

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE.

Diplomatic Correspondence Between the United States and Spain.

American Mediation Diplomatically Considered.

Strength of the Spanish Army in Cuba.

From the late diplomatic correspondence between the government of the United States and the Spanish government in relation to the struggle now going on for the independence of Cuba we make the following extracts, which will be found to convey an intelligent view of the position taken by the two countries.

FIRST PROPOSITION FOR A SETTLEMENT.

The first letter in the correspondence bears date Washington, June 2, 1893, and is addressed by Secretary of State Fish to Minister Siskies at Madrid. After referring to the situation in Cuba and calling attention to the conflict raging at that time for more than nine months, with no promise of a speedy termination, the Secretary writes to Mr. Siskies:—

"The President directs you to offer to the Cabinet at Madrid the good offices of the United States for the purpose of bringing to the civil war now ravaging the island of Cuba, on the following bases:—

First—The independence of Cuba to be acknowledged by Spain.

Second—Cuba to pay to Spain a sum, within a time and in a manner to be agreed upon by them, as an equivalent for the military and naval assistance rendered to her during the war in that island, including the public property of every description. If Cuba should not be able to pay the whole sum at once to each of the future terms, its instalments are to be adequately secured by a pledge of the export and import customs duties under an arrangement to be entered upon for that purpose in the future terms. By instalments are to be the principal and interest of those instalments until their final discharge.

Third—The abolition of slavery in the island of Cuba.

Fourth—An armistice pending the negotiations for the settlement above referred to.

In case the good offices of the United States are accepted by Spain you will request that such steps may be immediately taken as will arrest the progress of the war; and you will communicate at the earliest practicable date to the Secretary of State the progress of the negotiations, and the steps which you have taken for the purpose of bringing to the civil war now ravaging the island of Cuba, on the following bases:—

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

June 23, Secretary Fish, in another letter, writes to Minister Siskies that the proposal of the United States is "for the purpose of bringing to a close the civil war now ravaging the island." (Cuba), and cautions the Minister of "the delicacy to be observed on this point, so as not to arouse or excite any just susceptibilities of the government of the Minister or of the people of Spain."

ACT PROMPTLY.

An early decision on the proposition to mediate is extremely important. Hitherto the Spanish authorities in Cuba are in a position to do as they please with their own citizens. Cuba and Porto Rico should not be connected in the submission or negotiation.

SISKIES REPLY.

Under date of August 12, 1893, that he has communicated to Prim internally basis of convention. He promised me to say how much Cuba and Porto Rico would give. I said I had had no instructions, and suggested one hundred and twenty-five millions as probable. Prim said Spain might accept preliminaries with United States and concede autonomy of Cuba and Porto Rico for satisfactory equivalent as soon as hostilities ceased. He promised to bring the whole subject before the Council to-night.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN MINISTER SISKIES AND SENOR SILVEIRA.

On the 31st of July Minister Siskies met Señor Silveira, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the interview Mr. Siskies proceeded to observe

"That the government and people of the United States feel a kindly sympathy for the recent efforts made by the people of Spain in the great work of their national reorganization, and that it was the earnest desire of the President to avoid anything that could embarrass the government of Spain at this time. In this relation I mentioned the scrupulous observance by the government of the United States of all its international obligations, and the strict enforcement of its neutrality laws with respect to the Cuban insurrection, at the same time pointing out the close relations by which the population of the United States is connected with Cuba, the near proximity of the two islands, the commercial and social intercourse between them. It was not natural, I added, that a deep sympathy with the Cuban people should have grown up in the United States, especially so many of our citizens residing in Cuba, and some as fighting for the same principles of self-government we had ourselves adopted. That it were true, as he believed, that a majority of the people of Cuba desired to terminate the relation of colonial dependence upon the mother country, I assured to the President that in this they were only following the general course of events upon the American continent since the establishment of our own independence. This manifest and inevitable tendency had been generally recognized by the European Powers, including not only Spain herself, but Great Britain, France, Russia and other nations."

SENOR SILVEIRA ON CUBA.

After the Spanish Minister had heard Minister Siskies out he replied by saying that

"The Cuban question was one of the utmost gravity and delicacy. It was the intention of the Spanish liberals, who planned and executed the revolutionary movement, which have given to Spain its new political life, to make, at the earliest moment, provision for granting self-government to Cuba. But this fatal insurrection broke out at the very moment when it was becoming possible to give to Cuba all the rights she desired. The cry of 'Death to Spaniards' was heard in Spain, and it became impossible, in the face of civil war, to carry out the beneficent plan that had been formed. The liberal party in Spain first tried to its own hands to retreat, but soon to a seeming sympathy with the reactionary party in Cuba; and the liberals of Cuba who ought to be its firm friends, are converted, by the fatality of the situation, into its bitterest enemies. Every day the sentiment dear to the heart of the liberal leaders, that of freedom to all men; yet they stand before the world, in this Cuban conflict, as opposed to the self-governing government of Cuba, and in favor of slavery. I considered the insurrection on as a most deplorable misfortune and mistake, both for Cuba and for Spain. If a way could be found to settle all these conflicting interests, and to give to Cuba without infringing upon the honor of Spain the government would be greatly gratified. There is no intention or desire among the liberals of Spain to begin to work (exploit) the island of Cuba on the old selfish system. It has been their constant hope and wish to grant to the Cubans the administration of their own affairs and the full fruits of their own labor, and to sever their commercial connections and some shadow of their political relations."

GENERAL PRIN OBJECTS TO A CONFERENCE.

The day after his interview with Señor Silveira Minister Siskies had an interview with General Prin, in relation to which he thus writes:—

I then sounded the Marshal upon the proposal for a conference in Washington, in which Spain, the United States and Cuba should be represented; but to this at once demurred, saying Cuba could not be heard here through her deputies elected to the Cortes; that Spain might treat with the United States, not with Cuba.

SPAIN'S OFFER.

On the 13th of August Mr. Siskies telegraphs to Secretary Fish the following:—

President of Council authorizes me to state that the good offices of the United States are accepted. No suggestion informally, for your information, our cardinal propositions that will be acceptable, if offered by the United States, as the basis for a convention, the details to be settled as soon as practicable.

First—The language to be used to end the war.

Second—Spain to grant simultaneously a full and complete amnesty.

Third—The people of Cuba to vote by universal suffrage upon the question of their independence.

"The Spanish government by choosing to treat the subject as a purely legal question, to be settled according to their own forms of procedure, had apparently closed the door to any arrangement by which the good offices of the United States could be made immediately effective."

Señor Silveira replied that such was not the meaning or intention of his government, and expressed the conviction

"That by the friendly intervention of the United States a great step in advance had been rendered possible. Silveira then entered upon a very full analysis of articles 108 of the Spanish constitution, showing that it had two distinct and opposite phases in its relation to the present question; that while, on the one hand, it precluded the government from making any definite arrangement to agree to grant to the Cuban representatives shall have taken their seats in the Cortes, on the other hand it authorizes the government to make any arrangement that might be agreed upon by the Cortes, and that the Spanish government and Chambers being free to negotiate on the basis of a liberal constitution, the autonomy of independence; and that, although it might be said that the island of Cuba was not contemplated by the constitution, yet, owing to the article a somewhat latitudinarian construction, it was susceptible even of that interpretation."

Mr. Siskies responded as follows:—

"In dealing with the events now transpiring in Cuba it was necessary to look at them in a practical point of view; that unless some arrangement could be made to end the conflict which soon reached proportions and involved complications that would greatly increase the difficulties of a settlement; and that notwithstanding the desire of the President to bring to the country a satisfactory adjustment, the interests affected and the strong current of sympathy in the struggle felt in the United States might cause no little embarrassment if nothing was done to terminate the Cuban disputes soon in their own terms."

SECRETARY FISH AGAIN URGES ACTION.

On the 16th of August Secretary Fish telegraphs to Minister Siskies as follows:—

Urged acceptance on basis proposed by the United States. First proposition of Spain, that insurgents lay down arms, is incapable of attainment as a preliminary. The third, to ascertain the will of the Cubans by a vote, is impracticable because of the disorganization of society, and the terrorism that prevails, and the violence and insubordination of the volunteers. There can be no question as to the will of the Cubans to be so ascertained, if they are admitted. An armistice should immediately be agreed upon to arrest the carnage and destruction of property, and opportunity be granted to communicate with the insurgents, and emancipation of slaves be determined.

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL.

On the 20th of August Minister Siskies had an interview with the President of Council. The substance of the business transacted was as follows:—

The President of the Council said his idea was that the governments of the United States and Spain should come to an understanding in regard to the question—a full and complete accord; that then the complete cessation of hostilities would be necessary. The United States intend to accept a basis of settlement which should comprise:—

First—A cessation of hostilities.

Second—The election of deputies.

Third—A project of law to be submitted by the government to the Cortes for the purpose of the election of deputies.

It was impossible to act officially in the matter while the insurrection still maintained itself. But the arrangements which the two governments were now negotiating to arrive at, would be made in a friendly and amicable manner. It was in fact a treaty. I asked what would be the result if the United States accepted such a basis of agreement, and the Cubans refused to lay down their arms and proceed to the election of deputies. The President of the Council said:—"In that case there would be the usual one solution—continuing the war."

THE CUBANS MET BY PARTIES TO A NEGOTIATION.

On the 24th of August Secretary Fish telegraphs to Minister Siskies:—

The propositions of Spain are incompatible with any practicable negotiation. The representatives of the insurrectionary government are necessary parties to a negotiation. Free communication through the Cuban lines is immediately necessary. The United States cannot ask the insurgents to lay down their arms unless the volunteers are simultaneously effectually disarmed, and in good faith disbanded. This, if practicable, would insure that the United States would not be asked to arrest the destruction of life and property and to stop the outrages and annoyances to our citizens. An armistice could effect this immediately, and the terms of the negotiation be immediately opened that will probably result in peace and earn receiving a fair compensation.

MR. FISH AGAIN URGES ACTION.

September 1, Minister Siskies is again urged as follows by Mr. Fish in the following despatch:—

United States willing to mediate between Spain and Cuba, on the following terms:—First, that Spain should second, Cuba to recompense Spain for public property taken; United States not to guarantee unless Congress approve; daily destruction is already done; the value of property destroyed is immediately estimated; third, persons and property of Spaniards remaining on island protected, but they may at option withdraw. To prevent difficulties, as well as to stop hostilities and to give to the Cubans an early decision. These offers withdraw unless accepted before October 1. Say that anarchy prevails over much of the island. Murders of American citizens committed by volunteers. Occupation of their property attempted by Spanish authorities.

DECISION OF SPAIN.

Minister Siskies, under date of September 16, communicates the following as the reasons with the secretary of Foreign Affairs:—

First—Spain frankly and gratefully accepts good offices of United States, but cannot accept those proposed, and asks withdrawal of all aids of September 1st. Spain desires, with out appearance of pressure, to make the concessions she offers to Cuba.

Second—Unanimous commission of Cortes now in session, representing all parties, unanimously assure government all the means at their disposal to put an end to rebellion; they offer to treat about Cuba with their former power; not to reject, however, to a friendly understanding with the United States by which their good offices may help to end the struggle.

Third—Spain has not begun and does not contemplate negotiations with any foreign power about Cuba. The proposition of mediation of the United States, nor has any note been communicated to any foreign government.

Fourth—Spain desires to terminate civil war in Cuba, and will agree to armistice if necessary to peace. This measure will be recommended to the Cortes General of Cuba, but one left to his discretion.

Fifth—Spain is ready at once to give Cuba ample reforms and wide liberties exposed in preliminary, also general amnesty and gradual emancipation of slaves.

These refused, the war will be prosecuted with energy and activity, pardoning, however, the vanquished and prisoners, and striving to prevent all shedding of blood through their hands. No reprisals, whatever the provocation from insurgents.

Sixth—Reparation promised in cases of Spaniards and Spain. Orders given to prevent such cruelties hereafter.

Spain regards Cuban question as purely domestic, and will not, in my judgment, accept mediation. If our offer be withdrawn, and friendly relations continue, our good offices can mitigate the cruel character of the war, promote liberal concessions, and perhaps bring about an armistice.

SECRETARY FISH EXPLAINS.

In a telegram dated September 23, addressed to Minister Siskies, that

retained. General Prin said that it was necessary to proceed gradually and surely. The government was now occupied with various decrees, carrying its liberal policy into effect in Cuba. A decree would soon be issued initiating the

GRADUAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, by giving freedom to all negroes born after date. The government would also soon announce a plan of administrative and municipal reform for Cuba. All this without waiting for the termination of the war."

THE SPANISH ARMY IN CUBA.

On the 29th of December Minister Siskies communicated with Mr. Fish the following estimate of the Spanish forces composing the "Army of Cuba," compiled from the statement published in *La Iberia* of December 25, 1893, and from semi-official sources of information. The strength of battalions, batteries and squadrons, conforms to the regulations of the Spanish service:—

INFANTRY.

Eight regiments of infantry of the line, two battalions of eight hundred each.....	17,000
Twenty-five battalions of light infantry, one thousand each.....	25,000
Twenty-five companies of guerrilla veterans, one thousand each.....	25,000
Two battalions of militia (estimated).....	1,600
Eleven battalions of infantry, organized in Cuba (estimated to be of the same strength as regular light infantry).....	11,600
	52,400

ARTILLERY.

One regiment, two battalions of four batteries each eight companies.....	1,070
One regiment of mountain artillery, two battalions of four batteries each—eight companies.....	1,000
Field artillery being organized, force not stated.....	2,000

CAVALRY.

Twenty-five squadrons—fifty companies of 150 each (full strength in Spanish army).....	7,500
One battalion—ten companies of 150 each.....	1,500
Four battalions.....	4,000
Total.....	67,400

SEAFORCE.

60,000 volunteer troops doing garrison duty.....	60,000
Grand total.....	127,400

RECAPITULATION.

Infantry, fifty-six battalions.....	52,400
Artillery, four battalions, six regiments, two Cavalry, twenty-five squadrons.....	7,500
Engineers, one battalion.....	1,000
Telegraph, one battalion.....	1,000
Volunteers doing garrison duty.....	60,000
Total.....	127,400

THE CUBAN LEAGUE.

A meeting of the "Cuban League of the United States" was held last evening at Delmonico's, at which a large number of distinguished gentlemen, including Generals Granger and Bartlett and Hon. Cassius M. Clay, were present. General McMahon, the president of the League, stated that during his recent visit to Washington he ascertained that the resolutions offered by General Banks in Congress in favor of the patriot cause in Cuba would soon be adopted by the House of Representatives, and also that General Banks, General Logan, Senator Wilson, Governor Swayne, and many other prominent members of Congress had expressed a willingness to address a mass meeting in this city in behalf of the struggling Cubans. The proceedings of the meeting last night were confined to perfecting the details of organization and arranging for a grand Cuban mass meeting to be held in this city at an early date. Arrangements were also made to have similar demonstrations made in other large cities on the same night, of the meeting in this city. The date of the proposed mass meeting is to be announced at the regular meeting of the League next Saturday night.

A vote of thanks was given to Colonel Rockafeller, of the Seventy-first regiment, for his offer to the League of the use of the regimental armory for the purpose of holding its regular meetings; and it was decided to hold the next meeting at Delmonico's, as that place is more convenient to members of the League. The finances and the progress of the League in its work of developing the sentiment of the country in favor of Cuban independence were reported to be in a most satisfactory condition. A letter was read from Señor Aldama, president of the Cuban Junta, expressing regret that he and General Quesada were prevented by prior engagements from accepting the invitation of the League to attend its meeting, and hoped that they might on some future occasion avail themselves of the offer.

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SECRETARY FISH EXPLAINS.

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The good offices of the United States were tendered in the spirit of mutual friendship and in the interest of humanity, of Spain, of Cuba and of the United States. If the tender be not acceptable to Spain you may withdraw it. I do not say that these good offices will be ready whenever they can tend to a settlement of the unhappy contest that is devastating Cuba and injuring the commercial interests of this and of other nations.

THE SEIZURE OF THE SPANISH GUNBOATS.

In relation to the arrest of the Spanish gunboats in this city Secretary Fish says:—