




## EXILE

---

 In Spain, Martí was free to do as he pleased. He was, after all, a Spanish citizen. He found a job as a tutor to a wealthy family and enrolled in the Central University in Madrid. He studied law but also read the classics and attended the theater, concert halls, and art galleries. There were other Cuban exiles in Spain, and Martí soon became acquainted with them. One of the first things he did was turn to writing for the cause of Cuban independence. He wrote a pamphlet called *El presidio político en Cuba* (The Political Prison in Cuba), in which he tried to

inform the Spanish public of the injustices of their colonial governors. He became well-known in literary and political circles and was frequently asked to write about Cuba for Spanish newspapers. He was also invited to speak at university gatherings. His subject was always the unjust situation in Cuba and the need for change.

Valdés Domínguez soon joined Martí in exile, and they took up where they had left off in Havana. Together, they produced a pamphlet entitled *The 27th of November!* It contained a poem by Martí dedicated to eight medical students who were shot by Spanish police for demonstrating in Havana on that date in 1871. The pamphlet called upon Cubans everywhere to swear “an oath of infinite love of country . . . over their bodies.”<sup>1</sup> The pamphlet attracted much attention and, for the first time, brought the plight of Cuba to the attention of many of the Spanish people.

Spain was then still a monarchy, ruled by King Amadeus, and governed by a *Cortes*, or legislature. Martí believed that if Spain became a republic, its people would no longer stand for its colonial policy and would withdraw its army from Cuba. In February of 1873, a Spanish army corps mutinied and the king was forced to abdicate, or give up his throne. The first Spanish republic was established on February 11, 1873. Martí was in the press box





José Martí (seated) and his friend Fermín Valdés Domínguez were both convicted of treason and imprisoned by the Spanish government. Together, in exile, they wrote *The 27th of November!*

when the Cortes established the new government. He was delighted with the new order and the prospects for Cuba. However, when he heard one of the members of the new Cortes not only approve but praise Spain's colonial policy, he realized that nothing had changed.

Martí responded the way he usually did, by writing a pamphlet, *La República Española y la Revolución Cubana* (The Spanish Republic and the Cuban Revolution). In it, he argued that Cuba had the same right to govern itself as Spain did and that one republic should recognize the rights of another. His argument did not persuade the Cortes. Instead, it brought Martí to the attention of the authorities as a possible troublemaker.

Martí's health was still poor. This and his disappointment with the new Spanish republic led him to move to Zaragoza in northern Spain. Zaragoza was located in the province of Aragón, which had a long tradition of opposing the central government in Madrid, so Martí felt safer and more comfortable there, among people who felt the same as he did about the new Spanish republic. He had his credits transferred to the University of Zaragoza, where he continued to study law. He received his degree in law in June of 1874 and went on to obtain a degree in the liberal



arts. He continued to work as a tutor, earning just enough to cover his living expenses.

The new Spanish republic fell in January of 1874, following more military revolts. Martí had by now withdrawn from any active role in Spanish politics, although he still kept himself informed of events. He was now free to travel outside of Spain, but as a political exile he could not return to Cuba, especially since the war for independence was still being fought there.

Martí was now twenty-two years old, and he had not seen his family for over four years. After Martí's exile, his family had moved to Mexico, and Martí decided to join them there. He and his old friend Valdés Domínguez left Spain for Paris, where they lingered for a few weeks to take in the atmosphere of what was then considered the capital of the world. From there they went to England and set sail from Southampton for Mexico. They arrived in Veracruz on February 8, 1875. Martí was reunited with his family, although the occasion was a sad one because his favorite sister, Ana, had died while he was away. He was greeted happily by his father, who was now proud of his educated son's accomplishments. Father and son had never been close, and Mariano Martí had been angered by his son's conviction for treason. Now, however, he had



softened his opinion of Martí's political activities. He never stood in his son's way again.

Martí's first task in his new land was to find employment, and that meant, of course, a writing job. Through the influence of a family friend, Manuel Mercado, Martí was hired by Mexico City's *La Revista Universal* (The Universal Review). This was a weekly newspaper that covered literary and artistic affairs as well as national news. Martí soon became one of the most important members of the newspaper's staff. He published poems as well as articles on Mexico City's cultural life, using the pen name "Orestes." He also issued bulletins detailing Mexico's progress under its liberal government. Under his own name, he wrote articles on Spanish and Cuban politics. He paid particular attention to the Mexican Indian's place in Mexican life. This interest in minorities and their place in the government began when he was in Mexico and was to last for his lifetime. As he wrote in one of his poems:

*Con los pobres de la tierra  
Quiero yo mi suerte echar:  
El arroyo de la sierra  
Me complace más que el mar.<sup>2</sup>*

(With the poor of this world  
I want to cast my lot.  
A mountain stream to me  
Means more than the sea.)

Martí had made himself a respected public figure in Mexico. His views on everything from the theater to the political situation in Central America were eagerly awaited. In January of 1876, he was asked by workers in Chihuahua to be their spokesperson at a national labor congress. This was something new for Martí. Until now he had mingled mostly in literary and political circles. During this time, he also managed to publish a translation into Spanish of Victor Hugo's novel *Mes Fils* (My Sons), and to write a short play. This play, entitled *Amor con amor se paga* (Love Is Repaid With Love), was presented successfully by a Mexico City theatrical company. Also during this time, he met Carmen Zayas Bazán, the daughter of a wealthy Cuban aristocrat in exile in Mexico.

In the late fall of 1876, the political situation in Mexico had reached a state of crisis. General Porfirio Díaz had staged a military coup and forced President Lerdo de Tejada to flee the capital. Martí had admired and supported the president, and he was disappointed to see him overthrown by Díaz, a man whom everyone had thought was a liberal who believed in democracy. This planted in Martí the seed of distrust and suspicion of all military men who gave their promise to support popular government.



Martí decided to leave Mexico. Even though he was now an important member of the Mexican community, he had continued to work for the cause of Cuban independence. He had learned that the war for independence was not going well for the rebels. Part of this was due to differences in purpose within rebel ranks. General Antonio Maceo wanted most of all to free the slaves. His fellow generals felt that if they did, they would lose the support of the Cuban Criollo landowners. Therefore, the movement for independence had the full support of neither the African Cubans nor the Cuban Criollo landowners and farmers. Martí felt that he might be able to do something to solve this problem simply by being there. He was well-known and admired in Cuba because he was both the rebels' spokesman to the rest of the world and their chief supporter and fundraiser.

On January 6, 1877, Martí arrived in Cuba, traveling under the name Julián Pérez, which was a combination of his middle name and his mother's family name. Martí soon learned that the rebels' situation was desperate. They had suffered heavy losses with no apparent gains, and the countryside was suffering from the desolation brought about by the war. The heavy taxation Spain demanded in order to pay for the war had ruined whole businesses. The destruction of sugar





mills and plantations that had been caught in the path of the war had caused widespread unemployment. The United States had decided to side with Spain, thus denying the rebels badly needed supplies. In short, the situation was hopeless. Seeing that he could do nothing, Martí sadly returned to Mexico.

Martí did not wish to stay in Mexico under the dictatorship of General Díaz. His old friend Valdés Domínguez recommended that he try Guatemala, even lending him the money to get there. Martí arrived in Guatemala City in March of 1877 and immediately sought out any Cubans who might be living there. He soon met José María Izaguirre, another exiled Cuban, who was director of Guatemala's Central School. Izaguirre believed as strongly as Martí in the need for an independent Cuba, so the two men took to each other immediately. Izaguirre had heard of Martí and had read some of his political articles. He was most impressed, however, with Martí's educational background and achievements. Because Martí spoke French and English and was well grounded in Latin and Greek, Izaguirre had no trouble getting him appointed to the faculty of the Central School. So Martí embarked on another profession, this time as a teacher of history and literature.

During all of this time, Martí had been engaged to marry Carmen Zayas Bazán, who was still living



in Mexico with her family. In Guatemala, Martí met and became friends with General Miguel García Granado. The general had a daughter named María, and Martí fell in love with her. His engagement to Carmen, however, prevented him from asking María to marry him. Martí's dilemma was solved in a most unfortunate way: María died, most likely from tuberculosis. In her memory, Martí wrote one of his finest poems, *La niña de Guatemala* (The Young Woman of Guatemala). He says of her:

*Ella, por volverlo a ver,  
Salió a verlo al mirador;  
Él volvió con su mujer;  
Ella se murió de amor . . .  
Dicen que murió de frío:  
Yo sé que murió de amor.<sup>3</sup>*

(Wanting to see his return,  
She went up to the belvedere.  
He had returned with a wife.  
She died of love. . . .  
They say she died of cold;  
I know she died of love.)

In December of 1877, Martí returned to Mexico and married Carmen. He then returned to Guatemala with his young wife and plunged into the literary life of the capital. He edited the

university's newspaper, he lectured, and he began writing a history of Guatemala. He founded and took part in several literary and artistic clubs and became one of the best-known figures in Guatemala City's social and political life.

The president of Guatemala at this time was Justo Rufino Barrios, a liberal politician who had set out to modernize his country and bring relief to the poor and peasant classes. Martí was impressed by Barrios, particularly by his attempts to curb the power of the Catholic church. However, Barrios ruled with an iron hand, and he had little use for democracy or the opinions of the people. Martí was shocked when Barrios had eight priests executed merely for demonstrating against him.

A rumor spread through Guatemala's Central School that Izaguirre was neglecting his duties. President Barrios called Izaguirre before him to explain his conduct. Izaguirre felt insulted that his performance as director of the school should even be questioned, and he resigned in protest. Martí also resigned in loyalty to Izaguirre.

Martí could now devote himself full-time to writing, but he had difficulty earning enough money to support himself and his young wife, who was expecting a child. Then, in September 1878, the war in Cuba came to an end. One of the terms





Carmen Zayas Bazán, the daughter of a Cuban exile in Mexico, married José Martí on December 20, 1877.

of the peace agreement between the rebels and the government was that all Cubans convicted of political crimes be granted a complete pardon. Martí's name was high on the list of those whose sentences were set aside, and he was now free to return to Cuba legally.

