

THE CUBAN JUNTA, GOVERNING BODY OF REPUBLIC OF CUBA



1. J. Antonio Gonzales Lanuza, LL. D., secretary to the Cuban delegation. 2. Jose N. Hernandez, private secretary. 3. Francisco Chenard, secretary to the council of the Cuban revolutionary party 4. Tomas Estrada Palma, delegate. 5. Diego Tamayo, president of the council of the Cuban revolutionary party. 6. Manuel Ros, secretary to Mr. Palma. 7. D. M. Moya, purchasing agent. 8. Dr. Joaquin de Castillo, sub-delegate.

From their quarters in New York a little group of men manage the affairs of the Cuban republic. Collectively, they are known as the junta, and, while much has been said and written about them during the last few months, very little is known about them by the general public.

The group is called the junta from a Spanish word which is used to designate a consulative or legislative assembly for a nation or a district. There have been juntas during crises in all of the Spanish-American countries, and it has come to be used to mean a kind of ring or clique that manages the affairs of a government. In such a sense, the word is proper to use to describe the Cuban body in New York. But it is not officially a junta. There was such a council during the ten years' war in Cuba, but this body that has its headquarters in New York is, strictly speaking, not a junta at all. It is the legation that represents the interests of the Cuban republic abroad. Its authority is derived directly from the constituent assembly of the republic, which appointed it on September 19, 1895. This was the same assembly that formed the insurgents' government and commissioned Maximo Gomez as commander in chief of the Cuban army.

Palma Is the Head

The supreme head of the junta is Tomas Estrada Palma, who was made delegate and Cuban representative abroad. He is more important than the secretary of state, for he has practically carte blanche in his negotiations, and has authority to appoint ambassadors or ministers to any country whatever, and has control of all Cuba's

diplomatic agents and representatives throughout the world.

Recognizing that the most important post in the diplomatic service was that in the United States, Mr. Palma himself was made the diplomatic agent of the government in the United States, and should the present government of the island be recognized he would be received by President McKinley. Neither Mr. Palma nor any of the agents he has appointed to the Central and South American republics has been officially received by the government to which he has been accredited, but at the same time they hold indirect communication with the rulers, and their influence in behalf of Cuba is marked.

The relations of the United States to Cuba being of supreme importance, and as the independence of the island is in fact dependent upon the action of the great nation, it follows that Mr. Palma is the most important person in the government of the island. The presidency is insignificant in comparison, and General Gomez, commander of the army, is not as powerful. Besides this, Mr. Palma has to a limited extent the right to coin money and issue bonds.

Mr. Palma is well fitted for the duties of his office. He has been called the Benjamin Franklin of Cuba, and the comparison is not inapt, for he has been as active in his country's interests in America as Franklin was in behalf of the colonies while in France. There are many points of resemblance between the two men. Palma is not a great scientist or literary man, but like Franklin he is direct, gentle and determined in his methods, and as un-

assuming and plain, although eloquent in speech, as was the great American.

Palma was president of the republic during the ten years' war. He refused to allow his name to be presented for the honor during the present revolution because of his advanced age. He has lived sixty years. But knowing the value of old men in counsel, his associates persuaded him to accept the really more important post which he now holds.

Unusual suffering in behalf of Cuba was endured by him during the ten years' war. The Spanish made him a prisoner and sent him to Spain, where he was imprisoned until the suppression of the insurrection. While enduring the privations and tortures of life in a Spanish dungeon he was offered his liberty if he would swear allegiance to the Spanish crown. But his brave answer to the proposal was:

Defied Spain's Power

"You may shoot me if you will, but if I am shot it will be as president of the Cuban republic."

Besides Mr. Palma, three other appointments to the delegation were made by the Cuban government. These are Dr. Joaquin D. Castillo, the sub-delegate; Benjamin J. Guerra, treasurer of the republic abroad, and Gonzalo de Quesada, charge d'affaires at Washington.

Dr. Castillo is next in authority to Mr. Palma, and, in the event of the latter's death, would succeed him. He has served as a surgeon in the United States navy, was a leading physician in Cuba and held the post of surgeon general in the Cuban army until his transfer to his present post in the United States.

An important duty devolves upon Treasurer Guerra. He has charge of all the foreign funds raised for the revolution. A prominent tobacco merchant of New York, his name has inspired confidence in the thousands of cigar-makers who have contributed to support the revolution that their savings would not be misapplied.

During the recent negotiations at Washington an important factor has been Gonzalo de Quesada, the charge d'affaires. He is a graduate of the Columbia law school and a lawyer and writer of note.

Horatio S. Rubens acts as counsel to the junta, giving his services free. As his assistant he has Leon J. Benoit, and the chief clerk of the law department is Charles Richmond.

Secretaries of Legation

As secretaries of the legation are employed Dr. J. A. Gonzales Lanuza, Eduardo y Buduen, Frederico Perez Carbo, Luis M. Garzon, Nicholas Hernandez, Manuel Roz, Octavio A. de Zayas, D. M. Mayo and B. Giberga. All of these were appointed by Mr. Palma, and they are well fitted for their delicate duties.

The most important part of the junta's work is the furnishing of means of communication between the friends of the republic in the United States and the men in the field. There are more than 300 organizations of Cuban revolutionists in the United States, with a membership of more than 50,000, and they are all in closest touch with Delegate Palma, who is at their head. Their organization was due to a suggestion by Jose Marto, and their services in collecting contributions of money and supplies have been invaluable.