

## MARIANA GRAJALES: BLACK PROGENITRESS OF CUBAN INDEPENDENCE

James D. Henderson\*

Surveying the ruins of his American empire in the mid-1820s, Ferdinand VII could find some satisfaction in the fact that Cuba, one of his richest possessions, remained wedded to its colonial status. Several factors help explain the Cuban failure to take up the revolutionary gauntlet at the same time continental America threw off Iberian dominance. Throughout the years of fighting, Cuba was the principal staging point for Spanish soldiers on their way to the mainland, and therefore was always garrisoned with thousands of troops. Over the entire revolutionary period, Cuba experienced an economic boom which extended into the 1860s. Most of this prosperity was based on increased sugar production which enriched creole and peninsular landowners and other commercial interests and made them tenacious defenders of the colonial status quo. Burgeoning sugar production brought with it a tremendous influx of African slaves to work the plantations. In that fact lay the final powerful explanation for Cuban conservatism. Between 1800 and 1865 some half million slaves were transported to the island, and by 1817 the combined slave and free black population surpassed that of the whites.<sup>1</sup> As black<sup>2</sup> predominance grew, so did white fear of slave revolt. The Spanish minister Calatrava could write confidently in 1823, "The fear that the Cubans have of their blacks is Spain's greatest security in guaranteeing her domination of the island."<sup>3</sup>

The free blacks were the most troubling to those who profited from sugar and slavery. Less than half as numerous as the whites, they formed an intelligent and ambitious group of artisans and small farmers. Directors of colonial fortunes rightly perceived the free blacks as a dangerous anomaly in the society they had created, and over the first half of the nineteenth century, tried to hobble them by enacting a series of laws which limited their rights as free Cuban citizens.

When dissatisfaction with Spanish rule touched off the Ten Years' War in 1868, many free blacks joined the revolt and assumed positions of leadership in it. They formed one of the more radical contingents in the revolutionary armies, for in addition to political independence, they demanded immediate abolition of slavery and an end to the racism which they clearly saw as harmful to Cuba as a whole. Theirs was a sophisticated nationalism that in time broadened to make them an advance guard of Third World anti-imperialism.

There was no middle ground in the Cuban wars of independence. When men joined the revolt their families were routinely persecuted by the Spanish au-

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\*James D. Henderson is Coordinator of Latin American Studies at Grambling State University, Grambling, Louisiana.

thorities. Thus women and children often joined the insurgents and traveled with them for years at a time. Far from burdening the armies, they staffed hospitals, operated kitchens and offered field support that otherwise might not have existed. The best known among these *soldaderas* of the Cuban wars of independence was Mariana Grajales, an iron-willed free black to whom the Spanish referred shudderingly as "the mother of the terrible Maceos."

The violence of the Haitian revolution sent thousands fleeing Santo Domingo in the years following 1790. Cuba alone received a flood of thirty thousand immigrants between 1790 and 1804,<sup>4</sup> among them the free mulattoes Teresa and José Grajales. Like many of their race they made their way to Santiago, the principal city of eastern Cuba, whose considerable free black population made it something like their native Santo Domingo.<sup>5</sup> There they established their family, and on June 26, 1808, Teresa gave birth to a daughter whom they named Mariana.

Life in Santiago was not unpleasant for the Grajales and other free blacks. Though barred from assuming positions of leadership in the city, they shared a sense of community with others of their group, and were able to form meaningful relationships with whites and slaves as well.<sup>6</sup> In addition to its relatively benign race relations, Santiago enjoyed a degree of political liberality not shared by other Cuban cities. Since it was removed from large sugar growing areas, fewer creole *hacendados* and *peninsulares* lived there, and as a port city, its people stayed abreast of developments in Europe and the Americas—often learning of major world events sooner than other Cubans. Perhaps these factors explain the enthusiasm with which *santiagueros* greeted news that the liberal Spanish constitution had been reinstated in 1820 and the fact that elite leaders of the city were early proponents of political self-determination for the island and the abolition of slavery.<sup>7</sup> Creole nationalist José Antonio Saco was representative of this group. Born in nearby Bayamo, another city with heavy free black population, Saco was forced into exile for his outspoken denunciations of Spanish policy.

During her childhood, a great deal of what Mariana Grajales saw and heard around the bustling port city of Santiago must have troubled her. When she was just four years old the conspiracy of José Antonio Aponte, "the Cuban Spartacus", rocked Habana, Bayamo and several other cities. Aponte, a free black who had hoped to lead a slave revolt along Haitian lines, was executed along with many other conspirators.<sup>8</sup> Between Mariana's seventh and tenth years she saw troops marching out of town to battle *cimarrones* of the "great *palenque* of Frijol" located in the mountains north of Santiago,<sup>9</sup> and two years later, in 1819, one Ventura Sánchez rallied slaves on the outskirts of the city with the cry of "Land and Liberty." In each case the communities of run-away slaves were dispersed but never entirely eradicated.

The everyday sights of a slave society shadowed Mariana's childhood, although her reaction to the gangs of men, women and children fresh from the slave ships who were led naked through the streets of Santiago can only be imagined. One wonders how, as a girl of thirteen, she assessed the municipal campaign to relieve Santiago of the "insupportable stench" caused by rotting *bozales* left improperly

buried around the city's *barracones*.<sup>10</sup> Aware of the great difference between slave and free, a sense of their common origin nevertheless aroused her compassion. We know that years later she regularly visited the jail where captured *cimarrones* were punished in order that she not forget the horrors of slavery.<sup>11</sup>

Mariana received little formal education as she was growing up, probably because her parents were too poor to pay the modest tuition demanded by Santiago's school for free blacks.<sup>12</sup> She had to settle for the kind of informal education that could be acquired from her parents, through religious training and by remaining sensitive to the winds of change blowing across Cuba—winds which would in time sweep her into the mainstream of national history.

At the age of twenty-three Mariana Grajales married Fructuoso Regüeyferos y Hecheverría of Santiago. Between the time of her marriage in early 1831 and the year 1840, she bore four children, Felipe, Fermín, Manuel and Justo.<sup>13</sup> Tragedy struck the family in 1840 when Fructuoso Regüeyferos died. Mariana Grajales, widowed at the age of only 32, gathered up her young sons and returned to her parents' house.

The decade that Mariana and Fructuoso spent together was a relatively quiet one in the political life of the colony. Sugar continued to enrich everyone connected with its production, except of course the slave, and the sugar aristocracy gave thanks for its good fortune by steadfastly supporting the colonial regime. Only a short-lived liberal revolt in Spain, and a new promulgation of the hoary 1812 constitution, excited the island. Again it was the Oriente region, and Santiago in particular, where liberal fervor passed the bounds of prudence. In early September of 1836 General Manuel Lorenzo pledged allegiance to the document as enthusiastic crowds surged through the streets singing the Marseillaise.<sup>14</sup> But within a month Lorenzo and his subalterns were under arrest on order of Captain General Miguel Tacón, and by December they were bound for Spain to stand trial for treason. Tacón continued his persecution of Liberals in Oriente well into 1837, executing scores, driving others into exile, and in the process giving rise to a new popular saying. When asked where their liberal masters had gone, slaves on the sugar plantations answered laconically "Ya ahorcan blancos" (now they hang whites).<sup>15</sup>

Mariana Grajales did not long remain single after the death of her first husband. After all, she was an attractive and respectable widow in the prime of life, and her four healthy sons would soon be of an age to help with family chores. And Mariana was the first to realize that for the sake of her children she must find them a new father. All these factors weighed in the considerations which, in 1843, united Mariana and Marcos Maceo, a well-liked Santiago merchant, himself a widower with six children, and like Mariana a mulatto. Friends and relatives of both saw the wisdom of the match and approved of it, even though a formal wedding was not imminent.

Marcos Maceo was not a native of Cuba. Born in Venezuela, he had fought with distinction in loyalist armies during the wars against Bolívar and Páez. After Spanish defeat on the mainland he and the rest of his family left their home at Coro

and immigrated to Santiago de Cuba.<sup>16</sup> While his brother continued his career in the Spanish army, Marcos turned to commerce, and over the years won respect for his energy and probity.<sup>17</sup>

Mariana and Marcos' first child was born in Santiago on June 14, 1845. He was called Antonio de la Caridad, described on his baptismal certificate of August 26th as the "legitimate son of Marcos Maceo . . . and Mariana Grajales y Cuello."<sup>18</sup> Present at the baptism was Antonio's godfather, Don Ascensio de Asencio, a well-to-do creole lawyer of Santiago.<sup>19</sup>

Antonio Maceo was born at a time of tension in all sectors of Cuban society. In 1843 and 1844 conspiracies of slaves and free blacks were discovered near Matanzas and Habana, and in the frightful police action that followed hundreds of blacks were executed, many by flogging on a stairway-like scaffold designed especially for that purpose. The "Conspiracy of the Stairway" ultimately affected every black in Cuba, for it resulted in a series of draconian measures ordering strict surveillance of free blacks and fines for those who, in the opinion of police "offended them or showed lack of respect."<sup>20</sup> Blacks emancipated after May 1844 were to be expelled from Cuba, and all those not native to the island were forced to emigrate. Accordingly, Marcos Maceo visited the notary of Santiago early in 1845, securing an affidavit declaring that he was born in that city.<sup>21</sup>

Except for moments of uncertainty caused by factors outside of their control, the Maceos enjoyed moderate prosperity. Careful stewardship by Mariana and Marcos allowed them to purchase a farm north of Santiago in the Majaguabo district of San Luis *municipio*, and they named it, appropriately, La Esperanza. Mariana spent most of the succeeding years there, or at Las Delicias, the farm Marcos bought when he first arrived in Cuba.<sup>22</sup> Only when she was ready to give birth did she make the trip in to Santiago, always staying at the substantial house located at 16 Providencia Street. Between 1847 and 1850 she made three such trips, returning first with María Baldomera, then with José Marcelino and then with Rafael.<sup>23</sup> On the sixth of July, 1851, Mariana and Marcos took a trip of a different sort, this time to the nearby *cabecera* of San Luis. Many members of the flourishing family went along to witness the couple's much-postponed marriage. Over the following nine years five more children were born to Mariana Grajales and Marcos Maceo.<sup>24</sup> The last, Marcos, came when Mariana was fifty-two years old.

Several significant events marked the decade of the 1850's in Cuba. Seventy thousand slaves died in the great epidemics of 1852–1853 which carried off a tenth of the island's population. In Santiago alone 2,734 persons succumbed to cholera between September and December of 1852.<sup>25</sup> In the political sphere the relatively liberal policies of Captain General Juan de la Pezuela seemed to herald a new understanding between Cubans and the mother country, particularly in the area of slavery and the slave trade. Pezuela himself had abolitionist leanings, and under British urging, positive steps were taken to halt the flow of slaves into the island. But a strong reaction from influential owners of *ingenios* thwarted the program and sent Pezuela packing. Traditional, absolutist Cuba met the challenge of change in the 50's and emerged triumphant.

By 1862 Mariana Grajales was past middle-age. Her childbearing days behind her she could dedicate herself to raising the younger children, enjoying the triumphs of those already grown, and anticipating a dignified old age as matriarch of a vigorous and important tribe. Antonio, her eldest son by Marcos, joined half-brother Justo to administer the sale of farm produce in Santiago, and his marriage to María Cabrales in 1866 brought her the prospect of new grandchildren.<sup>26</sup>

Even as Mariana and her family settled into their role as one of the more prolific and prosperous free black families of rural Majaguabo district, events were conspiring to change the pattern of their existence. On one hand Cuba was becoming ever more strongly influenced by changes in the international economic climate. Economic fluctuations such as the severe depression of 1857 caused hardship on the island that was translated into demands for various kinds of reform.<sup>27</sup> International politics also had an immense impact in those years. The outcome of the United States Civil War, defeat of the French in Mexico and withdrawal of Spain from the Dominican Republic struck at Spanish absolutism in Cuba and heartened all anti-Spanish groups on the island. Failure of the Reformist Party in 1867 strengthened the hand of more radical creoles who had consistently argued that force must be used to win political freedom and civil rights for Cubans.<sup>28</sup> Significantly, creole radicals, unlike their more moderate counterparts, spoke out strongly against slavery thereby winning sympathy among free blacks.

Creole militance was focused in Oriente province during the mid-1860s, and it spread and strengthened itself through a network of Masonic lodges in major towns of eastern Cuba.<sup>29</sup> The "Grand Lodge of Colón" was founded in Santiago in 1859, and shortly thereafter Vicente Aguilera, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and others established "Redemption Lodge" in Bayamo.<sup>30</sup> On August 14, 1867, Aguilera and other wealthy creoles formed a revolutionary committee which set into motion the mechanism of revolt.<sup>31</sup> In the following months key members of the fraternity were told of the coming revolution and set to work quietly expediting it. Members like the Santiago lawyer Ascencio de Acencio were charged with bringing potential revolutionaries into the movement. He and his *compadre* Marcos Maceo agreed that young Antonio would be of use, and accordingly they made him a member early in 1868.<sup>32</sup>

One day in September of 1868, when Mariana Grajales was visiting Santiago, Ascencio appeared at her house at 16 Providencia. After exchanging pleasantries, he told her that he needed to see Marcos as soon as possible. Something in his voice told her that the matter was urgent, and she hurried back to Las Delicias with the message.<sup>33</sup> When Marcos reached the home of his friend, Ascencio told him that he had been selected to organize the forces of Majaguabo district.<sup>34</sup> The revolution was imminent! Conflicting emotions assailed Marcos as he returned to his farm. What would Mariana say? They were no longer young; what would happen to her once the revolution began—what if she didn't want him to fight? Pensive, silent, and inexplicably sad,<sup>35</sup> Marcos entered the house early in the afternoon before any of his sons had returned from the day's work. As he slowly described to Mariana all that he, Ascencio and the others had been planning for so

many months, her radiant face told him everything. She had no reservations about sacrificing all that they had to rid Cuba of the Spanish or, failing that, "to die in the attempt."<sup>36</sup> Later that same day every Maceo at Las Delicias took a fateful vow: "Swear," commanded Mariana Grajales, "by the blood of the crucified Christ, that you will fight to liberate your country, fight tirelessly, until you see her independent, or until you die achieving it!"<sup>37</sup>

In the month that followed, the Maceos fanned out through Majaguabo district to enlist their friends and neighbors in the coming struggle. Mariña Cabrales who had been living with her husband Antonio at La Esperanza, was sent to join Mariana and the other women at Las Delicias, and the isolated farm was turned into a military depot and encampment.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, some hundred kilometers eastward, near Bayamo, events were rapidly leading to the outbreak of hostilities. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and his fellow conspirators selected October fourteenth as the day Cuban independence would be announced. Suddenly word came that Captain General Lersundi had learned of their plan, ordering the principal conspirators arrested. The moment for action had come at last. On October 10, Céspedes gathered a small force at his *ingenio* La Demajagua and formally declared himself in revolt against Spain. From there he marched to the village of Yara where the first fighting of the Ten Years' War took place.<sup>39</sup>

When word of the "Grito de Yara" reached him by way of Ascencio Acencio, Marcos Maceo began mobilizing the small army which he and his sons had raised over the past frenetic weeks. Now La Esperanza took on the aspect of a true military camp. Many of the *guajiros* (farmers) who reported were mounted and bore their own shotguns. All of them came with food and clothing to last the weeks or months they anticipated the war might last, and none was without a long machete in the scabbard at his side. Their orders were to wait at the farm of Marcos Maceo until contacted by an officer of the revolutionary army.

Within ten days of the "Grito de Yara" a large number of armed men stopped at a *tienda* not far from La Esperanza. Marcos sent Miguel to learn who the men were and soon found that Juan B. Rondón, a friend and now captain in the revolutionary army was on his way to unite the Maceos' forces with his own 400 troops.<sup>40</sup> In a matter of hours the rendezvous took place, and the Majaguabo volunteers hurried off to say last farewells at home before returning to a predetermined spot. Marcos, his sons and Rondón's group then left for Las Delicias.

Mariana Grajales and the other women were startled by the shout which called them to the door, for Spanish authorities had spread the word that an immense group of bandits was at large in the countryside. But they recognized the voice as that of Marcos and stepped outside to see him standing before the house with Antonio, Miguel and an acquaintance named Rondón. "Do you know this gentleman?" Marcos asked in a booming voice. Mariana's only answer was a gasp, for at his signal Rondón's four-hundred armed men moved slowly out of the shadows and formed a great semi-circle behind them. "These are the bandits you were so afraid of." It was a fine prank and one of the few light moments they would experience for many years to come. Recounting the vignette nearly thirty years later, María Cabrales described "la vieja Mariana" as immensely satisfied that

there were so many men determined to fight for their country. "Overflowing with happiness" she went into the house, and, returning with her crucifix, made everyone kneel and swear "before Christ, who was the first liberal man to appear on earth," that they would free the nation or die for it. Antonio, José, Justo, Rafael, Felipe, Julio and Fermín departed with Rondón, while Marcos stayed behind to help move the women and younger children into hiding.<sup>41</sup>

Between their flight from Las Delicias to a remote farm higher in the mountains and the end of 1868, nothing dampened Mariana's early euphoria. It was true that Spanish soldiers captured seventeen-year-old Rafael in late October and burned the house at Las Delicias, but Marcos had Spanish friends who were able to get him released.<sup>42</sup> All other news was good. General Céspedes easily took Bayamo and immediately decreed the abolition of slavery. Reports reaching them indicated that her sons and husband were fighting with distinction. Antonio in particular caught the eye of his superiors who acknowledged his leadership of the Majaguabo volunteers by appointing him Comandante, and then, after his heroism at Mayarí and Guantánamo, by naming him Lieutenant Colonel on January 26, 1869.<sup>43</sup>

When the Spanish recovered from their initial surprise and rushed troops eastward to Oriente province where the revolt was centered, the tide of battle quickly turned. The 40,000 regular troops and poorly trained loyalist volunteers on the island in October were soon swelled by the arrival of 35,000 veteran soldiers equipped with the best rifles and new Krupp cannon. By mid-1870, there were 100,000 Spanish soldiers in Cuba, and their orders were to show no quarter to the traitors in arms.<sup>44</sup> The Count of Valmaseda, military commander in Oriente, reflected Spanish intransigence in his proclamation of April, 1869. His orders were to shoot every Cuban male over the age of fourteen if away from home without permission, to burn every house not showing a white flag, and to concentrate in Jiguaní or Bayamo every woman not living at home or with relatives.<sup>45</sup>

Valmaseda's proclamation was only a forewarning of the trials to follow. Bayamo was lost by mid-January, its civilian and military defenders heroically burning it before Valmaseda's advancing army. In addition, an outbreak of cholera spread panic among the people. Mariana experienced her first real anguish of the war when one of her eldest sons, Justo Regüeyferos was surprised at his wife's house and summarily shot near San Luis. Then another tragedy struck. Her husband Marcos was fatally wounded while fighting under Antonio's command during the taking of San Agustín. His last words, according to Antonio who cradled him in his arms, were "He cumplido con Mariana" (I've done what Mariana wanted).<sup>46</sup>

Antonio Maceo told his mother of Marcos' death in May of 1869, while recuperating from his first wounds in a clearing far back in the *manigua* (jungle). The Maceo women had abandoned their first hiding place as far too dangerous and adopted the policy of staying close to Antonio's *guerrilla*, making use of old *palenques* whenever possible. Whatever grief Mariana may have felt on hearing of her husband's death she kept to herself. Those who lived with her during those long years of warfare wrote that she always smiled under greatest adversity. She warned her daughters never to show distress even when tending the most ghastly

wound and to do nothing but praise the soldier for his valor. "Get well so you can go out and get another!" was her stock phrase to the injured soldier, whether her own son or someone else's.<sup>47</sup>

The summer of 1869 was particularly gloomy for the Maceos. Antonio was still recovering from his wounds when news came that the leading Masons of Santiago had been arrested, marched out of town and then hacked to death with machetes on order of the local chief of counter-guerrilla operations. The godfather of Antonio was among that number. In a particularly macabre touch, the corpses were robbed and all personal possessions taken to General Valmaseda.<sup>48</sup> Death struck again a few weeks later when the two infant children of Antonio and María died of disease—possibly of the cholera that ravaged eastern Cuba from late 1868 to 1871.

Valmaseda was determined to break the back of armed resistance during 1871–1872. Unable to draw the highly mobile *mambí* (insurgent) units into large-scale engagements, he ordered his numerically superior forces to pursue them into the *manigua*. The weeks and months that followed were a purgatory for all Cubans in arms. At one point the presidential party was so closely pursued by a Spanish column that for six days they were forced to live on wild sour oranges.<sup>49</sup> On September 5, Maceo's camp was surprised and he was seriously wounded in the hand-to-hand combat that followed. As the battle raged around her, Mariana Grajales, then sixty-three years old, crouched in a shallow foxhole until the attacking Spaniards were killed.<sup>50</sup>

Even as the Spanish pursued them, the *Mambís* continued their harassment of Spanish outposts. Antonio and José Maceo, fighting under the command of Calixto García, destroyed forward installations around Guantánamo. Valmaseda responded in December of 1871 with another dire proclamation: After January 1, 1872 all prisoners would be shot, all black women who supported the *Mambís* would be re-enslaved, and all white women so involved would be banished.<sup>51</sup>

The focus of the fighting moved westward to the Camagüey area during 1872. Spain now had 60,000 veterans in the field as well as thousands of Cuban "volunteers" and counter-guerrillas, but still they were unable to put down the stubborn rebels who, during 1873, thoroughly demoralized Spanish forces in Oriente. In that same year Valmaseda was replaced by his superiors. Supplies began reaching the Cubans from the North American mainland, and in early 1874 United States Secretary of State Hamilton Fish released figures indicating that Spain had lost 80,000 men since the war began. Spain began to worry that the United States might recognize Cuban belligerence.<sup>52</sup>

As fortunes of the *Mambís* waxed and waned, so too did those of the Maceos. Antonio was already the hero of black and mulatto soldiers having been promoted to brigadier general as a result of his victories against the Spanish. His mother enjoyed similar fame in the *Mambí* encampments. Known as "the woman who doesn't cry," she once turned on several women who began to sob at the sight of several dying soldiers and shouted "Get out of here skirts, there's no time for tears!"<sup>53</sup>

One of the finest moments in Cuban history took place early in April of 1874. Following the Battle of Cascorro the usual train of wounded made its way to the



encampment for medical attention. When the most gravely wounded were brought in, Mariana Grajales saw that one of them was her son Miguel, near death from the head wound that would soon kill him. Unwilling to show her grief she simply glanced at fourteen year old Marcos, her youngest son, and said in a clear, strong voice: "And you, stand up straight; now its time for you to go on campaign!," adding, "one son must replace another."<sup>54</sup>

Neither the heroism of *Mambí* leaders nor the invincibility of *guerrillero* armies in Oriente were sufficient to defeat the Cubans' greatest enemy: dissension within the revolutionary leadership. One particularly virulent aspect of that conflict was discrimination suffered by black and mulatto officers such as the Maceos. Shortly before the execution of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes by the Spanish early in 1874, a result of Céspedes' deposition by his House of Representatives, Antonio Maceo was named chief of revolutionary forces of Las Villas region and charged with taking that important city. But the patriots of Las Villas were white, and they resented being commanded by a mulatto from Oriente. Unable to launch the attack, Maceo resigned his commission in disgust and returned to Oriente, where he spent the remainder of 1874 and all of 1875 destroying sugar plantations and Spanish columns, and freeing slaves.<sup>55</sup>

The spectre of racism followed the Maceos even as they fought their way back and forth across Oriente. On February 1, 1876, President Spotorno named Modesto Díaz commander of Oriente in the wake of Calixto García's capture by the enemy. The post should have gone to Antonio Maceo. Leaders of the revolution probably did not believe Spanish propaganda that Maceo harbored secret ambitions to establish a black-dominated republic with himself at its head, but they did feel that a creole officer should always receive preference over one who was black or mulatto. The fact that Maceo and his family always had the warmest relationship with creoles and that Maceo himself demonstrated an almost excessive desire to treat his men impartially did not enter the consideration of his superiors.<sup>56</sup> Maceo held his tongue for several months, and finally penned an eloquent protest to the Cuban president concerning the racial slurs of a "small circle" close to him who would not serve under a black. He went on to point out that those who slandered him should be considered enemies of the republic who either directly or indirectly aided the Spanish. He then added that although he bore eleven wounds received in battle, he was not tired of fighting to create a republican Cuba.<sup>57</sup>

If the years of war had eroded the solidarity and esprit of the war effort in some parts of Cuba, they had done nothing to lessen the effectiveness of *guerrillero* armies in Oriente. For the remainder of 1876 and through the first half of 1877, forces under General Antonio Maceo, always followed and supported by the women, ranged at will over Oriente, destroying military posts, burning cane fields, liberating slaves and in general making life miserable and insecure for the Spanish. Then, on August 7, 1877, in a skirmish at the wooded glen called "Mangos de Mejía," Antonio Maceo was felled by a fusillade that left him riddled with eight bullet wounds, five of them in his chest. The men who bore him back to the *Mambí* encampment did so thoroughly convinced that he would die and with him the revolution.

But Maceo did not die, although his wounds and the treatment he subsequently endured would have killed most other mortals. Somehow he found the strength to stay on the move, always just beyond the clutches of two hundred Spanish troops sent to capture or kill him. The flight of Antonio Maceo, his brother José, Mariana Grajales, María Cabrales and a dozen more *Mambís* is one of the remarkable incidents of the Ten Years' War. Time and again their capture seemed certain yet always José and his handful of sharpshooters halted the Spanish with withering rifle fire. Once when Maceo, still confined to his litter, came under an enemy barrage, María Cabrales stood at his side and rallied the men with words unspoken until then: "¡Hay que salvar al General, o morir con él!" (We must save the General or die with him).<sup>58</sup> On September 27, his perforated right lung and crippled gangrenous right hand notwithstanding, Maceo mounted his horse and rode away from the Spanish. He vowed revenge by "collecting with interest" the debt which "the defenders of colonial absolutism and slavery" had contracted with him.<sup>59</sup> And that is what he did. Between February fourth and tenth of 1877, he and his followers won smashing victories against the Battalion of San Quintín, killing five hundred ninety of the seven hundred Spanish troops he engaged and taking large quantities of military supplies.<sup>60</sup>

One week after that remarkable series of victories, a small party of Cuban officers led by Máximo Gómez made its way to the *Mambí* camp. Gómez had come to say goodbye to Mariana Grajales and to relay some bitter news to her son.<sup>61</sup> Even as Maceo and his army were slaughtering the men of San Quintín on February 10, his own colleagues were signing the pact destined to end the war. The Pact of Zanjón was the result of several factors, among them dissension within Cuban ranks, the conciliatory policy initiated by Captain General Martínez Campos nine months before and, most of all, a profound weariness on both sides of the conflict; however, the pact did not free Cuba of either Spanish rule or slavery. Two weeks later, with his vow to Mariana Grajales still ringing in his ears, Antonio Maceo met Martínez Campos at a place near Santiago called Baraguá and categorically rejected the Pact of Zanjón. Martínez Campos had first tried insulting the mulatto general, and then cajoling him, and finally left with Maceo's warning that hostilities would resume in one week. "¡El 23 rompemos corajo!" shouted an officer who overheard the conversation, and soon the cry echoed through *Mambí* ranks: "The twenty-third we break the palm nut."<sup>62</sup>

The "Protest of Baraguá" was a noble but ultimately futile gesture. Not only had all revolutionaries outside Maceo's command laid down their arms, but the astute Martínez Campos had finally designed a strategy to defeat his formerly invincible foe. On April 7, 1878, Maceo saw with anger and chagrin what his brother José had described to him over the past two weeks—the enemy refused to fight. Even as they suffered casualties from a force one-tenth their size, the Spaniards called out "¡Viva la paz!" and "¡Viva Cuba!," and waved white flags tied to bayonets.<sup>63</sup> The cease fire which Antonio Maceo ordered that day was to be his last battlefield directive of the Ten Years' War. Discouraged at last by an enemy that would not fight and by friends who "wanted to get me out of the

country rather than see me die in Cuba," he sent Mariana, María and other family members into exile and then joined them in Kingston, Jamaica on May 9, 1878.<sup>64</sup>

Open hostility from the exile community greeted the Maceos when they arrived in Kingston. Máximo Gómez had denounced Antonio and José for rejecting the Zanión pact, and when they called a meeting of Cuban exiles on May 13 to plan an invasion of the island, only five men volunteered and seven shillings were donated.<sup>65</sup> The frigid reception did not stop the family from establishing itself in Kingston and continuing the struggle begun back at Majaguabo so long before. And as it had been then, Mariana Grajales was there offering support and encouragement when needed, reminding them all that none could rest until Cuba was free.

Even as a venerable elder in Cuba's independence movement, Mariana Grajales continued to play a significant role in the struggle. As Antonio and the others traveled endlessly over the Americas plotting a renewal of the revolution, Mariana helped care for their wives and children and received them as they arrived periodically at her house in Kingston. When Rafael, José and his family were captured by the Spanish following the fruitless "Guerra Chiquita," it was she who kept a vigil stretching over their years of imprisonment in Africa and in Spain, during which Rafael died at Mahón prison in the Balearic Islands. Although José had tried to hide from Mariana the sad state of his affairs, his resolve finally broke in July of 1884 and he sent her a long letter describing his ordeal and expressing the fear that he would never see her again. That letter moved the proud Mariana to take a humiliating step she had never before contemplated—she visited the Spanish consul in Kingston to beg for her son's freedom. In his dispatch to Madrid of September 3, Consul Francisco E. Gómez wrote with some astonishment that he had received "the mother of the terrible Cuban chieftains Antonio and José Maceo" and that she assured him of her sons' desire to live in peace with Spain.<sup>66</sup> Balanced against all that had gone before, the degrading moment in 1884 must have been the worst of her entire life, though viewed from another perspective it represented the highest sacrifice of her seventy-six years.

Shortly after Mariana's visit to the Spanish consul, José escaped from prison and made his way through North Africa to France, then to the United States, finally arriving in Kingston early in January, 1885. The following year he was joined by Antonio, Máximo Gómez and their families. Once again the Spanish received word of plotting of the "terrible Maceos" and Mariana could find satisfaction that her humiliation would be avenged.

Mariana Grajales did not live to see Cuba independent in 1902, or to see Antonio and José renew the battle in 1896 fulfilling the vow they had made to her nearly thirty years before. But Mariana Grajales had always known that Cuba would someday be free, whether by her sons' hands or by those of younger men like José Martí who visited her in 1891 and shortly before her death in 1893. "She caressed my face and looked on me like a son" wrote Martí, whose talk of liberating Cuba brought a sparkle to her dim eyes.<sup>67</sup> He sat with the old woman and watched her wrinkled face grow animated as she reminisced on a particularly outstanding lance

thrust by one of her sons, or of the time another, "bleeding from every part of his body, lifted himself and with ten men drove off two hundred of the enemy."<sup>68</sup> Martí sensed the power that Mariana Grajales exercised over all who came into contact with her, and it was he who wrote the epitaph that catches the essence of her contribution to Cuban independence: "And if one trembled when he came face to face with the enemy of his country, he saw the mother of Maceo, white kerchief on her head, and he ceased trembling!"<sup>69</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Leslie B. Rout, Jr, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (New York, 1976), p. 290; Arthur F. Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817-1886* (Austin, 1967), p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>"Black" is used here and elsewhere to denote mulattoes as well as persons of pure African ancestry. It should be noted that this is not the way "negro" was used in nineteenth century Cuba, where the word described only persons of pure African ancestry.

<sup>3</sup>José Luciano Franco, *Antonio Maceo, apuntes para una historia de su vida*, Vol. I (La Habana, 1951), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>Terence George Kemper, "The Effects of the Latin American Wars of Independence on the Cuban Liberation Movement: 1808-1838" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Miami, 1972), p. 199.

<sup>5</sup>In 1810 there were 108,600 free blacks in Cuba as compared to 274,000 creoles and 217,400 slaves. Figures for the central portion of Oriente province reveal that only 7.7% of the black population were slaves. See: Fernando Ortiz, "Síntesis estadística de la población de Cuba," *Revista de la Facultad de Ciencias y Letras* (Universidad de Habana), 22 (May, 1916), 282-283; Ramiro Guerra, "La Provincia de Oriente en Octubre de 1868," *Bohemia*, 63:42:102-104.

<sup>6</sup>A useful though idealized account of free black lifestyle in colonial Cuba is found in Herbert S. Klein, "An Integrated Community: The Free Colored in Cuba," *Slavery in the Americas, A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 194-227.

<sup>7</sup>Emilio Bacardí y Moreau, ed., *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba*, Vol. I (2nd ed.; Madrid, 1973), p. 152.

<sup>8</sup>José Luciano Franco, *Ensayos Históricos* (La Habana, 1974), pp. 127-190.

<sup>9</sup>Franco, *Ensayos*, pp. 29-30; Bacardí, *Crónicas*, Vol. II, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup>Bacardí *Crónicas*, Vol. II, pp. 146-147. The problem was solved by levying a 400 peso fine in each such instance.

<sup>11</sup>Leopoldo Horrego Estuch, *Antonio Maceo, héroe y carácter* (La Habana, 1952), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Lázaro Torres Hernández, "Mariana Grajales: una madre sublime," *Bohemia*, 64:4:100-104.

<sup>13</sup>Horrego, *Antonio*, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup>República de Cuba (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias), *Historia de Cuba* (3rd ed.; La Habana, 1971), pp. 110-111.

<sup>15</sup>Bacardí, *Crónicas*, Vol. II, p. 323.

<sup>16</sup>Leonardo Griñán Peralta, *Antonio, Maceo* (La Habana, 1936), p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>Torres, "Mariana," p. 101.

<sup>18</sup>Antonio Maceo, *Papeles de Maceo*, Vol. II (La Habana, 1948), p. 297.

<sup>19</sup>Felipe Martínez Arango, *Próceres de Santiago de Cuba* (La Habana, 1946), pp. 46-47.

<sup>20</sup>Cuba, *Historia*, pp. 127-128.

<sup>21</sup>Franco, *Antonio Maceo*, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. II, pp. 83-84.

<sup>23</sup>Concerning the house see: José G. Castellanos, *La casa donde nació Antonio Maceo* (Santiago de Cuba, 1957).

<sup>24</sup>They were Miguel, September 16, 1852; Julio, May 20, 1854; Dominga de la Calzada, May 11, 1857; Tomás, December 25, 1857; Marcos, September 24, 1860. Jose Luciano Franco, *La vida heroica y ejemplar de Antonio Maceo* (La Habana, 1963), p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>Corwin, *Spain*, p. 114; Bacardí, *Crónicas*, Vol. III, p. 87.

- <sup>26</sup>Franco, *Antonio Maceo*, p. 25.
- <sup>27</sup>Raúl Roa, *Aventuras, venturas y desaventuras de un mambi en la lucha por la independencia de Cuba* (Mexico City, 1970), p. 17.
- <sup>28</sup>Jaime Suchlicki, *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro* (New York, 1974), p. 73; Corwin, *Spain*, p. 151.
- <sup>29</sup>Albert Gallatin Mackey, *History of Freemasonry*, Vol VII (New York, 1898), pp. 1962–1963; Franco, *Antonio Maceo*, pp. 25–27, 33–36; Cuba, *Historia*, p. 167; Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. II, pp. 184–185.
- <sup>30</sup>*Boletín Oficial del Supremo Consejo de Colón*, Tercera Epoca (December, 1917), p. 111.
- <sup>31</sup>Franco, *Antonio Maceo*, p. 33.
- <sup>32</sup>Franco, *Antonio Maceo*, p. 35.
- <sup>33</sup>Horrego, *Antonio*, p. 32.
- <sup>34</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. II, pp. 83–84.
- <sup>35</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. II, p. 186. These words are used in an account written by Fernando Figueredo. María Cabrales, an eye witness to many of the events of those weeks, wrote her own gloss of the Figueredo account correcting it at some points but agreeing with it in major part.
- <sup>36</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, II, pp. 186–187.
- <sup>37</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, II, p. 187.
- <sup>38</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, II, pp. 82–84. From a letter of María Cabrales.
- <sup>39</sup>Francisco Vicente Aguilera, *Epistolario* (La Habana, 1974), pp. 11–12.
- <sup>40</sup>Horrego, *Antonio*, pp. 32–33.
- <sup>41</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. II, pp. 82–84. Letter of María Cabrales to Francisco de Paula Coronado, May 6, 1897.
- <sup>42</sup>Griñán, *Antonio*, p. 19.
- <sup>43</sup>José Luciano Franco, *La vida heroica y ejemplar de Antonio Maceo* (La Habana, 1963), p. 12.
- <sup>44</sup>Franco, *Antonio Maceo*, pp. 41–42; Raymond Carr, *España, 1808–1939*, trans. by J. Romero Maura (Barcelona, 1969), pp. 297–301.
- <sup>45</sup>Murat Halstead, *The Story of Cuba* (Akron, Ohio, 1896), pp. 297–301.
- <sup>46</sup>Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *La vida heroica de Antonio Maceo* (La Habana, 1945), p. 16.
- <sup>47</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. 2, pp. 190–191. From an undated paper titled “Noticias de Cuba,” written by Fernando Figueredo, aide to Antonio Maceo in the 1870’s and a colonel in the revolutionary army.
- <sup>48</sup>*Boletín Oficial*, (March, 1918), pp. 157–158.
- <sup>49</sup>James J. O’Kelly, *The Mambi Land* (Philadelphia, 1874), pp. 256–257.
- <sup>50</sup>Jose Martí, *Obras Completas*, Vol. I (La Habana, 1946), pp. 617–618; Torres, “Mariana,” p. 103. The Martí account of this incident is based on his conversation with her in Kingston shortly before her death.
- <sup>51</sup>Willis Fletcher Johnson, *The History of Cuba*, Vol. III (New York, 1920), p. 270.
- <sup>52</sup>Johnson, *The History*, Vol. III, pp. 271–290; Cuba, *Historia*, p. 293.
- <sup>53</sup>Torres, “Mariana,” p. 103.
- <sup>54</sup>Martí, *Obras*, Vol. I, p. 618; Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. II, p. 200.
- <sup>55</sup>Martí, *Obras*, Vol. I, pp. 515–516; Roa, *Aventuras*, p. 59; Cuba, *Historia*, pp. 270–273.
- <sup>56</sup>Maceo’s *aide de camp*, José Miró Argenter discusses the general’s scrupulous even-handedness in racial matters in *Crónicas de la guerra*, III (La Habana, 1970), pp. 323–325.
- <sup>57</sup>José A. Portuondo, *El pensamiento vivo de Maceo* (3rd ed.; La Habana, 1971), pp. 15–18.
- <sup>58</sup>Horrego, *Antonio*, p. 65.
- <sup>59</sup>Luis LeRoy y Gálvez, “Las heridas de Maceo en la Guerra de 1868,” *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí*, Vol. X (September–December, 1968), p. 71.
- <sup>60</sup>Rubén Castillo Ramos, “Los Mangos de Baraguá,” *Bohemia*, 66 (June 14, 1974), 5–7, 9.
- <sup>61</sup>José Luciano Franco, “Baraguá,” *Bohemia*, 64 (December 8, 1972), 18.
- <sup>62</sup>Horrego, *Antonio*, pp. 85–86.
- <sup>63</sup>Horrego, *Antonio*, pp. 93–94.
- <sup>64</sup>Maceo, *Papeles*, Vol. II, p. 242.
- <sup>65</sup>José Luciano Franco, *La ruta de Maceo en el caribe* (La Habana, 1961), pp. 12–13.
- <sup>66</sup>Franco, *Ruta*, pp. 103–106.

<sup>67</sup>Félix Lizaso, *Epistolario de José Martí* (La Habana, 1930), pp. 241–242. Letter from José Martí to Antonio Maceo, New York, May 25, 1893.

<sup>68</sup>Martí, *Obras*, Vol. I, p. 617.

<sup>69</sup>Martí, *Obras*, Vol. I, p. 617.

APPENDIX—in order of appearance

*soldaderas*—women soldiers

*hacendados*—owners of large landed estates

*peninsulares*—name given to Spaniards living in America

*santiagueros*—residents of Santiago de Cuba

*cimarrones*—run-away slaves

*palenque*—a settlement of run-away slaves

*bozales*—newly imported slaves

*barracones*—a stockades where newly arrived slaves were quartered

*municipio*—county

*cabecera*—county seat

*ingenio*—sugar mill

*compadre*—godfather of one's child

*guajiros*—farmers

*tienda*—store

*manigua*—jungle

*guerrilla*—guerrilla

*Mambi*—Cuban insurgents at the time of the Ten Years' War