

**ADDRESS OF TOMAS ESTRADA PALMA TO THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC.**

To the People of the United States :

The persistency with which the American press has during the last few days been treating of supposed administrative reforms to be introduced in Cuba by the Government of Spain compels me to request the publication of the following declarations which I make in behalf of my Government, of the army of liberation of Cuba, and of the Cuban Revolutionary Party.

The question of the proposed reforms is not a matter which at all concerns those who have already established an independent government in Cuba and have resolved to shrink from no sacrifice of property or life in order to emancipate the whole island from the Spanish yoke. If the Spanish residents of the island, who are favored by the Spanish Government with all sorts of privileges and monopolies, and if the handful of Cubans, too pusillanimous or too proud to acknowledge their error, or a few foreigners guided only by selfish interests, are satisfied that Cuba should remain under Spanish domination, we, who militate under the flag of the solitary star, we, who already constitute the Republic of Cuba, and belong to a free people with its own Government and its own laws, we are firmly resolved to listen to no compromise and to treat with Spain only on the basis of absolute independence for Cuba. If Spain has power to exterminate us, then let her convert the island into a vast cemetery; if she has not, and wishes to terminate the war before the whole country is reduced to ashes, then let her adopt the only measure that will put an end to it and recognize our independence. Spain must know by this time that while there is a single living Cuban with dignity—and there are many thousands of them—there will not be peace in Cuba, nor even the hope of it.

All good causes must finally triumph, and ours is a good cause. It is the cause of justice treated with contempt, of right suppressed by force, and of the dignity of a people offended to the last degree.

We Cubans have a thousandfold more reason in our endeavors to free ourselves from the Spanish yoke than the people of the thirteen colonies had when in 1776 they rose in arms against the British Government.

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The people of these colonies were in full enjoyment of all the rights of man; they had liberty of conscience, freedom of speech, liberty of the press, the right of public meeting, and the right of free locomotion; they elected those who governed them, they made their own laws, and, in fact, enjoyed the blessings of self-government. They were not under the sway of a Captain General with arbitrary powers, who, at his will, could imprison them, deport them to penal colonies, or order their execution, even without the semblance of a court-martial. They did not have to pay a permanent army and navy that they might be kept in subjection, nor to feed a swarm of hungry employees yearly sent over from the metropolis, to prey upon the country. They were never subjected to a stupid and crushing customs tariff which compelled them to go to the home markets for millions of merchandise annually which they could buy much cheaper elsewhere; they were never compelled to cover a budget of \$26,000,000 or \$30,000,000 a year without the consent of the taxpayers, and for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the army and navy of the oppressor, to pay the salaries of thousands of worthless European employees, the whole interest on a debt not incurred by the colony, and other expenditures from which the island received no benefit whatever, for out of all those millions only the paltry sum of \$700,000 was apparently applied for works of internal improvement, and one-half of which invariably went into the pockets of the Spanish employees.

If the right of the thirteen British colonies to rise in arms in order to acquire their independence has never been questioned because of the attempt of the mother country to tax them by a duty on tea or by the Stamp Act, will there be a single citizen in this great republic of the United States, whether he be a public or a private man, who will doubt the justice, and more than the justice, of the necessity in which the Cuban people find themselves of fighting to-day and to-morrow and always until they shall have overthrown Spanish oppression and tyranny in their country and formed themselves into a free and independent republic? I know that, with the exception of a very few indeed, who allow their selfish interests to obscure their sense of right and justice, there is not a single American, whether in the higher, the middle, or the lowest classes of society, who does not ardently wish the war to end and Cuba to be free and independent.

We have thrown ourselves into the struggle advisedly and deliberately; we knew what we would have to face and we decided unflinchingly to persevere until we should emancipate ourselves from the Spanish Government. And we know that we are able to do it, as we know that we are competent to govern ourselves. Experience has taught us that as a people

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we have nothing to envy the Spaniards—in fact, we feel ourselves superior to them, and from them we can expect no improvement, no better education. On the contrary, the longer we remain under their domination the worse shall be our condition, as from them we can learn nothing, and in politics especially the only thing they can teach us is corruption in all the branches of the public administration, and to initiate us into a system of bureaucracy carried to the rank of a political institution, which destroys all energy and initiative in the individual by awakening in him the hope of living upon the spoils of the public treasury.

With regard to the knowledge of modern institutions and to democratic sentiments we are far more advanced than the Spaniards. In that respect and in many others we have nothing in common with the Spanish people. We are Americans; we breathe the pure air of free institutions, and we contemplate with envy the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. We are in as good condition to rule ourselves without any fear of perturbations, disorder, or civil war as were the thirteen American colonies when they emancipated themselves from England, and in superior condition to the Spanish colonies of this continent when they broke off from the Spanish yoke. Slavery is over in Cuba, with all its injustice and cruelties. The white man and the colored live in perfect harmony, without prejudices and resentments between them. They fight together to conquer their political liberty; the colored people of Cuba have reached a higher stage of culture than that of the United States. They are industrious, intelligent, and lovers of learning. During the last fifteen years they have attained a remarkable intellectual development. On the other hand, thousands of white persons, with the facilities which their wealth offered them, have completed their education in foreign countries, especially in the United States, where they have become accustomed to republican practices and to the exercise of their rights as free-men, thus preparing themselves and their children for the exercises of those same rights in their native land when it shall be emancipated from Spanish domination.

Among other proofs which could be adduced of the capacity of the Cuban white and colored to rule themselves is the strong organization of the Cuban revolutionary party in America. It is composed of more than 20,000 Cubans living in different countries of the New World and formed into clubs, the members of which yearly elect their leader. This organization has an existence of over five years, during which every member has strictly discharged his duties, has respected, without any interruption, the regulations, and obeyed the elected delegate loyally and faithfully.

Among the members of the clubs there are several Spaniards, who enjoy the same rights as the Cubans, and who live with them in fraternal harmony.

This fact and those of the many Spaniards incorporated into our army fully demonstrates that our revolution is not the result of personal hatred, but an uprising inspired only by the natural love of liberty and free institutions. The war in Cuba has for its only object the overthrow of Spanish power and to establish an independent republic, under whose beneficent laws the Spaniards may continue to live side by side with the Cubans as members of the same community and citizens of the same nation. This is our programme, and we strictly adhere to it. The day of our triumph we shall have no reproach for any one, and our arms will be opened to all, Cubans and Spaniards, no matter what their opinion and attitude were during the war. But let all know, also, that between the present revolution and the Government of Spain there is no possible arrangement if not based on the recognition of Cuban independence. It is useless to speak about reforms or even of the more liberal home rule. All that is to nurse illusions and to lose the time which ought to be employed in preventing ruin and desolation.

The revolution is powerful and deeply rooted in the hearts of the Cuban people, and there is no Spanish power—no power in the world—that can stop its march. The war, since Gen. Weyler took command of the Spanish army, has assumed a cruel character; his troops shoot the Cuban prisoners, pursue and kill the sick and wounded, assassinate the unarmed and burn their houses. The Cuban troops, on their part, destroy, as a war measure, the machinery and buildings of the sugar plantations, and are firmly resolved not to leave one stone upon another during their campaign. Let those who can put an end to this war reflect that our liberty is being amassed with the blood of thousands of Cuban victims, among whom is numbered José Martí, the apostle and martyr of our revolution. Let them consider that before the sacred memory of this new redeemer there is not a single Cuban who will withdraw from the work of emancipation without feeling ashamed of abandoning the flag which on the 24th of February was raised by the beloved master.

It is time for the Cuban people to satisfy their just desire for a place among the free nations of the world, and let them not be accused if for accomplishing their noble purpose they are obliged to reduce to ashes the Cuban land.

T. ESTRADA PALMA.