

War and Genocide in Cuba, 1895★1898

BY JOHN LAWRENCE TONE

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS Chapel Hill



ENVISIONING CUBA

Louis A. Pérez Jr., editor

examine shortly, to avoid combat in the fall of 1897. The Cubans were elated. General José María Rodríguez remarked that even in Pinar del Río, where “the enemy had been so active in the past,” the Spanish were “leaving their forts and garrisons” and concentrating in the cities. Spanish columns debouched from these strong points to operate “from time to time,” but they did so “with a notable lack of spirit.” Rodríguez let his men rest, for they were still in no position to seek combat. He recognized that the politics that lay behind the Spanish decision to stand down might change again, and he ordered his officers to take advantage of the respite to convalesce. The men had to be got healthy and ready “in case the enemy begins a campaign” again.⁴⁹

Civilians, as always, suffered most of all. The epidemics among the troops spread to noncombatants in both zones. Reconcentration went virtually unopposed in western Cuba in 1897, and in the late summer it was finally extended to central and eastern Cuba. The starving reconcentrados had no resistance to malaria, typhus, and dysentery. Some who had lived their whole lives in interior towns where yellow fever was absent succumbed to that disease when they were relocated to cities that had long been endemic foci of yellow fever. And because the relocated civilians were also starving, even common viruses and infections killed them. Reconcentration had entered its final, most deadly phase. This tragic story will be the subject of the next chapter.

14 ★ Reconcentration

Weyler’s most controversial strategy for pacifying Cuba goes by the name of reconcentration — the forced relocation of civilians to cities and towns controlled by Spanish troops and their Cuban allies. One of the most terrible catastrophes in the history of the Americas, reconcentration turned an already cruel war into what some have termed genocide. Beginning in the spring of 1896, and picking up in 1897, Spanish troops uprooted half a million civilians and herded them into hastily built barracks, sometimes grouped into what were called “concentration camps.” The army supplied rations, enough to prolong the suffering. Though scholars disagree about the number of civilians who perished due to reconcentration, over 100,000 reconcentrados certainly died, some from starvation, others in epidemics that peaked in the fall of 1897. In November 1897 the Spanish government ended reconcentration, but sickly and starving peasants could not be “deconcentrated” to a burned-out and devastated countryside by fiat. So they continued to die by the hundreds every day in cities like Matanzas, Havana, Cienfuegos, and Santa Clara. Towns passed special ordinances expanding the cemeteries. When that became impractical, the reconcentrados were interred in mass graves, and when the grave diggers and body collectors became too ill, the dead were left for dogs and birds.

Weyler’s contemporaries often misunderstood reconcentration, and sometimes they printed deliberate falsehoods on the subject. This was natural. Nations and empires were at stake, and dead civilians were valuable propaganda. What this means for us is that we will have to wade through a thicket of disinformation, and we will need to bring fresh historical sources to bear on the problem, if we wish to understand reconcentration. What was it? What part did Weyler play in it? What impact did reconcentration have on civilians? This chapter will consider these questions.

Weyler issued his first reconcentration order on February 16, 1896, immediately after his arrival in Cuba. It applied only to the eastern provinces of Santiago and Puerto Príncipe, as well as to the district of Sancti Spiritus in the province of Santa Clara. On October 21, 1896, Weyler imposed reconcentration on Pinar del Río. On January 5, 1897, he extended it to Havana and Matanzas. A few weeks later, on January 30, he ordered the rest of Santa Clara reconcentrated, and on May 27, 1897, he renewed the reconcentration order for Puerto Príncipe and Santiago.¹

The reconcentration orders gave people eight days to relocate to the nearest city or town garrisoned by the Spanish, a narrow time period that ensured non-compliance and violence. Weyler published the decrees in the *Gaceta de la Habana*, the official organ of the government, and local papers reprinted them. In a rural society still largely illiterate, the news of Weyler's order must have frequently arrived with the troops sent to enforce it, to drag people from their homes and march them into cities, past trenches and barbed wire, where they could be "protected."

Weyler mandated the creation of "cultivation zones" to be fortified and defended by Spanish troops and Cuban Volunteers and worked by the reconcentrados for their own sustenance. Crops planted outside such areas were to be destroyed. Livestock outside the cultivation zones was to be destroyed or gathered up and reconcentrated along with the people. Civilians who resisted these orders and remained in the countryside were considered to be in league with the enemy.

There were exceptions. Owners of large rural enterprises could apply for exemption. If they had clear title to their property, were paid up on their taxes, showed signs of resisting the insurgents, penned and controlled their livestock, and had resources to pay for the cost of a garrison's upkeep, they and their managers and laborers might be left alone. With this provision Weyler threw a bone to the sugar barons, big farmers, and other rural entrepreneurs who supported Spanish Cuba. The addendum reminds us that reconcentration had something about it of class warfare. It worked by design against the interests of poor peasants, many of whom did not own or lease the land they worked. Rather, they enjoyed usufruct privileges — unrecorded, customary rights — to work land they did not own in order to supplement the income they earned as laborers in the sugar industry or some other rural enterprise. This gave them a legal standing hardly greater than that of squatters. Moreover, many small proprietors owed some back taxes, which they could never hope to repay during wartime. Thus, Weyler's requirements for exemption from reconcentration — landownership and no taxes in arrears — excluded all but the rich. Weyler's chief of staff, Federico Ochando, elaborated on this aspect of the order to make sure everyone understood that "the spirit" of reconcentration "did not apply to the big agricultural and industrial establishments" but only to small "shops, ranches, and cottages" not under Spanish protection. These were the small-fry that were liable to support the insurgents whether out of choice or through coercion. They had to be removed from play.²

Still, we should not go too far and construe reconcentration as nothing but class war. Strategic and military interests were always paramount. Weyler did

not exempt owners of big estates whose properties lay in areas that could not be secured against the insurgents, and, if military conditions allowed, the government might extend special consideration to small farmers and shopkeepers, some of whom, far from being separatists, were recent immigrants from Spain, even admirers of Weyler.³ Their sentiments of loyalty were not necessarily in question, only their ability in practice to resist the Liberation Army and remain loyal. Some Spanish officers understood this, and they did not enforce reconcentration fully when it was a matter of rural folk in pacified zones able to remain loyal. General Agustín Luque, for example, made a point of allowing "many people to remain in their homes" as a way of affording them "the means to fight hunger."⁴ Unfortunately, Luque's flexible approach was not common enough. The effect of reconcentration was generally to turn the poor into refugees, regardless of their politics.

Weyler's first decree of February 16, 1896, applying to the East was so little enforced (thus its renewal on May 27, 1897) that it is sometimes ignored in accounts of reconcentration. Yet it is an important and telling detail that Weyler issued his first reconcentration order within a week of arriving in Havana, for it reminds us that reconcentration had been in the works for some time.

Reconcentration had both long-term precedents and immediate precursors both in Cuba and around the world. Armies throughout history have relocated civilians in war zones in order to remove them from play as elements of logistical support for the enemy. Some contemporary Americans, including the naval officer and scholar French Ensor Chadwick, argued that reconcentration was unexceptional in this regard and conformed to the rules of war as everyone understood them in the 1890s.⁵ In 1902 the U.S. government, after reconsidering the subject closely in light of its own war of counterinsurgency in the Philippines, concluded that Weyler's reconcentration in Cuba had not, after all, violated accepted military practices.⁶ Leaving to one side what these statements indicate about the accepted rules of war, Chadwick and the U.S. government were right. Reconcentration was nothing new. The United States had practiced a form of reconcentration in its wars with Native Americans by herding them onto reservations. And Weyler, as we have already seen, had ordered the relocation of civilians in the Philippines in the period from 1888 to 1891.

The terms "concentration" and "reconcentration" were used interchangeably in Cuba, and their meaning was clear long before February 16, 1896. Indeed, one does not have to look as far afield as the United States and the Philippines for precursors to reconcentration. The same deliberate relocation of civilians had occurred right in Cuba during the Ten Years' War.⁷ In that conflict, too, the insurgents targeted plantations, ranches, and farms. By 1870 they had so thoroughly

*Castro
historian
secondary
source*

Cuba
disrupted agriculture and burned so many hamlets and farms in eastern Cuba that an alarming refugee problem developed there.⁸ "Everyone knows," wrote the governor of Puerto Príncipe on April 26, 1870, "that the insurrectos have declared war not only against Spain but also against property, destroying everything they find in their path." As a result, a "multitude of families" from the countryside, "seeking the shelter offered by our garrisons," had taken refuge in Spanish cities and towns, where they found themselves "in the utmost state of misery" and "lacking any means of subsistence." The situation required the government to intervene creatively to rescue the refugees and restore the economy. This was something very like total war, and the captain general would have to "attend to the creation of new elements of production" with as much energy as had been devoted to the military campaign. To make this possible, authorities in eastern Cuba received approval to implement some radical measures, including the seizure of private property, especially if it remained uncultivated, in order to create cultivation zones, which were ceded temporarily to the refugees. Interestingly, even families with ties to the insurgency were to be afforded this relief. These provisions were intended to save lives, but they were also political and military expedients. The reconcentrados had to be convinced that if they remained loyal to the Spanish regime "they would not be worse off than if they remained in the mountains." Proper management of the refugee crisis, as much as military victory against the insurgents, would provide the necessary antidote to the revolution. Yet to make any of this possible, the Spanish army had to direct refugees to appropriately fortified Spanish towns with barracks and land set aside for their use. Inevitably, this introduced an element of force into the scheme.⁹

The plan of 1870 was never implemented systematically, and so its existence is little known. Weyler knew about it, however, because he alluded to it in his memoirs.¹⁰ And we should recall where Weyler was in 1870. Fighting in Puerto Príncipe, he was in an ideal position to see reconcentration in action. Weyler drew upon this experience when he issued his reconcentration orders in 1896 and 1897. The dubious praise one sometimes sees heaped upon Weyler as "the only Spanish general in two centuries to contribute something new to military strategy" is therefore inappropriate. Reconcentration had many architects.¹¹

One of these was Arsenio Martínez Campos, who used the term "reconcentration" in a letter posted in July 1895, as we have already seen. He claimed to have "higher beliefs" that prevented him from forcibly relocating the population, no matter how necessary it might be to victory, but his moral qualms did not prevent him from recommending Weyler for the dirty job. However, in a reversal of his earlier vow against making war on civilians, Martínez Campos issued direct orders to his district commanders on November 4, 1895, on the

subject of reconcentration. In these directives, the captain general noted that the insurgents' practice of forcibly relocating civilians to rural districts out of the reach of Spanish protection lent "a special character" to the war by producing a much greater contrary movement: "the concentration of a portion of the peaceful inhabitants into towns" as they fled revolutionary justice. This flow of refugees into towns had produced a crisis. "It is clear," Martínez Campos continued, "that this imposes on us the burden of feeding them when they lack for resources, because we cannot abandon peaceful citizens to hunger and misery." The "unavoidable duty of humanity and of government" was to provide relief. In order to do this, the army had to make sure "that the concentrations forced [upon civilians] by the enemy take place in towns that have garrisons and are linked by rail." This, in turn, required that Spanish troops direct the refugees to the appropriate locations, and this, again, implied the use of force.

Once the reconcentrados were relocated, Martínez Campos promised that the government would help care for them, but it could not manage the herculean task alone. For one thing, it lacked the resources. For another, providing direct relief would require the use of supply convoys, and these, he warned, would become additional targets for the insurgents. Therefore, the reconcentrados would have to provide for most of their needs themselves. Martínez Campos ordered military and civilian officials to give the refugees access to "all uncultivated fields" in the vicinity of garrisoned towns, "whether belonging to the municipality or to private individuals." These would be "divided into allotments" so that they could be "worked and enjoyed by the immigrants," who were to be given tools and any other assistance they needed. Martínez Campos sent copies of this order to the War and Colonial Ministries for approval, which he received on November 29. He never carried out the plan, because he was on his way out, but it is clear that all of the elements of reconcentration were in place before Weyler had even been appointed captain general of Cuba.¹²

The refugee crisis faced by the Spanish as early as the summer of 1895 reminds us, too, that the Cuban Liberation Army had a hand in reconcentration. Cuban troops removed people who lived near Spanish towns and roads and confiscated their goods as a way to eliminate them as props to the Spanish regime. Some people cooperated with this "deconcentration" and joined the insurrection, but most sought protection with the Spanish. The scope and intensity of the refugee crisis instigated by the Liberation Army is well documented in the diaries and correspondence of both Cubans and Spaniards and needs to be taken seriously as a precursor to, and even a cause of, Weyler's reconcentration.¹³

Cuban veteran Serafín Espinosa recalled that wherever the Liberation Army went it confiscated or destroyed property so that "farmers had nothing of their

own." This forced everyone, but especially women and children, to flee into cities, turning Cuba Libre into a cheerless place for the men who stayed behind, in Espinosa's estimation. At least men had the option of joining the insurrection. Women and children had little choice but to become reconcentrados.¹⁴

The process went furthest in Pinar del Río, where Maceo arrived in January 1896 and burned down half of the towns, as we have already seen. Juan Alvarez, one of Maceo's company commanders, recorded his impressions of the province following this orgy of destruction. Rural districts had been depopulated. Houses stood empty, crops unkempt, and livestock abandoned as peasants fled before Maceo. Alvarez spent much of his time burning houses that had been vacated in the halcyon days of the invasion in January 1896. Burning vacant houses did not seem unduly harsh. Their owners, after all, had "gone to the city with the soldiers." Sometimes, though, Alvarez targeted houses that were still occupied. For example, he burned forty homes in the suburbs of Luis Lazo, forcing the occupants to flood into the town. The boundary between insurgent Cuba and Spanish Cuba ran right through the outskirts of Luis Lazo and hundreds of other places just like it. The insurgents' objective was to turn these suburban borderlands into charred dead zones between the two alternative Cubas — urban colony and rural republic-in-arms — with no middle ground in between. When Alvarez was not burning houses, he was rounding up livestock "in order to deny resources" to the Spanish. The animals had been left behind, but their owners might return with troops to reclaim them. Better to take or even kill them than to let that happen. In this way, the first reconcentrados lost the livestock that could have fed them in their narrowed circumstances. They arrived in Spanish towns completely reliant on charity.

The same thing Alvarez reported in Pinar del Río was going on everywhere else. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Gerardo Machado devoted his cavalry squadrons to gathering livestock, "without sparing those belonging to the pacíficos," because they had been selling their animals, as well as milk, eggs, and produce, to the towns. Not even chickens and goats were spared, but everything was taken to the mountains or butchered on the spot.¹⁵ Esteban Montejo recalled that what he did most during the war was catch and kill animals, especially pigs, in the dead of night. "We went on horseback, and on horseback we chased pigs, which were basically feral. They ranged freely, and were not fattened up. We would chase any pig we saw. For us it was a game. After the pig became tired, we would hack at its hind leg with our machetes while still mounted. The leg would fly off and the pig would not be able to run any more. We would dismount quickly and grab it by the neck. The bad part about it was that the pigs bled and screamed a lot."¹⁶ Within no time, as visitors to Cuba observed, the

countryside was barren of pigs . . . and cows, mules, horses, chickens, dogs, cats, and, finally, people.

Refugees arrived in cities not only bereft of animals but lacking seed, tools, clothing, and money. In areas where the insurgency was strong, a majority of the reconcentrados were women and children, because the men were with the insurgency or with the Spanish as Volunteers and counterguerrillas. The sexual division of labor in rural Cuba — as in many other peasant communities — had men working for wages outside the home and taking charge of tillage while women managed household animals and gardens. Destroying and confiscating livestock and homes thus separated women from their traditional means of subsistence. When women arrived in Spanish towns, local officials might give them plots of land to till, but they were unaccustomed to the plough and lacked draft animals. This produced the dolorous spectacle of women trailed by their children, all of them in rags, all of them starving, scratching the hard dirt with sharp sticks in a futile attempt to prepare the ground for planting. The situation was already so bad by January 1896 that Martínez Campos took the step of asking his officers and men to donate their labor and a portion of their pay to help these wretched women and their children. It was a hollow gesture, as almost no one volunteered for this gallant service, but it can be taken as another sign of how serious the reconcentrado problem was before Weyler's arrival on the scene.¹⁷

The insurgents enforced their own deconcentration of civilians throughout the conflict as a counter to Weyler's reconcentration. In the summer of 1896, Máximo Gómez could see that his prohibitions on commerce with Spanish cities were being violated when the Liberation Army did not force the issue. The worst places were Cascorro, Guaimaro, and other towns along the Júcaro-Morón trocha. "In these towns," Gómez wrote to the secretary of war, "the people eat good and abundant meat and produce from the countryside and this must be entering the towns from the surrounding areas."¹⁸ At times, it appeared, even revolutionary officials broke the blockade, either out of sympathy with the starving people in the cities or out of a desire to profit on the high prices that could be fetched by any product that did make it to market.¹⁹ These practices, said Gómez, had to stop. He therefore ordered that "all the families who live near the enemy towns," and who were "justifying their situation" with the excuse that they had to send food in to guarantee the survival of their relations in the town, would be removed. Units of the Liberation Army were to take them and "intern them at great distances" from their homes. To ensure "that they lose all hope of peaceful relations" with their friends and relatives in the towns, Gómez "also ordered that their houses be burned." He concluded: "It is necessary that when leaving on campaign the Spanish find nothing but a desert and

complete waste around them.”²⁰ Officers ordered their men “to persecute with the greatest severity anyone who maintains traffic and commerce” with the Spanish towns. Needless to say, these measures created the conditions for widespread starvation and misery and induced a flood of refugees into the towns.²¹

As we have seen, Gómez and Maceo never imagined that the function of the Liberation Army was to defeat Spanish armies. Rather, controlling the wealth of the countryside and blockading Spanish towns had always been their primary goal. This strategy made great sense in the context of the Cuban economy. The logistics of getting food to market in much of Cuba were complicated by the fact that broad stretches of the countryside had been dedicated to a single crop, either sugar or tobacco. This meant that local production of basic foods was often inadequate to begin with and that supplies had to be secured from relatively distant producers. As a result, cities were especially vulnerable to blockade. In the days before Weyler’s arrival, the insurgents had ridden “to the very gates of Havana” to prevent food from entering the city.²² In the city of Pinar del Río, around which the insurgents under Maceo were especially numerous, green grocers and milkmen became endangered species in the early spring of 1896. The Liberation Army hanged them, as well as any other civilians who tried to get food into the provincial capital.²³ In April 1896 Maceo ordered the destruction of all fences in Pinar del Río, hoping in this way to prevent the penning of livestock that could later be taken into the starving towns.²⁴ Even in late 1896 and 1897, when the Liberation Army lost the ability to do much in the strict military sense, it always retained the power to disrupt the flow of goods into Spanish towns, thus fulfilling its primary mission.

This manner of warfare made food immediately scarce, and the survival of the refugees became a serious problem. A correspondent for the Times of London remarked on the appalling problem of starvation in the Havana region as early as the spring of 1896, again, before the advent of official reconcentration:

Spain has another and serious danger to face in addition to the actual rebellion. The towns are crowded with refugees, a very large proportion of these being women and children. The local food supplies are nearly exhausted, and will be entirely so in a few months’ time. Little or nothing is being grown to supply local needs, and the rebels do not allow any country produce to be taken to the towns for sale. The people in the towns will, therefore, be dependent on what can be purchased abroad. . . . Unless relief in some form is provided, absolute starvation will overtake a large proportion of the population before many more months are passed.²⁵

But relief efforts mounted from abroad faced every sort of obstacle. For example, the British schooner *J. W. Durant* attempted to unload ten barrels of maize in early February 1898, but customs officials there wanted to collect a fee, so the maize sat. Fitzhugh Lee, the U.S. consul in Havana, lodged an official protest with Ramón Blanco, the man who replaced Weyler in the fall of 1897, and eventually the corn was landed.²⁶ Meanwhile, the Spanish Congress continued to debate the issue of what to do about relieving the hunger in Cuba. Would lowering tariffs make a difference to the really destitute? Was accepting American aid too much of a humiliation? Was it not an admission that Spain could not govern Cuba without the help of the North American colossus? Would the influx of cheap grains make its way into the hands of the insurgents? While these interesting questions were discussed in Madrid, Cubans continued to starve as the Liberation Army’s blockade of the cities tightened.

This blockade was supposed to be absolute, and Gómez became furious when exceptions were made. In practice, however, Cuban officials sometimes turned a blind eye to violators or allowed certain basic commodities, such as eggs, to get through.²⁷ Unit commanders, more in touch with local conditions than Gómez, allowed people “who are with us and who have families in the towns” to sneak food to their relations. With properly signed permits, they were allowed to deliver to blood relatives as much meat and vegetables “as will fit in a small saddlebag.” This restriction ensured that none of the food made it to pro-Spanish elements. However, these humanitarian steps amounted in the end to mere gestures. The embargo on trade remained an absolutely essential component of Gómez’s strategy if the insurgency were to have any hope of success, and we have seen that Gómez cracked down on Cuban officials and pacíficos who traded with the towns. Indeed, officially, the republic-in-arms called for the destruction of all property near towns and reiterated many times its position that the “introduction in towns of any article” of food was punishable by death. Recorded trials of desperate violators demonstrate how summary was the justice meted out to the smugglers of foodstuffs.²⁸ The system was harsh, but denying city folk access to food from the countryside was one of the cornerstones of the Cuban strategy.

After Weyler introduced reconcentration on a massive scale, towns developed new cultivation zones to feed the refugees, and this presented a novel challenge for the insurgency. They now had to eradicate these new plantings near the towns, and to the degree that they succeeded, they contributed to the misery and mortality of the reconcentrados. The assault on the cultivation zones served a dual purpose. First, of course, it starved the Spanish and their Cuban allies. Second, it provided the Liberation Army with much-needed food. The insurgents’ civil administration, the prefects and subprefects of the republic-in-arms, did

their utmost to set up their own farms to provide the Liberation Army with food. In the East, the system was reasonably successful.²⁹ In western Cuba, however, the Spanish and loyalist guerrillas had by 1897 destroyed the prefectures and the production of foodstuffs for the Cuban army, so that patriot troops there had to rely almost entirely on what they could rob from the cultivation zones intended for the reconcentrados.³⁰ Indeed, Cuban forces even began to rob their own cultivation zones. Andrés Rodríguez, an insurgent subprefect in the town of Higuanojo, wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Soriz on August 26, 1897, to complain about the behavior of Cuban troops in the area. They had been dispersed and had become mere bandits, seizing crops and livestock without permission. Rodríguez wrote: "I am taking the liberty of informing you that I believe it convenient for you to order a regular commission with energetic character to gather up individuals of the forces of General José María Rodríguez and of General Quintín Banderas who are useless in this zone and in fact prejudicial."³¹

So complete had the Cuban dependence on the reconcentrados' cultivation zones become that the American defeat of the Spaniards in 1898 constituted a serious problem for the Cuban army. As Mayía Rodríguez observed in August 1898, peace had made it impossible to feed the troops, whose "diet had up to the present depended upon the enemy cultivation zones." The suspension of hostilities "eliminated the peculiar mode the forces of our army had of attending to their subsistence" and threatened the scattered remnants of the Liberation Army with starvation.³²

Even the First and Second Corps in Oriente, where the system of prefectures had been more solidly developed, faced this problem to a certain extent. As in the West, the reconcentrados had set up cultivation zones, and the insurgents found themselves obliged to survive by expropriating what they could from the reconcentrados. The system worked so long as hostilities continued, but when the United States forced a peace settlement, the troubles began. Major General Jesús Rabí, in command of the Second Corps around Manzanillo, complained in the late summer of 1898 that his men were going hungry, now that peace terms with Spain prevented him from robbing livestock from the townsfolk. In fact, he could not even provide an accurate enumeration of his troops, because, starved by the peace, large numbers of soldiers deserted on a daily basis.³³

In 1897, when Weyler began to move his center of operations eastward, the insurgents stepped up their campaign to destroy towns and rural homesteads of the pacíficos that lay near centers of Spanish strength in eastern Cuba. Juan Castro, captain of a Spanish outpost at Cabaiguan, along the eastern trocha, informed his divisional commander in January 1897 that "many peaceful residents from the countryside are presenting themselves these days" seeking protection.

What should he do? he asked. The refugees were telling him "that the insurgents had taken the passes and documents they had from the Spanish identifying them as neutrals. They had told them that they had to join the rebellion and abandon their homes, and that if they did not they would be deprived of all of their property" and would find the security of their families threatened.³⁴ The same thing Gómez and Maceo had earlier enforced in western Cuba was beginning now in the East. Naturally, a flood of new refugees went to Cabaiguan and other towns in east central Cuba. Weyler's response was to announce his own reconcentration in the East in the spring of 1897. Now the towns of eastern Cuba became what those in the West had long been: charnel houses of starving refugees. This produced a well-justified worldwide outcry against such methods of making war, but all the blame attached to Weyler, while the Cuban insurgents' role in reconcentration went unnoticed by most of the world.

The Cuban provisional government noticed, however, and it objected to some of Gómez's stricter requirements. In the fall of 1896, Secretary of War Rafael Portuondo warned Gómez to allow food in to help the starving civilians. Gómez refused. In a letter to Portuondo dated November 21, 1896, Gómez rejected not only Portuondo's proposal but his very authority to interfere in such matters. This dispute became so serious that the provisional government forced Gómez to resign as commander in chief on December 8, 1896, when he turned authority over to Antonio Maceo. In a formal letter to his fellow cabinet members, Portuondo recommended accepting Gómez's resignation. "I understand that we must accept" Gómez's retirement, he wrote, "because there are many well-founded charges against him," as the government "knew perfectly well." Worse still, the whole country knew. The people, "vexed in their dignity," had begun "to rebel against a man they see aspiring to a dictatorship." So it had become "convenient for the health of the country to take advantage" of Gómez's offer to resign to remove him "in a gentle manner," in order "to satisfy public opinion which might otherwise demand his violent removal."³⁵ Gómez and the government had been at odds before, but this was the worst crisis of all. Were it not for the fact that Maceo died shortly after Gómez's resignation, it is very possible that the old caudillo would have been eased out over the issue of his treatment of civilians.

Weyler had a great deal to say on the subject of reconcentration. On December 30, 1897, after he had already been relieved of command and his name had become synonymous with genocidal cruelty, Weyler composed a defense that is worth quoting at some length:

The orders I dictated regarding the concentration of peasants in cultivation zones should not horrify world opinion because there was nothing cruel

about them. These methods were imposed, and only in certain territories, by the necessities of war. They were designed to deprive the enemy of all kinds of services provided by peasants, sometimes voluntarily[,] other times by threats and violence. These services were extremely important to the insurgents. They included cultivating crops and caring for livestock to feed [the insurgents]; acting as local guides; supplying intelligence to direct their operations; and serving as spies to reveal [our plans].

author agrees with Weyler's excuse

Reconcentration was carried out in some areas in accord with my orders. . . . In other territories reconcentration resulted from the free and spontaneous movement of the rural population, fleeing the burning of their towns by the insurgents. We always aided the appallingly destitute inhabitants who took refuge in our encampments by providing food and rations [and] assisting them in their illnesses and epidemics with doctors from our battalions and hospitals. In April and May 1896, when Spanish columns entered the tobacco-growing regions of Pinar del Río for the first time, more than 15,000 souls gathered and concentrated in our coastal camps voluntarily, because the towns and hamlets of the interior had been totally destroyed by the torches of those black insurgent gangs. Whole communities of people became transformed into miserable vagabonds who wandered the countryside, leaving as evidence of their tragic passage the cadavers of children, women, and old people.³⁶

No judgment is more partisan, of course, than Weyler's, and we must view anything he said or wrote about what he called Cuba's "black insurgent gangs" with skepticism. Nevertheless, in light of what we know from other sources about the precursors to reconcentration and about the participation of the insurgents in it, it is obvious that some elements of Weyler's analysis are correct. It does not mitigate his responsibility to recognize that other people were also responsible. By the time Weyler arrived in Cuba, places like Luis Lazo and its hinterland had already been transformed by war. People there had been forced to make a choice: They could head into the hills with the insurgents or flee to "Spain." Those taking the latter option had become wards of the Spanish state. This was fine with Gómez. As refugees, they helped to undermine the Spanish regime in Cuba, either by using up resources or by providing foreign journalists with the hideous spectacle of their starvation and death. In this way, dying refugees had an important part to play in national liberation. Gómez and Maceo did not make war with bonbons any more than Weyler did. Nor should we expect them to have been more humanitarian than the Spanish. That was not a fantasy

in which the soldiers who fought to free Cuba from Spain could afford to indulge.

Among the several parties responsible for reconcentration were Spanish officers and troops and Cuban Volunteers fighting for the Spanish who, without prompting from Weyler, had begun to "assist" refugees fleeing into cities and towns in western Cuba in early 1896. The Spanish liked to construe this as providing "aid" and "protection" to civilians. Military telegraphs from the period contain phrases like "Sending column to protect families" and "Returned with families" or again "Returned seven night with families that we protected and nothing new to report."³⁷ General Alvaro Suárez Valdés wrote to Weyler to report sending a column to the area of Consolación del Sur "to help with the reconcentration of families who want to pass into that town due to having lost their homes." Suárez Valdés complained of being unable to shelter all of the peasants who wanted protection. He also lacked sufficient cavalry to pursue "the little enemy parties that continue to disturb the residents of the countryside," so more refugees were sure to be on their way. They were flooding into the city of Pinar del Río, and he could not stop the process, which threatened to make life in the provincial capital unbearable. The letter is dated March 23, 1896, seven months before Weyler imposed reconcentration on Pinar del Río.³⁸

Indeed, the curious thing is that Weyler waited so long to issue a formal order of reconcentration for western Cuba. To explain this requires that we pay attention to chronology. Gómez abandoned western Cuba in May 1896, and Maceo withdrew to the mountains of Pinar del Río during the late spring and summer. During this respite, refugees began to return to their homes — to deconcentrate. Supplies that had been interdicted by the insurgents began again to trickle into the cities of the West. Moreover, neither side campaigned actively in the summer, so the situation did not call for a formal declaration of reconcentration. All of this changed as the weather improved in September 1896. On September 8, the indefatigable *Three Friends* landed an expedition in the far West, and Antonio Maceo began an offensive almost immediately. The process of rebuilding the economy came to a halt, and refugees began to arrive again in the towns. The only solution seemed to be to organize this influx of civilians and to create formal cultivation zones so that they could provide for themselves. This explains the timing of the order of October 21. Weyler promulgated the reconcentration order for Pinar del Río in response to a refugee crisis and a renewed military threat from Maceo. Now the forced relocation of civilians and the destruction of whatever they left behind began in earnest.

Within a few months, the same thing would occur in Havana, Matanzas, and

Santa Clara. In 1896 Spanish troops — again without the benefit of any formal order of reconcentration — had begun to evacuate rural districts of any inhabitants who had not already fled into cities or into rural districts under insurgent control. The Volunteer guerrilla formations aligned with Spain had come to specialize in these operations. Having cleared an area of people, they then wiped out any remaining crops and livestock, which might be used by the Liberation Army. Luis Diez del Corral reported that his Volunteer unit spent all of its time finding and destroying crops in the area around Minas Ricas, where the Liberation Army had farms. Similarly, the “principal operational object” of General Manuel Prats’s forces fighting around the swampy Zapata peninsula was “to destroy the plantings of the enemy and gather up their livestock.” The Volunteer formations relished these search-and-destroy missions, in part because, with the collapse of the economy, they had come to depend on the booty for their own survival.³⁹ In any case, these practices predated Weyler’s formal reconcentration of Havana and Matanzas.

Weyler’s reconcentration should be viewed, therefore, as a response both to the insurgency’s practice of total war and to his army’s reaction to it. The mirror image of Gómez’s strategy, reconcentration was designed to deny the insurgents access to civilians and their resources by controlling or eliminating them. What it was not designed to do — though Weyler and his supporters liked to conceive of it this way — was minister to the poor refugees already displaced by Gómez and Maceo. There was absolutely nothing humanitarian about reconcentration. Even the cultivation zones clearly served the interests of Spain rather than the refugees. Each reconcentration order contained detailed instructions relating to the cultivation zones, and in these details we can see something of Weyler’s mind-set. The order of January 30, 1897, which applied to Santa Clara, included the following instructions: “In each fortified town in the province a cultivation zone will be designated . . . so that current residents and recently arrived families can plant crops, excepting . . . those who have a father or husband in the insurrection.” The demarcation of the cultivation zone was left to a committee, or junta, made up of the military commander of the town, the mayor, the priest, the judge, and six propertied residents. This junta was given the power to oblige people to cultivate the land assigned to them. Reconcentrados would retain usufruct rights to their assigned plots until six months after the war ended to create a cushion for them. Municipal land would be given freely. Private land would be divided up among the refugees, with compensation for the landowners provided by a tax levied on all property in the municipality. The final stipulation stated: “No taxes or any other contributions

whatsoever can be levied on these reconcentrados for the use of this land while the war lasts.”⁴⁰

There are several salient points in these instructions that bear further comment. First, the denial of land and succor to families with ties to the insurgents made Weyler’s reconcentration more brutal than that envisioned and partially carried out in Oriente in the 1870s. Indeed, it amounted to a death sentence for a portion of the refugees.

Second, the management of the cultivation zones was left to local elites rather than the army. This ensured that the scheme did not threaten property relations. Total war can have the effect of making belligerents, through their armies, adopt command economies subversive of private property rights. Weyler was willing to do many things and see many things sacrificed in order to keep Cuba Spanish, but he did not go so far as to nationalize production or threaten private property in any fundamental way. The purpose of the Spanish regime in Cuba was, after all, the protection of unequal property relations that had evolved out of the slave era in colonial Cuba. It is not surprising, therefore, that Weyler rated the lives of Cubans more cheaply than property.

Some aspects of the law were generous. The prohibition on charging rents, taxes, and fees for the use of the land and the extension of the land grants for six months beyond the termination of hostilities are cases in point. Unfortunately, by giving local property owners control of the process, Weyler created a situation in which the cultivation zones had no chance to succeed. Municipal officials, already overwhelmed by the influx of “voluntary” refugees, could scarcely muster any resources to build housing or provide emergency relief as envisioned by Weyler’s decree. And as respectful as Weyler tried to be toward local property relations, his plan had the effect of asking propertied townfolk to extend a helping hand to peasant refugees. In essence, one side in a military conflict was to give alms to people who were suspected, rightly or wrongly, of supporting the other side.

This took the principle of “turning the other cheek” too far for some landowners, who controlled municipal politics and had ways of resisting the decree. Troops rounded people up and marched them into cities only to find that promised barracks for the refugees had not been built. Owners of vacant lots and buildings demanded payment for giving them over to the reconcentrados. The juntas overseeing the scheme identified and set aside the most barren ground for cultivation zones. And they rarely set aside enough land. In the province of Havana, for example, Spanish officials estimated that only one-fifth of the reconcentrados were given access to land. Finally, the whole thing was im-

plemented as if time did not matter. In fact, it ran out almost immediately. The plan required that infertile ground be prepared for cultivation by hungry people — a majority of them women and children — who had no draft animals and who needed to make the land productive overnight. Only someone like Weyler, with no knowledge of agriculture and no real interest in the fate of the reconcentrados, could have imagined that the cultivation zones had the slightest chance of success once their management was left to local elites.

A third provision of Weyler's plan allowed for a common tax on property to compensate those whose land had to be tapped for the reconcentrados. This was supposed to ensure that none of the landowners was unduly harmed by the creation of the cultivation zones. However, it also created the disgusting spectacle of rich Cubans — those with enough property in or near town to have left it uncultivated — collecting fees from other townspeople for the "service" of letting destitute refugees eke out an existence farming land that had always been (and still was) worthless wasteland.

A fourth aspect of Weyler's plan that deserves highlighting is that it forbade the owners of lands assigned for use by reconcentrados from collecting rents and use fees from their new tenants and prohibited municipalities from taxing them. This provision, positive in itself, suggests by its very enunciation that something more sinister may have been taking place. Indeed, a disturbing practice had developed during the war in which municipalities had been levying taxes on and private individuals had been collecting fees from the poor refugees. In effect, whatever property they had been able to bring with them into the cities was seized by municipal officials to compensate them for the trouble of providing relief.

There are always exceptions to any rule. Administrative records show that some municipalities created cultivation zones that worked. By the fall of 1897, a few were even producing surpluses. When the insurgents heard about a successful cultivation zone, they naturally attempted to destroy it in order to keep up the pressure of starvation in the cities. Just as the Spanish army could not protect sugar and tobacco, neither could it protect some of the cultivation zones.⁴¹ It did not take a well-organized, large force to wipe out crops. Even the dispersed remnants of the Liberation Army that existed in the West could do the job. Thus, the diaries of Cuban officers in 1897 are filled with references to burning crops planted by the refugees.⁴² Only in the largest towns with strong garrisons was there any hope of protecting the new plantings. But in such cases the crops were not always safe from Spanish troops and their allies, who "taxed" the poor reconcentrados to supply their own pressing needs.

These problems did not seem to concern Weyler very much. In fact, the culti-

vation zones were designed above all to save money and troops, and in this they succeeded. Weyler provided some rations to the refugees, but the mechanism of the cultivation zones placed ultimate responsibility for relief squarely with the reconcentrados, who were expected very quickly to feed themselves. This was supposed to spare the financially strapped Spanish state a new obligation and free up resources for the troops. Cultivation zones were also intended to obviate the need to supply garrison towns by convoy, thus eliminating the insurgents' favorite military target and allowing the Spanish to avoid another onerous and dangerous task.

Reconcentration was always and above all a military measure. This fact must be kept in mind. Removing civilians who might provide support and information to the Cubans was sound strategy. Following the reconcentration decree of October 21, 1896, Spanish troops conducted sweeps through Pinar del Río, removing whoever was left in the countryside to a few towns firmly under Spanish control. By then, of twenty-five municipalities in Pinar del Río, nine had been virtually erased by the insurgents. They produced refugees rather than sheltering them. Another ten were in various stages of rebuilding, and they accepted few reconcentrados. This left Artemisa, the center of operations for the forces guarding the western trocha, and Consolación del Norte and Bahía Honda, on the north coast, to receive most of the reconcentrados. They were followed by Consolación del Sur, San Cristóbal, and Mantua, in that order. The capital, Pinar del Río, though spared by the insurgents, never accepted its fair share of refugees. In any case, the success of reconcentration is one reason Maceo had to flee Pinar del Río in December 1896. The place could no longer support an army.

We will never know the exact number of Cuban civilians who died under reconcentration. At one extreme, the Spanish Liberal politician José Canalejas stated after a fact-finding mission in 1897 that 400,000 Cuban civilians had already perished and that another 200,000 would surely die before the effects of Weyler's policy could be reversed. Ramón Blanco supported Canalejas's findings, claiming that 570,000 Cubans had died in the war. In a population of just over 1.7 million people, these figures, if true, would mean that Weyler exterminated about one-third of the Cuban people, higher than the percentage of dead in Russia during World War II and a greater proportional demographic loss than in Pol Pot's Cambodia. However, the figures supplied by Canalejas and Blanco are not to be trusted. Inveterate enemies of Weyler and Cánovas, Canalejas and Blanco provided their "data" to discredit their Conservative predecessors and to solidify the Liberals' hold on power in the fall of 1897. Neither was actually in a position to have accurate information on the subject of reconcentration at the time he issued his report.⁴³

American estimates also exaggerated matters for political reasons. As the American jingoes ramped up their effort to convince the American public to intervene in Cuba, Fitzhugh Lee reported that 75,000 reconcentrados had died in Havana alone and that at least 300,000 had died in the island as a whole. What greater reason to deploy American troops could there be?⁴⁴ Other American investigations produced results that echoed Lee's estimate. In 1897, President McKinley asked former congressman William J. Calhoun to look into conditions in Cuba. In June, after a three-week visit to the island in which he consulted no official sources, Calhoun issued a report that echoed Lee's: The Spanish had relocated 500,000 civilians, and 300,000 had already died. His description was stirring: "I traveled by rail from Havana to Matanzas. The countryside outside of the military posts was practically depopulated. Every house had been burned, banana trees cut down, cane fields swept by fire, and everything in the shape of food destroyed. . . . I did not see a house, man, woman or child, a horse, mule, or cow, nor even a dog. . . . The country was wrapped in the stillness of death and the silence of desolation." These words have been often quoted, with the implication that the destruction had been caused by the Spanish and that it characterized the whole island, not just the view from Calhoun's train window. Certainly, this was how Calhoun's contemporaries interpreted the matter.⁴⁵

Calhoun's sources are not clear, but, based on his report, one could conclude that by the time reconcentration officially ended in November 1897, the number of its victims would have grown to well over 300,000, perhaps approaching the estimates given by Spanish Liberals.⁴⁶ Following his own fact-finding mission, Senator Redfield Proctor issued a report on March 17, 1898, that depicted the plight of the reconcentrados in moving terms and stated that more than 300,000 had perished, the same figure Lee and Calhoun had bandied about. It is not unknown for "fact-finding" missions to find each other and to repeat each other's conclusions instead of looking for and finding the facts. As we shall see, Proctor's report helped provide one final push for the United States to declare war, but it was based on nothing solid.⁴⁷

cont. report cited from secondary sources

Scholars often cite the findings of Canalejas, Blanco, Lee, Calhoun, and Proctor, apparently unaware of the limitations of these historical sources. As a result, extraordinarily high mortality figures, usually ranging from 300,000 to 400,000, have, by force of repetition, come to be accepted as fact by many scholars.⁴⁸ There is evidence from census data, however, that gives us cause to reject such high numbers of civilian deaths. The census of 1899, administered by American officials, revealed 1,572,797 inhabitants in Cuba, compared to a population of 1,708,687 in 1895. Simple arithmetic suggests that 135,890 more people died or left Cuba during the war than were born or entered the island. The

Cuban demographers Juan Pérez de la Riva and Blanca Morejón and the economic historian Julio Le Riverend used these census data (although they calculated the figure for Cuba's population in 1895 at 1,730,000) to arrive at a figure for population loss of 157,203. They also ascribed all of these losses to fatalities caused by reconcentration, discounting losses from war casualties, emigration, starvation and disease not directly ascribable to reconcentration, and other causes. Le Riverend, still not satisfied, "rounded" the resulting number for deaths upward again to 200,000, blaming all of these deaths on reconcentration.⁴⁹

If one can round up, one can also round down. Some scholars, using the same census data, have argued for lowering the mortality caused by reconcentration. They note that emigration from Cuba during the war, the loss of growth due to lower immigration from Spain, and other sources of population loss must be taken into account. Taking all of these problems into account, economic historian Jordi Maluquer de Motes has suggested that between 155,000 and 170,000 Cubans died due to reconcentration. This is the most careful calculation performed to date using the census data.⁵⁰ But this figure was too high for other scholars. David Trask and Joseph Smith thought the number of fatalities should be placed closer to 100,000. Ivan Musicant thought that 95,000 civilians had died. The Cuban scholar Tiburcio Pérez Castañeda concluded in 1925 that only 90,000 civilians died in reconcentration. And, recently, Carmelo Mesa-Lago believed that 60,000 civilians perished in the war.⁵¹

Something is terribly wrong with a methodology that arrives at such widely varying conclusions. Fortunately, data exist in the documentation generated by the administrators in charge of reconcentration's dismantling from November 1897 to January 1898 that can be used to test the census data. On November 28 Ramón Blanco, who had just replaced Weyler as captain general of Cuba, sent a questionnaire to the provincial governors. He wanted to know: (1) How many people had been reconcentrated in the province? (2) How many men, women, and children were still reconcentrated? (3) How many had died? (4) What was the condition of the remaining reconcentrados? And (5) What steps could be taken to provide relief? Table 4 is a compilation of the data that the provincial governors sent back to Blanco. These data, though incomplete, provide fresh information to the debate on reconcentration.⁵²

The governors of Puerto Príncipe and Santiago did not report the numbers of dead due to reconcentration, but they estimated that only 6,800 people had been reconcentrated in Santiago and a mere 2,245 in Puerto Príncipe. These numbers are low because the Spanish never fully implemented the reconcentration decrees in the East. Certainly, many people fled "voluntarily" to eastern towns, and they might have escaped enumeration as official reconcentrados, but the situa-

TABLE 4. Reconcentrados in Cuba

| Province | Population | Reconcentrados | % | Fatalities | % |
|-----------------|------------|----------------|-----|------------|-----|
| Pinar del Río | 226,692 | 47,000 | 21% | 23,495 | 50% |
| Havana | — | — 120,000 | — | — 42,000 | — |
| Matanzas | 273,174 | 99,312 | 36% | 25,977 | 26% |
| Santa Clara | — | 140,000 | — | 52,997 | 38% |
| Puerto Príncipe | — | 2,245 | — | — | — |
| Santiago | — | 6,800 | — | — | — |
| Total | — | 295,357 | — | 102,469 | 35% |

Source: Archivo General Militar de Madrid, doc. sobre Cuba, caja 61; Sección Capitanía General de Cuba, leg. 167.

tion of such people in places like Manzanillo and Santiago differed dramatically from that of their counterparts in places like Havana and Matanzas. They were never so numerous, so they were not crowded together in vast barracks, where devastating diseases like malaria, yellow fever, and typhus did their worst. In a census of 1907, children aged ten to thirteen constituted a higher percentage of the population in the two eastern provinces than in the rest of Cuba, suggesting that people got through the war years and had children in the East. Without firm data, we can only surmise based on the low number of official reconcentrados that mortality in Santiago and Puerto Príncipe would have been quite low.

The numbers for Matanzas and especially Pinar del Río are most reliable and useful because they are broken down by municipality, age, sex, and other categories of analysis. This is owing to the zeal of provincial governors Francisco de Armas and Fabio Freyre, who seem genuinely to have been moved to do whatever they could for the reconcentrados.

The worst mortality in Pinar del Río, as elsewhere, occurred after reconcentration had officially ended in November 1897. According to Freyre, the number of reconcentrados peaked at 39,495 in November. A few months later, fewer than 16,000 remained. Freyre thought the difference, 23,495, had almost all died. He reported that it was “indisputable that the great majority of [these people] have succumbed. We cannot secure any official notice of their deaths because in most cases no formalities were observed in their burial. Sometimes they were interred where they lay.” The “daily number of deaths was so high” in the fall of 1897 and the “indifference” to their disappearance so complete that a precise figure for mortality could never be found. In December 1897 and January

1898, though, Freyre knew of 5,000 people interred in the cemetery. In a separate accounting, Freyre documented 47,000 reconcentrados in the province all told. This was 21 percent of the population in Pinar del Río. If we trust Freyre, and there seems to be no reason not to, then over one-fifth of the population was reconcentrated in Pinar del Río and at least 23,495 of them died.⁵³

Reconcentration began later but proceeded with greater intensity in Havana. José Bruzón, governor of Havana, submitted a horrifying report on the condition of the reconcentrados there. The moats that defended the old city had become a terrible spectacle. The municipal government had given them over to the reconcentrados, and there they lived and died by the thousands, some not even buried but becoming food to glut dogs and carrion birds. As bad as things were in the capital, Bruzón knew they were much worse in other towns. In 1897 very few places had actually bothered to set up the mandated cultivation zones. Bruzón thought that only about one-fifth of the reconcentrados had access to these lands, which they cultivated practically with their bare hands, lacking tools and animals. He reckoned that “thousands” had died in every month since the beginning of reconcentration and that 75 percent of the reconcentrados had either died or returned to the countryside. We know from other sources that as many as 120,000 people in the province of Havana were reconcentrated. If the percentage that died were similar to mortality rates in Pinar, Matanzas, and Santa Clara, then it would translate to a figure of 42,000 dead. Nevertheless, because it is mere speculation, this number is not included in the table. Bruzón gave no firm data.

The data for Matanzas province is the most complete and detailed and inspires great confidence. Francisco de Armas gave a precise figure of 25,977 dead, based on the reports of local juntas charged with ministering to the reconcentrados. This number is roughly one-fourth of the nearly 100,000 people relocated to towns and cities in Matanzas.

As depressing as the numbers are for Pinar, Havana, and Matanzas, factors related to the chronology of the fighting limited mortality there. Weyler decreed reconcentration in Pinar del Río in October 1896, but it could not be enforced until later in the year, especially after the death of Antonio Maceo in December 1896. It was then, too, that he extended the system to Havana and Matanzas. Only a few months later, and certainly by the summer of 1897, insurgent forces had been routed in all three western provinces. As a result, the insurgents could not destroy all of the cultivation zones set up to feed the reconcentrados. Some towns even produced surpluses for local trade, which became possible as Spanish forces secured roads and railroads in the spring and summer of 1897. Indeed, in parts of the West, the reconcentrados were already returning to the



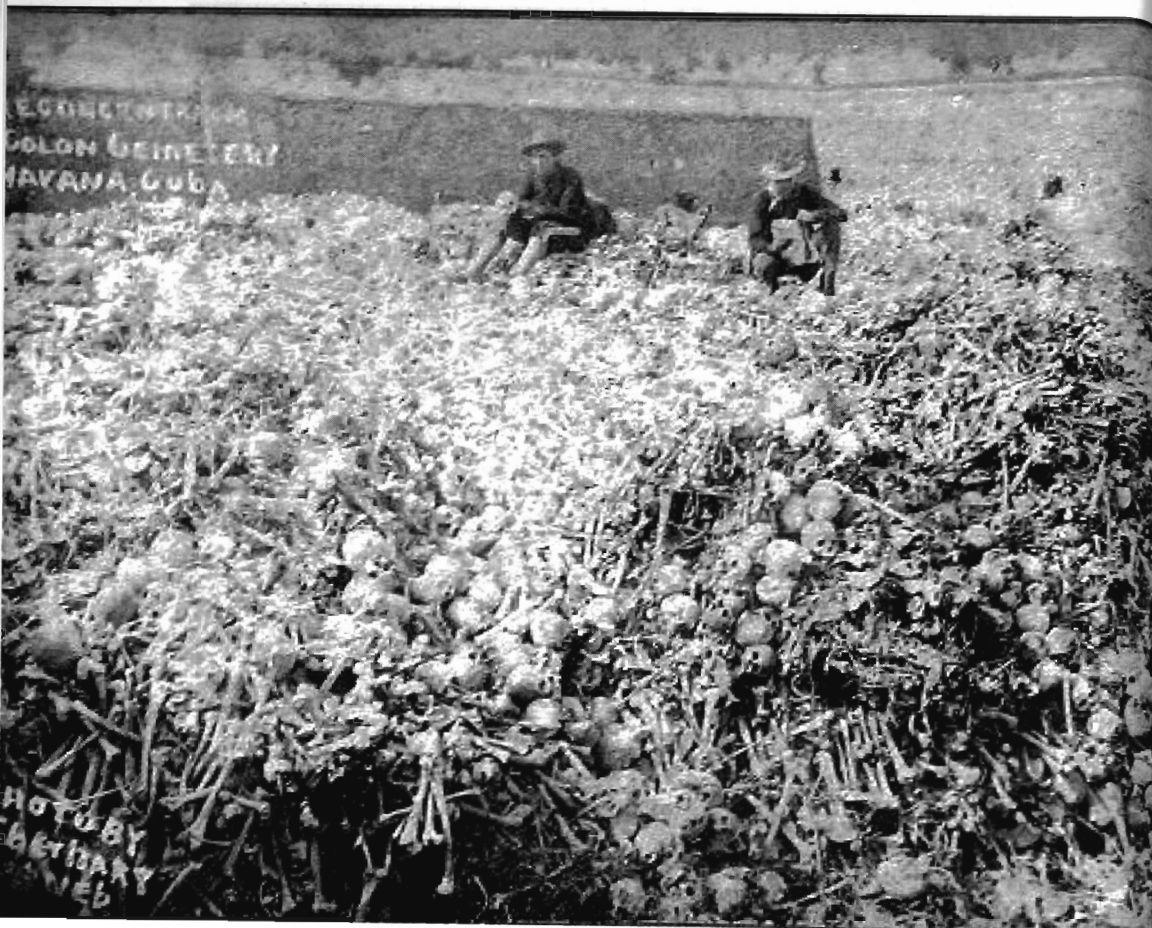
Many victims of reconcentration were children, like this boy.
Photograph used with permission of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana.



Many reconcentration victims were women, like this one, forced by the war into fortified Spanish towns and concentration camps. Photograph used with permission of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana.

countryside even before Blanco arrived in Havana in October 1897. Towns in Pinar del Río destroyed by insurgents had already been or were being rebuilt in the summer of 1897, and tobacco farms were back in normal operation in much of the province. Sugar plantations and mills in Havana and Matanzas, at least those that had not been completely demolished by the Liberation Army during the war, produced sugar again in 1897. What all of this meant was that, as bad as reconcentration was in the three westernmost provinces, the pacification of the region and the beginnings of economic recovery limited mortality to some small extent.

In the center of the island, in Santa Clara, people suffered even more than in the West. Of the 140,000 civilians who became reconcentrados, more than 52,997 of them died, according to the report of the provincial governor. This terrible mortality rate of 38 percent requires some explanation. Santa Clara became the "front line" of the war in 1897. As Spanish forces advanced eastward toward the Júcaro-Morón trocha, they carried out reconcentration behind the lines. But cultivation zones could not be set up so quickly nor defended well in a province still contested by the Cubans. In the less developed East, the insurgents controlled the situation. In the West, the Spanish did. Santa Clara occupied the



So many civilians died during reconcentration that their bodies could not be buried, as in this picture of skeletons piled high at a cemetery in Havana. Photograph used with permission of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana.

deadly zone in between, in which neither side dominated. Civilians are always the victims in such situations, and Santa Clara was no exception. For reasons we will examine in the next chapter, Weyler's Conservative backers in Spain began to lose their hold on power in August 1897, and Weyler realized that his days in Cuba were numbered. Unfortunately for the people of Santa Clara, the Spanish Liberals could not form a ministry for another two months, and in the meantime Weyler carried out reconcentration with extra rigor as he was determined to complete the pacification of the island as much as possible before he was relieved. The destruction of Santa Clara was Weyler's parting shot to Cuba.

One of the terrible ironies of reconcentration is that the worst mortality oc-

curred after Weyler's departure, under the Liberal government charged with dismantling reconcentration. Weyler had been removed on October 9, but Ramón Blanco did not arrive in Havana until October 31. Then followed another deadly delay of two weeks before Blanco officially ordered an end to reconcentration on November 13. Blanco decreed that farmers, agricultural workers, artisans, and their families could return to their homes. Along with this measure, Blanco also redeployed Spanish troops and Cuban Volunteers to garrison dozens of previously abandoned rural properties and small towns in order to protect the reconcentrados once they returned to the countryside. Blanco believed that, with the Cuban insurrection reduced to its original strongholds in Oriente, the time had come to repopulate and rebuild rural western Cuba.

Unfortunately, returning the reconcentrados to the countryside proved to be difficult. Indeed, one year later, in October 1898, American military officials occupying Cuba complained that reconcentration was still in effect.⁵⁴ Thousands of ill and malnourished people, many of them widows and orphans, could not simply be turned out of their lodgements, however miserable they might be. They had to be cured and fed first and then reinserted gradually into whatever they could reconstruct of their previous lives. To manage this transition, Blanco ordered the creation of "protective juntas" to manage the reconcentrados. Each municipality was supposed to form a junta of local notables charged with administering emergency rations and medicines and with overseeing the construction and repair of hospitals and housing for any remaining reconcentrados who had been unable to return immediately to their former lives.

Blanco's plan to end reconcentration achieved very little at first because the "protective juntas" administering the plan had no resources. The local elites who formed the juntas, even assuming that they were willing to use their own resources to provide relief to the reconcentrados, had been tapped out during almost three years of war. Indeed, except in particular cases, the scale of the crisis precluded local solutions, and Havana had to provide the money to manage deconcentration. Letters poured in to Blanco in November complaining that people continued to die in the streets as American photographers snapped their pictures. Only a grant of money from Blanco could rectify the situation.

Finally, on November 23, Blanco got the message and ordered a credit of 100,000 pesos set aside for distribution to the provinces. Not only did the credit of 100,000 pesos come too late. Not only was the sum not nearly enough. But Blanco made it difficult to use. Juntas had to issue such detailed receipts justifying their expenses that it made helping the reconcentrados all but impossible. Finally, Blanco doled out the credit with a miserly hand, assigning portions to each province only on November 29 but holding back half of the total until December 23.

Moreover, he coupled this grant of money with a new burden: the army would cease to provide emergency rations, which had previously been the only source of food for some of the reconcentrados. In future, all relief would have to come from the juntas, drawing upon the grants allotted to them by Blanco.

One of the greatest obstacles to deconcentration continued to be the insurgents. When Blanco began to facilitate the return of peasants to the countryside it alarmed the Cubans. "Because the enemy is trying to allow the reconcentrados to leave the towns and return to the countryside," read one proclamation, the Liberation Army would have to be more strict in enforcing the "system of warfare" put in place by Gómez. Townsfolk would not be allowed to leave, unless they came all the way over to the revolutionary camp. Simply returning to their homes was not to be permitted. On the contrary, "heads of families and men over sixteen years old" would be required to plant crops in zones protected by the republic-in-arms, and if they refused, they would be "expelled" from Cuba Libre and forced back into the cities. If the Spanish would not enforce reconcentration, the insurgents would.⁵⁵

The American press treated readers to daily fare on the subject of reconcentration. No account was too gruesome. On May 17, 1896, *New York World* correspondent James Creelman sought to slake his readers' thirst for tales of others' misery: "Blood on the roadsides, blood in the fields, blood on the doorsteps, blood, blood, blood. The old, the young, the weak, the crippled, all are butchered [by the Spanish] without mercy." Stories of Cuban slaughter comforted Americans not only by giving them solace in others' misery but also by reinforcing a familiar stereotype of the cruel, lascivious, and lazy Spaniard, historically the key antithesis to the humane, restrained, and industrious Anglo-Saxon, whose burden it was to save humanity.⁵⁶ The "black legend" of Spain, inherited from the victims of Spanish hegemony in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, held that Spaniards suffered from fiery temperaments, fanaticism, laziness, inconstancy, and an excess of bloodlust.⁵⁷ As the Spanish empire crumbled, Spain became the quintessential "dying nation," in Lord Salisbury's memorable phrase. She became even more capricious and dangerous, like an aging lion that has not yet admitted it is no longer the alpha male of the pride.⁵⁸ This was the Spain that undertook infant slaughter and warfare against women without a second thought. Joseph Pulitzer's *World* warned that "a new Armenia lies within eighty miles of the American coast," and the *Chicago Times-Herald* predicted that without U.S. intervention the slaughter would go on until no one was left in Cuba, because no number of civilian dead would be enough to satisfy "the thirst for blood inherent in the bull-fighting citizens of Spain."⁵⁹

newspaper articles quoted from secondary sources

Lurid accounts of reconcentration, combined with lower newspaper prices, more photographs, and flashier typefaces, allowed Pulitzer to increase subscriptions to the *World* from 400,000 in 1895 to 822,804 in 1898. William Randolph Hearst employed the same techniques and stories to raise the circulation of his *New York Journal* even more dramatically, from 150,000 in 1896 to almost 800,000 in 1898. Major dailies in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, St. Louis, San Francisco, Washington, and other American cities purchased and reprinted what the so-called yellow press in New York ran. As a result, day after day, Americans received a consistent and relentless tale of genocide in Cuba. It would have been hard to live in America and not have a very clear, though false, idea about reconcentration.

The yellow press loved to single out Weyler. He was such an easy target. An arrogant martinet, Weyler seemed to be the embodiment of the haughty Spaniard. Weyler's personality was not suited to handling questions from the press. Asked for statements and explanations, Weyler was likely to reply with brutal and hateful quips, as if to uphold his reputation for toughness and cutoff conversation. Weyler could not hide his distaste for reporters. At their best, they revealed his notorious womanizing, poked fun at his diminutive stature, or gave him nicknames like "General Almost Pacified." At their worst, they undermined the security of the Spanish state. Weyler's dislike for reporters was notorious, and we should not be surprised that the press returned his loathing in equal measure.

In fairness to the press, Weyler had made it difficult to gain anything other than a Cuban perspective on events. He attempted to create a news blackout by imposing rigid controls over telegraph communications and restricting the presence of journalists who wanted to see the war from the inside. This ensured that only the Cuban version of events reached the American public. The handful of reporters who went to Cuba to gain a firsthand experience of the war had to seek out Cuban hosts. Journalists like Grover Flint marched with Gómez, García, or Maceo, and not with the Spanish, in part because Weyler gave them no choice in the matter. And they filed stories by telegraph in Jamaica or Florida from the longhand notes they smuggled out because wiring articles directly from Cuba past Spanish censorship was impossible. What they wrote reflected their frustration with official Spain and their better treatment by the Cuban insurgents. In this way, Weyler's press controls backfired.

like Fidel Castro

What American reporters wrote about reconcentration came mostly from Cuban sources. Cuban patriots were not only superb practitioners of guerrilla warfare, they were also skilled propagandists. Officials of the Cuban provisional government provided information on Spanish human rights abuses to anyone

who would listen, especially to journalists. The political bias of such information was obvious, but at the time no one seemed to mind. Few American reporters understood Spanish, and even fewer wanted to go to Cuba. Given these limitations, journalists could hardly pursue leads and check facts with any rigor. Most filed whatever they were given by agents of the Cuban republic-in-arms and were content to call it journalism. Indeed, many reporters relied on briefings at the so-called Peanut Club, where Horatio Rubens, Tomás Estrada Palma, and other Cuban leaders in New York City issued daily press releases on Cuban victories and Spanish atrocities.⁶⁰

Not indyph

Officials of the Cuban republic-in-arms, both in Cuba and in the United States, had grasped the crucial role that the press and world opinion would play in the outcome of the war, while Weyler and the Spanish regime clearly had not. Where the Cubans appeared solicitous and eager to talk, Weyler seemed haughty and elusive. Inevitably, Cuban perspectives came to dominate public perceptions of reconcentration around the world.

Sometimes the journalists were themselves members of the Cuban junta in New York. The *Daily Inter-Ocean* printed a piece by Salvador Cisneros-Betancourt, who asked his American audience: "Will not the continuance of [Spain's] supremacy in Cuba mean the perpetuation of medieval traditions . . . and the upholding of all that to men of the nineteenth century is debased and barbaric?"⁶¹ Another member of the junta was given space in the *World* to describe his "impartial" account of the way Spanish troops "inhumanly hacked" Cuban patriots into pieces "in the fury of fiendish vindictiveness."⁶²

Henry Sylvester Scovel had a greater impact on American public opinion than any other journalist. His most famous contributions to public discourse in the United States were the articles he published in the *World* on November 21 and 30, 1896, summarizing several months of fieldwork in Cuba. Spain's "settled purpose" in carrying out reconcentration, according to Scovel, was the "extermination of the Cuban people under the cloak of civilized warfare." Scovel captivated his audience by detailing atrocities that the Spanish "dons" committed against civilians, especially against women and children. Scovel deployed the rhetoric of human rights and the techniques of yellow journalism to enthrall readers, sell papers, and prepare public opinion in the United States for war all at the same time.⁶³

Not every American journalist produced stories favorable to the Cuban cause. George Bronson Rea, after spending time with Maceo and Gómez, concluded that most of the stories of Cuban victories and Spanish atrocities had been fabricated. However, Rea's case was unusual. He worked for the *New York Herald*, one of the few papers to maintain some critical distance from official Cuban propa-

ganda. And even the *Herald* would not print some of Rea's material because it cast doubt on so much that was exciting, horrible, and profitable. In the end, Rea had to publish his findings in a book, where it had no impact on American opinion or foreign policy.⁶⁴

Foreign journalists, too, injected a note of skepticism and doubt about the Cuban reports. The *Times* of London had placed a man in Cuba who confessed that "[n]ewspapers in the United States publish repeatedly stories of such atrocious barbarities perpetrated under the Spanish regime, and committed by Spanish officers, that the Spaniards would be deservedly placed outside the pale of civilization if one-half of the charges formulated were true. I cannot obtain any proof to substantiate the wild talk indulged in with regard to these barbarous acts. . . . As for the charges made against General Weyler personally, they are too ridiculous to merit serious attention." The "wild talk" suggested that Spanish troops strip-searched Cuban women, raped them, killed their babies, tortured and murdered their husbands in cold blood, and shackled the survivors in dungeons and imprisoned them behind barbed wire, where food and medicine could be denied them. Weyler was supposed to be especially fond of rape and torture. Most American investigative journalists confirmed these and other practices reported to them by the Cubans. Reconcentration was mass murder on a gigantic scale carried out deliberately by the satanic Weyler and his Spanish demons.⁶⁵

We can glimpse in detail an example of the way Cuban patriots fed American journalists doctored accounts of Spanish "atrocities" in an investigation carried out by the Spanish foreign minister into a sinister story that hit the American presses in late 1897. An American newsman reported that the commander of the garrison of Nuevitas had set himself up as a little dictator and had declared it a capital offense for anyone to leave their homes. When people left in order to procure food, he had them shot. One woman in Puerto Príncipe seemed to have been shot under such circumstances, sparking a protest by several foreign consuls in Havana and raising a scandal in Madrid. In the mind of the American public, this became twisted into the belief that no one, anywhere, at any time could step outside without risking death. The image of the Cuban people furtively going out for a breath of air, hiding around corners from Spanish sentries, was a pleasing one to the American public. These were people who clearly needed liberating. The real story, unearthed after an investigation by Foreign Minister Segismundo Moret and Ramón Blanco was less press worthy. The garrison commander in Nuevitas had declared it a capital offense for civilians to leave their homes during an attack by insurgents, a routine provision of martial

law. The attack never occurred, and the penalty was never imposed. By then, however, an incredulous American public believed that the Spanish were capable of anything.⁶⁶

Not indexed In another example, Senator Roger Mills publicly accused the Spanish of capturing and murdering Antonio Maceo and Pancho Gómez, despite all evidence to the contrary. As we have seen, the two illustrious Cubans died in battle, and the Spanish soldiers present did not even recognize their bodies, leaving them behind for the Cubans to recover. Nevertheless, even after the details became known, most of the American public remained convinced that the Spanish had murdered the Bronze Titan and the young son of Máximo Gómez.⁶⁷

Not indexed Cuban patriots in New York were tireless in their efforts to persuade Americans to intervene in Cuba. In one of hundreds of examples, Ricardo Delgado wrote a long piece for the New York World, which served as a conduit for Cuban propaganda in the United States, on August 23, 1896. Delgado described how he narrowly escaped when one of Maceo's camps in Pinar del Río was overrun by the Spanish. He explained that even with 80,000 [sic] men under arms, the Liberation Army could not stop the Spanish from murdering civilians. He knew of at least 10,000 who had been murdered. "They have been shot down in their houses or by the roadside and their bodies left to the birds of prey." He knew personally of the assaulting of many women, "even young girls of ten, by these brutal, bloodthirsty Spanish troops." He told of how Weyler forced the wife of an insurgent to disrobe, and, how, with his riding boots still on, he mounted her, spurring her flesh as he forced her to crawl on all fours. Later he turned her and other captured Cuban women over to the common troops, who used them until they died, mutilating their bodies after death. "God forbid the continuation of the hellish atrocities that are now going on daily and hourly in Cuba. . . . Will not the people of America help us?"⁶⁸

American officials were just as dependent on Cuban sources of information as members of the American press were. The Cuban junta in Manhattan had close ties to various figures in the government, especially Wilkensen Call and William Sulzer, House representatives from Florida and New York, and Don Cameron and Henry Cabot Lodge, senators from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. A Cuban legation at the Raleigh Hotel in Washington had a bankroll of \$1 million and exerted all of its effort to lobby Congress and the administration.⁶⁹

One of the Cubans' most important allies was U.S. consul Fitzhugh Lee. The nephew of Robert E. Lee, a former Confederate cavalry commander, and the ex-governor of Virginia, Fitzhugh Lee was an indispensable political asset. This made his ignorance of Spain, Cuba, and the Spanish language forgivable and even useful, especially when there were so many English-speaking Cuban field

officers happy to keep Lee up to date on the reconcentration problem.⁷⁰ Despising everything about Spain and Spanish culture, Lee was no friend to Weyler, who treated Lee coldly.⁷¹ To Lee's queries about civilian suffering, Weyler responded that "everything is fair in war," a line of argument designed to anger rather than court Lee.⁷² It is not surprising that Lee — and every other American in Cuba — turned exclusively to Cuban sources for intelligence about reconcentration. This ensured that Washington had the propaganda tools it needed to sell a war in Cuba to the American public.

Summing up what we know about reconcentration, the available data, summarized in Table 4 above, indicate that 295,357 Cubans were reconcentrated, not counting those in the province of Havana, which supplied no data. It is certain that if we had solid data for the province of Havana, the total number of reconcentrados would be higher. We know from the numbers on mortality in Matanzas, Las Villas, and Pinar del Río that 102,469 reconcentrados died. The governors of Havana, Puerto Príncipe, and Santiago provided no firm data. If they had — especially if the missing data for Havana were included — the total number of reconcentrados who died in Cuba might approach a figure close to the undoctored estimates based on the censuses, as well as those worked out by Jordi Maluquer de Motes, who concluded that between 155,000 and 170,000 of the reconcentrados died.

Although not quite the 300,000 or 400,000 dead of legend, the figure of 155,000 to 170,000 civilian casualties is enormous, amounting to about 10 percent of the total Cuban population of around 1,700,000. While it is true that Weyler was neither the first nor the last person to relocate civilians in wartime, and while it is true that the Cuban revolutionaries, among others, must share the blame for reconcentration and the extension of warfare to the civilian population, Weyler's enterprise was unprecedented at the time for its scale, intensity, and efficiency. In later years, Weyler and his defenders liked to point out that, with the war in Cuba barely ended, the British imposed a brutal form of reconcentration on the Boer population in the Transvaal and Free Orange State and "everyone thought it natural and did not make the least protest."⁷³ The same thing happened in the Philippines, where Americans herded civilians into fortified camps to choke off a movement against the American occupation, causing mortality worse than anything that had happened under the Spanish, with only a murmur of criticism. Indeed, this may help to explain why, in 1902, the U.S. Congress officially absolved Weyler of any wrongdoing, as if it were in its power to do so. We may add that in Vietnam the French had their agrovilles in the 1940s, which became the Americans' "strategic hamlets" in the 1960s. Many similar examples could be cited. The point is that Weyler's reconcentration

How many deaths?

No citation

formed part of a long tradition of counterinsurgency warfare, and it is incorrect to credit him with any particular military genius, even an evil one. On the other hand, the Spanish administration of Cánovas, and their servant in Cuba, Weyler, conducted a campaign of warfare against civilians in Cuba that led to the death of some 10 percent of the population. That others contributed to it and that similar examples of atrocious military practices in other countries can be cited in no way exculpates the responsibility of the Spanish regime. Sometimes "black legends" contain some truth, and when they do, they must be faced squarely.

Reconcentration worked to undermine the Cuban insurgency, but it backfired by creating an outcry in the United States against Spanish barbarism. When a state — especially a populist republic — embarks on foreign military adventures, it is essential to prepare the ground by clothing war in the language of human rights and a civilizing mission. Reconcentration gave the American jingo the tool they needed to do this. As a result, the American public went to war in Cuba confident that its cause was righteous. Even so, American intervention was not inevitable. It required an unforeseen cataclysm in Spain to make that happen.

15 ★ The Monster and the Assassin

History sometimes turns on the unforeseeable actions of individuals. This injects a complexity into human affairs that frustrates scholars who want to reduce human experience to a predictable, manipulable, and safe social science. This complexity delights historians, however, and it serves an important function. It reminds us that we are agents of our own destiny, free to be angels or demons.

The unpredictable event that helped to produce Spain's defeat in Cuba was the assassination of Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, Spain's great Conservative statesman. In 1874 Cánovas had written the seventeen-year-old Alfonso's Sandhurst Manifesto, the founding document of the Bourbon Restoration in Spain. It was he who crafted the Spanish constitution and he who created the ingenious system of electoral prestidigitation known as the turno pacífico. Cánovas restored order to Spain and inaugurated the most stable parliamentary government the country had ever seen. European and American statesmen held him in high esteem. Bismarck, for example, considered Cánovas one of the few people with whom he could really have a conversation.¹

Like Bismarck, but on a smaller stage, Cánovas used foreign adventures to bind fractious Spaniards together and solve political crises at home. In 1860, for example, he exulted over the sharp, decisive victory against Morocco, not so much because he was interested in the occupation of Tetuán, but because it generated, if only briefly, a sense of national community and mission in Spain. Cánovas opposed Spain's withdrawal from the joint Franco-Spanish attempt to seize Mexico in the 1860s, and he fought the decision to abandon the Dominican Republic in 1865, despite the fact that both the Mexicans and the Dominicans had made it quite clear that the Spanish presence would not be tolerated. On the face of it, this intransigence appears foolish: Cánovas argued that once Spain committed its armies to a foreign adventure, sounding the retreat would damage Spanish prestige so badly that it would prove more costly in the long run than investing additional resources in salvaging the situation. In a famous speech before the Spanish Congress on March 29, 1865, Cánovas expressed himself on the subject of the Dominican war: "What we cannot do is brandish our sword, wave the flag, and go into combat against a miserable army of half savages on the beaches of America, and return defeated, leaving our reputation

Notes

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

| | |
|-------|--|
| AGM | Archivo General Militar (Segovia) |
| AHN | Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid) |
| AMM | Archivo General Militar de Madrid (Madrid) |
| ANC | Archivo Nacional de Cuba (Havana) |
| BN | Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid) |
| car. | carpeta (folder) |
| CGC | Sección Capitanía General de Cuba |
| div. | división (division) |
| EP | Sección Expedientes Personales |
| exp. | expediente (document) |
| GR | Sección Gobierno de la Revolución |
| HL | Huntington Library (Pasadena) |
| LCMD | Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division (Washington, D.C.) |
| leg. | legajo (box or bundle) |
| secc. | sección (section) |

PREFACE

1. For an example of the old interpretation in which the Cubans played little role in their own liberation see the classic work by Frank Freidel, *The Splendid Little War*. The “black legend” of Spanish decadence is a theme I discuss in a later chapter. For an essay on the theme see López Ibor, *El español y su complejo de inferioridad*.

2. For a critique of the American project of “constructing the Cuban absence” see the chapter by that title in Pérez, *War of 1898*. This “history with the Cubans left out” never went unchallenged in America. See, for example, Philip Foner, especially in his *Spanish-Cuban-American War*.

3. The myth of the Cuban “people-in-arms” was consubstantial with the war itself. Nevertheless, at least two Cuban combatants knew better and fought against the myth. General Piedra Martel found risible the view that Cuban national consciousness had anything to do with the genesis or success of the Cuban war effort: “The national spirit of independence was never well developed in Cuba. Not in 1868, and not in 1895 . . . despite the fact that some historians want to see in them an already well defined separatist tendency. A heroic minority sustained the war of 68 . . . and the same thing happened in the war of 95.” See Manuel Piedra Martel, *Campañas de Maceo*, 9–10. General Miró dismissed as absurd the “grave error” current in 1895 that claimed armed insurgents were naturally superior fighters because they embodied the innate spirit of the people. See Miró, *Cuba*, 23. Unfortunately, the wisdom of Miró and Piedra Martel found no place in the historiography.

4. The classic account in this vein is the work by Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, especially his *Cuba no debe*, where the title says it all. For more recent examples of this traditional nationalist interpretation of the war, see Amado Palenque, *La campaña de invasión*, 10, where

49. *Mayía Rodríguez to Alejandro Rodríguez, October 20, 21, 1897, and January 9, 1898, ANC, GR, legs. 14, 1859.*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. Weyler's orders in AMM, CGC, leg. 114.
2. Pérez Guzmán, *Herida profunda*, 46-47.
3. *Ibid.*, 17.
4. Morote, *En la manigua*, 4.
5. Chadwick, *Relations*, 2:493-94.
6. Pérez Guzmán, *Herida profunda*, 256.
7. AHN, Sección Diversos, Títulos-Familias, leg. 3176, no. 107; Fernando Gómez, *La insurrección por dentro*, 19.
8. Gutiérrez de la Concha, *Memoria sobre la guerra*, 89.
9. *Cardona* Circulars dated April 6, 8, and 26, 1870, AMM, CGC, leg. 61.
10. Weyler, *Mi mando*, 1:9.
11. Cardona and Losada, *Weyler*, 12.
12. Correspondence between Martínez Campos and the minister of war and the colonial minister, AMM, CGC, leg. 101.
13. The Cuban "deconcentration" orders may be found in AMM, CGC, leg. 138.
14. Espinosa y Ramos, *Al trote*, 69, 253.
15. Machado's correspondence, AMM, CGC, leg. 136.
16. Barnet, *Biografía de un cimarrón*, 162.
17. Weyler, *Mi mando*, 1:56.
18. Máximo Gómez to Rafael Portuondo, September 8, 1896, ANC, GR, leg. 11, exp. 1451.
19. General José M. Capote to Brigadier Cornleo Rojas, n.d., ANC, GR, leg. 16, exp. 2207.
20. Máximo Gómez to Rafael Portuondo, September 8, 1896, ANC, GR, leg. 11, exp. 1451.
21. Brigadier Javier Vega to Secretary of War Rafael Manduley, July 18, 1896, ANC, GR, leg. 16, exp. 2219.
22. Letter of April 3, 1896, Phillips Papers, LCMD.
23. Reports from Cuban commanders, AMM, CGC, leg. 140.
24. Maceo's orders, AMM, CGC, leg. 138.
25. *Times of London*, July 17, 1896.
26. AMM, CGC, microfilm no. 33.
27. Pardo González, *La brigada*, 36-37.
28. Trial records, AMM, CGC, leg. 136.
29. El Gobierno Civil del Estado de Oriente listed hundreds of names of prefects, subprefects, and other civil officials in 1897, in ANC, GR, leg. 14, exp. 1648.
30. Brigadier José Gómez to Santiago García Cañizares, February 14 and March 5, 1897, ANC, GR, leg. 16, exp. 2255 and 2262; Brigadier H. Espinosa to Cañizares, April 17, 1897, ANC, GR, leg. 16, exp. 2269.
31. AMM, CGC, leg. 138.

32. José María Rodríguez to General Miles, August 17, 1898, and Rodríguez to Bar-tolomé Masó, n.d., ANC, GR, leg. 11, exps. 1851, 1852.

33. Jesús Rabí to García Cañizares, September 19, 1898, ANC, GR, leg. 16, exp. 2197.
34. Castro's correspondence, AGM, secc. 6A, div. 3a, leg. K3.
35. Gómez to Portuondo, November 21, December 8, 1896, and Portuondo to Consejo de Gobierno, December 10, 1896, ANC, GR, leg. 11, exps. 1468, 1469.
36. Weyler's personnel file, AMM, EP, microfilm no. 53.
37. Various telegrams from the field, AMM, CGC, leg. 482.
38. AMM, CGC, leg. 440.
39. Corral, *El desastre*, 43-44, 81-85, 97.
40. Weyler's instructions in AMM, CGC, leg. 114.
41. Millis, *Martial Spirit*, 75-77.
42. See, for example, Espinosa y Ramos, *Al trote*, 156-57.
43. Romanones, *Sagasta*, 192; Francos Rodríguez, *La vida de Canalejas*, 156-58; Pérez Guzmán, *Herida profunda*, 10.
44. Offner, *Unwanted War*, 92-93. Lee later revised this estimate downward to 200,000.
45. Morgan, *America's Road*, 25.
46. Offner, *Unwanted War*, 42-48.
47. Russell et al., *Illustrated History*.
48. For examples, see Golay, *Spanish-American War*, 5; Pérez Guzmán, *Herida profunda*, 10; Romanones, *Sagasta*, 192-95; and Roig de Leuchsenring, *Cuba no debe*, 18-21, and *La guerra libertadora*, 145. Roig viewed reconcentration as "the extermination of the civilian peasant population by the barbaric Weyler and his hordes of assassins," and when it came to counting the victims of reconcentration, he chose the highest possible figures given by Blanco and Canalejas. The quotation is from Roig's introduction to Juan Gualberto Gómez, *Por Cuba Libre*, 45.
49. Pérez de la Riva and Blanca Morejón, "La población de Cuba"; Le Riverend, *Historia Económica*, 491, 563. Philip Foner also liked the figure of 200,000. See Foner, *Spanish-Cuban-American War*, 1:115. The number of dead could be increased further by rounding the population of 1895 up to 1,800,000 and that of 1898 down to 1,500,000, as Hugh Thomas seems to have done (*Cuba*, 423). Even this was not enough for Fernando Portuondo del Prado and Oscar Pino-Santos, who, using this same census data, insisted nonetheless that 400,000 reconcentrados died, a figure that far exceeds their own already generously rounded data. See Portuondo del Prado, *Historia de Cuba*, 578, and Pino-Santos, *Cuba*, 231.
50. Maluquer de Motes, *España en la crisis*, 39. Maluquer's discussion of the census data is the most skillful that I have seen.
51. Trask, *War with Spain*, 9; Joseph Smith, *Spanish-American War*, 19; Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 70; Pérez Castañeda, *La explosión*; Mesa-Lago, "El trabajo en Cuba," 36-77.
52. The data and the discussion that follows (unless otherwise indicated) come from reports on reconcentration in AMM, GCG, especially leg. 167, and AMM, Fondo Documentación sobre Cuba, leg. 61.
53. AMM, CGC, microfilm no. 45.
54. AMM, CGC, leg. 159.
55. Circular to prefects November 1897, AMM, CGC, leg. 136.

56. *New York World*, May 17, 1896. See also Wilkerson, *Public Opinion*, 29–40. Americans connected Weyler's behavior in Cuba with the murderous occupation of the Low Countries by the Duke of Alva in the late sixteenth century. It was then, according to Henry Cabot Lodge, that the English and the Dutch, representatives of civilization, had begun the work of dismantling the decadent Catholic empire of the Spanish Hapsburgs, and it would fall to the Americans to complete the job. "We represent the spirit of liberty," wrote Lodge, "and the spirit of the new time, and Spain is over against us because she is medieval, cruel, dying" (Lodge, *Intervention in Cuba*, 8–9).

57. Julian Juderías first used the term "black legend" for the title of his 1914 book, *La leyenda negra*. The timing of the work is interesting. Juderías had lived through the most intense period of "Spain bashing" the world had seen since the Thirty Years' War. An interesting essay on the image of Spain in America is Kagan, "Prescott's Paradigm."

58. Robert Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury, pronounced his "dying nations" speech in Royal Albert Hall three days after George Dewey destroyed Spain's Asian Fleet in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. Later, in a fit of diplomatic sensitivity, he denied that Spain had been the subject of his discourse, but no one believed his retraction. The language of "living" and "dying" nations had already become familiar in the age of social Darwinism. And in the United States no one doubted which nation was living (the United States) and which dying (Spain). There is a nice analysis of the impact of this speech in Spain in Ballbé, *Orden público*, 175–79.

59. Thomas, *Cuba*, 336; Wilkerson, *Public Opinion*, 7–8, 29–32, 42. On this subject see also Wisan, *Cuban Crisis*. On the subject of bullfighting, Mary F. Lowell of the Temperance League argued in public forums that Spanish cruelty arose from the national festival, which produced monsters like Weyler who were inured to the most extreme violence and who were therefore more likely to employ it themselves in a routine way. Lowell's amateurish sociology received an interesting retort by the eminent Spanish writer Emilia Pardo Bazán, in *La vida*, 31–37.

60. Millis, *Martial Spirit*, 40–43.

61. *Daily Inter-Ocean*, February 10, 1896.

62. *New York World*, May 26, 1896.

63. Brown, *Correspondents' War*, 49.

64. Rea, *Facts and Fakes*.

65. *Times of London*, May 21, 1896.

66. Moret to Blanco, AMM, CGC, leg. 114.

67. Armiñan, *Weyler*, 15.

68. *New York World*, August 23, 1896.

69. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 287–88.

70. AMM, CGC, leg. 145.

71. Morgan, *America's Road*, 23.

72. Lee, "Cuba under Spanish Rule."

73. Pardo González, *La brigada*, 14.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. For recent reassessments of Cánovas, covering every aspect of his life and times, see Bullón de Mendoza and Togoires, eds., *Cánovas y su época*.

2. Conde Fernández-Oliva, "Sobre el pensamiento," 143–44.

3. Comellas, *Cánovas*, 95, 153, 330–34. On his view of monarchy, see also Raga Gil, "Cánovas ante la Gloriosa," 33–46.

4. Comellas, *Cánovas*, 130–31, 227; Raga Gil, "Cánovas ante la Gloriosa," 44–45.

5. The following discussion rests on two excellent accounts of the political crisis of the early 1890s in Spain: Serrano, *Le tour du peuple*, and Alvarez Junco, *El emperador*.

6. Serrano Sanz, *El viraje*.

7. Anarchism was more complex than can be described here. See Alvarez Junco, *La ideología política del anarquismo*; Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology*; and Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalucía*.

8. Alvarez Junco, *El emperador*, 148.

9. Argilagos, *Prédicas insurrectas*, 32–48.

10. Alvarez Junco, *El emperador*, 154.

11. Fernández, *Cuban Anarchism*, 31–35.

12. Fernández, *La sangre*, 23–29.

13. *Ibid.*, 30.

14. *Ibid.*, 80–94.

15. *Ibid.*, 34.

16. Mariano y Vivo, *Apuntes en defensa*, 93–95.

17. Sagasta's quote reproduced in Roig de Leuchsenring, *Cuba no debe*, 30.

18. Armiñan, *Weyler*, 165.

19. García Acuña, *Impresiones y antecedentes*, 6.

20. Pando, *Documento*, 6.

21. Offner, *Unwanted War*, 57.

22. Adán, *El Lobbyismo*, 11.

23. Estrada Palma to García Cañizares, AMM, CGC, leg. 155.

24. Estrada Palma's correspondence in AMM, CGC, leg. 155.

25. Dupuy correspondence in AMM, CGC, leg. 155.

26. This is the position of Robles Muñoz, 1898, 104–7.

27. See Offner, *Unwanted War*, for a detailed examination of diplomacy in this period.

28. Letter from Ramón Solano of January 22, 1898, AMM, CGC, leg. 138.

29. In Jiguaní, eleven insurgents turned themselves in during early February. In March Cayito Alvarez and other Cuban officers attempted to surrender but were intercepted and executed by another band of Cubans. In Sancti Spiritus in early April 1898, Colonel Rosendo García surrendered with three officers and twenty-two men, all armed and mounted. These are just a few examples of what was going on. As General Pando wrote to Blanco from Manzanillo on March 13, 1898: "Desertion continues and marked enemy demoralization in this jurisdiction" (AMM, CGC, legs. 155, 159).

30. López Marín to Gustavo, Guanajay, January 28, 1898, AMM, CGC, leg. 155.

31. Corral, *El desastre*, 136–38.

32. A detailed Spanish assessment of Cuban forces in AMM, CGC, leg. 159.

33. Orencio to Viñagera, AMM, CGC, leg. 155.

34. Dyal, *Historical Dictionary*, 10.

35. Fernández, *La sangre*.