With the intention of asking him for an explanation, Mayía and Collazo left their hotel, accompanied by Charles Hernández, the bearer of the news.

They found Martí seized with an extraordinary nervous excitement. Ceaselessly he repeated the same words: "It is not my fault! It is not my fault!" When Collazo and Mayía entered, the latter with a changed, hard expression, they realized that something extraordinary had happened. Those who were going to demand an explanation soon gave him back their loyalty and faith.

When Martí felt calmer, he spoke of the impossibility of abandoning the enterprise which had aroused such hopes. Only the means had changed.

The failure of the Fernandina plan had an unexpected effect on the Island. It revealed a vast movement which

awoke the sleepers, restored faith to the incredulous and made everyone reflect that the Cuban war was not only imminent, it was a powerful attack. The Junta in Havana, meeting with Juan Gualberto Gómez, received at that moment the news divulged by the American press and the cable. General Julio Sanguily, who belonged to the Junta but did not have sufficient confidence in the work Martí was doing, had a real surprise. He rose from his seat and uttered words that revealed to his fellow conspirators how much he had doubted Martí until that moment, and how firmly he believed in his work from then on. All the Cubans who had thought about the independence of their country reacted the same way to a greater or lesser extent.

On January 17 when his work crumbled before his eyes, Martí was already thinking of renewing his efforts in a different direction. The work undone was such that it would serve to further unity and to increase public respect. Perhaps, outside of the material losses, the worst thing was the disappearance of the coordination of efforts which he had obtained, between the movement on the Island and external aid. It was no longer possible to subordinate the movements in Cuba to those from outside, and the revolution was free to arise by itself in Cuba without being shackled by the wait which it had had thus far. He hastened to promote coordination again without the loss of any aid, with the speed and precision which the frustrated movement had demonstrated and with the help of the emigrants, who gave him evidence of their confidence and loyalty.

On January 29, having saved as much as it was possible to save, he drew up in New York the call to arms which the impatient Island demanded. Mayía Rodríguez and Enrique Collazo signed the document with Martí. The authorization demanded that the actions of the regions involved be simultaneous, or as nearly so as possible. Any uprising in Occidente that did not take place at the same time as those in Oriente was considered dangerous, and it should be planned as closely in accord as possible with Camagüey and Las Villas. The declaration also assured immediate, continual outside aid. With this order Quesada left for Key West. He was to see that it reached Juan Gualberto Gómez. He had another

charge: that of taking up a new, indispensable collection in order to cover the expense (two thousand pesos) of the trip which Martí and Gómez had now decided to make from Santo Domingo to Cuba. Quesada bore letters from Martí to Figueredo, Poyo, Serafín Sánchez, Gato, and Paulina and Ruperto Pedroso, Martí's Negro friends. Now the time for sacrifice was near, and Martí asked them to make it, to give their house to the cause if it was necessary.

He sailed for Santo Domingo on the thirty-first. A few minutes before his departure he wrote to Maceo. All he could offer him, at that difficult time, was the same amount that he had for the trip with Gómez: two thousand pesos.

Gómez was very anxious, for he had received no news. But Martí arrived on February 7 accompanied by Mayía Rodríguez and Collazo. It was necessary to face the new facts, and this adjustment was the subject of their conversations during the first few days. They made long trips on horseback in search of men who might help them. They went from Montecristi to La Vega, Santiago de los Caballeros and Puerto Plata, returning at the end of February. On the twenty-sixth in Montecristi they received news of the uprising in Cuba. In March Martí again visited towns and settlements in Haiti: Cap Haitien, Fort Liberté, Guanaminthe, Petit Trou. They were beginning to solve the greatest problem, that of money, and in March they were offered a schooner with some men. Enrique Collazo and Manuel Mantilla left for New York. They had orders from Gómez to invade the Island in the province of Occidente as soon as the news of his arrival in Cuba was received.

The inactivity of waiting gave him the opportunity of approaching the life of the humble in all its rough, natural details. Never had he portrayed with fewer strokes and greater depth the man of the country in his poor retreat, the countryside around him, his keen, thoughtful judgments, his inner fineness. The pages Martí wrote seemed like lessons in human understanding. He wrote them, not for any newspaper, but for "his little girls"—Carmen and María.

In his letters to *Patria* he stressed two points of the constant, necessary campaign. They must preach the true character of the war, which was not directed against the