

## Cuba—What Is the Position of the Administration?

The carefully and cunningly worded letter, dated from Washington, which was sent by the Associated Press to all the newspapers, and published yesterday, on the present attitude of the administration with regard to Cuba, naturally leads to the inquiry whether Mr. Secretary Fish is backing down or not. This letter has something of the red-tape style of the State Department, and exhibits a weakness which we can readily believe the Secretary might evince; but from its general character and tone we are inclined to think it was inspired by the Spanish Minister at Washington or by some underling of the State Department under his influence. We are the more disposed to take this view when we consider that Mr. Fish himself not long ago talked in a very different strain upon the Cuban question, when we call to mind the fact that the President has on several occasions spoken warmly and hopefully for the Cubans, and when we recur to the declaration of General Sickles to the government at Madrid, that the United States would have to recognize, at no distant day, the Cubans as belligerents. In short, we are not willing to believe the administration would back down to the extent indicated by the spirit and tone of this Washington letter.

The argument used to cover up the timidity, ignorance and short-sightedness of the Secretary of State on this Cuban question is as fallacious as it is weak. After stating that "the United States government had been asked to follow the example of Mexico and Peru and other South American republics, and thus officially encourage the Cubans in their struggle against Spain," the writer goes on to say that "the reasons for not acquiescing in such appeals are based on the law of nations, the conditions of the island not justifying, in the opinion of the administration, the recognition of the Cuban flag." What is the law of nations on this subject? There is no fixed or determined law. Nations are governed in each case according to the circumstances that surround it, and generally from political considerations and self-interest. The only general recognized law is that before conceding belligerent rights to a people they must show their ability to sustain a war, with a reasonable prospect of ultimate success. Apply this rule to the case of Cuba and what must be the conclusion? The Cubans have maintained their war for independence over a year. From the smallest beginning and with very limited means they have been gaining ground all the time. They have improvised and created resources for war and are stronger to-day than ever. The whole population, white and black—for since slavery has been declared abolished by the Cespedes government the negroes are with the Cubans—are heart and soul for independence, with the exception of a limited number of Spaniards and Spanish officials. Never, perhaps, was there more unanimity in a country struggling to be free. Then, as to the prospect of ultimate success, scarcely any one in this country has any doubt. Mr. Fish himself has said that Cuba is destined to be free. There is nothing, in fact, in the law of nations, so-called, to hinder the recognition of the Cubans as belligerents.

But, as was said, nations make a law for themselves or construe the law governing such cases to suit their own policy. Humanity, the cause of liberty, progress, the weakening or strengthening of nations in certain circumstances, and other considerations, are brought to bear upon the question of recognition. It has been the policy of this republic from its foundation to give aid and comfort as far as possible to every people struggling for freedom. Especially has it endeavored to promote the cause of republican liberty in all the countries of America, and to exclude, as far as practicable, European and monarchical domination on American soil. We have never failed to seize

an opportunity to carry out this policy. From the time the Monroe doctrine was proclaimed the nations of the world have recognized—however reluctantly sometimes—this to be the American policy. To surround this great republican country with republics and to uphold their institutions involves a great principle of national existence and progress. They are, as Mr. Seward aptly designated them, “our buttresses.” All nations act upon the same principle to strengthen themselves. To show this we might notice the conduct of Prussia in absorbing the States of Germany, of France in annexing Nice and Savoy, of Italy in extending her dominion, of England in her annexations in India and other parts of the world, of the course of Russia, and, in fact, of the policy of all governments where their own interests, progress or aggrandizement are concerned. In every point of view—for the sake of humanity, for the cause of republican liberty in America, for the sake of progress, for our own interests—Cuba appeals to us for recognition and support. Spain has no claim upon us beyond that demanded by strict international obligations, and these do not bind us to refuse the Cubans recognition. If the Washington letter referred to expresses the views and policy of the administration they are in opposition to public sentiment and unworthy of this great republic. However, Congress will soon meet, and, if we mistake not, the voice of the people will be heard then and the Cubans be recognized.