

# Cuba's Efforts for National Existence—A Sketch of Her Grievances—An Address to the American People.

*To the People of the United States:*

Seeing that frequent misrepresentations of the revolutionary movement going on in Cuba are made through the press, I beg leave to answer them by laying before the public a brief statement of facts connected with that movement.

Revolutions never go backwards. They may be checked for a longer or shorter time, but finally burst forth with irresistible impulse and roll on to a successful issue. So with regard to Cuba, which has failed in several attempts to overthrow the tyrant over her, but is likely to succeed now in the struggle for freedom and self-government.

To review her efforts for national existence and sketch the grievances which justify the revolution going on within her borders, is the purpose of this address, which is respectfully submitted by the undersigned as a general agent of the **Cuban revolution**.

Ever since the close of the war of independence of South America the Captain-General of Cuba has been clothed by special law with all the powers given to commanders of besieged places. This severe measure arose from the revolutionary attempt which was then defeated through the interference of the United States government, lest universal freedom in slave-holding Cuba should affect slavery in the Southern states of this country, as Mr. Clay remarked at the time in explanation of his opposition to the military expedition which Venezuela, then at war with Spain, was fitting out to help Cuba to achieve her independence, so that Cuba has been since that time groaning under a relentless tyranny, but still endeavoring now and then to shake it off. Her endeavors have brought about not only the persecution or execution of many illustrious Cubans, but also that of high-minded Spaniards, such as General Lorenza, who, while Governor of Santiago de Cuba in 1836, proclaimed there the liberal constitution promulgated in Spain, and was persecuted by Captain-General Tacón, who sent from Havana a heavy body of troops against him and his constitutional followers. Several years later, many Cubans who remonstrated against the slave trade were persecuted for having done so, and nearly all of them driven into exile. Shortly thereafter, military commissions were set at work all over the Western Department of Cuba to suppress an alleged conspiracy among the colored people.

The guilty parties were found chiefly among the rich free colored people whose property was, of course, confiscated, and their lives taken by wholesale, on the scaffold, while not a few of them died under the lash, which was freely and mercilessly used to compel them to confession. The suppression of this alleged conspiracy was followed a few years later by a real conspiracy of the white people, under the lead of General Lopez, who, being detected before his plans were matured for an uprising in the central part of the island, fled and came to the United States, whence he sailed in 1850 at the head of some six hundred men, and landed at Cardenas. He failed in his attempt to free Cuba, and returned to the United States. During the subsequent year partial uprisings took place, and Lopez sailed for Cuba once more, with about four hundred and fifty men, to assist his friends in their efforts to achieve Cuban independence; but he again failed, and himself and many of his followers were executed. However, the Cubans, persevering in their determination to be free, renewed their plans to that end, and a well-organized movement was started under General Quitman, but fell through, in 1855, with the loss of valuable lives, and the banishment of a great many distinguished Cubans, to say nothing of a heavy outlay of money. Yet, nevertheless, the Cubans, not despairing, a few years afterwards began to work again for their freedom, and when the late Spanish revolution broke out, they were finally maturing their plans to free Cuba from the military sway of Spain. That revolution improved their opportunity, and on the 10th of October last, they rose up in arms, as appears from the following extract of their declaration of independence, dated at Manzanillo on that day, viz.:

"In arming ourselves against the tyrannical government of Spain, we must, according to precedent in all civilized countries, proclaim before the world the cause that impels us to take this step, which, though likely to entail considerable disturbances at present, will ensure the happiness of the future.

It is well known that Spain governs the Island of Cuba with an iron, blood-stained hand. The former holds the latter deprived of political, civil, and religious liberty. Hence the unfortunate Cubans being illegally prosecuted and thrown into exile, or executed by military commissions in times of peace. Hence their being kept from public meeting and forbidden to speak or unite on affairs of State. Hence their remonstrances against the evils that afflict them, being looked upon as the proceedings of rebels, from the fact that they are bound to keep silence and obey. Hence the never-ending plague of hungry officials from Spain, to devour the product of their industry and labor. Hence their exclusion from public stations, and want of opportunity to skill themselves in the art of government. Hence the restrictions to which public instruction with them is subjected, in order to keep them so ignorant as not to be able to know and enforce their rights in any shape or form whatever. Hence the navy and standing army, which are kept upon their country at an enormous expenditure from their own wealth, to make them bend their knees and submit their necks to the iron yoke that disgraces them. Hence the grinding taxation under which they labor and which would make them all perish in misery but for the marvelous fertility of the soil. On the other hand, Cuba cannot prosper as she ought to, because white emigration, that suits her best, is artfully kept from her shores by the Spanish Government; and, as Spain has many a time promised us Cubans to respect our rights, without having hitherto fulfilled her promises; as she continues to tax us heavily, and by so doing is likely to destroy our wealth; as we are in danger of losing our property, our lives, and our honor, under further Spanish dominations; as we have reached a depth of degradation unutterably revolting to manhood; as great nations have sprung from revolt against a similar disgrace, after exhausted pleadings for relief; as we despair of justice from Spain through reasoning, and cannot longer live deprived of the rights which other people enjoy, we are constrained to appeal to arms to assert our rights in the battle-field, cherishing the hope that our grievances will be a sufficient excuse for this last resort to redress them and secure our future welfare.

"To the God of our conscience and to all civilized nations we submit the sincerity of our purpose. Vengeance does not mislead us, nor is ambition our guide. We only want to be free, and see all mankind with us equally free, as the Creator intended all mankind to be. Our earnest belief is that all men are brethren. Hence our love of toleration, order and justice in any respect. We desire the gradual abolition of slavery with indemnification; we admire universal suffrage, as it insures the sovereignty of the people; we demand a religious regard for the inalienable rights of man as the basis of freedom and national greatness."

Such are the facts showing the oppression of Cuba, and her efforts to be free up to the 10th of October last. Since then the Cuban liberation army has been gradually increasing, notwithstanding the losses consequent upon a steady campaign, and now comprises some 42,000 men, under C. M. Cespedes, who is commander-in-chief of that army, and the head of the republican government, duly established within the lines of the liberators. Their lines run in a westerly direction from the eastern end of the island to Sagua la Grande, without reaching the seaboard either north or south, for want of the requisite armament to hold it. But the territory pointed out is nearly two-thirds of the area of Cuba in which slavery has been abolished, and in which the Spanish control only the ground where they are kept at bay. This has been done by the patriots in a comparatively short time, notwithstanding their sad deficiency in war materials, and leads to the belief that if they had been tolerably supplied with such materials their movements would now cover also the remainder of the island, where no uprising has yet taken place from utter want of arms, while their enemies are fully armed with the best approved weapons of the United States. But such are our neutrality laws; they allow an European power to obtain war material freely from our workshops to crush a people struggling for freedom in the very heart of America, and prohibit the same people from supplying themselves with similar materials from us to carry on their struggle against that power. Yet the Spanish hirelings, in their misrepresentations of the **Cuban revolution**, frequently, through their editorial columns and otherwise, assert that the laws referred to have been violated. Let them bear in mind that from the foregoing statement of facts no other conclusion can be drawn but that Cuba is fairly started on her way to national independence; that her sons have been manfully fighting for it these six months, without having yet violated our neutrality, despite their lack of arms, and are, therefore, entitled to the earnest sympathy of our people, and the more so, as their struggle involves a great American principle—namely, that no European power shall longer control any country upon this hemisphere.

J. VALIENTE.