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ARTICLE

THE WAR.

Review of the U.S.'s Attitude Towards a Free Cuba.

Not a Free Cuba is Wanted Now by American Capitalism but a War that May Secure Gold Bug Domination—Free Cuba is a Pretext.

By Daniel De Leon

Capital is said by a Quarterly Reviewer to fly turbulence and strife which is very true; but this is very incompletely stating the question. Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent. will insure its employment anywhere, 20 per cent. certain, will produce eagerness; 50 per cent., positive audacity; 100 per cent. will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent.—and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring a profit, it will freely encourage both.

—P.J. DUNNING.

This country is now at war with Spain. It may be difficult, at a season when low passions are rampant, for the word of sense to be hearkened. But that is no reason for suppressing it. The Socialist is accustomed to stand up unperturbed against mountain-high errors and deafening nonsense. His success in the past is a guarantee that there is that in reason that secures its ultimate triumph, and lays upon the sane the obligation to utter it regardless of immediate consequences. Our Comrades, the class-conscious working-class of Spain, are doing their duty in this respect, and, in their own country, are tearing off the mask of "patriotism" from the hideous face of the exploiting class that rules them, and exposing its true object in its Cuban policy. If they, in a more backward country than this, and, consequently, surrounded by denser masses of ignorance than we are, are doing their duty, the duty is all the more imperative upon us to speak out here.

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This war is the direct product of the bestiality of the ruling classes of to-day.

Under the pretence of “national dignity,” the Spanish ruling class seeks to continue its malfeasances in Cuba. Cuba, like all the American colonies once owned by Spain, has been the pasture ground for the lazy, dissolute Spanish Grandee to recuperate his fortunes. Bankrupted at home by self-indulgence and extravagance, he would secure from his influential partners in a life of crime a “mission to the colonies.” As “Captain General,” “Governor,” “Alcalde,” or “Secretary,” or with some other of many sinecure titles, the Iberian reprobate would in the colony “enter upon his mission.” Extortion, high-handed theft, even murder—he stuck at nothing. His object was to amass as much wealth as possible, in the most rapid manner possible, while living as sumptuously as possible all the while. This is a condensation of Spanish colonial history. From Mexico, down to Argentine {Argentina?}, the experience was the same. These colonies, more than eighty years ago put an end to their colonial martyrdom. On a hundred fields of bloody battle the Spanish forces were crushed, and Spanish domination ended.

When the last batch of Spanish Vice-Roys, captured on the bloody fields of Junin and Ayacucho, were packed by the South American revolutionists on board a ship and sent back to Spain with the warning that if they or any of their kind returned they would no longer be treated as belligerents but as brigands, and would be hanged on the nearest trees, the South American revolutionists saw no possessions left to Spain in the Western hemisphere except the larger Antilles—Cuba, San Domingo and Porto Rico.

South America seemed and remained safe. But the presence of Spanish forces in these Antilles alarmed the South Americans. The Liberators did not consider their freedom really secured so long as Spain held those islands in American waters. As a result of this apprehension, the freedom of the islands was decided on; Cuba was the first one to be invaded and freed from Spain by the South American forces. Preparations were made on a large scale. The expedition was about to start. But, from a quarter least anticipated, it found its path barred. What quarter was that?—The Government of the United States.

At that time, the Bourbons and Copper-heads ruled this country. Slavery had become valuable to them, and, consequently, it had been declared by them “sacred.” The South American Declaration of Independence from Spain had gone accompanied with the emancipation of the negro. When independence was secured chattel slavery was simultaneously abolished. This was the fly in the ointment. The Government of the United States feared to see Cuba and the other two islands made free by the breath of the South American Revolution: Cuba’s freedom would have meant the emancipation of the negro. The Washington administrations, intent at the time, one after another, upon the acquisition of more territory on the continent to extent chattel

slavery on, blocked the South American plan. Cuba remained to this day a Spanish colony, groaning under all the ills that that means.

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Since then three distinct attempts were made by the Cubans themselves to shake off the Spanish yoke. The present one is the third. And it is under the pretext of aiding this third attempt that our country now finds herself in war with Spain. The attitude of our capitalist class when it first interfered in behalf of Spain in Cuba is substantially the attitude it strikes now, and even worse. Self interest at the expense of the Cubans caused it to block the South American expedition; and now, self interest, at the expense of our own working class, causes it to appear as the paladin of Cuban freedom.

That Cuban freedom, however, is not the real object to our Government, a cursory review of the situation will demonstrate.

For three years the Cuban insurgents have been battling against Spain. During this period what was our Government's attitude? It sedulously sought to prevent all aid from reaching the Cuban insurgents. Nor is that all. Having at last come to the opinion that Cuba should be free, what would have been the natural course, if what our Government really was after was the liberation of the island? Would a declaration of war against Spain have been necessary? No.

If the insurrection of Cuba is powerful enough, numerically, to maintain the country free, all that was necessary would have been to recognize her independence, and then open our ports and our markets to both belligerents—Spanish as well as Cubans. The Cubans, suffering for want of arms, could have got here all they wanted; their bonds would have sold readily, and furnished them with an ample treasury to equip themselves. Our Government might have added to that the sending of a Minister Plenipotentiary to reside near Gen. Maximo Gomez. Many a broken-down home politician would have been found ready for the mission. The freedom of Cuba would have been assured. But it would have been assured without war on our part. It is because war was wanted and needed by our Government that the peaceful and natural method was not resorted to.

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The FREEDOM of Cuba is but a pretext, the real object was WAR, and war is but the means to an end that our ruling capitalist class of the Republican variety has clearly in mind, and proposes to pursue athwart the din of "patriotism," and wading knee-deep through the blood of the American as well as the Cuban working class.

First—In the first place, the promised "good times" did not materialize. Neither

could they. Consumption is not to be cured with soothing syrup; neither can the ills of the capitalist system be remedied by the gold any more than the silver cure, by the protection any more than the free trade injection. McKinley, as well as Bryan, stood for the continuance of the capitalist system. The election of the former did what the election of the latter would have done, leave the disease untouched. Poverty, with its resulting desperation, is increasing apace. What the quack doctors of old used to do, our quack political doctors of to-day practise;—a blood-letting. There are few things that bring more completely home to capitalism the barbaric instinct that animates it than the homœopathic system it has to meet social evils with:—to aggravate them; to seek to remove distress by the application of still greater distress; to seek to secure domestic PEACE by means of WAR. Our ruling class needed a war; Cuba's freedom was a handy pretext. Hence freedom was not given to Cuba without war.

Second—The Republican or gold bug element stands in positive fear of a Bryan series of victories. It knows that the “good times” did not come. It knows, and has seen many an evidence thereof, that the blind masses are likely to rush like a herd of buffalo to the other camp of the existing old parties. If it apprehended a Socialist victory it would not be in such distress, because it knows that it could rely upon the good sense of its Bryan or silver wing of capitalism to join and make common front with it against the workingman's party; and it would hope that it could either bully or coddle enough workingmen into such a camp of combined capitalism to at least give it a fighting chance against the Socialist Labor party. But with a Bryan party it is different. The habit that has become national of the workers rushing from Reps to Dems and back again, gives Bryanism such a chance that the gold men feel positively alarmed. The gold bug element needs a war; Cuba's freedom is a handy pretext. Hence freedom was not to be given to Cuba without a war.

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The talk of a short, sharp war is a blind. Unless events in Spain break the slate at Washington, the war will be carried at least over the pending Congressional elections.

This is the secret of the war with Spain. The nation stands before open graves into which thousands of her sons will ere long be laid;—victims on the altar of the Capitalist system of tyranny.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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