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THE WORLD-HERALD'S EDITORIAL REACTION
TO THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Catharine Fogarty
August, 1975

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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June 6, 1975
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INTRODUCTION

The city of Omaha had three major newspapers in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Republican, as the name suggests, was the mouthpiece of the Republican Party. The Herald espoused the principles of the Democratic Party. Dedicated to the growth of the city, the Herald considered the Union Pacific to be the major business factor behind that growth. The third Omaha paper, the Bee, came into existence when its founder, Edward Rosewater, desired to mold public opinion in favor of the creation of a Board of Education. Organized on a partisan basis, all three papers took positions on the major political issues of the day.¹

Gilbert Hitchcock, a local lawyer, ventured into Omaha's competitive newspaper business with the founding in 1885 of the Omaha Daily World. He felt the city needed a non-partisan, neutral paper which would balance the city's news coverage.² Reflecting his non-partisan approach was the slogan Hitchcock adopted, "a newsy paper for busy people."

¹Robert Foster Patterson, "Gilbert M. Hitchcock, A Study of Two Careers" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1940), pp. 84-88. Hereafter cited as Patterson, "Hitchcock."

²Paul V. Peterson, "The Omaha Daily World and World-Herald, 1885-1965" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1966), pp. 41-42. Hereafter cited as Peterson, "World-Herald."

This policy of non-political reporting was especially innovative in an atmosphere of political journalism.³

The hope that the paper could avoid political intrigue quickly disappeared. The Daily World in 1885 accused Bee publisher, Edward Rosewater, of attempting to influence the hiring of the architect for the new city hall. The Bee wanted the new building located on the grounds adjacent to the Bee building at Seventeenth and Farnam.⁴

The next target of the Daily World's scorn was the local gas company. The paper claimed that the company offered an inferior product for an inflated price. Carrying out his own personal campaign against the company, Hitchcock refused to pay his gas bill and asked other citizens to do the same.⁵

When a quarrel developed between the city council and the police board over who had control of the police department, the Daily World vehemently opposed involving politics in the police department. The next year, 1888, the paper exposed a vicious Kangaroo court at the city jail which resulted in a grand jury investigation. The jury investiga-

³Patterson, "Hitchcock," p. 101.

⁴Peterson, "World-Herald," pp. 68-70.

⁵Ibid., p. 71.

tion upheld the paper's allegations.⁶ Gradually the Daily World was becoming a crusading organ.

The paper by 1887 had taken stands on several issues. It condemned child labor. It opposed the protective tariff of the Harrison administration. Claiming that death by hanging for capital punishment cases was cruel, the Daily World called for its replacement with an electrical device. It supported the Knights of Labor call for the cessation of convict labor as a work force for the state. Though the paper still considered itself independent of politics, its comments and ideals leaned toward the Democratic Party.⁷

Both the Daily World and the Herald were operating at a financial loss at the end of the 1880's. Hitchcock, considering it financially advantageous to get into the morning newspaper field, bought the troubled Herald in 1889. With the purchase came the birth of the Omaha World-Herald.⁸ Though the paper took stands on certain political issues, it still took pride in its non-partisan approach to the issues. It justified this on the grounds that it formed its opinion independently, divorced from the major political parties.⁹ The 1890's changed this non-partisan attitude with the rise

⁶Patterson, "Hitchcock," pp. 117-118.

⁷Ibid., p. 71.

⁸Ibid., pp. 132-133.

⁹Ibid., p. 137.

of William Jennings Bryan and the free silver movement. Bryan became nominal editor of the paper and used it to preach his free silver philosophy. When he resigned to become the Democratic candidate for president, Richard Metcalfe, a staunch Bryanite, became the editor.¹⁰ The paper was now the Democratic mouthpiece of Omaha.

The World-Herald's bent toward the Democratic Party carried on through the 1890's. By the end of that decade, the nation's newspapers were embroiled in a controversy involving Spain's presence in Cuba. Those papers that felt the United States should fight for Cuban independence criticized President McKinley for moving too slowly with his Cuban policy. The war-anxious papers sensationalized the brutality of Spain's treatment of the Cubans and called for American action. The World-Herald was among these war-anxious journals. It claimed the Republican administration was too cautious prior to the war. War was necessary to rid Spain from the Western Hemisphere.

As early as the 1850's, the United States was involved to a minor degree with the attempts of Cuban insurgents to break the link with their mother country, Spain. Cubans living in New York City planned an invasion of the island hoping to spread rebellious fervor among their countrymen. The attempt failed.¹¹ Then in 1854 a group of American ambassadors

¹⁰Peterson, "World-Herald," pp. 175-176.

¹¹Walter Millis, The Martial Spirit (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), pp. 11-12. Hereafter cited as Millis, Martial Spirit.

to Europe suggested to the United States State Department that the American government should offer Spain \$120,000,000 for Cuba. With the slave issue an important one, political fears on the part of northerners silenced this idea.¹²

Cuba's Ten Years War which started in 1868 was a series of guerrilla clashes between insurgents and the Spanish military. The fighting raged in the unsettled regions of western Cuba, but never reached the center of Spanish strength near Havana. Again this rebellious war was supported by the Cuban junta, a group based in New York which was established to promote propaganda and gun-running with American help. Many Americans came to the aid of the insurgents and the more adventurous ones went into the profitable gun-running business.¹³

The end of the Ten Years War came in 1876 when Spain sent its ablest military man, General Martinez Campos, to pacify the island. By offering leaders of the insurrection amnesty, he induced them to lay down their arms. Political life in Cuba during the next twenty years was relatively calm. The political party with the largest support among the islanders wanted to solve the problem peacefully and without complete separation from Spain.¹⁴

¹²Ibid., pp. 12-13.

¹³Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 15-16.

The Ten Years War proved unsuccessful for the most ardent dissenters, but guerrilla operations began anew in 1895. New York was again the major base of operations.¹⁵ At this time the Omaha World-Herald had directed its opinions toward the Democratic Party and had given sympathy to the rebel cause. It did not, however, at this time favor any overt action on the part of the United States.¹⁶ In 1895 an American ship, the Allianca, was near the Cuban shore and was fired upon by Spanish sailors. The Omaha editors felt the United States should seek an official apology but hoped that military action could be avoided by settling the matter through diplomatic channels.¹⁷

Though not wanting war, the World-Herald called the 1895 uprising the most formidable yet and offered its best wishes to the rebels. It assured the rebels of American recognition if a republic were established. Alluding to the Monroe Doctrine as a bond of sympathy protecting the Western Hemisphere from European intervention, the paper went so far as to justify American intervention in the island.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁶ Morning World-Herald, February 28, 1895, p. 4 as cited in Roger J. Jacob, "A Study of the Editorial Opinion of the Omaha World-Herald Toward the Cuban Crisis, 1895-1898" (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Omaha, 1967), p. 32. Hereafter cited as Jacob, "Editorial Opinion."

¹⁷ Sunday World-Herald, March 19, 1895, p. 4 as cited in Jacob, "Editorial Opinion," pp. 33-34.

¹⁸ Morning World-Herald, March 23, 1895, p. 4 as cited in Jacob, "Editorial Opinion," pp. 35-36.

Between 1895 and 1897 the World-Herald changed from giving only sympathy to the rebel cause to advocating the recognition of Cuban belligerency.¹⁹ Finally, the paper called for overt American intervention on behalf of the troubled island. As war became inevitable in the early months of 1898, the paper which once declared its objectivity in news coverage, became an avid advocate of direct military confrontation with Spain. The call to arms to rid the Western Hemisphere of an evil presence became the World-Herald's constant appeal. The paper approached the subject with an evangelical zeal that put it among the war-anxious and sensational journals flourishing at the end of the century.

¹⁹Patterson, "Hitchcock," p. 201.

CHAPTER I

THE SALVATION OF SUFFERING CUBA

Immediately preceding the Spanish-American War, the World-Herald printed several stories telling of horrible atrocities inflicted upon the Cubans by their cruel Spanish overseers. According to these stories, wretched conditions existed on the island due to its occupation by a nationality of barbarous and unscrupulous people. The prevalent theme of the paper's editorial policy was that the moral duty of the United States was to save these suffering Cubans. Obtaining syndicated articles from New York newspapers telling of atrocities inflicted on helpless Cuban victims increased the World-Herald's zeal for freeing the island.

The New York newspapers which were most persistent in championing the Cubans' cause were Hearst's Journal and Pulitzer's World.¹ A World correspondent, James Creelman, sent reams of sensational stories. He wrote of men, women and children heaped along the roadsides, dead or suffering from disease, and of hospitals invaded by Spaniards intent on shooting the Cuban inmates.² Another New York reporter told of Spanish

¹Marcus M. Wilkerson, Public Opinion and the Spanish-American War (New York: Russell and Russell, 1932), p. 21. Hereafter cited as Wilkerson, Public Opinion.

²Ibid., p. 33.

soldiers cutting ears off Cuban victims and proudly keeping those ears as trophies.³

The New York correspondents in Cuba disclosed incidents of undue cruelty inflicted on women and children. One story told of a Spanish soldier attempting to intimidate a young woman into sexual submission. When she refused to acknowledge his advances, he drew his sword and slashed her until her blood ran profusely. Her pleas for mercy only served to lead her tormentors on to the brutal murder of her and her child. She was shot and her baby was beaten on the head with the butt of a Spaniard's rifle. According to the report, the intoxicated murderers cut off their victims' heads and hung them on a grocer's door.⁴

The World-Herald, obtaining wire service from the New York Journal, used similar techniques to evoke sympathy for the Cuban cause. It revealed incidents of Cuban suffering under the reconcentrado policy of General Valeriano Weyler, Captain-General of Cuba in 1896. He had served Spain in putting down previous revolts and had gained the reputation of being brutal and heartless.⁵ In order to keep Cubans of the rural areas from engaging in rebel activities, the Captain-General concentrated them in guarded camps within

³New York World, June 1, 1896, p. 7 as cited in Wilkerson, Public Opinion, pp. 33-34.

⁴Ibid., June 3, 1896, p. 7 as cited in Wilkerson, Public Opinion, p. 34.

⁵Ibid., p. 29.

the urban areas of the city. Due to the unsanitary conditions of the camps, many confined persons died from disease and starvation. The Omaha paper reported that from April to December of 1897, the death rate from starvation increased from 200,000 to 500,000 people. This figure represented a death rate of fifty per cent of the population of the island. If President McKinley allowed such conditions to continue for another year, the death rate would be near ninety-eight per cent. With the population of Cuba exterminated at this rate, the paper sarcastically figured, there would be no need at all for American intervention.⁶

The paper's statistics were alarming and in March of 1898 it printed more staggering statistics. The American Red Cross indicated that the total number of people encamped had numbered 800,000. Of this number 425,000 people had died, and an additional 200,000 people probably would die. Of the remaining prisoners, five per cent would likely fall victim to starvation. The total number of dead would then reach 635,000.⁷ How can we say we live in peaceful times, the paper asked, when people are "herded into pens like cattle" and starved to death?⁸

⁶Morning World-Herald, April 17, 1897, p. 4 and December 18, 1897, p. 4 as cited in Jacob, "Editorial Opinion," p. 70.

⁷Morning World-Herald, March 9, 1898, p. 1.

⁸Evening World-Herald, February 28, 1898, p. 4.

The World-Herald again presented its case against Spanish barbarity in a very strange editorial containing a suggestion that the United States pit the Sioux Indians against the Spanish. Suggesting that five thousand Sioux be sent to encounter the same number of Spanish, the paper claimed that in matters of cruelty this would be an even match. The Indians with their savage attitudes scalped their victims and felt that in battle any means necessary should be taken to win. The Spanish took pride in raiding hospitals and in ravishing women and children. Thus the Spanish were no more civilized than a band of Indians. As long as the Indians might be ready to make amends for fighting the government, the paper self-righteously asserted, the United States should pit them against the enemy. The only concern would be the death of a few Sioux "who in time could become fully civilized."⁹

Several times the World-Herald implied that barbarity was an inherent part of Spanish history. In one article the paper recounted details of the death of an American colonel and fifty of his men who forty-seven years earlier had been caught in Cuba by Spanish officials. The Spaniards took their clothes and mutilated their bodies. According to subsequent investigations, the men had not received proper buri-

⁹Morning World-Herald, April 11, 1898, p. 4.

al and indignities performed on their bodies were so severe that they could not be mentioned in the paper.¹⁰

The World-Herald editorialized several times concerning the moral justification for war. This justification was based on Christian and biblical principles. The paper argued that the people of the United States were God's chosen ones in wreaking vengeance on the evil-doing Spaniards. If war resulted while carrying out this duty, it would be a righteous war.

The paper pointed out a moral justification when commenting on a circular initiated by a pacifist from Boston saying that any war was evil and contradicted the principles of Christianity. The case for a moral war would be one fought for humanity and the preservation of liberty. It was fine, the editors moralized, to quote the divine rule of turning the other cheek when assaulted. The rule, however, would not tell us to "turn the first cheek for a second blow after the second cheek has been turned and smitten."¹¹ This editorial was in reference to the atrocity problem in Cuba, the DeLome letter, and the Maine explosion. These incidents, Editor Metcalfe believed, were national disasters that had to be avenged. If the pacifist who wrote the letter would read the Bible, he would learn that Jehovah

¹⁰Evening World-Herald, February 22, 1898, p. 4.

¹¹Sunday World-Herald, March 27, 1898, p. 4.

never avenged in person. He would rather select somebody as an agent to carry out his will. Some Christians, the paper asserted, felt that the United States was the chosen minister of God "to wreak His vengeance upon the inhuman oppressors of Cuba, the insulters of the American flag, and the murderers of the sailors of the Maine."¹²

The World-Herald did not hesitate to point to the holy men of the Bible in emphasizing the importance of war. If Saint Paul were living, the paper asserted, he would say that it was America's duty to put a halt to Spain's butchery, for those who are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak. Was this not applicable to this country's situation in Cuba? Could not the United States be compared to Moses, an agent of God to free the Israelites? From cover to cover, the paper claimed, the Bible was filled with stories showing that God had always sent men and nations to punish those who did not abide by His laws. "And a war waged against tyranny is always a holy war and entirely in keeping with the divine will."¹³

The moral attitude assumed by the World-Herald appeared in almost every pre-war editorial. Perhaps it was not always the major theme, but it did touch even those editorials concerning such technical matters as military pre-

¹²Ibid., p. 4.

¹³Sunday World-Herald, March 20, 1898, p. 4.

paredness or military strategy. When war did become a reality, the paper continued preaching to its readers that the United States was God's chosen nation.

The World-Herald's zeal for saving the suffering Cubans reached its peak in March of 1898 when it established the Cuban Relief Bureau.¹⁴ This organization was established at 1520 Douglas Street, and the editor appealed to Nebraskans and Iowans to bring in food, linens, drugs and money. Noting that the work of Cuban relief existed in several large cities, the editor urged Omahans to respond enthusiastically. Omaha must not lag behind in the "general cause of humanity."¹⁵

The Omaha paper dedicated the Bureau to Mrs. John M. Thurston, wife of the United States senator from Nebraska. In order to investigate conditions in Cuba, the New York Journal had invited the Thurstons on a tour of the island. While on tour Mrs. Thurston died on a yacht, and the paper attributed her untimely death to the shock of seeing the suffering and starvation in Cuba. The destitution, the editor said, could not be described in words. Its intensity was so great that "the shock of its realization completely prostrated one of Nebraska's noblest women when brought face to

¹⁴Peterson, "World-Herald," p. 297.

¹⁵Evening World-Herald, March 17, 1898, p. 1.

face with it, and almost immediately thereafter resulted in her untimely death."¹⁶

Mrs. Thurston had written a few lines concerning what she had seen in Cuba and the World-Herald enthusiastically printed them to evoke the sympathy of its readers. Appealing to the mothers of the United States she wrote:

"O, mothers of the northland who tenderly clasp their little ones to your loving hearts, think of the black despair that fills each mother's heart as she felt her life blood ebb away and knew that she left her little ones to perish from the pains of starvation and disease."¹⁷

Again capitalizing on Mrs. Thurston's impressions of hunger on the island, the World-Herald printed one of her letters. In it she told of visiting the private residence of Clara Barton where the nurse treated some of the victims of the Spanish-dominated island. Mrs. Thurston saw some of the patients and remarked that exposure and starvation were common symptoms:

"I have no words vivid enough to bring before you the poor shrunken lips, the brown skin on some of them already deprived of life and falling off in great patches; the great sunken eyes, the swollen lips and tongues tell their tale of woe and misery."¹⁸

To allow the readers to respond to Mrs. Thurston's appeal, the World-Herald set up its Bureau. Its appeal to

¹⁶Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁷Ibid., March 16, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 4.

the readers for an enthusiastic response echoed a familiar theme; it was America's humanitarian duty to save the people of the famine-ridden island. "Within sight and sound of this land of plenty," cried the paper, "where bursting granaries and plenty reigns, there is a beautiful island filled with thousands of people who are dying of starvation."¹⁹

Appealing to the Christian community, the paper noted that it was of no avail to send missionaries with their lofty ideals and words to people who were wasting away; this would have no effect. Duty dictated that the people of means send food, not preachers. The Bureau would give people an opportunity to practice Christianity with concrete examples of charity and good will.²⁰

When asking for money, the Omaha paper used sentimental and maudlin examples of children bringing in their small but hard-earned contributions. One child handed over a box containing \$23.67. The contribution was completely voluntary. It had been collected by the students of Kellom Grade School. Another boy sent a dime with a message noting that he was just a little boy who was sorry for the suffering Cubans and wanted to help alleviate the problem.²¹

¹⁹Ibid., March 17, 1898, p. 4.

²⁰Ibid., March 24, 1898, p. 4.

²¹Ibid., March 26, 1898, p. 1.

To allay the fears of the community that the Spanish officials might possibly interfere and seize the goods, the World-Herald detailed where the supplies should go. They would go to the American consul in Matanzas, Cuba. The choice of this destination was made for three reasons. The destitution was great; the consul, A. C. Brice, a native Iowan, was active in distributing relief; and finally this was where Mrs. Thurston observed some wretched scenes which were responsible for her collapse.²²

Ultimately the World-Herald collected enough supplies to fill a twenty-two car train and received \$11,000 in cash. The paper lost no time in heaping laurels upon itself and the community for this most successful endeavor.²³ The train, bound for a special receiving station in New York, was routed through Kansas City. The reason for this diversion was that the train was emblazoned with signs revealing the contents and advertising the source of the vehicle of good will. A reporter accompanied the train and sent back reports concerning the national reaction to the people's efforts.²⁴ One of the reactions came from the Buffalo, New York, Times and the World-Herald reprinted it for its readers:

²²Sunday World-Herald, March 20, 1898, p. 4.

²³Morning World-Herald, April 8, 1898, p. 1.

²⁴Peterson, "World-Herald," p. 297.

And while these hundreds of tons of food, clothing and supplies of every practical nature are being hastened forward to save the lives of the starving Cubans, reduced to misery and destitution by the cruel heel of the Spanish despotism, the Times reminds its readers that the initiative in the movement was taken up by that great organ of the people of the west, the Omaha World-Herald.²⁵

So the paper received accolades for its efforts and at the same time was able to reiterate its favorite theme of Cuban misery caused by Spanish cruelty.

During the time the World-Herald sponsored the Bureau, it continued editorial attacks on its Republican competitor, the Omaha Bee. It accused that paper of sneering at the Bureau and making attempts to discourage the effort.²⁶ In one editorial Metcalfe mentioned that the Bee carriers had contributed \$6.20 to the Bureau. He sarcastically remarked that if the boys ran the editorial office and the editorial writers carried the papers, the opinions of the Bee would greatly improve while the carrier service would be greatly jeopardized.²⁷

Calling the twenty-two car train a "brassband advertising train," the Bee set itself up for further attack. The World-Herald called the Bee's statement an insult to every donor. The slur, Metcalfe retorted, sounded nice coming from a writer who "had his arm so deep in the exposition treasury

²⁵Evening World-Herald, April 14, 1898, p. 4.

²⁶Morning World-Herald, March 29, 1898, p. 41.

²⁷Ibid., p. 1.

that he could not wiggle his elbow."²⁸ Although the World-Herald did not explain this attack, it did give itself a chance to hint at foul play with the upcoming Trans-Mississippi Exposition to be held in Omaha.

Because the Bee failed to mention the tumultuous send-off that the citizens of Omaha gave the mercy train, the World-Herald referred to that paper as the "local Spanish organ." Perhaps the Bee would have mentioned it if the train had been supplied with food for the Spanish soldiery.²⁹ Throughout the war period the World-Herald continued its attacks on the Bee for its alleged Spanish sympathies.

Although the Cuban Relief Bureau enjoyed great success, the supplies did not reach Cuba until July. The provisions lay at Key West for more than a month, and in a heated editorial the World-Herald demanded to know what caused the delay. With plenty of ships to escort the relief ship and with two-hundred-thousand men under arms, the government had not kept its promise to deliver the supplies.³⁰ Eventually the goods did reach Cuba but they were not used for the original purpose. The fighting had made it impossible to reach Matanzas so the food was used to feed Ameri-

²⁸Ibid., April 16, 1898, p. 4.

²⁹Evening World-Herald, April 9, 1898, p. 4.

³⁰Ibid., June 20, 1898, p. 4.

can soldiers. The paper conceded that this was a good enough cause since the soldiers were engaged in "wiping out Spaniards."³¹

The World-Herald relief effort was a great success in three ways. The paper received much publicity for its efforts. It was a means of bringing to the attention of its readers the plight of the Cubans under Spanish rule. Finally, it served as a precursor for continued effort on the paper's part to relieve sufferers of other disasters.³²

³¹Ibid., July 4, 1898, p. 4.

³²The World-Herald established the Good Fellows in 1910. The purpose of this organization was to provide food and gifts to the needy at Christmas time. Interview by author with Frederick Ware, former editor of the World-Herald, Omaha, March 10, 1973.

CHAPTER II
GUILTY UNTIL PROVED INNOCENT

February of 1898 witnessed the two events which raised the ire of the American people even more than the alleged Spanish atrocities. The incidents, both direct attacks on the United States, were the DeLome letter and the Maine explosion. The war-orientated newspapers, including the World-Herald, used these events to argue for intervention. The United States must fight, declared the paper, if not for the freedom of the Cubans then for the honor and respect of the American flag which had been desecrated by the Spanish nation.

When the story of the DeLome letter appeared in the World-Herald on February 9, it made the first page but not in the bold headlines it received in other papers. It was at the bottom of the first column. It simply stated what the Spanish minister to the United States had said about President McKinley. The letter, a personal one written to a friend in Cuba, had described the President as "weak and catering to the rabble" and "a low politician who desires to stand well with the jingoes of his party."¹

¹Morning World-Herald, February 9, 1898, p. 1.

The week following the publication of the letter, the World-Herald gave it more attention. In an article on February 10 the paper accused DeLome of writing the vicious letter simply because he refused to deny its authenticity. The same article called it an "offense against the amenities of diplomatic relations" and a sufficient basis for DeLome's dismissal from Washington.² Eventually the State Department called the American minister in Madrid to request DeLome's recall, but the latter had resigned before the United States presented its request to the Spanish government.³

The World-Herald's editorial reaction stated that the letter was undoubtedly disrespectful to an American president. More important than this disrespect, however, was the concluding remark made by DeLome:

It would be advantageous to take up, even for effect, the question of commercial relations, and to have a man of some prominence sent here in order that I may make use of him to carry on a propaganda among the Senators and others in opposition to the junta.⁴

To the World-Herald this admission that commercial treaty negotiations could be carried on for effect only showed the "natural trickery and deceit" of the Spanish and showed they had "hoodwinked" the administration in Washington.⁵

²Ibid., February 10, 1898, p. 1.

³Millis, Martial Spirit, p. 99.

⁴Ibid., p. 98.

⁵Sunday World-Herald, February 13, 1898, p. 4.

McKinley should be more aware of Spanish deceit, the paper asserted. To keep peace in Cuba, the Spanish had been promising reforms and a form of autonomy on the island. According to the paper, the dishonesty in the DeLome letter revealed to the United States the lack of Spain's earnestness in dealing with reforms in Cuba. The letter showed the diplomatic dishonesty of the Spanish and "removed the last excuse for non-interference in the wretched and inhumane warfare now being carried on in that unhappy isle."⁶

A week after the DeLome letter made headlines, the nation had to face a much more serious problem and that was the destruction of the battleship Maine on February 15. At the request of the American consul, Fitzhugh Lee, the Maine was sent to Cuban waters to insure the safety of American citizens in case of any massive outbreak of hostility. The battleship was in the Cuban vicinity on a non-martial mission and with its explosion came the question: Was it an accident or was it a Spanish plot? Immediately the McKinley administration assigned a group to investigate, the Board of Inquiry.

The first accounts of the disaster appeared in the World-Herald in a calm and factual manner. The day following the explosion the paper, in a one column headline, simply told of the events. Estimates of casualties were

⁶Ibid., p. 4.

one-hundred men lost but Captain Charles Sigsbee and other officers of the ship had survived. The Captain, aboard a Spanish man-of-war, telegraphed the Secretary of Navy urging that public opinion be muted until further reports could be obtained.⁷

An article the following day hinted at the possibility that a Spanish plot might have been involved in the explosion. The magazines of the ship had been inspected the night of the disaster and temperatures had been normal. There were twenty-five tons of powder but no detonating powder or anything that could be exploded by concussion. High explosives were stored in the main magazines but these were not the ones that had blown up. Conditions were normal, then, and not conducive to an internal explosion.⁸ The same article revealed that some of the soldiers felt that it was a plot. They maintained that the people of Cuba showed them little courtesy believing American presence in their waters was an affront. The Cubans wrote vicious anti-American pamphlets and "authors of such cowardly hatred would not stop at an act of terrible vengeance."⁹

The Board of Inquiry deliberated over a month and during that time the war-anxious press kept open a constant

⁷Morning World-Herald, February 16, 1898, p. 1.

⁸Ibid., February 17, 1898, p. 1.

⁹Ibid., p. 1.

forum for opinions linking the Maine explosion to Spanish treachery. Such suspicions led to many rumors and speculations as to what really had happened. Newspapers, especially the Journal and the World, used such rumors to their advantage and sent reporters to get stories from Cuba.¹⁰ The Board's hearings were secret but reports confirming a Spanish plot were abundant. The World-Herald printed the stories obtained by the Journal and hardly a day went by without some indication that Spain was guilty of perpetrating the crime.

Two days after Secretary of the Navy John Long requested the public not to make accusations about the explosion until the Board had determined the cause, the World-Herald printed two stories by Journal writers. Julian Hawthorne writing from Havana maintained that the harbor had been sown with mines. He quoted a Spanish official as saying that if the Maine ever used its guns or caused any trouble in the harbor, "she would be in hell the next minute."¹¹ This, according to Hawthorne, confirmed the fact that torpedoes were placed in the harbor. Another Journal writer felt that the Americans were much too trusting when they allowed a Spanish pilot to place the Maine where he saw fit.¹²

¹⁰Wilkerson, Public Opinion, p. 121.

¹¹Evening World-Herald, February 18, 1898, p. 6.

¹²Ibid., p. 6.

A Journal article reported that a chart found in the Library of Congress pointed to the location of mines in the Cuban harbor and one mine was close to the buoy where the Maine settled. The article was sketchy and the only basis for the information was that the chart was prepared during the Weyler regime and pointed strongly to Weylerite officers wanting the destruction of the American ship. The article did not mention how the chart happened to be in Washington.¹³

Alfred Henry Lewis of the Journal linked the crime directly to the Spanish government. According to the reporter, the explosion was caused by a government-owned mine set by seven men in the military service of Spain. The mine was allegedly obtained from a Spanish transport ship whose Captain was a Weylerite and the plot was supposedly organized at a ship chandlery shop owned by a Weylerite. Lewis said that the story was told by three divers who planted the mines. Because they did not receive their monetary reward for the deed, and in a state of drunkenness, they told their story. One of the divers had disappeared. According to the story, Spanish officials asked him to inspect the bottom. There was talk that he was murdered; that perhaps the Spanish officials cut his air tube while he was inspecting the ship. Dramatically, Lewis ended his story with an old Spanish maxim, "dead men tell no tales."¹⁴

¹³Morning World-Herald, February 25, 1898, p. 1.

¹⁴Ibid., March 3, 1898, p. 1.

Even before Lewis had written the story alleging that Spain's military was involved in the explosion, he had expressed his feeling that Weylerites were the criminals. He noted that in Cuba there were two main political factions, the Weylerites and the Sagasta-Blanco faction.¹⁵ He described the Weylerites as cruel, lusty and bloody men who opposed autonomy and hated Americans. The Sagasta-Blanco faction was more moderate and realized that war would ruin autonomy, disgrace the Spanish and free Cuba. The Weylerites wanted war. If they won, the United States would be humbled and Cuba would remain Spanish. If Spain lost, Weylerites could blame the loss on Sagasta, and Weyler could rebuild his political fortunes. In either case Weyler would disgrace one of his enemies, the United States or the ruling Spanish government.¹⁶

By inferring Spanish involvement in the Maine case, Journal writers emphasized Spain's hatred of Americans. Eugene Bryson, a Journal correspondent in Cuba, wrote of a carnival he witnessed in Havana. He wrote of the exulted joy that had overtaken the people there, and the excessive

¹⁵Praxides Mateo Sagasta was the liberal Spanish premier who desired pacification on the island and promised political reforms including eventual home rule for Cuba. One of his first acts was to recall Governor-General Weyler and replace him with Ramon Blanco y Arenas. Blanco was to conduct the squelching of the Cuban rebellion on humane and Christian principles. Margaret Leech, In the Days of McKinley (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 149. Hereafter cited as Leech, McKinley.

¹⁶Sunday World-Herald, February 18, 1898, p. 6.

and unnatural gaiety as if "something they dared not confess was the cause of their strange elation."¹⁷ Another article told of an incendiary circular being spread around Havana. The circular described Spanish displeasure at the American effort to rid Cuba of Weyler and Spanish hatred of those Cubans who favored autonomy. It went on to call Americans hogs "who meddle in our affairs, humiliating us to the last degree, and for still greater taunts order to us one of the ships of their rotten squadron after insulting us in their newspapers and driving us from our homes."¹⁸ The martial American press used this hate-Yankee attitude to its advantage by making it seem natural that the Spanish would want to blow up an American ship.

The World-Herald printed stories of local interest concerning the Cuban problem. In one case the paper received a letter written by an Omaha sailor who served and died on the Maine. It noted the sailor's observations of the unfriendly welcome the ship's officers received from the Spanish officials. He also mentioned that the men of the ship feared going ashore because it might result in rioting. The young sailor ended his letter with the indication that trouble with Spain was imminent. The preface that the World-Herald gave this letter left little doubt about Spanish guilt in the explosion:

¹⁷Morning World-Herald, February 21, 1898, p. 2.

¹⁸Evening World-Herald, February 18, 1898, p. 6.

The writer's story of their unwelcome reception and the intense animosity manifested toward them by the Spaniards is of thrilling interest, while the subsequent death of the young seaman in that treacherous harbor, in the very climax of naval horrors stamps with the seal of ghastly prophecy his forebodings as to the outcome.¹⁹

Besides printing the Journal stories accusing Spain of criminality in the Maine affair, the World-Herald editorially linked the Spanish to the crime. The paper did state that fair-minded persons should reserve their judgment until firm evidence was available. Several incidents listed in an editorial, however, implied that the Spanish were guilty. Spanish officials had directed the ship to a specific spot in the harbor. American witnesses declared that when the explosion occurred water shot upward. This indicated that the force came from outside the ship. In another rather inconclusive statement, the paper noted that cement linings from the Maine were shot into the air. Thus the explosion was outside and below the ship sending the objects in an upward direction. Finally, in an inane comment, the editorialist stated that it was improbable the explosion was an accident since "an accidental explosion of such magnitude is absolutely without precedent."²⁰

The World-Herald suggested that the Spanish were the ones who had to prove themselves innocent. One conspicuous

¹⁹Ibid., February 21, 1898, p. 1.

²⁰Sunday World-Herald, February 20, 1898, p. 4.

absence in the Maine case was the lack of effort in Cuba to apprehend the persons responsible for the crime.²¹ When the Spanish made an official proclamation declaring that there had been no mines or torpedoes in Havana harbor and these weapons were not a part of their system of defense, the Omaha paper mockingly asserted that the United States could not take the word of the Spanish in good faith. For one thing it was not customary for nations to keep each other informed on weapons used in preparation for war. So the simple denial on the part of Spanish authorities settled nothing. In a more piercing attack on Spanish good will, the paper said that at one time we had accepted the word of the Spanish. The DeLome letter had shattered that trust by showing them insincere in attempts to negotiate a trade agreement and in imposing a system of autonomy in Cuba.²²

During the Board of Inquiry's deliberations the World-Herald printed several articles about war preparations. The paper left little doubt as to the inevitability of war. In one article it announced that McKinley was negotiating with

²¹Ibid., March 6, 1898, p. 4. In his recollections Captain Sigsbee, chief officer on the Maine, felt strongly that the Spanish government perpetrated the crime. He noted that the Maine was not welcome in the harbor by Spanish officials and they situated the ship in a designated spot. Private handling of explosives was prohibited indicating that only government officials would have access to mines. After the explosion Spain endeavored to prohibit an American investigation. Charles Dwight Sigsbee, The Maine (New York: The Century Company, 1899), pp. 186-187.

²²Evening World-Herald, March 31, 1898, p. 4.

a New York financier about a war loan and with Congressional finance leaders about funds for war supplies.²³

A Journal article published on March 7 stated that the President had given up hope of peace and was in the market for war ships. Not only was the country in the market for ships, but the State Department had information that Spain had purchased several war vessels.²⁴ Three days later the Journal announced that McKinley told an intimate friend grave news. The President said that the Maine was blown up by a submarine mine and serious consequences could be expected. The Journal reporter who told the story proceeded to outline a possible plan of action for the President. The plan included a message to Congress declaring war and an immediate movement of troops on Havana.²⁵

Locally the World-Herald printed an article which stated that the Thurston Rifles, part of the Nebraska National Guard, was carefully selecting recruits to put its numbers at full war-time strength. Interestingly enough, the article mentioned that Governor Silas Holcomb had received no dispatch from Washington concerning the state of

²³Ibid., February 18, 1898, p. 6.

²⁴Morning World-Herald, March 7, 1898, p. 1.

²⁵Ibid., March 12, 1898, p. 1.

Nebraska's militia but had received one from the New York Journal.²⁶

On March 28, after a month of investigation, the Board of Inquiry made public its findings. In a brief report it stated that the cause of the explosion was a submarine mine. No responsibility for the act could be fixed since definite evidence could not be obtained.²⁷ The official report, then, did not link Spanish authorities to the explosion. This did not cause the World-Herald to halt its relentless attack on the Spanish. In one editorial the paper stated that the Spanish government was responsible for the crime. First of all, an English manufacturer of mines declared that he sold to Spain a number of mines which were to be used in Havana harbor. Spanish authorities had complete control of the harbor and fifty-eight days had passed since the explosion. Spain had done nothing to prove her innocence. Based on these three premises the paper concluded that it could be no other than Spanish officials who plotted the heinous deed.²⁸

About two and one-half months passed between the Maine explosion and the official declaration of war. During this period of time the World-Herald did not let up in its

²⁶Evening World-Herald, February 18, 1898, p. 1.

²⁷Millis, Martial Spirit, p. 127.

²⁸Evening World-Herald, April 14, 1898, p. 4.

indictments against the Spanish and its insistence on war. The Maine incident, despite the fact that Spain's guilt was never proved, was the basis for many unsubstantiated reports and became the battle cry for war. If it had not been the Maine, it would have been something else. The Omaha paper felt that even if the Maine had been an accident, the United States would still have the responsibility for ridding Cuba of her despotic government.²⁹

²⁹Ibid., February 17, 1898, p. 4.

CHAPTER III

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITY AND REPUBLICAN PASSIVITY

Before the blowing up of the Maine, the United States Congress was involved in debates over the method of handling the Cuban problem. Throughout the period of the 1897 Cuban unrest, resolution after resolution came to the floor of the Congress. Many of these Congressional resolutions requested the President to recognize belligerency rights of the Cuban rebels. Others went so far as to urge the United States government to recognize the Republic of Cuba as a free and independent state. Less militant resolutions requested the President to use his offices to bring about a peaceful settlement to the conflict.¹

The World-Herald strongly favored pro-rebel resolutions and urged the administration to be firm and aggressive in freeing Cuba of the Spanish menace. Before the outbreak of the Spanish-American War the paper vehemently denounced passive reaction to these resolutions and censured many Congressional and administrative leaders for their delay and slowness in forming a positive plan of action.²

¹Wilkerson, Public Opinion, p. 62.

²Sunday World-Herald, April 17, 1898, p. 4.

Concerning belligerency rights, the World-Herald felt that the rebels had been entitled to these rights since 1896. A state of war existed for two years, noted the paper, and the Spanish were "trampling down all rules of civilized warfare."³ With American recognition of the rebel cause and with material aid, the rebels would have already defeated the Spaniards and would have been free. American failure to act in this regard had given Spain the distinction of being the only European nation to defy the Monroe Doctrine.⁴

Congress in mid-April approved a resolution declaring that Spain should relinquish its authority over Cuba and withdraw her troops giving the island the right to be free and independent. Immediately the World-Herald lauded the resolution and urged military action if Spain refused to comply. The paper noted that the United States was not dethroning the Spanish dynasty but simply freeing American soil of foreign oppression. If war resulted, then it would be a righteous war. No international law restrained a humane government from using forcible intervention to put a halt to atrocities.⁵

To implement any of the Congressional resolutions, the United States would have to risk resorting to military

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵Evening World-Herald, April 20, 1898, p. 4.

action. Advocates of a slow, cautious policy declared that the United States was not ready to deal with Spain on the seas and insisted that she needed more time to prepare. The World-Herald felt delay would only give Spain more time to position her navy in the best possible location for hostilities. Delay had already enabled the Spaniards to send a flotilla across the Atlantic, a hostile act in itself. Why, the paper asked, wait and give the enemy the advantage in war?⁶

The Omaha paper called for immediate action, preferably military action. In an editorial the World-Herald declared that had James Buchanan not been so calm and patient, the Civil War might never have occurred. He had seen the Confederacy being formed and preparation being made for war but he had called for patience and diplomacy.⁷ In a series of articles the paper deplored leaders who, like Buchanan, were slow and it accused them of letting liberty slip out of the hands of Cuban rebels.

To the World-Herald the Republican Party was the greatest obstacle to a free Cuba and to the passage of necessary Congressional resolutions. The paper was not too harsh on President McKinley but it did feel that his actions were too passive and slow in dealing with the Cuban problem. In reply to a Washington Post editorial, the Omaha daily

⁶Ibid., April 2, 1898, p. 4.

⁷Ibid., April 1, 1898, p. 4.

summed up its attitude toward McKinley. According to the World-Herald, the Post had listed it among a group of papers that had urged the President to act aggressively and without common sense. In the Post's opinion these papers attributed base motives and unworthy acts to the President and his advisors. In reply the Omaha paper emphatically denied the accusations and stated simply that the error in McKinley's Cuban policy lay in acting too slowly.⁸

The World-Herald did attack McKinley but only on political grounds, not on a personal basis. Before the war broke out, the President trusted the negotiations would avert any outbreak of hostilities. His plan was first to secure an armistice, then through a peace conference, offer the services of the United States for arbitration.⁹ The World-Herald denounced the President's desire to secure an armistice. How, the paper asked, could the President secure one without consulting the Republic of Cuba, a government he had refused to recognize on the grounds that it had no real existence? Recognition should have been offered the previous year. The insurgents had fought for it and had established themselves as a viable force. Concluding, the paper stated that recognition was too late for using that technique as a means to peace.¹⁰

⁸Morning World-Herald, March 25, 1898, p. 4.

⁹Leech, McKinley, p. 170.

¹⁰Evening World-Herald, April 5, 1898, p. 4.

The World-Herald was disappointed when in early April the President gave a major foreign policy address to the Congress. The message also raised the ire of many Congressmen in both parties.¹¹ It did not call for recognition of Cuban independence. It did call for neutral intervention in Cuba based on three objectives: to end the bloodshed, to end the danger to American commercial interests, and to end the strategic danger in the Western Hemisphere. The first objective, to end the horrors of war, was uppermost in McKinley's mind.¹² ✓

Reacting to the message, the World-Herald called it a "plea for more time in which Spain may accomplish its designs against liberty."¹³ McKinley asked Congress to turn the problem over to the administration so they could take measures to end hostilities and secure stability. According to the World-Herald, the President could not be trusted with the confidence of the American people. He had shown himself incapable of dealing with the situation which he did not understand. He talked of a war in Cuba but he would not grant belligerency rights. He acknowledged Spain's loss of control over the island but would not admit to a formal

¹¹Wayne H. Morgan, William McKinley and His America (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), p. 377. Hereafter cited as Morgan, William McKinley.

¹²Ibid., p. 377.

¹³Evening World-Herald, April 12, 1898, p. 4.

recognition that a state of war existed. Because the Cubans did not possess a stable or substantial government, he would not recognize Cuban independence. Yet, the paper asserted, he should not expect a stable government until the oppressors left the island.¹⁴

McKinley had abdicated all controls that could have helped the Cuban situation. Attributing a lack of knowledge of the problem to the President, the World-Herald offered what it felt was the motive for his inaction. He wanted to intervene in the island's troubles for a peaceful end to hostilities. He was not, however, interested in the liberty of the Cuban people from the bonds of the Spaniards.¹⁵

In a scornful editorial about building a facsimile of McKinley's home for the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, the World-Herald projected its belief that the Republican Party was shirking its responsibility to the Cuban cause. It listed a series of souvenirs which should be placed in the home for special viewing, among these souvenirs would be a reproduction of the Maine. On the ship would be placed the Republican platform from the 1896 election. Special emphasis would be given to the plank stating that the United States should use its influence to bring about peace and independence to the island. The home would contain a copy of

¹⁴Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 4.

the resolution giving the Cubans belligerent rights which was defeated by the Republican leadership of the House of Representatives. The walls would be papered with reports from consular agents of the United States showing "noble women and innocent children despoiled and slain at the instigation of Spanish monsters."¹⁶

The World-Herald was harder on Congressional anti-war factions than it was on the President. Marcus Hanna, a Republican senator from Ohio, received special attention for his inaction with regard to the Cuban problem. He had a reputation for being Wall Street's man in the Senate and because Wall Street wanted no war, neither did he.¹⁷ The Omaha paper felt it most regrettable that the President would depend on the "ponderous, well-fed Marcus A Hanna" for advice.¹⁸

The paper urged the American people not to listen to Hanna and it deplored his position of leadership in the Republican Party. In his personal life the paper gave him as little credit for being a leader as it did on a political level. He was one who during the Civil War preferred the society of matrons and children to the rigors of fighting. He used money for bribery and hid behind a guise of patriotism. Calling it a defense of national honor, he sought to

¹⁶Morning World-Herald, March 4, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁷Thomas Beer, Hanna (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), p. 192.

¹⁸Evening World-Herald, April 13, 1898, p. 4.

supplant popular government with the domination of Wall Street.¹⁹

Calling the Maine disaster a mere accident, stating that the relations of the United States and Spain would not be strained, and declaring that there was nothing Congress or the President could do about the Maine explosion, Hanna provoked the wrath of the World-Herald. Hanna made these remarks shortly after the Maine trouble and the Omaha paper declared that these untimely remarks proved how poorly fitted for leadership he really was. The statements lacked wisdom and were an attempt to bluff the American people. The dignity of the United States will be upheld, declared the paper, without the influence of Hanna "exactly as the union was preserved in the '60s without the assistance of that same distinguished non-combatant."²⁰

Another Republican, Speaker of the House Thomas Reed, received condemnation from the paper. He exerted much influence in Congress and, according to the World-Herald, he appointed men of his persuasion to key committees. Consequently anti-war advocates monopolized the power and could "with impunity take up the cause of Spain."²¹ Due to Reed's powerful influence in blocking belligerency resolutions, the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 4.

²⁰Morning World-Herald, February 24, 1898, p. 4.

²¹Sunday World-Herald, March 6, 1898, p. 4.

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Omaha paper felt that he more than anyone was responsible for the Maine explosion.²²

David H. Mercer, Second Congressional District representative from Nebraska, voted against a resolution for Cuban independence. Two weeks earlier he had introduced a resolution calling for Cuban independence. This sudden reversal brought the World-Herald's wrath down upon him. The paper intimated that perhaps his reversal was due to pressure from Reed and the Republican Party. Whatever the reason, the World-Herald warned him that he awaited a rebuke at the hands of his constituency whom he had misrepresented by his vote against independence.²³

In mid-April a resolution came before Congress which proclaimed the need for American intervention into the Cuban problem. Abhorrent conditions on the island and the Maine incident were the basis for that justification. In regard to this resolution, the World-Herald said it was a document recognizing the Republic of Cuba as the true and lawful government, and it embraced the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine, "a doctrine to which every European power other than Spain has yielded."²⁴ The World-Herald favored implementing these

²²Evening World-Herald, April 18, 1898, p. 4.

²³Ibid., April 15, 1898, p. 4.

²⁴Ibid., April 18, 1898, p. 4.

pro-rebel resolutions but the paper was frustrated by continued attempts by the Republicans at putting them aside.

CHAPTER IV
THE DEVILS OF WALL STREET

In its fervor for a more active American policy concerning Cuba, the World-Herald viewed Wall Street as being as much of an obstacle as the Republicans in Congress. Reacting to a New York Tribune editorial claiming that war would not return a single cent, the World-Herald lashed out at the commercial interests of the United States, and accused them of holding "the almighty dollar" above patriotism. The Tribune, the Omaha paper declared, spelled patriotism "paytriotism."¹

Financial experts in New York, one World-Herald editorial proclaimed, insisted that the United States was not prepared for war and that New York harbor would be at the mercy of Spanish invaders. In reality the New Yorkers did not need to fear the destruction of their harbor because it was surrounded by well-fortified forts. What they really feared, according to the Omaha paper, was a drop in their stocks and bonds. The stockbrokers' real fear was exhibited when the news of the Maine disaster reached New York. The gamblers became wild in their eagerness to sell. They gave no thought to the two-hundred and fifty-six brave seamen

¹Evening World-Herald, April 9, 1898, p. 4.

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True or
not,
viewed
as true
by writer
Summer 11

killed in the explosion. They gave no thought to life or national honor when "stocks and bonds hang in the balance."²

Fearing that war would jeopardize their interests, many businessmen urged the administration to avoid conflict. There were many theories as to the reason so many business people wanted to avoid war. Since 1893 the nation had been plagued by an industrial depression. Whenever it looked like recovery was imminent, a national crisis would arise to squelch it.³ So in the opening months of 1898, the stock market would plummet when it seemed that war was imminent and rise when negotiations seemed to be leading to peace. To much of the financial world, a war would mean disaster.⁴

Some conservative financial elements feared that war would lead to an unstable currency and inflation. They feared the revival of free silver fever and accused jingoes of perpetrating the war agitation for the purpose of bi-metallism.⁵

Trade with foreign markets was at a high for the American businessman. At the time the United States had a

²Ibid., February 25, 1898, p. 4.

³William E. Leuchtenburg, "The Needless War With Spain," American Heritage, February, 1957, p. 35. Hereafter cited as Leuchtenburg, "Needless War."

⁴Julius Pratt, Expansionists of 1898 (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1936), p. 234. Hereafter cited as Pratt, Expansionists.

⁵Ibid., pp. 241-242.

favorable balance of trade of \$286,000,000 and an increase of iron, steel, and copper exports.⁶ In April, 1898, the Commercial and Financial Chronicle made a pertinent comment on the recent business prosperity. Everything was looking toward a business upswing "and that the Cuban disturbance, and it alone, has arrested the movement and checked enterprise."⁷

The World-Herald did not give the business community credit for knowing why it did not want war. The paper accused the money gamblers of lacking patriotism and sympathy for the oppressed Cubans. It accused them of exerting influence, illegal influence, on key people in the government.

One World-Herald editorial hinted at bribery between an unnamed Congressman and an alliance of insurance companies. The insurance companies had purchased a number of Spanish bonds. Depending on Cuban taxes to pay for interest on these bonds, a loss of the island by the Spanish would render the bonds worthless. So the insurance companies kept a powerful lobbyist in Washington to try to avert war by influencing Congressmen. If a man makes \$8,000 from one source and \$17,000 from another, the paper asked, who will that man serve? Human nature is such, concluded the editorial, that the cause paying \$17,000 will come out ahead.⁸

⁶Ibid., p. 238.

⁷Ibid., p. 239.

⁸Evening World-Herald, April 6, 1898, p. 4.

Quoting from the Chicago Tribune, a staunchly Republican organ, the World-Herald pointed out the significance of Wall Street's influence on Congress. In this editorial the Tribune said that the American people would have no say in the matter of war and peace. This would be the prerogative of the Wall Street gamblers. The Chicago paper speculated that many Republicans would break away from the peace policies of the President and the Speaker of the House and vote with the Democrats. This severance, however, would not depend on conscience but on business advisers. If they, the business community, wanted war, then promises would be lavish. If they wanted peace, "under their seductive influence Congress will be as gentle as a sucking dove, however tigerish its roar may have previously been."⁹ The World-Herald concluded that this was an outright confession from a Republican organ that the Republican Party was not one of "patriotism, progress and prosperity" but "the pliant tool of Wall Street."¹⁰

Typical of Wall Street's lack of interest in Cuba's freedom was a proposal by Henry Clews, a contemporary authority on Wall Street. He felt that recognition of belligerency would be a mistake since it would prevent Americans from collection of damage claims from the Spanish gov-

⁹Morning World-Herald, March 9, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.


ernment, a right stipulated by treaty. Besides losing this right, any overt intervention would mean war. Thus, Clews felt, the United States should intervene in a friendly way and obtain liberal measures for the island; this would include home rule under Spanish supervision. If the rebels rejected this plan, the United States could use force to make them lay down their weapons and accept this new form of government. The World-Herald immediately disparaged this plan calling it cold-blooded and completely characteristic of Wall Street sentiments.¹¹

In late February a reporter for the Chicago Chronicle revealed another Wall Street scheme. J. P. Morgan and other financial leaders were supposedly behind this plan which involved buying Cuba. The reporter alleged that the plan would reap a \$120,000,000 profit for the Morgan syndicate and the bonds and interest would have to be guaranteed by the United States government. Again the paper called this typical of Wall Street mentality. It asked why Spain should be reimbursed for spending vast amounts of money "in its cruel effort to stamp out the spirit of liberty."¹² It asked why future generations of Cubans should have to pay American taxes so Spain could get out of her troublesome situation. Wall Street had hammered out another plan to extort more


¹¹Sunday World-Herald, March 13, 1898, p. 4.

¹²Evening World-Herald, February 23, 1898, p. 4.

profit from the people of the United States and Cuba.¹³ To the Omaha World-Herald this was typical of Wall Street history.

Wall Street, the Sacramento Evening Bee insisted, was the "colossal and aggregate Benedict Arnold of the Union, and the syndicated Judas Iscariot of humanity."¹⁴ So, too, did the World-Herald look upon this conglomerate of money changers, a group whose actions were synonomous with treason. 

¹³Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁴Pratt, Expansionists, pp. 235-236. 

CHAPTER V
IN DEFENSE OF A BLOODY WAR

Success came to the war-orientated press on April 24, the day Congress declared war, even though McKinley had tried to maintain peace until the last. On March 29 he sent word to the government in Madrid that the United States had three demands to be met in order to avoid war: (1) agree to an immediate armistice, (2) revoke the reconcentrado system, and (3) work with the United States to provide for Cuban relief. On March 31 the Spanish agreed to the demands. They would not, however, concede a defeat and stated that any truce would have to be asked for by the insurgents. Since the rebels anticipated United States intervention, they would not appeal for a truce. Seeing the situation as hopeless, the Spanish government finally gave in to the American demand and on April 9 announced its willingness to offer an armistice to the rebels. By this time it was too late. McKinley had decided to fight.¹

The World-Herald had extensive front page news coverage of the war activities from the New York Journal and the Associated Press wire services. During the fighting, however, fewer editorials appeared about the war. Those which

¹Leuchtenburg, "Needless War," pp. 40-41.

did appear took the form of three major themes: a reiteration of American moral duty to fight, the need to fight a bloody and swift war to evict the Spaniards from the Western Hemisphere, and the need to foster confidence and trust in the American fighting men. ?

According to the World-Herald, American moral duty to fight was based solely on humanitarian grounds. In answer to a question on the morality of war and killing, the World-Herald gave a reply typical of its attitude. It printed the experiences of a University of Michigan professor who had been to the Philippines. The professor told of the hardships the natives had in paying the exorbitant tributes to the Spanish government. Some men spent their entire lives trying to pay these taxes and if they failed they would be severely punished by Spanish officials. Some men were deported from the islands if they could not pay, and in order to come back to their families they had to be capable of paying their debts. When many islanders made only six cents a day and five cents went for board, it was a rare man who could return to his family. The World-Herald added its own touch to the professor's story by stating that the Spanish had squeezed her colonies of tributes and had "drowned them like rats; smothered them in dungeons viler than the Black Hole of Calcutta and made a festive holiday of shooting them in the public square of *Dear Worcester?*

Manila."² The United States had to put a stop to this cruelty.

The United States was to serve as "heaven's instrument to put an end to its [Spain's] shame and iniquity."³ Since this was the case, the World-Herald felt its typical anxiety and frustration in not forging ahead and quickly ridding Cuba of the Spanish menace. At war's onset the American military strategy was unclear. President McKinley declared a naval blockade, but there was a question of whether to send American land forces into the island itself. American officials worried about its men facing the rainy season and the yellow fever season without being acclimated to Cuba.⁴ To the Omaha paper the naval blockade was not sufficient. American military officials had to overlook the dangers of yellow fever and send troops to Cuba without delay.

The reason offered by the World-Herald for quick action was that the Spanish were taking advantage of American delay. They were building fortifications on the Cuban coast which were twice as strong as they had been a month before.⁵ Also working toward the favorable Spanish position was the

²Evening World-Herald, June 1, 1898, p. 4.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴Millis, The Martial Spirit, p. 154.

⁵Morning World-Herald, May 16, 1898, p. 4.

inefficiency of the blockade. Because the blockade cut Havana off only from the front, supplies could easily be taken in from the rear. What the United States had to do, according to the paper, was to invade Havana with a land army.⁶

An incident which outraged the World-Herald was the attack by a Spanish masked battery on the American ship Winslow. The ship had moved too close to the Cuban shore and was fired upon. Five men were killed and the commander was wounded. The paper indignantly alleged that if Cuba had been filled with American troops three weeks earlier, the disaster would not have occurred. American lives were too precious to be lost by delay and "the president will do well to send his strategy board to the rear and send the soldiers and the sailors to the front."⁷

Delay in action could cause Spain's European allies to come to her aid. This fear was raised by the World-Herald when it reported that Austria was secretly giving material aid to Spain. The effect of the United States carrying on a mere blockade or a bloodless war was encouraging nations unfriendly to us to aid the enemy. To stop this aid America had to have a vigorous war policy and defeat the Spanish.⁸

⁶Sunday World-Herald, June 26, 1898, p. 4.

⁷Evening World-Herald, May 13, 1898, p. 4.

⁸Evening World-Herald, May 30, 1898, p. 4.

Quoting from a Russian newspaper, the Omaha paper again posed the problem involved in continued military delay. The Russian article stated that it was time to end the senseless war by having the United States submit "her pretensions" to a European tribunal to judge her actions. If she refused, European military intervention would ensue. The United States would not tolerate European intervention, declared the World-Herald, but if we continued to fight a bloodless war then we could expect problems. Europeans would interpret America's unnecessary passivity as incapacity, and nothing could restrain Europe from intervention. A show of strength and action would be America's only salvation.⁹

The World-Herald printed a letter written by an anonymous citizen. The letter expressed a fear that France, with her dread of Anglo-Saxon aggressiveness, might be interested in forming an alliance to save Spanish colonies. The paper countered the letter by declaring that France was interested in a Spanish victory in as much as a creditor was interested in the success of a debtor. The United States, however, should be wary of France if it were shown that we were losing the conflict. If the United States could push the war to a "bloody conclusion" then she need not worry about the French or any other European intervention.¹⁰

⁹Morning World-Herald, June 7, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid., May 17, 1898, p. 4.

In early May Commodore Dewey gave to the war-anxious press what it wanted--a victory at Manila Bay. Not only had the United States won the battle, but she did it without the loss of a single ship. Immediately the World-Herald poured out accolades to Dewey and his great victory. Spain, the paper declared, must be deprived of every vestige of her colonial possessions. People must be freed from misgovernment and "we may well believe that God in his own good time will wipe the Spanish government from the face of the earth, and that in the progress of civilization that portion of the race that is so incapable of reformation will be exterminated."¹¹

To emphasize the greatness of the victory, the paper pictured the battle as one with great odds against Dewey. He had to struggle against a larger number of vessels. The Spanish were much more familiar with the area of battle, giving them local advantage.¹² In order to reach the enemy, Dewey had to slip by well-fortified forts and avoid the mines which had been placed there in preparation of his arrival.¹³ Having no first-class battleships, Dewey had to fight with cruisers and gunboats. The paper noted that there was as much difference between a cruiser and a battleship as there

¹¹Morning World-Herald, May 3, 1898, p. 4.

¹²Ibid., p. 4.

¹³Sunday World-Herald, May 8, 1898, p. 4.

was between a "'nigger-shooter' and a breech-loading shotgun."¹⁴ All the disadvantages must be viewed, declared the World-Herald, in order to really see the greatness of Dewey and his fighting men and to build confidence in America's fighting position.

The victory at Manila Bay brought about a national interest in imperial gain. If the Philippines were ever to be considered a colonial possession, the United States would have to send an army of occupation to reinforce Dewey.¹⁵ Despite the fact that the World-Herald later came out against imperial gains as part of the fruits of American victory, it did urge that reinforcements be sent to Dewey to help him wrest the Philippines from Spanish control.¹⁶ One editorial hinted at the pride inherent in controlling worldwide possessions. Britain would no longer have the exclusive honor of the sun never setting on her empire. Dewey had liberated the Philippines and placed the American flag on Asiatic soil:

The sun now sets no more on the American republic and its possessions. The nation is a beacon light to the oppressed and by his stout deeds Dewey has stamped

¹⁴Evening World-Herald, May 7, 1898, p. 4. For a more realistic view of both combatants' strengths and weaknesses see the memoirs of Secretary of the Navy. John D. Long, The New American Navy (New York: The Outlook Company, 1903), pp. 171-176. Hereafter cited as Long, Navy.

¹⁵Millis, The Martial Spirit, p. 174.

¹⁶Morning World-Herald, May 23, 1898, p. 4.

himself the greatest of naval commanders, conferring unbounded honor upon the flag of his country, making this nation worldwide in its possessions.¹⁷

Perhaps even more exciting than Manila was the battle waged at Santiago in Cuba. For a month American ships under Commodore William Sampson and Admiral Winfield Scott Schley had the strength of the Spanish navy bottled up in Santiago harbor. The Spanish fleet under Admiral Pascual Cervera was unable to move against the American blockade. It was not until the first part of July, having spent a month in confinement, that they even attempted a break of the blockade. Their attempt failed when they were bombarded and defeated by the American forces. News of the victory reached the United States on July 4. In contrast to the World-Herald's usual bloodthirsty outburst against the Spanish, the paper remained relatively calm during the long duration of suspense at Santiago. It praised Schley and Sampson for chasing Cervera into the harbor.¹⁸ It noted that the American fleet could not move quickly and wage a direct attack since the harbor was loaded with mines. Not only did the Americans have to contend with mines, but also Cervera had chosen

¹⁷Sunday World-Herald, May 15, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁸Admiral Cervera was not chased into the harbor but had been there long before Schley arrived. Schley had made no location of the Spanish fleet, until he was ordered to Santiago by Sampson. Millis, The Martial Spirit, pp. 235-236.

cover in an area which had plenty of inlets and islands through which not more than one vessel could manuever.¹⁹

The World-Herald felt that the fact Cervera chose Santiago to place his fleet was significant, an act of providence. Santiago had been the scene of a tragedy involving American military men in 1873. Fifty-two Americans had been taken off their ship, the Virginus, which had allegedly been destined to carry arms and ammunition to the Cuban rebels. They were tried as pirates and condemned by Spanish officials to be shot. The return of the Spanish fleet and its eventual destruction at Santiago, the paper cried, was "divine restitution." For a generation Americans have been waiting to avenge these murders and vengeance came in the guise of Cervera.²⁰

The Omaha paper went so far as to praise Cervera for his acumen. He long eluded the Americans and when asked why he did not come out and face enemy forces he listed three solid reasons. First of all, his guns had been dismounted for use in land fighting. Second, he did not have enough coal to get up sufficient steam. Last of all, he felt that Sampson was ready to bombard him the moment he moved. The World-Herald called on Americans to give Cervera the kind treat-

¹⁹Evening World-Herald, May 31, 1898, p. 4.

²⁰Evening World-Herald, June 9, 1898, p. 4.

ment that "becomes a man of keen judgment and straightforward speaking."²¹

An interesting outcome of the victory at Santiago was the controversy over who should take the laurels, Schley or Sampson. Sampson was the ranking officer of the crew but he was not present for the actual battle. He had gone on shore to confer with General William Shafter, leader of the American land forces.²² Because of his absence, Schley was left to confront the enemy and he had won the battle by the time Sampson had returned. The Admiral was deeply disappointed and envious. He intercepted the victory dispatch written by Schley and wrote one of his own. In his own he did not mention the name of the officer who won the battle.²³

The New York Journal made a journalistic controversy over the Schley-Sampson question, declaring that Schley was the sole hero of Santiago.²⁴ The World-Herald in several vehement editorials took the same stand. It was Schley, it noted, who bottled up Cervera's fleet in the harbor, directed the fighting and had the honor of receiving the surrender of the Spanish officers. Sampson, returning to the scene

²¹Ibid., July 2, 1898, p. 4.

²²Millis, The Martial Spirit, p. 297.

²³Ibid., pp. 312-313.

²⁴Charles H. Brown, The Correspondent's War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 390. Hereafter cited as Brown, Correspondent's War.

after the battle, took the prize of receiving the surrender of the officers.²⁵

In Sampson's victory dispatch he offered to the American people what he called their Fourth of July present, a destruction of Cervera's entire fleet. He made no mention of Schley's part in the victory.²⁶ The World-Herald, in order to build Schley's prestige, used this as a basis for a comparison of the two men. While Sampson failed to give credit where credit was due, Schley bestowed the credit on the fighting men. The paper quoted from Schley's report in which he congratulated his men and said he was happy to have the opportunity "to contribute to a victory that seems big enough for all of us."²⁷ To the World-Herald this showed the breadth and broadmindedness of the man it felt to be the hero of Santiago.

During the fighting the World-Herald very seldom printed a pessimistic word or showed the least concern over failing to win the war. This was our war for humanity. American fighting men were heroes and American leaders were fearless. To the World-Herald reader of 1898 there could be

²⁵Evening World-Herald, July 16, 1898, p. 4.

²⁶Ibid., July 9, 1898, p. 4.

²⁷Ibid., July 28, 1898, p. 4. In 1901 Schley appeared before a Naval Board of Inquiry for alleged slowness in carrying out orders and inaccuracy in the reporting of events in Santiago, Long, Navy, pp. 283-287.

little doubt that the United States would whip the Spanish into submission and carry out the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine.

CHAPTER VI
FUROR OVER FINANCES

The method of paying for a costly war was a controversy which arose at war's onset. The selling of war bonds was one proposed solution. The World-Herald blasted the idea of war bonds on the basis that they were unnecessary. Taxes, it felt, should be sufficient to pay for the war. Besides bonds might be redeemable only in gold and thus would be advantageous only to the Wall Street speculators.

In an editorial the World-Herald quoted some Wall Street financiers as saying the United States could not issue any bonds unless they were payable in gold. Europe and Wall Street would never consider investing in coin or silver bonds.¹ The Omaha paper feared that if the administration yielded to those who wanted gold bonds, it would leave the whole money issue up to the speculation of Wall Street gamblers. They could raid the treasury of its gold reserves. To overcome this the paper advocated the issuance of treasury notes or greenbacks. In this way redemption would depend on the option of the federal government. Whatever would be convenient payment would be paid to the noteholder, gold or silver.²

¹Evening World-Herald, July 20, 1898, p. 4.

²Ibid., May 27, 1898, p. 4.

The World-Herald quoted another financier as saying that in this time of war United States currency of any kind would be good in subscribing to war bonds. At the time of redemption, however, a holder could be paid back only in gold. If American currency was good enough in time of war, the paper queried, why would it not be good in times of peace? If American currency suffices to buy war materials and pay soldiers, it should suffice to maintain honor in financial circles. If American currency is good enough for payment by the bond holder, it should be good enough for payment to the bond holder. The greenback carried the United States through the Civil War, the paper declared, and it would carry it through this war. It should be relied upon in times of war and peace.³

The World-Herald maintained that the United States government did not need to borrow any money at all. The government had enormous gold reserves withheld from circulation at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury. If the need arose for more money, as it might in war, this reserve could be put into circulation. The paper also noted that the government had unlimited credit. It loaned millions of dollars of credit to the national banks which the banks circulated in the form of national bank notes. If need be, the government could recall those bank notes and substitute

³Morning World-Herald, May 9, 1898, p. 4.

for them \$225,000,000 of greenbacks. This would be added circulation of money to buy war materials, and the American people and not the banks would be reaping the profits.⁴

In an editorial warning Secretary of the Treasury Lyman Gage to be cautious when conferring with the bankers about a bond issue, the World-Herald gave two more reasons for opposing such an issue. First, it would be the American people who would have to pay for the redeeming of these bonds and they were in no mood for an outrageous bond sale. Secondly, if the common people were buying these bonds it would be for the safe investment of their money; Wall Street would buy them for speculative reasons with concern only for financial gain.⁵ Here again the Democratic paper was revealing its distrust of Wall Street and its worry about the financial interests gaining power over the people's interest.

The World-Herald reacted bitterly to a Chicago Tribune assault on the bimetallist Senators who opposed the bond issue. The Tribune accused those Senators of failing to give the Administration the money to carry out the war, of ruining the credit of the United States abroad, and of causing a destructive and far-reaching financial panic. According to the Chicago paper, this was treason.⁶ The World-

⁴Evening World-Herald, April 23, 1898, p. 4.

⁵Morning World-Herald, April 30, 1898, p. 4.

⁶Ibid., May 1, 1898, p. 4.

Herald countered this charge that the bimetallists were not providing for the war. The paper charged the Republicans with seizing upon any pretext in order to pass the gold bond issue and being willing "to prostitute any cause to the advancement of their own schemes."⁷ In this case the scheme was to kowtow to the desires and wants of the gold gamblers. It was significant, noted the paper, that Mark Hanna, Thomas Reed, and other "pro-Spanish" Congressmen were now advocating the proposed bond issue. Now that the war was on, Wall Street and its Congressional friends were anxious to make the best of the situation. By demanding the bond issue, they could make fantastic profits.⁸

The World-Herald accused the Republicans of wanting to put the weight of paying for the war on the shoulders of those who could least afford it. The Republicans pretended that the financial emergency was so great that gold bonds had to be issued; the interest on these bonds would have to be paid for by the taxpayers. Instead of burdening the taxpayer, the paper proposed that the United States encourage imports so that the sources of tariff revenue could be used to finance the war. This proposal struck at the Republican advocacy of discouraging imports for the protection of American industries.⁹

⁷Ibid., May 2, 1898, p. 4.

⁸Ibid., May 1, 1898, p. 4.

⁹Sunday World-Herald, June 5, 1898, p. 4.

The World-Herald alleged that the leaders of the Republican Party zealously protected corporations and monopolies from carrying their fair share of the war tax. An advantage offered to the telegraph companies was an example of that protection. The law required that the companies affix tax stamps on messages, but they could pass the charge on to the sender. This was simply another way of the common citizen getting hurt for benefit of the company. To the Omaha daily the idea that the Republican Party would pass a law to hinder the profits of the large corporation was absurd. Only during campaigns do they reap rewards from corporations and those rewards are for the "benefit of the Republican campaign fund."¹⁰

In a rather naive editorial the World-Herald claimed that the answer to the finance question was patriotism. Let the people pay their share of the taxes uncomplainingly. Let those whose taxes were assessed too low confess and pay their proper share. "With patriotism abroad in the land we have a right to expect that the boards of equalization will be forced to work overtime for accommodation of the property owners who know that their assessments are too low and who are patriotic enough to step forward and call attention to the fact."¹¹

¹⁰Evening World-Herald, July 16, 1898, p. 4.

¹¹Morning World-Herald, June 18, 1898, p. 4.

CHAPTER VII
BRYAN'S CHAMPION

The silver money philosophy which the World-Herald advocated during the war came about in large part due to the direction given to one editorial policy by William Jennings Bryan. Bryan decided to run for the United States Senate in 1894. At the same time he felt that it would be beneficial to become editor of the weekly issue of the World-Herald, an edition which circulated in the rural areas of the state. Hitchcock agreed to the scheme if Bryan would agree to invest \$25,000 in the paper.¹ Although Bryan lost his bid for the Senate seat, he did get involved in the newspaper and left his mark on editorial opinions. The paper began heralding his ideas for free silver at a 16 to 1 ratio, for direct election of senators, tariff reform, and the regulation of corporations for the public good.²

When Bryan became involved in the war effort, he came under much criticism and the World-Herald vehemently defended its former employee. In April of 1898 Bryan sent his

¹Bryan was able to collect only \$9,000 for Hitchcock and rumors spread that it was the silver miners who contributed the money. These allegations were probably false. Paola E. Coletta, William Jennings Bryan, Vol. I: Political Evangelist, 1860-1908 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), pp. 100-101.

²Ibid., p. 101.

former adversary in the 1896 presidential race, William McKinley, a telegram offering his services in the war effort in any capacity.³ The Nebraskan considered himself a pacifist but enlisted in the military because of a religious sense of brotherhood. He felt that the war was justified because diplomatic channels failed. The United States had to choose between war and "servile acquiescence in cruelties which would have been a disgrace to barbarianism."⁴ Bryan initially enlisted in the National Guard as a private. Governor Silas Holcomb, however, empowered him to recruit his own regiment and assume the role of colonel. There was one complication in the fact that Nebraska had two regiments already formed. The first was on its way to Manila and the second was heading for training camp. The War Department had urged states to expand their formed companies rather than create new ones. After some maneuvering Secretary of War Russell Alger lifted his order and allowed Bryan to form the Third Nebraska Regiment.⁵

Bryan's military adventures caused some controversy but his former employer, the World-Herald, stood steadfastly

³William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan (Chicago: The John C. Winston Company, 1925), p. 272.

⁴Louis William Koenig, Bryan: A Political Biography of William Jennings Bryan (New York: Putnam, 1971), p. 276. Hereafter cited as Koenig, Bryan.

⁵Ibid., pp. 274-275.

behind him. When a Lincoln newspaper, which was quoted in the World-Herald, called the Third Regiment a "picked-up" unit and accused Bryan's ascendancy as being a matter of shallow politics, the Omaha paper was infuriated. The World-Herald accused the Lincoln paper of basing its sneer on partisan hatred. Even more intolerable was carrying partisan hatred to the extremes of sneering at the volunteers who made up the Third Regiment. "It contains the flower of Nebraska's young manhood, young men who have willingly offered to sacrifice themselves if need be in the defense of their country."⁶ The World-Herald called the sneer a shame and disgrace to the Republican Party and even to the state of Nebraska.

Bryan's regiment was not assigned to the war zone but was ordered to Camp Cuba Libre near Jacksonville, Florida. It was not until July 18 that they disembarked from Omaha and their send-off was spectacular. A special day had been set aside at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha to honor the regiment. Fifteen thousand people gathered to pay homage to them and to show them a spectacular fire works display. One display glared "Welcome Third Regiment" and it was followed by a fiery portrait of Colonel Bryan himself.⁷ The World-Herald was instrumental in the success of the affair.

⁶Evening World-Herald, July 18, 1898, p. 4.

⁷Koenig, Bryan, p. 278.

Weeks ahead of time it told of the upcoming event. It urged the housewife to prepare "the choicest specimens of her culinary skill."⁸ The paper urged the citizenry to make it a memorable occasion; a fitting farewell showing the appreciation of the people of Nebraska. The soldiers should be feasted like kings "for they are kings by their American birthright."⁹

Bryan made it emphatically clear that he was in the war for high moral purposes, not for American imperialistic gain or territorial aggrandizement. He made a speech at Nebraska Day at the Exposition declaring his anti-colonial attitudes. The speech received both favorable and unfavorable press.

The World-Herald quoted a Washington Post editorial which sarcastically claimed that no sooner had he put on his colonel's uniform than Bryan made known his negative stance on national expansion. The Omaha paper was furious. It claimed that since in the army, Bryan gave no political speeches or interviews. When he made the Nebraska Day speech, he was not a volunteer and was entitled to a free expression of ideas. Since he had been a soldier, the paper asserted, he had refused to make political speeches.¹⁰

⁸Evening World-Herald, July 15, 1898, p. 4.

⁹Ibid., July 13, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁰Morning World-Herald, July 27, 1898, p. 4. When the Republican Party did well in the Congressional elections of 1898, Bryan felt compelled to comment on politics

The World-Herald again showed its irritability at the Bryan critics when it quoted the Kansas City Star accusing him of wanting to maintain Spanish oppression in the Philippines and Puerto Rico rather than planting institutions of democracy there. The Omaha paper proceeded to defend the colonel's position on imperialism by outlining his philosophy on the subject. The war was undertaken purely on humanitarian grounds. If it turned into war for conquest, the United States would be adding hypocrisy to greed by fighting. If American citizens turned their ideals to thoughts of territorial aggrandizement, they would be yielding to the hypocrites who "clothe land covetousness in the attractive garb of 'national destiny.'" Governments should derive their power from the governed and not from a stronger military force.¹¹

In one editorial the World-Herald listed a group of newspapers favorable to Bryan's right of free expression on national expansion. An interesting observation cited in the World-Herald came from the Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, a paper usually hostile to Bryan. In his speech, the New England paper commented, it was hard to detect the

even though he was in uniform. He conceded that a Republican defeat might have handicapped McKinley in peace negotiations but by no means could the Republican victory be considered a mandate for imperialism. Koenig, Bryan, pp. 285-286.

¹¹Evening World-Herald, June 17, 1898, p. 4.

signs of the demagogue which were being attributed to Bryan on the East coast. His words were like an "apostle of democracy" speaking out against lust for land and desire for empire. The idea of national expansion was not only undemocratic but also would divert American attention and money from urgent domestic issues. William Jennings Bryan, asserted the Republican, spoke for national honor and against an ideology which conflicted with American purpose in fighting the war.¹²

Bryan's stint in the service was not one of glory. He never reached the war zone but was ordered to a Florida camp. Both he and his men suffered bouts of malaria and he dropped forty-five pounds while serving. After the treaty of peace was officially signed, Bryan resigned from his military post. He had been waiting for an assignment as part of the military occupation force in Cuba. He decided, however, to leave his position and return to politics. He gave the following reason for his decision:

My reason for leaving the army was that the sentiment in favor of imperialism was widespread and that many democrats had been led to join in the cry for 'expansion' as it was then termed. I believed imperialism to be dangerous to the country and so believing I resigned my position in the army to oppose it.¹³


¹²Ibid., June 21, 1898, p. 4.

¹³Charles Morrow Wilson, The Commoner: William Jennings Bryan (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 255-256.

CHAPTER VIII

OMAHA'S SPANISH SYMPATHIZERS

The Cuban rebellion provided a fertile field for exaggeration and sensationalism in journalistic reporting. A reason offered for the rise of sensational newspapers, or yellow journals, was competition. It was so great that papers had to resort to exaggeration to sell their stories. In New York there were several major newspapers, and they not only had to compete among themselves, but also with papers from Boston, Chicago and San Francisco. The two most bitter rivals were the World and the Journal, both from New York.¹

The World-Herald had its competition too, in the form of the Omaha Bee, an essentially Republican paper. The World-Herald often referred to it as the Daily Dongo or the Espano Daily Fly because of what it felt to be the Bee's strong Spanish sympathies in regard to the war. 

The World-Herald delighted in printing the alleged Spanish apologist attitude of its competitor. To substantiate its claims against the Bee, the World-Herald listed some of that paper's editorial policies concerning major events of the war. According to the World-Herald, the Bee, both in headlines and editorially, claimed that the Maine

¹Wilkerson, Public Opinion, p. 7.

was blown up by accident and the Spanish were concerned and sorrowful over the matter. The Republican organ then said that the Maine incident would not affect the relationship between Spain and the United States.² When the United States was about to recognize Cuban independence, the Bee claimed that this recognition was only an arbitrary assumption which Spain would not tolerate.³ When the Spanish offered what the World-Herald felt to be a mocking, insincere armistice, its competitor claimed that the armistice was all the United States should expect from the Spanish.⁴ To the Omaha Democratic paper the prevailing sentiments of the Bee showed a lack of patriotism and a definite pro-Spanish bent.

The World-Herald was outraged at a Bee claim that the United States could make no demands on Spain in regard to the Maine disaster or the whole Cuban problem. This country would have to be satisfied with whatever course of action Spain was pleased to take.⁵ During April, before the outbreak of war, the World-Herald quoted this Bee editorial several times, and it claimed that the Bee was advocating total capitulation to the enemy in order to avoid war.

²Evening World-Herald, April 2, 1898, p. 4 and The Omaha Daily Bee, March 29, 1898, p. 4.

³Morning World-Herald, May 21, 1898, p. 4.

⁴Ibid., April 28, 1898, p. 4.

⁵Evening World-Herald, April 1, 1898, p. 4 and The Omaha Daily Bee, March 29, 1898, p. 4.

The editors of the World-Herald were outraged at the Bee for printing an anti-war poem dealing with unnecessary death. It promptly reprinted the poem for its readers. The poem started out urging boys to kill even though it would break a mother's heart. What difference does death make since civilization was a mockery and "brotherhood a fake."⁶ The prayer of the Spaniard was to save his land while the prayer of an American was a ten-inch gun. Perhaps if the fighting took place on American soil, citizens would not be so anxious for war. Since the fighting was far off, the boys could be sent off with a blessing. The poem concluded with an attack on the outlandish American desire to fight:

So blow their bodies full of lead
 And sink their ships at sea,
 The more you kill the more 'twill fill'
 Our loyal land with glee.
 And while your bullets, breathing death,
 Shall cut and tear and maim,
 We'll pray the mighty god of war
 To give you perfect aim.⁷

To the World-Herald this poem was an inexcusable attack on American patriotism and fighting spirit.

A controversy involving the hiring of the Pinkerton Detective Agency to guard the Exposition grounds, served as a basis for another World-Herald accusation against the Bee. According to the World-Herald, the Bee had advocated using the agency and had revealed that the chief of the agency had

⁶Morning World-Herald, May 21, 1898, p. 4.

⁷Ibid., p. 4.

been called to Washington about using his men to track down Spanish spies. Contrary to what the Bee printed, the World-Herald printed an Associated Press story saying that the Pinkerton chief was in the capital city under investigation alleging that he had worked closely with Spanish representatives there. According to the report, the agency had worked with the Spanish in investigating filibustering. This Associated Press dispatch was not printed in the Bee and the Democratic paper accused it of suppressing the facts. A bond of sympathy, the World-Herald dramatically claimed, might exist between the Bee and a group that had relations with the enemy.⁸

The World-Herald also differed with its competitor on the issue of recognition of Cuban independence. The World-Herald quoted a Bee editorial in which it said that American recognition of Cuba would be tantamount to a declaration of war. It based this on the international code which stated that when a nation is engaged in a domestic war and another nation recognizes rebel independence, that other nation commits an act of aggression and is a part of that war. In reaction to the editorial the World-Herald listed offenses of the Spanish including starvation of men, despoiling of Cuban women, and the Maine explosion. American duty was to humanity and because international law was largely precedent, it

⁸Ibid., June 9, 1898, p. 4.

should be the duty of the United States to set a new precedent that could command the respect of other nations.⁹

The World-Herald accused the Bee of misrepresenting the facts in regard to a story about the Nebraska volunteers. According to the World-Herald, the Bee alleged that two Nebraska regiments had to beg for three weeks to get enough men to fill their quotas. They eventually did fill their ranks but it was not until this time, when it was too late to join, that a great number of men offered their services. According to the Bee story, these men knew they would be turned down when they applied. The World-Herald denied this charge and pointed out that the physical examination was so rigid that many volunteers had to be turned away. The biggest problem, according to the Democratic paper, was not the inability to get men but in pacifying the many upset volunteers who had to be turned away. To prove the patriotism of the Nebraska volunteers, the World-Herald made an offer. It would guarantee any number of men the governor would need in filling the regiments. It would print the governor's request in the paper and wait for a response. In ten days, the

⁹Evening World-Herald, March 1, 1898, p. 4. The Bee felt that the United States should wait until after the Cuban rebels had won independence on their own before recognizing them. This would keep us out of hostilities. See The Omaha Daily Bee, March 31, 1898, p. 4.

paper guessed, it could recruit and mobilize ten thousand men.¹⁰

Another incident that outraged the World-Herald was a Bee assertion that Governor Holcomb was holding Nebraska troops in Lincoln rather than sending them to the front lines. The Democratic paper pointed out that the Governor had no authority over the movement of troops. That was the jurisdiction of the War Department. The Bee's desire to find fault with the Governor "makes it necessary for that sheet to persistently misrepresent conditions."¹¹

The World-Herald used the war background to bolster what it felt to be its superior journalistic position. Since its competition in the Missouri Valley territory was so weak, it felt that to maintain its superiority it had to make little effort. With the Journal and Associated Press dispatches the paper could get the news from twelve to twenty-four hours earlier than its rivals. This fact placed it as one of the great newspapers of the land.¹² An example of unrivaled World-Herald news services was the handling of Senator Thurston's Senate speech on the horrible conditions of Cuba. The paper received and printed an early copy and every newspaper in the country of any significance wanted to

¹⁰Ibid., May 19, 1898, p. 4 and Morning World-Herald, June 6, 1898, p. 4.

¹¹Morning World-Herald, May 16, 1898, p. 4.

¹²Ibid., April 28, 1898, p. 4.

get this early copy. According to the World-Herald, the Bee did not print the speech early for fear of creating a sensation.¹³

The World-Herald printed an editorial implicating the Bee in news stealing. Suspecting one of its New York contemporaries of taking stories from early editions, the Journal decided to set a trap. It printed a fictitious story about an attack on Spanish land batteries. It used the name of the Spanish defender, Colonel Replipe W. Thenuz, which spelled backwards was "we pilfer the nuz." The World-Herald printed this dispatch and according to the accuser the Bee reprinted it. The World-Herald felt that this proved the news stealing charge and the Bee should make an open confession of the theft.¹⁴

The World-Herald's exaggerated indictment against the Bee continued throughout the war period. In a rather pompous editorial the paper claimed that the Bee was learning good journalism under its training. The Bee had printed a favorable editorial about the Rough Riders and the World-Herald used this as an indication that its competitor was improving:

But under the gentle training of the World-Herald--the gentleness of which has not been marred by the necessary application of the lash at times--under

¹³Evening World-Herald, March 23, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid., July 9, 1898, p. 4.

that training there is yet some hope that the Bee may in time become qualified for a place in the homes of patriotic men.¹⁵

¹⁵Ibid., p. 4.

CHAPTER IX
THE WOES OF WAR

The misery of war did not end with the signing of a peace treaty. Problems of disease and death arose at the end of the fighting and offered the press new subject material for the stimulation of public passions.

Yellow fever, malaria and dysentery struck the soldiers who had captured Santiago. Colonel Theodore Roosevelt felt compelled to get word north that these men were suffering from tropical diseases. He along with other officers wrote a letter, later to be called the "Round Robin," to the Administration begging for orders to send the fighting men home:

This army must be at once taken out of the island of Cuba. . . . The army is disabled by malarial fever to such an extent that its efficiency is destroyed and it is in a condition to be practically entirely destroyed by the epidemic of yellow fever sure to come in the near future. . . . The army must be moved at once or it will perish. . . . Persons responsible for preventing such a move will be responsible for unnecessary loss of many thousands of lives.¹

This letter never made it to the War Department but instead was delivered to a correspondent of the Associated Press. The Secretary of War, Russell Alger, and President McKinley

¹Millis, Martial Spirit, p. 352.

read about the letter in the paper and were infuriated. It was a horrendous indictment of the way the Administration was handling the war and it revealed to the Spanish, who were now negotiating for peace, that the United States army was no longer an effective fighting force.²

The World-Herald immediately commented on the "Round Robin" in which the allusions to ineptness of the War Department were to later grow into a full scale scandal. The paper credited Theodore Roosevelt with great wisdom and courage because he was able to persuade his superiors to get soldiers out of the death trap.³ In writing the letter, the Colonel did break rules of military etiquette and discipline. It did gain, however, the desired results and the World-Herald felt that he should be judged on humanity and good sense.⁴

Seizing on the alleged ineptness of the War Department, stories of horrible camp conditions and dying soldiers

²William Harbaugh, Power and Responsibility; The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), p. 106.

³Alger had issued the orders to evacuate the soldiers before the letter was written. Ibid., p. 106.

⁴Evening World-Herald, August 19, 1898, p. 4. Roosevelt later revealed that he was asked by General Shafter to write the letter because he was a volunteer soldier who planned to return to civilian life. He would not have to worry about losing face with the War Department as would a regular officer. Shafter denied this accusation. Theodore Roosevelt, The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 139-141.

appeared in the World-Herald throughout August, September and October. Not only were camps in Cuba inadequate, but also those in the United States were inept. They had fallen victim to shoddy medical practices at a time when good medical care was especially needed. At one point the World-Herald printed statistics to prove charges of mismanagement in the camps. In all there were 2,914 deaths attributed to the war and its aftermath. Three-hundred and forty-five were killed in battle. The remaining deaths were due to disease; the number was 2,569 dead soldiers.⁵

Military officials made investigations of the alleged charges of mismanagement and the World-Herald was quick to print indictments. One team of investigators reported conditions to be terrible due to the failure in getting proper supplies. Added to that problem, some hospital wards were so overcrowded that some soldiers were compelled to sleep outside. Soldiers were unable to bathe for a week at a time and were unable to get a clean change of clothing. Drinking water was warm and muddy. Garbage of all kinds was left untended on the floor. One nurse told of patients, covered with fleas and maggots, who nobody bothered to cleanse.⁶

⁵Evening World-Herald, October 19, 1898, p. 4.

⁶Morning World-Herald, September 14, 1898, p. 4.

Medical personnel lacked quality. Nurses allegedly used profane and abusive language around the sick men. Some nurses would spend time playing craps instead of tending to their patients. One nurse was charged with making lemonade for the men and charging them for the service. Medicine was in short supply and sometimes untrained nurses would give overdoses when there was a supply in sight.⁷

With these stories of horrors being revealed, the World-Herald was appalled to learn that a veterinarian was in charge of the medical services at Camp Thomas in Tennessee. The paper could not comprehend the fact that a "horse doctor" was placed in charge of sick men. The fault, suggested the paper, lay in the fact that McKinley appointed him because of the veterinarian's strong Republican ties.⁸ When it learned that Assistant Secretary of War, George Meiklejohn, was to make a tour through Nebraska on behalf of Republican candidates, the paper was unrelenting in its attacks on the Administration for appointing a veterinarian. It noted that even the American Veterinarian Review felt the appointment was unwise and unjust since the man had devoted himself to animal services for eighteen years and had little experience in hospital work.⁹

⁷Ibid., p. 4.

⁸Evening World-Herald, September 23, 1898, p. 4.

⁹Ibid., October 24, 1898, p. 4.

In late August some of the men of the Nebraska Second Regiment returned to Omaha with their stories. They told reporters that their food was rotten and vermin infested. They told of going for days without food. Their water was tainted with typhoid-causing insects. Rains putrefied piles of refuse, and this helped in the spreading of disease.¹⁰

The World-Herald made big news of the return of the sick men from the Nebraska group. It even volunteered to aid any men who needed hospitalization, but who had no relatives to aid them. Eleven soldiers needed the help and the paper made provisions at St. Joseph's Hospital at its own expense.¹¹ When a second contingent of sick arrived, the paper wired Nebraska's Senator William V. Allen to make sure the soldiers had the best medical care Omaha could offer. Senator Allen replied that the Secretary of War wanted the paper to furnish the medical care and send the bill to the War Department.¹²

A controversy arose over the altruistic initiative of the World-Herald. Appearing in the Bee was an interview with an army chief surgeon who denied that the World-Herald paid for any medical expenses for the sick soldiers. The army major made this statement presumably to quell suspicions

¹⁰Ibid., August 31, 1898, p. 6.

¹¹Ibid., p. 6.

¹²Ibid., September 2, 1898, p. 1.

that the War Department was negligent in its duties.¹³ To counteract the major's denial, the World-Herald listed a number of services it had to perform because the army failed to do them. Not only did it have to find hospital accommodations for eleven sick men, but it had to provide coffee for four hundred returnees because the army had failed to make provisions. Government officials had failed to provide enough bread and milk so the local daily had to see that more was obtained.¹⁴ On the transfer of patients to the hospital the "mighty men of red tape" sent one corpsman to care for the sick. The others who helped in the transfer were World-Herald reporters, citizens and police whom the paper recruited to help.¹⁵

Perhaps most appalling to the World-Herald was the using of Fort Omaha hospital facilities for the sick rather than Omaha hospitals. Conditions at the Fort were terrible. The buildings had been abandoned a few years earlier because they were dilapidated. Besides being infested with vermin, they had broken windows and falling plaster. There was no water near the bedstands "to relieve the burning fever-parched lips."¹⁶ It was up to the paper to send a message

¹³Ibid., September 7, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 5.

to the Adjutant General urging that the sick be taken to Omaha hospitals. The protest did get results and some of the patients were transferred to local hospitals.¹⁷ The World-Herald felt that if it had not been for its initiative in offering relief to the suffering, the sick would have even lacked the necessities of life due to the negligence of the army officers in discharging their duties.

The Omaha paper wanted to know who was responsible for the problems after the war. Someone was responsible for pitching General Shafter's camp in an infection-infested swamp. Someone bungled in failing to get medical aid to the sick. Someone was responsible for placing volunteer camps in areas where there was no drinking water and where facilities were horrible.¹⁸ The World-Herald took little time in determining who the criminal was. It was Russell Alger and a political machinery within the War Department.

Secretary of War Alger was not appointed to his post on his military merits. The World-Herald alleged that he was put there because he possessed millions of dollars which he gave generously to the Republican Party. He had presidential aspirations and did not spare his funds in achieving his ambition. Party leaders felt the obligation to put him somewhere so they gave him the leadership of the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸Ibid., August 24, 1898, p. 4.

War Department.¹⁹ The Omaha paper accused Alger of running his office like a political campaign. Political interests were the basis of officer appointments, the assigning of camps for the regiments, and the distribution of favors.²⁰ The paper accused him of appointing his business partner as a brigadier general and accused General Shafter of having made his big money in lumber dealings in Michigan.²¹ Alger's business was lumber and he came from Michigan.

The World-Herald quoted the Army and Navy Gazette, which the paper was quick to note was not part of the "yellow press," to show the extent to which politics influenced the War Department. Partisan politics was the cause of all the problems. At a time when skill and experience were needed, appointments were made on the basis of political pull. In the commissary department, whose job it was to secure supplies and get them to two-hundred and eighty-thousand men, the army did not call to service the experienced men. It called to service sons of political power houses. Of the eighty-seven officers appointed in this department, only nineteen were from the military. The remaining sixty-eight were inexperienced civilians and, for the most part, incompetent.²²

¹⁹Ibid., August 30, 1898, p. 4.

²⁰Ibid., August 24, 1898, p. 4.

²¹Ibid., August 30, 1898, p. 4.

²²Sunday World-Herald, September 11, 1898, p. 4.

The World-Herald printed a story which had first appeared in the Chicago Tribune, a Republican organ. The story told of the disbanding of the post of Inspector General. The top officers of this department rose to higher ranks and assumed new jobs. The importance of the post was indisputable: it was their duty to investigate and report on the necessities for troop comfort, sanitary conditions, and quality of food and health care. Two officers were left to perform this function and they failed to make any inspection tours. According to the report, this had to be one of the glaring errors of the war effort.²³

The Bee had opinions on the World-Herald's horror stories. It pointed out that the yellow press had pushed the United States into a war for which it was not prepared. Now the same journals were trying to create sensation and sale of papers by exaggerating assaults on the military establishment. The purpose of the assault was to halt the laurels being heaped on the Administration for a successful war and to stop the death of the Bryanite Party.²⁴

In its editorial pages the Bee talked of the War Department being well managed.²⁵ According to the World-Herald, the Bee's news stories told a different story. The

²³Evening World-Herald, September 20, 1898, p. 4.

²⁴Ibid., September 2, 1898, p. 4 and The Omaha Daily Bee, September 7, 1898, p. 6.

²⁵The Omaha Daily Bee, August 29, 1898, p. 6.

story of a young Iowa soldier appeared in the Bee's news columns. The young man had died of typhoid fever. His father revealed the facts of his son's condition. He had been uncared for, lying in a bunk of filth. His tongue was swollen and protruded from his mouth. Fleas crawled freely as he lay in a dull stupor. He was a strong young athlete and with proper care "he could have stood the rough life of a ten-year campaign without flinching."²⁶

The campaign against the War Department had some success. At Alger's request, the President set up an investigating commission to explore the alleged misconduct of the Department. Under the heat of the investigation Alger retired to run for the United States Senate seat from Michigan.²⁷ The commission took testimony in seventeen cities and military camps granting soldiers an opportunity for complaint. They concluded that while there was some inexperience and incompetency in the Department there was no purposeful or criminal neglect toward the soldiers.²⁸ Politically, the Algerism charge had little effect on the off-year elections. The

²⁶Morning World-Herald, September 10, 1898, p. 4.

²⁷Russell A. Alger, "The Food of the Army During the Spanish-American War," North American Review, January, 1901, p. 39 and "As to Algerism So Called," The American Monthly Review of Reviews, August, 1899, pp. 139-140.

²⁸H. Wayne Morgan, William McKinley and His America (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), p. 428.

Republicans were in the majority and McKinley was assured of victory for his peace proposals.²⁹

²⁹Ibid., p. 408.

CHAPTER X

THE RESULTS OF WAR

After the battles of Manila and Santiago there was little doubt that the United States had won the war. During the waning months of battle, July and early August, the World-Herald let it be known its stand on the meaning of victory, on victory terms of the treaty, and on American colonialism. The paper called on Spain to relinquish every island to which the United States had sent troops, and to pay an indemnity which would cover every dollar the United States had to pay during the war.¹ Despite this hard-line policy toward Spain, the Omaha paper came out unequivocally for the United States to offer sovereignty to the newly acquired Pacific islands.

To the World-Herald the war with Spain was well worth fighting because of its splendid results. The splendid results were not, however, the acquiring of the Pacific islands, but rather the winning of freedom for the oppressed. The war had shown the world that "American pretensions of superior justice and humanity were based on fact" and that

¹Morning World-Herald, July 11, 1898, p. 4.

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Americans were willing to lay down their lives for the defense of free institutions.²

To the Americans themselves the benefit of fighting was the obliteration of sectional differences and animosities. The New York society man fought next to the western cowboy.³ With this solidified citizenry came a sense of national purpose and destiny, and the United States became "as a beacon light to the weary and oppressed of all lands and climes."⁴

The World-Herald did feel the war had some tangible results. Before the war Americans felt that they would lose the war if it was fought at sea. Manila and Santiago, however, showed that America had an effective navy. The war showed that the country could put together an effective fighting force on short notice. That fighting force taught Spain a lesson by stripping her of her colonies and giving her time "to devote more attention to the bestowal of decent rule upon its own people."⁵

Despite the fact that it was a well-fought war and the results were beneficial, the World-Herald worried about the acquisition and colonizing of the newly acquired territories. The paper reminded its readers that the war was fought for

²Ibid., August 8, 1898, p. 4.

³Sunday World-Herald, August 14, 1898, p. 4.

⁴Morning World-Herald, August 8, 1898, p. 4.

⁵Sunday World-Herald, August 4, 1898, p. 4.

the liberation of Cuba. It was not a war for conquest yet the accidental acquiring of the Philippines "so whetted our appetite for territory that we have well nigh forgotten the sole purpose of the conflict."⁶ That sole purpose was humanitarianism and not imperialism.

The voices of imperialism lauded the economic advantages of imperialism. Colonies would provide a foothold in the competitive markets of the Far East and it would be a travesty to let them go to the "predatory instincts" of Germany and Japan.⁷ Besides the economic value of colonialism, the imperialists raised a moral issue. In their view the Filipinos were incapable of self rule and it was America's obligation to "sustain the liberating and civilizing mission it had set out to fulfill."⁸

The anti-imperialist philosophy had for its basis the idea that subjugation of alien people against their will was contrary to the deep-seated principles of American democracy. As for taking up the white man's burden, the anti-imperialists countered with the idea that the United States should civilize and democratize by example, not by coercion. Coer-

⁶Ibid., June 5, 1898, p. 4.

⁷Robert E. Osgood, "Ideals and Self-Interest in Foreign Policy," in American Expansion in the Late Nineteenth Century, ed. by J. Rogers Hollingsworth (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 83. Hereafter cited as Hollingsworth, Expansion.

⁸Ibid., p. 81.

cion, virility, manifest destiny and other ideals espoused by imperialists were like "a reversion to the discredited doctrines of militarism and acquisitiveness, which America had renounced when she severed her ties with the Old World and established a better way of life in the New."⁹

The World-Herald clung unswervingly to the policy of the anti-imperialist. The paper saw advantages to a peaceful occupation of large colonies, but with outright colonization it felt any economic advantage was outweighed by political dangers and risks. One fear inherent in a colonial policy would be the governing of people completely different in thinking and culture. American success as a country had depended on a common set of interests among its citizens. To take islanders who differed in habits would be splitting the country into different sections with varying interests and concerns. The paper quoted Alexander Hamilton as praising the fact that the United States was one long stretch of undivided land, inhabited by people with similar backgrounds, religions, customs and ideals of government. Hopefully the United States would "never split into a number of unsocial, jealous and alien sovereignties."¹⁰

In regard to the annexation of the Hawaiian islands, the World-Herald revealed another complaint against imperial-

⁹Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁰Sunday World-Herald, June 12, 1898, p. 4.

ism. The paper rebuked the Cleveland Administration for trying to restore the monarchy there while young insurgents were trying to establish a republic. The American people, proclaimed the paper, should be elated with the birth of a republic. To think of taking a new republic as a state should be unthinkable. The American destiny is to establish universal liberty by example, not conquest. To ignore those trying to set up a republic and force them to accept an American form of democracy was contrary to American principles. The United States should never do this at the behest of those who seek financial profit for themselves. The country should assist the islanders in setting up a stable government and retreat to let them manage their own affairs.¹¹ The paper put little credence in the imperialistic idea saying the islanders were too uncivilized to succeed on their own.

The fear raised by imperialists that the United States could become isolationist if she did not pursue a colonial policy was completely unfounded in the view of the World-Herald. American commerce and trade were progressing and the production capacity and resources were so vast that the country would not need colonies to gain financially.¹² American world-wide influence was growing. Slowly the United States was "undermining the foundation of thrones

¹¹Evening World-Herald, June 24, 1898, p. 4.

¹²Sunday World-Herald, June 12, 1898, p. 4.

and sowing the seeds of religious and political liberty in the breasts of the people of all lands and all climes."¹³

The temptation of acquiring colonies, the paper admitted, was very real and could not be denied. The World-Herald recognized that colonization held out inducements to the speculative and restless. The paper, however, warned of tangible dangers inherent in a colonial policy. The expense of maintaining a standing army to protect the possessions should be considered. The necessity of getting entangled with European powers also interested in the Far East should be feared. Turmoil and political intrigue within the colonies would undoubtedly plague the United States.¹⁴

The World-Herald had a reply to those imperialists who felt that the islanders were incapable of setting up a stable government. The Cubans, the paper argued, proved themselves as capable and strong soldiers throughout the turmoil. Perhaps the United States would have to remain on Cuban soil until law and order were established but this would ensue in short order. The Philippine question was more complicated. They were not as well-equipped for self government as the Cubans, and once the United States released its power there, they could fall prey to a European power struggle. So the United States should maintain its authority there, even

¹³Ibid., June 19, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 4.

though it was against American tradition to do so, until Filipinos were capable of defending themselves against monarchical interference.¹⁵

The World-Herald in its fight against imperialism evoked lessons the country could learn from history. One lesson could be learned from the British experience with colonialism. The English colonial policy was a trail of bloodshed in pursuit of financial aggrandizement. She had lost some of her finest young men "upon the altar of territorial and financial greed."¹⁶

In answer to imperialists who claimed that one could look at the American acquisition of Louisiana, Florida, and Texas and see that Americans improved all territory they touched, the World-Herald pointed out that the United States never had to cross water for this expansion, nor did she violate the wishes of natives trying to set up a democracy. According to the World-Herald, the country should never annex the islands but should set an example for them. "Let us make of our own country such a haven of happiness that all other nations gazing thereon will feel impelled to follow our example in order to reap a share of the blessings that are being showered upon us."¹⁷

¹⁵ Evening World-Herald, May 10, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., July 2, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

Another factor of colonialism which bothered the Omaha paper was its violation of the Monroe Doctrine. The policy would undoubtedly involve the United States in Old World politics. It would be a substitution of force for consent of the governed. It would be an overthrow of the principles of self government "which have distinguished our government from the monarchies and aristocracies of the old world."¹⁸

A theory offered about the mentality of the anti-imperialist was that he was basically a racist. To bring into the fold of American citizenry aliens from across the seas would mean compounding racial strife in this country. These aliens would have to be admitted as equals or subjects. If admitted as subjects, it would be contrary to the principles of the Declaration of Independence. To keep them from becoming equal citizens of the United States, the country would have to let them govern themselves.¹⁹

Although the World-Herald was staunchly anti-imperialist, the racist theory could not apply to it. The paper had few haughty illusions of American supremacy. Perhaps its view that the United States could be seen as an example of greatness was tainted with haughtiness. The paper, however, sincerely felt that the islanders were as

¹⁸Morning World-Herald, June 22, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁹Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-imperialists and the Inequality of Man," in Expansion, ed. by Hollingsworth, pp. 89-95.

capable as anyone else to form a democracy and succeed at it. There was only one editorial that showed any blatant Anglo-Saxon superiority. In this rather inane comment the paper told of Dewey's request for sixty thousand pounds of soap to be delivered to the Philippines. Commenting on the request, the paper philosophized:

Soap is a product of the civilized world and the users are the leaders in progress and enlightenment. Soap and the bible go hand in hand, figuratively speaking, in the development of backward races, and that cleanliness is next to godliness is a self evident truth. When Dewey asked for the soap he showed he was making wonderful progress in the task of leading the Filipinos into higher paths of usefulness.²⁰

²⁰Evening World-Herald, July 22, 1898, p. 4.

CHAPTER XI
A POLITICAL AFFAIR

McKinley gave careful consideration when he selected men of both expansionist and anti-expansionist persuasion to negotiate the peace treaty. William Day, a moderate on the Philippine question and open to alternatives, was to serve as chairman. Whitelaw Reid, editor of the New York Tribune, was an avowed expansionist. Cushman Davis of Minnesota and William Frye of Maine were both imperialists and were both powerful and influential Senators. George Gray, an anti-imperialist, would represent the Democrats and serve as a balance.¹ Although there was one token Democrat, there could be little doubt that McKinley leaned toward the imperialistic persuasion in his choice of a peace delegation. ↙

In late September and early October, McKinley embarked on a tour of the Midwest. His purpose was to feel out the people's attitude on expansionism, and to speak as the victorious President of all the people, not as a Republican. Not co-incidental was the fact that off-year Congressional elections were impending and Mark Hanna felt that to insure

¹Morgan, William McKinley, p. 401.

a Republican victory, the people should see their victorious chief.²

For two weeks McKinley stumped the Midwest talking in general terms of peace, national unity, and a return to prosperity. He made vague references to national destiny and to the fruits and blessings of a victorious war. He made one reference to a definite expansionist policy when he stated that the United States was in prime financial condition, and what she now needed was new markets and "as trade follows the flag it looks very much as if we were going to have new markets."³

The high point of McKinley's tour was his October 12 appearance at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha.⁴ The World-Herald gave much publicity to the event which was to be called "peace day." The paper refrained from criticism of the President and urged Omahans to put aside their political prejudices and "unite as American citizens to pay proper tribute to the chief magistrate of the greatest country on earth."⁵ Business facilities should be decorated in honor of the President and people should pay their proper respect by greeting him with enthusiasm.

The World-Herald gave wide and favorable coverage to the President's reception and speech. McKinley and his

²Ibid., pp. 406-407.

³Leech, McKinley, p. 341.

⁴Morgan, William McKinley, p. 407.

⁵Evening World-Herald, October 7, 1898, p. 4.

staff stayed at the Omaha Club, located on Twentieth and Douglas Streets. He was escorted by the police and a large contingent of the Knights of Aksarben.⁶ On the day of the speech, people came from all over and gave him a warm reception. People gathered across from the Omaha Club and some ventured across the street "to even touch the sidewalk or press the steps where his excellency had passed on entering the club house last night."⁷

To an estimated crowd of 100,000 people, the President made his speech, the meaning of which was veiled behind vague generalities. He talked of how the United States did not invite war but, once involved, she had the favor of the Almighty in her fight for humanity. Neither did the country invite the delicate questions of peace. In answering the questions of peace, the United States must avoid undue aggression "and aim to secure only such results as will promote our own general good." The country should not shirk her responsibility and, the President asked, should we deny to ourselves what the rest of the world so freely and so justly accords to us? What the rest of the world "accords to us and the results which would promote our own good" were vague statements. What they meant, undoubtedly, were more foreign markets and good strategic lands.⁸

⁶Ibid., p. 1.

⁷Ibid., October 12, 1898, p. 1.

⁸Ibid., October 12, 1898, p. 1 and Leech, McKinley, pp. 341-342.

The President no sooner ended his tour than the World-Herald resumed criticism of the Republican Administration. It accused him of making a purely political trip veiled behind beautiful words of national destiny. The trip was a tool to gauge the enthusiasm of the public for his policies. What are his policies, the paper asked? Does he want to keep the Philippines or relinquish them? Does he want to keep Luzon and give up the other islands? McKinley made no concrete proposals on which the people could make judgment.⁹

The President talked of the suddenness with which the war broke out. This statement, according to the paper, was completely false. The Republican platform of 1896, which McKinley endorsed, called for the United States to actively seek peace and stability in Cuba. The President in accepting this proposal should have recognized the inevitability of war, but he did not use the year of 1897 to prepare for fighting. The people knew it was coming and they urged the government to prepare. Instead McKinley used the time to play politics in his appointments and, as a result, slow, incompetent and stupid men failed to respond to a brewing storm.¹⁰

McKinley made a statement that soldiers who endured the hardships of winning a war would never tolerate being

⁹Ibid., October 25, 1898, p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid., October 17, 1898, p. 4.

put down in the press. In response to this statement the World-Herald referred to Algerism. The paper made it clear that the investigations into the War Department were not investigations of the soldiers but of "political nincompoops." It was an "investigation of politicians given shoulder straps for the purpose of rewarding them for party service."¹¹ Party politics and campaign contributions placed men in jobs where experience was needed. It was an investigation of those who pitched camps in "feverholes" and those who created hardships for the soldiers. The President made a ludicrous judgment on the American people who would not think of impeaching the soldiers.¹²

The World-Herald wanted to make "peace day" at the Exposition a resounding success; with a Presidential visit it was bound to be. The paper encouraged public support for the visit. Elections were impending, however, and again the paper had to raise some issues to promote its Democratic aspirations. Thus criticism of the Republican Administration ensued.

¹¹Ibid., October 18, 1898, p. 4.

¹²Ibid., p. 4.

CONCLUSION

President McKinley did not want the war. He fought the inevitable to the last, but finally relented to a war-anxious Congress and press. That the press had tremendous effect on his final decision to declare war is indisputable. In a conversation with McKinley, Henry Pritchett, the head of a government science agency, told of how the President found it impossible to halt the war. With the incessant agitation of the press and the emotionalism in Congress there was nothing else he could do. Perhaps if McKinley had been made of sterner stuff he could have handled the situation and avoided the war. Pritchett pointed out, though, that if one turned back to the contemporary newspapers he would see "in what a ferment the public mind must have been to accept such expressions of prejudice and passion."¹

That the World-Herald was one of these papers which was filled with passion and prejudice is obvious. That Mrs. Thurston might have died of a purely physical attack did not even occur to the editor. Instead he attributed her death to the heartbreak of seeing the suffering Cubans under the management of the barbaric Spaniards. That the Spanish were

¹Henry Pritchett, "Some Recollections of President McKinley and the Cuban Intervention," North American Review, March, 1909, pp. 397-403.

innocent of blowing up the Maine was unthinkable. The paper proclaimed them guilty before they could prove their innocence. That the business community should worry about prosperity and making money was a sin when just south of us people were starving, suffering, and dying.

The Omaha paper had no mercy on the Spanish or the anti-war faction in the United States. To the World-Herald reader of 1898, there must have been no other recourse than to fight this godly war for humanity and rid the Western Hemisphere of monarchists and brutes. With this kind of propaganda agitating the public it is little wonder why the Spanish-American War was fought.

The World-Herald was sincere in its belief that this war was for humanitarian purposes. It had no interest in overseas expansion for financial aggrandizement or for American glory. The platitudes and generalities about this country being like a beacon light for the oppressed were really what the World-Herald of 1898 was all about. In its simplistic approach to the war it was able to see what it wanted to see, Cuba's freedom from Spain. America's subsequent thrust into worldwide politics was something the World-Herald did not want or expect.

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