




# REVOLUTION

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 In April of 1894, General Gómez came to New York and met with Martí to plan the invasion of Cuba. Their plan was that there would be a general uprising by the underground revolutionary forces in Cuba at the same time that Gómez was invading the eastern part of the island with a force of about two hundred Cubans and Dominicans. Antonio Maceo would launch an invasion from Costa Rica to land in Oriente province. A third expedition would leave from Key West and land at Camagüey province, in the central part of the island.



By late December of 1894, everything was ready. Three fast ships were rented and made ready for the upcoming invasions. The three ships were to leave from Fernandina Harbor, not far from Jacksonville, Florida. The captains of the ships had been told that their destination was Central America. Once at sea, the Cubans planned to force the captains to follow their plan for the landings in Cuba. One ship was to go first to Costa Rica to pick up Antonio Maceo and his men and then invade Cuba from the north. Martí and his men would sail first to the Dominican Republic to meet with Gómez and his volunteers so that they could invade Cuba from the south. The third ship would go first to Key West and there pick up the remaining invading force to land at Camagüey province.

The "Fernandina Filibuster," as the plan was called, suddenly fell apart. A member of the Cuban Revolutionary Party accidentally revealed the plan to one of the captains of the ships, who spread it among the waterfronts of Florida. The Spanish government soon heard the rumors and made a complaint to the State Department in Washington, D.C. The United States government could hardly condone an invasion of a foreign country starting from its own shores, so it seized the three ships and all of the arms on board. Martí managed to

escape to New York, but most of the men on board were arrested.

Much to Martí's surprise, the failure of the "Fernandina Filibuster" did not mark the end of the Cuban Revolutionary Party. Instead, the émigré communities rallied to his support. One wealthy Cuban woman offered to put up bail for all of the men who were arrested. An American lawyer, Horatio S. Rubens, who had assisted Martí during the strikes in Key West, managed to save some of the supplies from the ships. But most important, the plan convinced the wealthy members of the Cuban community in Florida and New York that Martí was serious about his intentions to wage a revolutionary war against Spain. The slight, idealistic poet became a hero and an idol to exiled Cubans throughout the Americas. Cigar makers and businesspeople began to send money and lend their full support to the Cuban Revolutionary Party. In many ways, the "Fernandina Filibuster" was a victory for Martí.

Revolutionary fever swept through Cuba and the émigré communities. All the military leaders and veterans of the Ten Years War offered Martí their services. Martí was quick to respond to this new wave of enthusiasm for an invasion. On January 29, 1895, Martí, Gómez, and an official representative of the Cuban Revolutionary Party



issued an order for the revolution in Cuba to begin. Juan Gualberto Gómez, who represented the party in Havana, was told to set a date for a popular uprising whenever he thought that the two provinces of Oriente and Camagüey could support a military invasion.

Martí traveled from New York to the Dominican Republic to join General Gómez and work out the plans for the invasion. He arrived at Montecristi on February 7 and there awaited word from Cuba that the uprising had begun. Unfortunately, Martí's concentration on the invasion was broken when word arrived that Antonio Maceo was balking at joining the operation. Maceo gave as his excuse that he was not given a large enough share of the party's funds to finance his end of the invasion. Actually, he had lost faith in Martí, doubting that the younger man could carry off such a grand enterprise. Martí wrote him a sharp letter to pull him into line. Maceo finally agreed to join in the invasion, but he never recognized Martí as the real leader of the revolution.

On February 24, 1895, the "*Grito de Baire*" ("Cry from Baire") was made from within Cuba, and the uprising began. Unfortunately, Spanish spies had known all along that the uprising was going to take place, and they immediately arrested



all of the revolutionary leaders in Havana. The revolt in the western provinces was put down by the Spanish almost before it began, so the revolution was confined to the eastern provinces.

When Martí learned of the spread of the revolution in Oriente province, he drafted a message to the Cuban people called *El Manifiesto de Montecristi* (The Manifesto of Montecristi). In it, he justified the revolution and put forth its aims. He also enlarged upon his ideas for the future. He saw Cuba as an independent republic, completely free from any outside influences or military control. He saw an end to Cuba's one-crop economy and its domination by the United States. He saw an end to racial discrimination and appreciation, rather than fear, of Cuba's African population. Martí and Gómez signed the manifesto on March 25, 1895. On the very same day, Martí wrote to a friend in the Dominican Republic: "I promoted the war; with it my responsibility begins, not ends."<sup>1</sup>

Many of Martí's followers thought that he should return to New York and oversee the efforts of the Cuban Revolutionary Party to support the revolution. Martí stoutly refused. He wrote in his "political will" that he was "dying of shame" at the thought that he had asked others to give their lives for a cause he was unwilling to risk his life for.<sup>2</sup> He





José Martí in Jamaica in 1892. He is wearing his usual outfit, a black suit with simple white shirt and black tie.

addressed this will to his friend Federico Henríquez, a prominent citizen of the Dominican Republic. He also wrote a "literary will," in which he directed that all of his papers and manuscripts should go to his friend Gonzalo de Quesada, whom he appointed his editor. This concern with wills and his work indicated that Martí was deadly serious about what he was going to undertake. This was no mere idealistic adventure he was setting out on. The invasion of Cuba was the end and purpose of his life, and he was willing to die for it.

Before he left Montecristi, Martí wrote a poem of farewell. It was to be his last poem.

*Adiós. El vapor irá  
En la semana que viene:  
Ya lo tiene, ya lo tiene  
Un amigo que se va.*

*Yo de mí le he de decir  
Que en seguirlo, sereno,  
Sin miedo al rayo ni al trueno  
Elaboro el porvenir*

*Su  
José Martí<sup>3</sup>*

(Goodbye. The ship leaves  
In the coming week.  
Now you have, now you hold  
A friend who is leaving.



And of me I have to say  
That in following it, serenely,  
Without fear of the lightning or the thunder  
I am working out the future

Yours  
José Martí)

On April 1, 1895, the same day that he wrote his literary will, Martí set out with Gómez and four other men for Inagua, a town on the coast of the Dominican Republic. They had already hired a ship to take them to Cuba, but when they arrived in Inagua, they could not find either the ship or its captain. A German freighter, the *Nordstand*, was in the harbor, bound for Haiti with a cargo of fruit. Martí gave the captain a \$1,000 bribe to take him and his party aboard and drop them off in a small boat near the coast of Cuba. On the night of April 1, 1895, Martí and Gómez, together with three Cubans and one Dominican, boarded the vessel and hid below decks. These four men were a far cry from the two hundred men that Martí and Gómez were supposed to have raised for their part of the invasion. However, it was too late to turn back, and Martí's presence in Cuba was more important to the cause than a thousand men would be. After some mix-ups and delays, the ship finally took to sea; and on April 10, it arrived three miles off the coast of Cuba at Cape Maisí.



The six men put their weapons and provisions in a small rowboat and then climbed in themselves. The weather was bad and the boat overloaded, so they had trouble maneuvering the boat to shore. Spanish patrol boats were in the vicinity, so they could not make any noise or show a light. Martí wrote in his diary:

We strap on our revolvers. Head toward clearing. Moon comes up red from behind a cloud. We land on a stony beach, La Playita (at foot of Cabobajo). I the last to leave the boat, bailing it out. Jump ashore. Great joy. . . . Sleep on the ground nearby.<sup>4</sup>

The following day, they broke camp and headed inland. Martí had come home at last.

Antonio Maceo had already landed in Oriente province. His group had then made their way on foot to Guantánamo, in southeastern Cuba, through rough country. In order to avoid detection by Spanish troops in the area, Maceo had split his small force into even smaller groups. Martí and Gómez met one of these groups, and hearing that Maceo was in the area, pressed on in hopes of meeting him. With their forces united, they could try to contact the underground groups and rebels who had been fighting the Spanish for more than a month. As they progressed inland, they picked up volunteers and sympathizers with their cause



along the way. They also learned from friendly farmers that they were being followed by Spanish army units.

On April 15, Gómez surprised Martí by promoting him to major general of what they called the Liberation Army. Of course, this was more a recognition of Martí's importance to the revolution than of his military abilities, but Martí was still pleased and proud. He wrote in his diary: "Up until today I have not felt that I was a man. I have lived ashamed and have dragged the chain of my fatherland all of my life."<sup>5</sup> Now he felt that he was a soldier, marching with his comrades to do battle, with the "jubilation with which men offer themselves for sacrifice."<sup>6</sup>

The invasion force continued westward until it reached the area of Guantánamo. Here they learned that Maceo was operating in the vicinity of Santiago de Cuba, the largest city in eastern Cuba. Maceo, who was perhaps the most popular of the heroes of the Ten Years War, had attracted an army of six thousand volunteers. Martí and Gómez hastened to join Maceo. It was while still marching over rough country that Martí was interviewed by a correspondent for the *The New York Herald*, George E. Bryson. Although the last thing Martí wanted was for the United States to become involved in the revolution, he realized that he must

convince the American public of the rightness of his cause. This would at least make it difficult for the United States government to side with Spain. He therefore sent a letter to the editor of the *Herald* outlining his plans for the revolution and the future government of Cuba.

This matter of the future of Cuba caused differences between Martí and Maceo when their forces finally met. It was May 5, 1895, when Martí and Gómez joined Maceo in a village near Santiago de Cuba. They immediately began to plan their future strategy. They agreed that the war must be spread as quickly as possible to the western part of the island. Maceo tried to get Martí to return to the United States to coordinate efforts to supply the revolutionary forces. Martí refused, insisting that he was needed in Cuba. Martí and Maceo also disagreed on what was to happen after the revolution succeeded.

Martí had always insisted that the government of Cuba be a republic, firmly in the hands of civilian representatives who would make all decisions democratically. Maceo was in favor of a military *junta*, a small group of army officers who would steer the new nation through its first difficult years. Martí knew from his experience in Mexico and Central America that a junta tends to remain in power long after the nation has been established.



This he wanted to avoid at all costs, even more than he wanted to avoid the interference of foreign powers in Cuba's internal affairs. Maceo stubbornly refused to bend to Martí's wishes. He was so displeased that he refused to let Martí and Gómez review his troops. He relented the following day, however, and Martí was allowed to speak to the army. He promised them that there would be no surrender of the revolutionary forces until complete and absolute independence had been assured.

That same day, May 6, Martí and Gómez's small force resumed its march westward until, on May 12, they arrived at Dos Ríos, a small town on the Cauto river in the foothills of the Contramaestre mountains. Here they made their camp, and Martí resumed his never-ending task of writing dispatches to the various revolutionary groups, appeals for support from émigré groups abroad, and personal letters to people in high places as well as to friends.

On May 17, Gómez learned from scouts and the friendly population of the area that a large Spanish force was in the vicinity. He left immediately with a large number of men to scout and harass the enemy and possibly engage in battle. Martí was left in camp, suffering from the long-term effects of the injury he had received in prison during his captivity as a youth. On May 18, he began a





Martí poses with a group of Cuban revolutionaries in Central America. He was at home in a jungle hut as well as in a businessman's office.

letter to Manuel Mercado, the family friend who had gotten him his first job in Mexico and with whom he had kept up a lifelong correspondence. In this letter, he repeated his dreams of democracy for Cuba, for racial and social harmony, and for freedom from outside influences. He wrote that it was his duty "to prevent, by the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading over the West Indies and falling with that added weight upon other lands of our America."<sup>7</sup>

"Our America" was a phrase that Martí had been using more and more in his writings and speeches. It was his one overpowering concern, and he had served it at the expense of his health, his family, and his personal life.

The letter to Mercado was never finished. The next day, when he heard the sounds of a nearby battle, he could not bear to remain in camp while others were fighting and dying for a cause he so strongly believed in. He therefore disobeyed orders by leaping on a white horse and riding headlong into the fray. He was recognized by Spanish soldiers and died in a hail of bullets.

