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Cuban separatism in exile and the internationalisation of the cause (1830s–1880s)

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Abstract

This article explores the limits of exile as a globalisation vector for the cause of Cuban separatism. While many Cubans were expelled from the Spanish island for political reasons between the 1830s and 1880s, others left of their own volition to avoid conflict with the colonial authorities. Despite political and social differences, many within this heterogeneous community of voluntarily and forcibly exiled strove for change within Cuba. Over the decades studied in this article, as Cuban separatism evolved from imperial reformism to pro-independence during the 1868–1878 war, Cubans in Europe, the United States, and Latin America struggled to speak a common language and present themselves as an organised separatist group. Disagreements over the abolition of slavery, autonomy, and imperial ties were far more prevalent among “*los de afuera*” (those abroad) than activists within Cuba.

Keywords Connections · Cuba · Exile · Independence · Separatism

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Introduction

By the late 1820s, following a period of imperial upheaval beginning in 1808, Cuba and Porto Rico were the only remaining American territories under Spanish rule. Calls for greater political autonomy were increasing among the Cuban creole¹ community, partly fuelled by the fact the island was responsible for around 18% of global sugarcane production.² Rather than independence, demands made during this period were largely for reform: the creation of colonial assemblies along French or British lines, and access to larger markets through the opening of free trade.³

As Spanish rulers continued to reject such reforms, many creoles were either driven out of Cuba for their opposition to the imperial status quo or left of their own free will.⁴ The majority of these political exiles headed for the United States (US), with lesser numbers settling in other parts of the Americas and Europe. Emigration increased through most of the nineteenth century, peaking during the Ten Years' War (1868–1878) between Cuban separatists and Spanish loyalists. In this article I focus on the period between the 1830s and 1880s, a time when

¹ In this article, creole is used to refer to all people born in Cuba.

² Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio: el complejo económico cubano del azúcar* (Havana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1964).

³ Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *Cuba, España, España, Cuba: Historia común* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1995).

⁴ This article is adapted from my thesis on this topic, *Quitter la Très Fidèle. Exilés et bannis au temps du séparatisme cubain, 1834–1879*, submitted in 2016, to be published by the Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

Cuban separatist aspirations had not yet taken the radical form they acquired under the most famous of the island's patriots, José Martí. During the period under analysis, separatist demands continually oscillated between reform, autonomy, annexation, and overt independence, particularly within exiled political communities. It is important to note that despite the slave trade having been outlawed since the 1815 Congress of Vienna,⁵ Spain was among the many violators of this British-imposed clause during this period. Captives continued to be shipped to Cuba until the 1860s,⁶ and slavery was only abolished within the country in 1886. The Cuban political exiles of the mid-nineteenth century had thus left a land of slave owners: most were middle-class to wealthy, literate men who considered themselves—and were considered by others—to be white,⁷ and were at times—although far from always—part of the slaveholding elite.

While only a few of those banished from the island due to their political views discussed imperial reform in Europe, Cuban separatist communities began to develop in the cities of the eastern US from the 1850s. Annexationist groups eager for Cuba to join the US republic were founded in New York and New Orleans. As the American Civil War ended, the outbreak of the Ten Years' War in 1868 triggered an unprecedented wave of emigration from Cuba. While estimates of how many Cuban exiles landed in the US vary considerably, the more trusted

⁵ David Eltis, James Walvin and Svend E. Green-Pedersen, *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981); Jesús Sanjurjo, *In the Blood of Our Brothers: Abolitionism and the End of the Slave Trade in Spain's Atlantic Empire, 1800–1870* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2021).

⁶ Inés Roldán de Montaud, 'En los borrosos confines de la libertad: el caso de los negros emancipados en Cuba, 1817–1870,' *Revista de Indias* 71, no. 251 (April 2011): 159–92.

⁷ Romy Sánchez, 'Les libres de couleur cubains "en exil" au milieu du XIXe siècle,' *Revue française d'études américaines* 164, no. 3 (2020): 85–101.

sources refer to the relocation of approximately 20,000 persons during this conflict.⁸ Documents produced by Spanish consuls in New York list around 3,500 active political “*emigrados*” in the city during the war.⁹ These migrations swelled the ranks of *juntas* and clubs working outside Cuba to back the independent republic cause, particularly in the US. The roles played by those in exile from Cuba in the Spanish imperial crisis have been analysed by a number of historians. In older perspectives, such as that of Juan José Expósito Casasús, these groups and the Cuban liberation army of 1868 were “the two wings of the bird of freedom”.¹⁰ However, more recent studies have emphasised the diversity and complexity of these exile groups, and often focus on the final third of the nineteenth century and the popularity of José Martí’s socially and racially inclusive radical activism in Florida and New York.¹¹

Although recent studies in transnational history emphasising interactions between various exiled communities during the “century of nationalities”¹² have included cooperation

⁸ Joan Casanovas Codinas, ‘El movimiento obrero cubano durante la Guerra de los Diez Años (1868–1878),’ *Anuario de estudios americanos* 55, no. 1 (1998): 248.

⁹ Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereinafter AHN), Ultramar, Libro 662.

¹⁰ Juan José Expósito Casasús, *La emigración cubana y la independencia de la patria* (Habana: Editorial Lex, 1953).

¹¹ Gerald Eugene Poyo, *With All, and for the Good of All: the Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989); Gerald Eugene Poyo, *Exile and Revolution: José D. Poyo, Key West, and Cuban Independence* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014); Dalia Antonia Muller, *Cuban Emigrés and Independence in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Lisandro Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars, and Revolution: The Making of Cuban New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

¹² Delphine Diaz and Sylvie Aprile, eds., *Les réprouvés. Sur les routes de l’exil dans l’Europe du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne, 2021); Catherine Brice, ed., *Exile and the Circulation of Political Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020).

between Cuban exiles and those from other countries,¹³ such links have remained difficult to identify and seem, *a priori*, less visible in mid-nineteenth century US than those relating to groups of European origin.¹⁴ This may be due to the fact that, for Cuban separatism, exile was the prototypical site of intense dispute of key issues, starting with the slave trade. Exile may well have heightened the tensions and divisions among Cuban nationals, thus hindering cooperation with other causes and communities. By examining the international and transnational dimensions of Cuban exile activity during a period in which independentism was being defined, I will explore why there is so little evidence of transnational cooperation prior to the 1890s.

In the following pages, I will demonstrate that cooperation with the Cuban cause rarely originated from exiles of other countries, and that those exiled Cubans who became involved in the struggle were seldom practically involved in transnational cooperation with other causes. With the notable exception of fundraising, the internationalisation of the cause within Cuban exiled circles at this time was often merely a matter of words and ceremonies. It appears that exile was not a major driver in raising the Cuban Question¹⁵ to an international level.

¹³ See Rafael Rojas, 'Los amigos cubanos de Juárez,' *Istor*, no. 33 (2008): 42–57, and David Luis-Brown, 'An 1848 for the Americas: The Black Atlantic, "El negro mártir," and Cuban Exile Anticolonialism in New York City,' *American Literary History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 431–463. Dalia Muller also explores the links between exile and the internationalization of Cuba's liberation movement but focuses more on the 1890s. See Muller, *Cuban Emigrés*, 132–41. See also Alessandro Bonvini's article in this special issue.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Helena Toth, *An Exiled Generation: German and Hungarian Refugees of Revolution, 1848–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); The classic work on the topic is A. E. Zucker, ed., *The Fortyethers: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950).

¹⁵ The term "Cuban Question" appears in the late 1860s in the context of the imperial war between loyalists and separatists on the island and refers to debates about the relationship between Cuba and the United States and the

Contributing factors for this appear to reside in the island's imperial status and its particular relationship with the US.¹⁶

Exile and the making of an international network for the Cuban cause

In 1870, Miguel de Embil, a wealthy exiled Cuban banker and economist, wrote to New York magnate Moses Taylor suggesting that Cuban separatists should “present” the possibility of a “reasonable revolution” in order to win over French and British lenders.¹⁷ Wealthy European investors and many other “friends” of Cuba such as Taylor hoped for a gradual transition to independence that would not disrupt trade. At this date, supporters of the Cuban exiles fell into two groups: bankers, diplomats and politicians in host countries who sympathised out of shared interests, and exiles from elsewhere with similar aims. Between 1840 and 1880, Cubans entering the US encountered an established political landscape of anticolonial Irish, German, Italian, Polish, French, and Spanish exiles.¹⁸ The circles in which they moved brought them

future of the island. The same phrasing is then used around the 1895–1898 independence war in Cuba, when the United States intervened, and also after the Revolution of 1959 to address the Cuba–US issue from the US perspective. See James M. Shinn Jr., ‘The Cuban Question: The Ten Years’ War and the Reconstruction of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1865–1878,’ PhD. Diss., (Yale University, 2020).

¹⁶ In this sense, the situation for exiles from Cuba differs from that of others, including the Italians studied in Maurizio Isabelle, *Risorgimento in Exile: Italian Emigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁷ New York Public Library (hereinafter NYPL), Moses Taylor Papers (hereinafter MT), box 305/3, Miguel de Embil to Moses Taylor, March 2, 1870.

¹⁸ Delphine Diaz and Sylvie Aprile, ed., *Banished. Traveling the Roads of Exile in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022); Sylvie Aprile, *Le Siècle des exiles* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2010); Rafe Blaufarb,

into contact with Latin American, Spanish, and non-Spanish European exiles of various persuasions, and there was no shortage of disagreement and conflict. While many international figures advocated the reasonable revolution referred to by Embil, others championed a more radical political project.

US support for the Cuban Question via exile networks

As there were more Cuban exiles on American soil than elsewhere, and strong familial alliances that predated the conflict with Spain, the greatest support for Cuban separatists existed in America, where such links played an at times indirect part in internationalising the Cuban cause. For instance, two sons of Isidro Fernández Cavada, involved in the *Trienio liberal* of 1820–1823 in Spain, and an American mother of French origin, Emily Howard Gatier, were *mambises*,¹⁹ and the third an exile in Philadelphia.²⁰ Shortly after their father died in 1838, the family had moved to Philadelphia, where Emily married an American businessman, Samuel Dutton. Cristóbal Madan provides another example of a matrimonial alliance with political consequences: his second wife, Mary O’Sullivan, a New Yorker of Irish origin, was the sister of John L. O’Sullivan, the influential pro-expansionist Democrat.²¹

Bonapartists in the Borderlands: French Exiles and Refugees on the Gulf Coast, 1815–1835 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825–1863* (Port Washington: Ira J. Friedman, 1965).

¹⁹ Although the origins of the term are still debated, *mambí* (plural *mambises*) denotes soldiers in the Cuban Liberation Army. See Real Academia Española: <https://dle.rae.es/mamb%C3%AD>

²⁰ Raúl C. Galván, *Nineteenth-century Cuban Transnationals: Sugar, Revolution and Citizenship* (University of Wisconsin, Ph.D. dissertation, 2011), 43.

²¹ Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars and Revolution*, 40–77.

Led by O’Sullivan, the Young America movement illustrates the increasing ties between Cuban annexationists and Democrat circles, particularly in the South and East Coast of the US. These included influential men such as the Louisiana diplomat Pierre Soulé, who fervently advocated that the US purchase Cuba,²² and the Secretary of State John C. Calhoun, who, in the late 1840s, was in contact with reformist creoles from the Havana Club and, with his Spanish counterparts, monitored those deported in the wake of the *La Escalera* conspiracy.²³ There were also influential women: Jane Cazneau, the first female war correspondent in America under the pseudonym Cora Montgomery, was an ally of Cuban annexationists and the principal financial backer of the annexationist newspaper, *La Verdad*.²⁴ Narciso López’s attempts to liberate Cuba attracted many Southern soldiers, such as veteran of the Mexican–American war William L. Crittenden, who was executed alongside López in 1851. In 1855, a text by John T. Phillips entitled “To Cuban Exiles” was presented in the New York newspaper, *Papagayo*, as proof of the “sincere and virtually universal sympathy spontaneously arising for the Cuban people.”²⁵ Editor Miguel Teurbe Tolón asked how any Republican heart could fail to “beat full of sympathy for these people wishing to be free of Spanish despotism”, and called on the masonic figure of the “Great Architect of the Universe” to help liberate the island. Intertwined with many strands of US solidarity with Cuba were republicanism, freemasonry, and the possibility of preserving the slave trade.

²² Catherine Chancerel, *L’homme du Grand Fleuve* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2014).

²³ Walter Jonhson, *River of Dark Dreams* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 322; Archivo General de la Administración (hereinafter AGA), Asuntos Exteriores, Washington, box 7808.

²⁴ Linda S. Hudson, *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807–1878* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001).

²⁵ *El Papagayo*, March 12, 1855, 17.

The range of US backers broadened and became more active during the Ten Years' War. In March 1869, an announcement in the *Boletín de la Revolución* invited "all the citizens of New York and its environs to come to the *Steinway* lounge [...] to discuss matters concerning the current state of affairs in Cuba."²⁶ The signatories, who included the poet and *New York Evening Post* editor William Cullen Bryant, the abolitionist pastor Henry Ward Beecher, the writer George William Curtis, the powerful managing editor of the *New York Tribune* Charles A. Dana, the banker Henry Clews, the editor of the *New York Herald* James Gordon Bennett, the founder of *Harper's Bazaar* Fletcher Harper, and the explorer and zoologist Paul Belloni Du Chaillu, "publicly and formally" expressed their sympathy for those "living near our borders, who are almost part of us, and who are sacrificing their fortune and lives to obtain rights." While pre-Civil War support for Cuban separatism had largely originated from Democrat and pro-slavery politicians, many Republicans and abolitionists had joined the cause by 1869, thoughts of maintaining slavery in Cuba after 1865 having notably receded.²⁷ Speaking at one pro-Cuba meeting, Republican New York Mayor Abraham Oakley Hall spoke in favour of insurrection at length.²⁸ Venturing beyond limits the federal authorities dared not breach and referencing a weapon that was emblematic of the *mambises'* struggle, Hall declared that "if someone sends billhooks to Cuba to sell them, and on arriving on the island they magically become a more offensive object, I see no reason to take issue!" Such calls for solidarity could be heard beyond New York. At a pro-Cuba meeting at Charleston Market Hall on April 19, 1870, Democrat Mayor Gilbert Pillsbury described his initial reluctance to attend

²⁶ *Boletín de la Revolución*, March 24, 1869, 3.

²⁷ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba. Race, Nation and Revolution, 1868–1898*, (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1999); Gerald Horne, *Race to Revolution. The United States and Cuba during Slavery and Jim Crow* (New York, New York University Press, 2014).

²⁸ *Boletín de la Revolución*, March 31, 1869, 3.

the event due to his desire to protect US-Spanish relations. Pillsbury declared that he was “not a revolutionary” and claimed the fighting in Cuba was simply a struggle for right and justice:²⁹ even the faint of heart were being won over by the promise of a “reasonable revolution.”

Solidarity with Cuba was now a key issue in US domestic politics: as non-naturalised Cubans could vote in the US presidential elections in seven states, subject to long-established gender and racial criteria,³⁰ the exile community had significant political influence. On August 30, 1876, an article entitled “the Cuban vote” by the Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden—who would lose a disputed election to Rutherford Hayes later that year—was published in *El Tribuno Cubano*. In the heading, Cirilo Villaverde declared that, having waited in vain for a “recognition of belligerency” by President Ulysses Grant, his newspaper now supported Tilden. The Democratic candidate compared the fate of the Cubans to that of “Arabs facing the Spaniards, or Huguenots in France”,³¹ and denounced the absolute and tyrannical monarchy of Spain.

Recognition of Cubans who had revolted against the Spaniards as belligerents and therefore legitimate revolutionaries was a major issue for exiled Cubans and their supporters, and was a primary motive for seeking the backing of influential Americans.³² It was to this end that Leonardo del Monte contacted the aforementioned New York magnate Moses Taylor in the hope of securing names from his formidable address book:

²⁹ *La Revolución*, April 28, 1870.

³⁰ Alan H. Kennedy, ‘Voters in a Foreign Land: Alien Suffrage in the United States, 1704–1926,’ *Journal of Policy History* 34, no. 4, (2022): 245–75.

³¹ *El Tribuno Cubano*, August 30, 1876.

³² On the concept of belligerency in the nineteenth century, see Jorge L. Esquirol, ‘Latin America,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of International Law*, eds. Bardo Fassbender and Anne Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 554–57.

Desiring to know some of the influential Senators and members in Washington to instruct them and make them acquainted with the progress of our Revolution, I beg you will have the kindness to give me some letters for those you may happen to know. I will consider it as a great favour.³³

Taylor received a similar request from Pedro Alfonso y León in Key West.³⁴ Not only a provider of financial support, Taylor acted as a political intermediary for contacts in New York, Washington, and beyond, and was therefore a source of hope in the struggle for recognition of belligerency. As James M. Shinn Jr. has shown, this issue not only engaged white elite networks: Afro-American activists from around the country took up the “Cuba Libre” cause, brandishing it as an emblem of their recent entrance into politics in the aftermath of the Civil War. In addition to meetings, articles, and fundraising, supporters of African descent contacted separatist exile organisations in New York to offer Union Army veterans prepared to support the insurgents in Cuba.³⁵

Links between separatist Cubans and Americans of various tendencies were particularly evident in the US press. Launched in 1851, the *New York Times* usually featured at least one article daily on the Cuban Question. Unsurprisingly, coverage was more extensive when events involved US citizens, as when around fifty men were sentenced to death alongside Narciso López in 1851, and during the *Virginius* affair of 1873, which also led to the execution of US

³³ NYPL, MT, Leonardo Del Monte to Moses Taylor, December 6, 1869, box 305/2.

³⁴ NYPL, MT, Leonardo Del Monte to Moses Taylor, October 4, 1869, box 305/2.

³⁵ James M. Shinn Jr, ‘The “Free Cuba” Campaign, Republican Politics and Post-Civil War Black Internationalism,’ in *Revolutions and Reconstructions. Black Politics in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Van Gosse and David Waldstreicher (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 176–97, 182.

nationals.³⁶ Reflecting a consensus among the New York press, regular reports supporting Cuban separatism were published in the *New York Times* during the 1870s. Activities by the Cuban exile community were also reported, with the founding of an annexationist *junta* in 1852, as well as a Cuban Club banquet held in Kingston, Jamaica and an initiative by the League of the Daughters of Cuba to help insurgents, both in November 1869, all receiving coverage.³⁷

The most tangible sign of support was financial assistance. While Cora Montgomery funded exiles during the period of filibustering annexationism, and Moses Taylor made significant contributions during the pro-independence period, they were far from alone. Donation lists from events organised by the prominent exile Emilia Villaverde document the names and contributions of many New Yorkers: the most generous doner only indicated his initials, J.S.Y; the Democrat businessmen Royal Phelps gave 10 dollars; the Republican abolitionist Cassius Marcellus also gave 10 dollars; a priest named Everet gave 2 dollars; and a “child” donated 15 cents.³⁸

³⁶ In 1873, a ship intended to support the Cuban insurrection was seized by the Spanish Navy. Following a trial for piracy, 53 crew members were summarily executed, including British and American citizens. The political and diplomatic crisis between Spain, Britain, and the US resulted in compensation being paid to families of the victims. Henry A. Kamen, ‘Remember the *Virginius*: New Orleans and Cuba in 1873,’ *Louisiana History* 11, no. 4 (1970): 313–31.

³⁷ *The New York Times*, July 1, 1871, 2.

³⁸ *La Revolución*, April 30, 1870.

Latin American solidarities

The young Latin American republics were particularly willing to help their “Cuban brothers,” with many Peruvian, Chilean, and Mexican adventurers, journalists, and statesmen taking up the separatist cause. These included Pedro Santacilia and Domingo Goicuría, who Rafael Rojas has described as “Juárez’s Cuban friends”.³⁹ The relationship between Pedro Santacilia and Benito Juárez is particularly eloquent: having met in exile in New Orleans, the two liberals remained in contact. Santacilia and Goicuría established a maritime transport brokerage in the Gulf of Mexico and, having travelled to Mexico for business in 1861, Santacilia became private secretary to Benito Juárez, by then the country’s President. In 1863 he married Juárez’s eldest daughter, Manuela, and became a noted figure in Mexican politics, authoring several articles denouncing the French occupation. Santacilia served as Juárez’s secretary until the President’s death in 1872, after which he was elected to the federal Congress.⁴⁰

The Chilean writer, journalist, historian, and politician Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna was another central figure in independent Latin-American support for the Cuban exile community. Having discovered their political hopes—shifting towards the independence option by 1865—when sent to the US as a “confidential agent” during the Chincha Islands War, Vicuña Mackenna observed their frustration that Cuba had not been annexed following the Civil War. He presented a typology of political tendencies among Cuban exiles in the account of his mission: the reformists were represented by Pozos Dulces, the annexationists by Domingo Goicuría, whose past as a lieutenant to William Walker was denounced by Vicuña Mackenna,

³⁹ Rojas, ‘Los amigos cubanos de Juárez’.

⁴⁰ Rafael Rojas, *Cuba mexicana: historia de una anexión imposible* (México: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2001), 256–7.

and the pro-independentists by the *Sociedad Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico*. Vicuña Mackenna offered to provide the *Sociedad* with vessels and arms from Chile and founded *La Voz de América*, a New York newspaper that called for war to be declared against Spain, despite concerns over the lack of consensus on whether annexation or independence should be the goal.⁴¹ Although Vicuña Mackenna and Benito Juárez shared a “Spanish–American republicanism” and were therefore hostile to US expansionism and calls for annexation,⁴² the geopolitical context of the 1860s and European attempts to reconquer parts of the Americas compelled them to dialogue with advocates of the new republican imperialism. The Cuban Question thus acted as a catalyst for continental political struggles, especially once the Ten Years’ War was underway.

Peruvian support for the Cuban exiles was led by Leoncio Prado.⁴³ Known as “Pradito,” Leoncio was the son of Mariano Prado, President of Peru between 1865 and 1868, and 1874 and 1879. After fighting Spain in the Peruvian Navy, the young Leoncio had joined an expedition to map rivers in the Amazon, before moving to Richmond, Virginia to study: it was while Leoncio was in the US that his father was overthrown. Leoncio and two of his brothers joined the Cuban liberation army in 1874. Eager to contribute his naval skills to the cause, he approached the *mambí* general staff and proposed chartering what he envisioned as an insurgent warship. To this end, he captured the Spanish vessel *Moctezuma* in November 1876. Renamed *Céspedes*, the ship was swiftly recaptured by the Spaniards, but Leoncio escaped and returned to Lima a hero of the Cuban cause. In New York, he recounted his exploits to Miguel de

⁴¹ Rafael Rojas, *Las repúblicas de aire: utopía y desencanto en la revolución de Hispanoamérica* (Madrid: Santillana Ediciones Generales, 2009), 296–97.

⁴² Rojas, *Las repúblicas de aire*, 296–97. See also Matías Sánchez Barberán, *Le républicanisme sud-pacifique à l’aune des recompositions impériales. Pérou, Bolivie, Chili. Années 1860*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Paris, EHESS, 2020.

⁴³ Cesar García del Pino, *Leoncio Prado y la revolución cubana*, (La Habana, Orbe, 1980).

Aldama, who immortalised him in the “pantheon of Cuba’s liberators.”⁴⁴ Leoncio Prado’s actions combined his support for the Cuban cause with Latin American resentment towards Spain, and upon his return from the Caribbean, Pradito was celebrated as a hero by the more radical pro-independence Cuban exiles.⁴⁵



Figure 1 Leoncio Prado, photograph by Eugène Courret, Source: Wikipedia.

⁴⁴ Amels Escalante Colás, Angel Jiménez González and Francisco Gómez Balboa, *Diccionario enciclopédico de Historia Militar de Cuba. Primera parte (1510–1898). Tomo 1 Biografías* (Havana : Ediciones Verde Olivo, 2010).

⁴⁵ In his study of Prado and the Cuban Independence War, Cesar García del Pino does not refer to Prado’s position on slavery, but does emphasize his links with the radical anti-slavery group, *República en Armas*, under Francisco Vicente Aguilera, and their conflicts with the exiled *Junta*, generally considered to be ambiguous about abolition. See Cesar García del Pino, *Leoncio Prado*.

Mutual Cuban–Spanish rejection of the imperial status quo

While, due to political and geographical proximity to the anti-imperial cause, support for Cuban exiles could be found throughout the US and Latin America, few Spaniards championed the liberation of Cuba. In the late 1830s, however, at a time when the *Cortes* (parliament) excluded overseas members and the colonial status of former American possessions was validated by the 1837 constitution, two politicians were notable for at least some affinity with Cuban reformism: Francisco Martínez de la Rosa and Salustiano de Olózaga. The former, President of the Cabinet in 1834–1835 and Minister of State under Narváez in 1844–1846, was also the Spanish ambassador to Paris in the early 1840s, when Domingo del Monte—representative of the Cuban cause in Spain alongside José Antonio Saco—was frequenting literary salons and political circles in the French capital. As repeatedly encouraged by his Creole correspondents, Del Monte pleaded the Cuban reform cause with Martínez de la Rosa on several occasions, securing goodwill, but not open support.⁴⁶ Del Monte was also a close friend of De Olózaga, President of the Cabinet in 1843, as indicated by their correspondence.⁴⁷ These two influential contacts were sympathetic to the Cuban cause, but ultimately unproductive.⁴⁸ Successive changes in the Spanish government and an inflexible colonial policy from 1837 thwarted all lobbying attempts by Saco and Del Monte. Other contacts between Cuban exiles and Spanish parliamentarians occurred throughout this period. For instance, Emilio Castelar, antiroyalist journalist, history

⁴⁶ Paul Estrade, and Sophie Andioc Torres, *Réformistes cubains en France et en Espagne au milieu du XIXe siècle / Reformistas cubanos en Francia y en España a mediados del siglo XIX* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 20.

⁴⁷ Domingo Del Monte, *Centón epistolario*, vol. 3 (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2002), 354.

⁴⁸ Josep María Fradera, *Colonias para después de un imperio* (Barcelona Edicions Bellaterra, 2005), 165.

professor, and future President of the first Spanish Republic, fled to Paris when sentenced to death following the uprising of 1866. When in exile, he corresponded and met with Cuban exile Ambrosio Valiente, to discuss books and articles about abolitionism.⁴⁹

Occasionally, rumours surfaced of Spanish officials collaborating with Cuban separatists, such as conspirator Manuel Rojo, suspected of being a liaison for Cuban activists in Cadiz in 1837. Another example is Pelayo González, an employee of the Administrative Council of Confiscated Goods—from those involved in separatist insurrection—in Havana, who, in 1869, was suspected of “relations with the Cuban junta in New York.”⁵⁰ It was perhaps these connections that enabled Creoles like Gaspar Cisneros Betancourt to recover their impounded goods, and former exiles such as Pozos Dulces to hold a position with the same Commission of Confiscated Goods fifteen years after being exiled.⁵¹ Cuban–Spanish friendships certainly proved useful at pivotal moments between loyalists and separatists. In 1869, 250 men suspected of conspiring with the insurgents were deported by the Spanish authorities from Cuba to the African island of Fernando Po, from which those who had the resources to do so attempted, and at times managed, to escape. The governor of the penal colony, distraught that these escapes were damaging his reputation, noted that he had opened his home to one of the wealthier fugitives, Miguel Riquelme, “to set an example in terms of hospitality but also because he is the cousin of the general and brigadier of the same name.”⁵² Upon their return from Mahón in 1870, the surviving Fernando Po absconders were assisted by

⁴⁹ University of Miami (hereinafter UM), Cuban Heritage Center (hereinafter CHC), Ramiro Casañas Collection, Emilio Castelar to Ambrosio Valiente, Paris, December 13, 1866.

⁵⁰ Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereinafter ANC), Donativos y Remisiones, 544/40, and Archivo Histórico Nacional de España (hereinafter AHN), Ultramar, 4373/7.

⁵¹ Alfonso W. Quiroz, ‘Loyalist Overkill: The Socioeconomic Costs of “Repressing” the Separatist Insurrection in Cuba, 1868–1878,’ *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (1998): 261–305.

⁵² AHN, Ultramar, 4718/5, no. 148.

the editor of the Barcelona newspaper *El Republicano*, who raised 500 pesos and a chest of clothing from the “Cuban colony in Barcelona.”⁵³

It is important to note that not all Cuban exiles in Spain embraced the separatist cause. This was particularly the case for wealthy individuals such as the López brothers, who headed the A. López y Cia maritime shipping company, and famous trader Joan Güell, all members of the highly conservative Barcelona Spanish Overseas Circle.⁵⁴ Also, while detailed analysis of the points of contact between Cuban separatists and Spaniards from various social and political backgrounds should not lead us to forget that these two camps were at war, it is also evident that such ties did exist.

European causes and points of convergence with Cuba

The Cuban cause received sympathy and support from exiles originating from other parts of Europe. Anti-imperial solidarity was particularly evident following the republican revolts of 1848, and in response to the New Imperialism of the 1860s and the 1870s. These shifts in the Old World context produced significant distinctions in the nature of this support.

In February 1854, the sixth anniversary of the Parisian revolution, the aforementioned Miguel Teurbe Tolón addressed an audience of Cuban independence supporters in New York. Speaking in French, Teurbe Tolón claimed that inauguration of the republic that “Napoleon the

⁵³ Juan B. Saluvel, *Los deportados a Fernando Póo en 1869: memoria escrita por Juan B. Saluvel* (Matanzas: Imprenta Aurora del Yumurí, 1892), 135.

⁵⁴ Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, ‘Empresarios en la distancia: con el negocio en Cuba y la vivienda en Cataluña (1830–1880),’ *Illes i imperis: estudis d’història de les societats en el món colonial i post-colonial*, no. 10–11, (2008): 153–166.

little destroyed with his impious hand” had been welcomed by people of every nationality “gathered beneath the standard of fraternity”.⁵⁵ Among the “alliance of peoples” who then marched from Leonard Street to City Hall were representatives from Italy under a banner for “God and the people”, from Cuba with their single star flag, and, brandishing the Stars and Stripes, from France. The crowd was later joined by delegations from Germany and Hungary, and a group from Poland whose standard declared “Death to tyrants! Poland is not dead!”⁵⁶ Similarly, during the spring of 1850, the primary Italian-language newspaper in New York, *L'Eco d'Italia*, published a series of articles in its “American chronicles” section about one of Narciso López’s unsuccessful expeditions; in a special issue fronted by the Cuban annexationist flag, the paper noted that “the Cuban cause is the same that Italians and Hungarians have been struggling for.”⁵⁷ Another article indicated that information about the annexationist expedition to the Cuban city of Cárdenas originated from testimony by Pietro Duval, an exile who had served as a captain under Giuseppe Garibaldi in Montevideo and fought in Hungary before becoming a leader in López’s 1850 undertaking. Having returned to New Orleans with some of his companions he was able to provide an account of the Cuban expedition.⁵⁸ Duval was not the only Italian involved in López’s adventures,⁵⁹ and *L'Eco d'Italia* emphasised the republican and revolutionary affinity between their people and the Cuban exiles.

⁵⁵ *El Mulato*, n°3, 6 mars 1854, ‘Celebración del Aniversario de la república francesa’.

⁵⁶ *El Papagayo*, March 12, 1855, 4.

⁵⁷ *L'Eco d'Italia. Supplemento*, May 25, 1850, 25. I am grateful to Michele Magri for sharing these documents with me. For further details on Italian exiles in New York, see Michele Magri, *Risorgimento oltre Atlantico. Mobilità politica tra Italia e Stati Uniti, 1815–1860* (EHESS–Pisa University, 2023).

⁵⁸ *L'Eco d'Italia*, June 8, 1850, 74. This issue and the details on Pietro Duval were also provided by Michele Magri.

⁵⁹ See Ignacio García de Paso’s article in this special issue.

Interactions between exiles during the earlier period often occurred at important events such as commemorations, anniversaries, and ceremonies. However, given the lack of press and individual commentary on the subject, it is difficult to determine the political motivations of those in attendance. For instance, a report of the 1854 burial of the Cuban journalist Lorenzo Allo in New York tell us that German, Polish, and Italian exile associations were represented,⁶⁰ but there is no information on the nature of their interactions with Cuban exiles and the discussions that took place.

Although the vague notion of a “universal republic” provided a way of federating the various national struggles of European exiles in a general opposition to “tyranny,” the presence of exiles from other countries at events relating to Cuban separatism does not necessarily indicate explicit solidarity with the Cuban cause. However, references in their writings certainly indicate that the events of 1848 held significance for some Cuban republican exiles. In 1870, for example, the lawyer, writer, and teacher José Ignacio Rodríguez copied the report of an 1852 session in the US Senate in which a senator had spoken of his impressions of the renowned Hungarian revolutionary and statesman, Lajos Kossuth, and stated that the Secretary of State had given too much support to the emancipation of Hungary. As a good advocate for his cause, Rodríguez appears to have noted this statement as research in preparation for his request that the US Congress recognize Cuban belligerency.⁶¹

Similarly, Giuseppe Garibaldi resurfaced in the world of Cuban exile during the 1870s. The political activist Emilia Casanova wrote to him on January 3, 1869 that after nearly a year of fighting, “if the great Garibaldi has kept his silence, it is because he cannot know of our

⁶⁰ Enrique López Mesa, *Algunos aspectos culturales de la comunidad cubana de New York durante el siglo XIX* (Havana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2002), 21.

⁶¹ Library Of Congress, JIR, 32nd Congress, 1st session 1852, box 52, Sen. Ex. Doc. no. 92.

cause.”⁶² The hero of Caprera responded sympathetically, telling her that he had been with her “heart and soul since the beginning of your glorious revolution,” and stated that Spain was not the only imperial power “fighting for liberty at home, while wanting to reduce other people abroad to slavery.”⁶³ The following year Casanova—on behalf of 300 signatories—sent a letter to Victor Hugo requesting his support, inspiring the writer and politician to pen his poem *Aux Femmes de Cuba*, published in *Actes et Paroles*.⁶⁴ In 1874, Hugo was again petitioned. Antonio Zambrana, the Cuban republic representative in Paris, wrote to his home on Avenue de Clichy stating that “America has its Gibraltar, Monsieur, and it is called Cuba”; not even a colony, but “a Spanish penal colony, darker even than those in Africa.”⁶⁵ Having “already spoken out for noble and valorous Cuba,” Hugo replied that he would not hesitate to do so again and arranged to meet Zambrana and his friends.

Lesser-known individuals also expressed their desire to join the *mambises* in Cuba, highlighting the grassroots level of support and solidarity for Cuban independence. In February 1876, “Baron G. Taube” wrote in French to the “representative of the Cuban republic in New York”. Following “various vicissitudes of fate and family disputes”, including running “a trading house in Vienna” and having “consumed all my fortune with the help of the year of grace 1873”, this “Russian Pole” had emigrated from “old Europe” to a village in Pennsylvania. But Taube had found no salvation in America, being unable to “find any occupation other than that of glass painter,” the “microscopic profit” of which made little impact on “the abominable hole” he was in. With his “strong and brave twenty-one-year-old” friend, a glassmaker from

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⁶³ Emilia Casanova de Villaverde, *Apuntes Biográficos de Emilia Casanova de Villaverde: Escritos por un contemporáneo* (New York, 1874), 59–60.

⁶⁴ Victor Hugo, *Oeuvres complètes de Victor Hugo*, (Paris, France: J. Hetzel, A. Quantin, 1880).

⁶⁵ NYPL, MT, Antonio Zambrana to Victor Hugo, Paris, December 1874, box 308.

French Switzerland, this exile was keen to aid socialism and enrol in the Cuban liberation army.⁶⁶ Taube went on to list his physical attributes and abilities with a bayonet, sword stick, foil, gun, horse, and diplomatic negotiations, before ending the letter by declaring that, caring little for life, his only fear was the attacks of ennui he suffered. Taube hoped the expedition would keep these at bay.⁶⁷

Although the circumstances in Cuba and the issue of exile are not mentioned in this letter, a request from a “Russian Pole” and a “French Swiss” illustrates the diversity among grassroots support for the Cuban cause. While the situation in which Baron G. Taube found himself is hardly representative, his plea provides a way of reconsidering those rallying to Cuban cause during the 1870s, a time when the political atlas was being reordered on both sides of the Atlantic. People were no longer fighting for the same values they had rallied to in 1848: the global shockwave of the 1848 revolutions had placed nationalities, independence, republicanism, and, in certain cases, the principle of equality and popular sovereignty to the forefront of global political events.⁶⁸ The 1848 moment was heir to the Greek and Polish insurrections, as well as constitutional experimenting and liberal uprising in the Iberian and Italian peninsulas during the 1820s and 1830s. Approaches to politics and combat underwent a major shift following the Crimean War, France’s imperial interventions in Mexico, the Franco–Prussian War, and the travails of communalism as a principle of political organization based on

⁶⁶ ANC, DR, 170/129, ‘Carta firmada por G. Taube dirigida al Representante de la República cubana en New York,’ February 27, 1876.

⁶⁷ ANC, DR, 170/129, ‘Carta firmada por G. Taube dirigida al Representante de la República cubana en New York,’ February 27, 1876. No source enables us to ascertain whether Baron G. Taube served under the *mambises*’ flag, but his profile as a “combatant for all causes” probably did not work in his favour with the directorate of Cuban exiles in 1870s America.

⁶⁸ Quentin Deluermoz, Emmanuel Fureix and Clément Thibaud, eds., *Les mondes de 1848. Au-delà du printemps des peuples* (Paris: Champ-Vallon, 2023).

the federated communes that flourished in Europe at the time.⁶⁹ In the 1870s, social progress, improving conditions for the labouring classes, the total and immediate emancipation of slaves and the oppressed, and tangible equality were at the forefront of the international agenda.⁷⁰

At times, the Cuban exile community was out of sync with these developments: while aspiring to independence and emancipation from imperialism, they faltered over the form their future republic should take. Accusations made in 1876 that the exiled junta in New York was disconnected from the non-white base of exiled workers and craftsmen—based mainly in New Orleans and Key West—had little effect: rather than embrace the ideals that were gaining international support, they continued as an elitist, overwhelmingly white group, many of whom clung to a past of privilege and wealth.

Conclusion

Cuban exile communities certainly served as platforms for disseminating and internationalising the cause of Cuban separatism during the mid-nineteenth century, especially once the 1868–1878 war of independence had begun. Exile clubs, associations, and *juntas* counted on

⁶⁹ Quentin Deluermoz, *Commune(s). 1870–1871. Une traversée des mondes au XIXe siècle*, (Paris : Seuil, 2020); Jeanne Moisand, *Federación o muerte. Los mundos posibles del Cantón de Cartagena (1873)* (Madrid: Ed. Catarata, 2023).

⁷⁰ Similar cases to Taube can be found in Mario Etchechury Barrera, ‘Legionarios, enganchados y cautivos. Apuntes para una investigación sobre las formas de reclutamiento transnacional durante la Guerra del Paraguay (1864–1870),’ in *A 150 años de la Guerra de la Triple Alianza contra el Paraguay*, eds. Juan Carlos Garavaglia and Raúl Fradkin (Buenos Aires; Prometeo Libros, 2017) and Alessandro Bonvini and Stephen Jacobson, ‘Democratic Imperialism and Risorgimento Colonialism: European Legionnaires on the Argentine Pampa in the 1850s,’ *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 1 (2022): 89–108.

international backing from their beginnings in the 1850s. It was mainly the major US cities of Cuban exile, particularly New York and New Orleans, that provided support for the combat. Liberal Spain supplied a small number of supporters and networks, despite the imperial conflict pitting the island against its colonial metropole. With a history of opposition to Spain, Latin America also provided a favourable environment for the Cuban cause. The imperial crisis of the Ten Years' War had a significant impact on the international stage.

However, rather than from exiles of other countries, foreign support for the Cuban cause mainly originated from politicians, businessmen, and combatants. The few encounters between exiles identified during this period, as analysed here, reveal instances of solidarity rooted in principles, ceremonies, and oaths of alliance rather than joint actions. Moreover, Cuban exiles lacked coordinated action at this time.⁷¹ Two major points of disagreement—relating to what form separatism should take and whether to include people of African descent in the Cuban national project—divided the community and hindered international support. Potential foreign backers often hesitated due to the socioracial segregation within exile groups or concerns that Cuba would merely become another US state.

When compared with the internationalization of causes by other exile communities, that of Cuban separatism was rather desultory. Therefore, the prism of exile cannot adequately exhibit the transnational dimensions of this political cause: a focus on war and combat, Cuba's relationship with the US, and its status as part of the Spanish empire provides a more compelling approach.⁷² Substantial international backing would only manifest fifteen years later, when José Martí categorically rejected annexation by the US and included Afro-Cubans in his movement.

⁷¹ Romy Sánchez, 'Specific Ways of Speaking Out from Exile: The Case of Cuban Separatists Abroad, 1840–1880,' in *Exile and the Circulation of Political Practices*, 62–76.

⁷² Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba. Race, Nation and Revolution, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Attempts to turn the Cuban cause into a transnational issue prior to the “Martí sequence” were largely in vain, as the divided exiles struggled to reach agreement on how to definitively break with the Spanish Empire. These internal debates left little room for unequivocal support.

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