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JOSE MARTI AND THE PAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE, 1889-1891

During 1889-1891, one of the Hispanic World's greatest writers, José Martí, took part in the Pan American Conference in Washington, D. C. The Conference proper extended into 1890 but did not complete its agenda until April 3, 1891 with the adjournment of the Inter-American Monetary Commission. Although Martí was an official delegate only to the latter, he played an important role in the entire Conference, advising and unifying the Latin Americans. At least three writers have covered almost all of the important aspects of this particular episode in Martí's life.[1] There is a side, however, that remains largely unexplored: Martí's evaluation of the delegates and his attitude toward them.

For Martí, a foe of annexation who believed that only "iron and blood" could help Cuba, the opening of the Pan American Conference was "an unfortunate coincidence." At the very moment when the exhausted island had almost united behind his call for

[1] Félix Lizaso, *Martí; Martyr of Cuban Independence*. Translated by Esther Elise Shuler. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953). Lizaso's biography includes portions on Martí's role as Latin America's spokesman at the Conference and his desire for Latin America to gain self-respect and thus merit the esteem of the United States, Lizaso also describes in a general manner Martí's attitudes toward the Conference, and his contact with Argentina's delegation, Herminio Portell Vilá, "Martí diplomático," *Universidad de La Habana* (May-June 1934). This article deals with Martí's diplomatic background as consul for Uruguay and Argentina, and includes an analysis of the State Department's delay in accrediting Martí for the Monetary Commission, Carlos Márquez Sterling has described in detail the proceedings of the Monetary Commission in "Martí y la Conferencia Monetaria de 1891," *Academia de la Historia de Cuba* (La Habana: Imprenta "El Siglo XX," 1938).

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revolution, the Pan American Conference raised again the "false hope," that Cuba could become independent without a war. Martí labeled the entire affair a "search party for subsidies at Latin America's expense."[2] He pictured the Latin American delegates coming one by one to Washington, some burdened with gratitude, some with fear of their neighbors, others dazzled by the great Republic, all, perhaps, disoriented and unprepared for the coming test, assembling "under the talons of the eagle" (VI, 143). That the United States would take advantage of such factionalism to the detriment of Cuba and Latin America, Martí never doubted; the certainty made him take to the Catskill Mountains under doctor's orders where his poetry again came to his need, and he wrote *Versos sencillos*, a voice crying in the wilderness. We will follow, in his own words, the evolution of his reactions, which appear mainly in two sources: his letters printed in *La Nación* of Buenos Aires, and his private correspondence to Gonzalo de Quesada. In the face of a conference that he already foresaw as disastrous, Martí had one gigantic task: to unify the Latin American delegations. He would attempt it by first informing them of the nation that had invited them-a nation as complex as any that had ever existed.

In Martí's eyes there was really only one delegate representing the United States-James Gillespie Blaine. And Blaine was not even one of his country's ten delegates. Nonetheless, he was voted president of the Conference, an honor that Martí, unlike many of the other Latin American delegates, never begrudged him, knowing how much the Conference was the creation of the Secretary of State. What really disturbed Martí was that, for him, Blaine represented everything that he feared in the character of the North American people. A dismal prospect indeed except that Martí could appreciate another side to that character. He was aware of what he called "sensible opinion" that did not want to risk losing a legitimate trate with Latin America by allowing clever North

[2] José Martí, *Obras completas* (La Habana: Editorial Nacional de Cuba, 1963), VII, 397. Volume and page numbers in the text of this article refer to volumes I-XXVI (1963-1966) of the complete works.

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Americans to take advantage of that area's discords. He quoted a United States daily: "But they [Latin America] won't be misled; they have eyes, they know us well, and they think better of us than we deserve" (VI, 35). This "sensible opinion" was not present in any great degree at the Conference, but it loomed in the background in the form of its most recent manifestation, Grover Cleveland. To bring Blaine's character into relief, we must put him alongside that of Cleveland, as Martí often did when trying to understand more fully the United States. In fact, no other names, Spanish induded, apart from God, are more frequently mentioned by Martí in his works than those of Cleveland and Blaine, in that order. It was Martí's way of expressing his concept of the United States to choose two opposites: "We love the land of Lincoln, but we fear the land of Cutting," or "This wild scenario has given twin births, John Brown and Guiteau."

Cleveland symbolized for Martí all that preserved the republican form of government. "In Cleveland, the New England spirit, clear and resistant, fused with that of the New American who neither fears nor turns back" (X, 168). Explaining Cleveland's victory over Blaine in 1884, Martí underlined the complete American in the virile form of Cleveland. "And if asked who he is, we say that he's of the people, and though young, he's one of those first Americans with an iron hand and eagle eye, who hasn't taken his boots off yet. He has the disdain, the penetration, ingenuity and audacity, the hardness and soil of the land he was born in. He springs from the merchant and from the explorer. He springs from the Puritan and the dumper of the tea bales. His eye is on the future, his decision is to arrive" (X, 187). The positive idea that Martí had of Cleveland and the United States appeared most clearly in 1884 during the presidential campaign when he compared Cleveland to Blaine. On one side was Blaine "who, to the painful disgust of sensible and loyal North Americans, did not think it shameful to use force when one had it, who thought that now was the time to nail the world, as far as the arm could reach, to the growing edifice of what was once the home of liberty." On the other side was Cleveland "aplauded by honest people of the Republic, who thought

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that anyone violating the law, the peace and independence of a neighbor's house was like a bandit of nations." When the Democrats selected Cleveland as their nominee, Martí saw their choice as the North American people's repudiation of Blaine and his policies. "No, by God! The nation that had been the home of liberty must not become the dragon on which conquest mounts, in the manner of those despotic or corrupt nations which have degraded or dominated the world" (XIII, 277). In short, Blaine represented the aggression and power of the United States, Cleveland its restraint and dignity.

Never did Martí describe the United States in more generous terms than during Cleveland's four years in office and no wonder, considering the love and admiration he gave to Cleveland, and his habit of seeing a whole nation in the face of one of its men. "A completely honest, simple man, frank and stolid, a sure clean hand, resolute but not obstinate," this was his composite picture of the President.[3] And of his country: "Plymouth rock, natural altar, worthy of men's knees. Nothing higher than mighty Reason. Nothing higher than a duty to free the powers that Nature put in men's minds. No king over civil rights, no king over conscience. Nothing over man but the sky" (X, 262). On the eve of Cleveland's 1884 election victory, Martí, with irrepressible high spirits, wrote that Cleveland was "on the road to becoming the leader of the freest, greatest people on earth" (XIII, 275). It was an important election for Martí. It guaranteed four years of peace and "respite for our America." And after Cleveland's speech, Martí aknowledged that the United States was no longer seen as "traitors to the human spirit... that, though they do not help establish universal liberty as they ought, at least they practice it and respect it" (X, 180). Significantly, after four years of Cleveland, Martí was in no way disenchanted and proudly recorded, when Cleveland was nominated for a second term, that the "acclamation applause lasted twenty-three minutes." But on November 2, 1888, the good days were over for Martí. Though it was Benjamin Harrison who defeated Cleveland, "behind him, casting the yellow glance of his ivory eye

[3] *Ibid.*, X, 114; XIII, 276; X, 52.

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on his silenced adversaries, Blaine defeated all" (XII, 87). Under the disguise of "Americanism, international blandishments, and conferences of Hispanic American republics" (XII, 95), the "Prime Minister of the Republican party, Lord Blaine, our Master Blaine" (XII, 42) was looking south toward the equator to sell what he could not sell in the home market because of over-pricing, a high tariff, and an unwillingness to undermine the towers of wealth of the industrialists.

Curiously, Martí's early references to Blaine were positive. The first reference to Blaine appears in Martí's first dispatch to *La Opinión Nacional*, Caracas, August 20, 1881, a few days after he arrived in New York for the second time. (His first visit had been a brief one in 1880). Here, Martí only said that Blaine was President Garfield's "impatient, spirited aid" (IX, 25). A month later he writes of "the knightly and famed Secretary Blaine" (IX, 32). But the third reference that same month reveals Martí thoroughly captivated: "Blaine, this brilliant man, capable of a healthy, intrepid and glorious policy, the friend of South America (IX, 41) ... A powerful man who inspires respect, sensible, arrogant, honest, good, almost great" (IX, 68). As Garfield lay dying from Guiteau's bullet, Martí described the Secretary's "lucid face, still moist with mourning for his friend. In his shining eyes, his frank look, in his high forehead and full lips and his disordered hair" one foresaw the call of Combat to reform his shattered party. "There is a Latin sparkle in the acts and feelings of this eloquent North American" (IX, 68). This quality in Blaine would attract Martí even after his attitude toward him changed: "Knight of the word," he called him when Guiteau's lawyer caught Blaine evading his questions during the trial (IX, 147); "Possessed of a frightening vitality," when Martí first began to comprehend Blaine's foreign policy in Latin America (X, 382); "even when lying, his lips never lose their eloquence," when Blaine was campaigning for the presidency in 1888 (XII, 43). It was Blaine's eulogy of Garfield in the Spring of 1882 that crystalized Martí's attitude. "Though warm, skillfull, full of feeling and elegance, it was not true praise" of Garfield's character. Blaine had been incapable of understanding a character

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that "in times of disbelief, had believed, who had loved honor in times when men only loved themselves..." (IX, 273).

Satisfied in 1882 that he had pierced to the essence Blaine's character, Martí did not bother with him until 1884, a year when the first of the many preoccupations with Blaine began to plague Martí. A man who "if he had his country in his hands, would give it a navy for spurs, an army for horse and with a slap, send it to conquer the world" was running for president (X, 53). It would be a day of mourning "for this country and for justice," a day of mourning for some lands "of our America, whose knees are still weak," a mourning for human freedom itself "if this sharp, fearless and unshackled man came into the presidency of the United States." Of the greatness of his country "he has only its greatest prejudices." To Martí's disappointment Blaine was nominated by his party (X, 68).

We have already described Martí's apprehension turning to joy at Cleveland s victory. True to type, Martí paid tribute to his fallen enemy: How sad to see men lose! You feel like losing with them (X, 121). But such generosity was soon replaced by the nagging worry of Blaine again. How he rebounded from defeat! "A feline spirit that falls without hurting itself," eyes fixed on the elections of 1888 (XII, 42). Never "entrusting his speeches to inspiration but working them up laboriosuly, often rewriting each phrase many times..." (X, 151), Blaine was barnstorming the West, "setting it afire with his personal magic" (XI, 190). Anyone else with a position as changeable and "immoral as Blaine's but less skillfull, less eloquent, would have long ago perished from public life" (XI, 123). He pursued and was pursued, giving no quarter and receiving none. "Neither mercy nor kid gloves are a natural product of the United States." In this land of "the hunter and attacker," Blaine's rare makeup of aggressiveness "endeared him even to his dazed enemies" (XI, 91). Yet the United States could not accept as their leader a man such as Blaine, "rapacious egoist, majestic, bold as an eagle," especially not after Cleveland had revealed the roots of the nation's ills and had pointed to their remedy. In February, 1888, Martí recorded that the country was

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talking of nothing but Blaine's letter from Florence in which he announced his withdrawal from the race. He had, according to Martí, seen the handwriting on the wall (XI, 409). Martí was relieved, but he was not deceived. Blaine did not get the nomination, but there was no doubt as to who continued to rule his party. In October, one month before elections, in one of New York's baseball stadiums, Blaine held 20,000 people spell-bound for twenty minutes, without pause, in an exhibition of "great theatrical oratory, with the theatre in it hidden from view" (XIII, 359).

Cleveland was defeated by Harrison, and, as foreseen by Martí, Blaine became Harrison's Secretary of State. "Premier," Blaine wanted himself called, an appropriate title at a time when the Republic had "become an invading host under Caesar's banner" (XII, 135). In a letter to a friend, seven months before the opening of the Pan American Conference, Martí described how Cleveland's defeat and Blaine's selection had affected him. "... I'm not myself anymore. What I have all along feared and said would happen is on top of us—the policy of conquest of the United States. A man can take more than he thinks before he dies; because I have been dead a long time, yet I am still alive. If one thing could have killed me, it would have been this. I console myself with my usual medicine, the only cure for pain, imagined or real, and it leaves me with my respect and dignity intact—work" (XX, 203). At this stage Martí felt called upon to deliver a biographical sketch of Blaine to the readers of the *Nación*. Interestingly, he never wrote an article devoted entirely to Blaine, something he did for Buffalo Bill, Jesse James, and some twenty-five other North Americans.

In those last months before September 1889, when the delegates were to arrive, Martí waited anxiously. Also waiting to greet that other America were ten business men: Andrew Carnegie, "that little fellow with the round eyes, the astute, conciliatory Scot;" John B. Henderson, "aggresion's chiefton," Harrison's candidate for president of the Conference, but defeated by his enemy Blaine; Henry Gassaway Davis, Blaine's common father-in-law, the guiding hand in one of the railroad companies that wanted to "run its

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rails across America;" William H. Trescott, "the soul of the State Department, Blaine's mouthpiece, voluble and skillful with words, who knows when occasion demands to throw monkey wrenches;" Charles Flint, a notable father, with a beautiful wife, summers in Tuxedo, winters in Florida, who does a thriving business with Brazil;" five more of whom Martí says nothing, and one of whom he could not say enough—"a palid figure with penetrating eyes, hair down on his forehead, an imperial smile and a smooth hand"—Blaine, who, on his feet, awaited the noon arrival of Latin America in the State Department's hall.[4]

By the 20th of September, most of the Latin American delegates were in New York. Martí graphically described them, their curiosity to see each other and embrace, speaking a common language that knitted them, strangers up to that moment, into one tapestry, multi-colored yet complete. Each group talked of its own coutry's matters, asked why this or that delegate had come, approved or disapproved of the conference. To some the United States was a "gingerbread man with one arm Wendell Phillips and the other Lincoln, who was going to make countries that could not do it themselves, rich and free." Some who had changed both their residence and interests said "my country" when referring to the United States. Those possessed of an American vision greeted all with equal pleasure. Those who did not, did not stay to get acquainted. Martí immediately sensed how formidable a task it would be to unite them for the coming battle. While they waited for the arrival of the Argentines, they exchanged notes about each other.

Martí predicted that the difficulties could come from Central America and Colombia, raw with open wounds. Representing Guatemala was "the capable Fernando Cruz, a man of letters and a poet." Few had not heard the name of Jacinto Castellano of Salvador. Nicaragua had sent Horacio Guzmán, said to be impassioned with a desire for canals. Canals were on the mind of Costa Rica, too, who had sent Manuel Aragón, "beaming with the power and intelligence of work." There was Jerónimo Zelaya of Hondu-

[4] *Ibid.*, VI, 81, 98, 128, 103, 81; XII, 363; VI, 86, 39, 42.

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ras, "one of those who labored to resurrect Central America from the tomb of Morazán." Three from Colombia: José María Hurtado, in the textile business in New York, "a man of firm counsel;" Clímaco Calderón, the consular money expert; Carlos Martínez Silva, "the hard working man of letters and editor of the *Repertorio Colombiano*, who had just published a biography of the founding father Fernández Madrid." Venezuela chose Nicanor Bolet-Peraza, "a poet in prose, who turned out the *Revista Ilustrada de New York* with a painter's pen." For Ecuador came José María Caamaño; for Chile, Emilio C. Varas and José Alfonso, "a wise, useful graybeard." From Peru, Félix Zegarra, "a name familiar to any Americanist. Many years residence in Washington had not blunted his judgement nor cooled his faith in his country." From Bolivia came José Velarde, "a man of clear eyes, so open-mannered that no heart could resist him." Brazil sent three: Lafayette Rodríguez; Amaral-Valente, "known in New York international law circles;" and Salvador Mendonça, "book lover, pithy, a cultured man who knew how to attract people to his country and his emperor" (VI, 35-38). And finally, Matías Romero from Mexico, "the friend of Ulysses S. Grant, who, it is said, dept with gratitude when Romero gave him a check of thousands of pesos when Grant went bankrupt. Like Grant, Romero was taciturn, enterprising, tenacious, a man of deeds and numbers, hardly speaking, endlessly writing, masticating his thought, digging in archives. He would sit and discuss with farmers, cut weeds, break rocks; he was not one of those who looked at the sky, who felt the bloody bite of the sublime on his heart. He believed that man's work on earth was finished when he could sit down and contemplate the stacked pile of his fortune. Married to a North American, a svelt New Orleans lady, Romero believed that Mexico was safer as a watchful friend of the United States than an open enemy. His country had complete confidence in him."[5] But they were a group held in suspension. Like a horse stamping impatiently for its rider, Latin America awaited the arrival of *The City of Paris* bringing the delegates of Uruguay and Argentina.

[5] *Ibid.*, XIII, 75; X, 479; IX, 363, 335; VI, 36.

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In a fine rain on a cold morning, a reception committee boarded a coast guard cutter and entered the bay to meet the great steamer. The committee included a representative of the United States delegation, Flint, and of the business world in New York, William Hughes; and Argentine and Uruguayan officials, including Martí who was consul for Uruguay in New York. They left the cutter and climbed aboard the steamship—delegates, business men, consuls—all up the hand ladder, then were fetched umbrellas and raincoats as they waited on the ship's deck. A path was cleared to the library. There, a dignified old man stood waiting, immediately joined by a younger one "striding like he was entering battle," —the delegates of Argentina, Manuel Quintana and Roque Sáez Peña. Hughes and Flint offered to have them transferred to the cutter, "though you might be more comfortable," Hughes suggested "if you remain on the steamer." They remained. Hands stretched out to welcome a man with "open face and frank smile," Alberto Nin, the delegate from Uruguay. A consul searched vainly for a bouquet of flowers for the Argentine lady, Mrs. Sáenz Peña. Everything else was in order, customs did not inspect the baggage, coaches were waiting at the dock. Everyone could relax and take a place at the bridge to see how New York was entered on a misty day (VI, 38).

The Argentines lunched in the dining room of an insurance company, and that evening, Hughes invited them and the Uruguayans to a dinner of the most eminent. Martí attended for Uruguay, Sáenz Peña for Argentina. A Mr. Plummer, the "prince of texties," gave his toast: "May two peoples someday dominate the universe; one from the isthmus north, the other from the isthmus south." Everyone looked to where the Argentine delegate sat, arms crossed, listening. He lifted his glass: "To the great American nation." Nin raised his: "To all the peoples of America" (VI, 40).

On October 5, the delegates were to take an excursion trip lasting a month, a sumptious 6,000 mile jaunt by train complete with dining car and French cuisine. Not all intended to go; Mexico already was familiar with the country; Chile was not interested,

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and as yet Argentina was not on the list. In this, as with everything Argentina did, Martí was anxious to learn what they would decide. He considered the trip "window dressing" to impress the Latin Americans to buy. Argentina should not go, and to his delight, they refused (VI, 45). The day following their arrival in New York, the Argentines, in company with most of the other delegates, set out for Washington in special cars. Everyone wanted to learn "who that dignified old man was in the Argentine group" (VI, 40).

His first glimpse of the Argentines had impressed Martí. The banquet scene was still fresh in his memory. "You should have seen Hughes' face," he wrote to his readers in Buenos Aires, "when Sáenz Peña told him, while calmly blowing smoke rings from his 'tabaco' that it was not certain that his government had as yet appropriated its half of a steamship line subsidy of which the United States would put up the other half!" (VII, 397). Perhaps it came as no surprise to him that Argentina could become the leader of Latin America at the Conference. For several years he had been a close friend of Vicente Quesada the Argentine minister in Washington. It is also possible that in his articles to *La Nación*, Martí himself had contributed a great deal in preparing Argentina for the responsibilities he hoped it would assume. Domingo Sarmiento and Miguel de Unamuno, reading him in *La Nación*, had come to a similiar conclusion: Martí was the greatest creator of the language of their time. So impressed were they, that Argentines visiting New York made it a point to search for the author of those articles. One was Miguel Tedín, member of the diplomatic core who would be Argentina's delegate to the Monetary Commission, along with Martí. "I arrived in New York in early 1888," writes Tedín, years later, "and one of my first projects was to look for Martí whose correspondence to *La Nación* had impressed me vividly."[6] He found him where most had always come upon him —in his Uruguayan consul's tiny office with the pine bookshelves that he had made himself. His only personal adornment was a silver ring on his finger inscribed with the word *Cuba*; the only

[6] José Martí, *Amistad Funesta*. Edited by G. de Quesada. (Berlin: 1911), p. 3.

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decoration in the room, an iron ring on the wall, his souvenier from prison sent by his mother as a "magic talisman in his pilgrimage for his country's liberty." The Argentine graciously presented Martí with a writing chair and a fur skin to warm his feet in the cold New York nights. Probably, Quintana and Sáenz Peña also knew of Martí from *La Nación*. It is a fact that before arriving in the United States, they had been briefed by their ambassador Quesada in Paris.[7] Quite possibly Quesada filled them in on Martí at that time. Quesada writes in his memoirs that he had often invited "the unfortunate Cuban Martí to dine in the many good restaurants" of New York.[8]

Though Martí confided to the hilt in Argentina (he helped his disciple Gonzalo de Quesada become Sáenz Peña's private secretary), he feared "the complicity of the small and niggardly states of our America with Blaine," and he was saddened by Mexico "whose hands were tied by its nearness to the United States" (VII, 397). Try as he might he could not help seeing Latin America as a flock disoriented, in need of a shepherd, especially his own Cuba. He wrote often to his disciple working at the side of the Argentines: "I would like to have a long talk with you . . . about the danger you are in for having the confidence of such an important delegation, and for being exposed to people, who pretending friendship, will approach you to take advantage of that confidence" (I, 247). He warned Gonzalo to be alert and formal. In these letters to Gonzalo we find the most intimate details about the other delegates. Gonzalo was accompanying them in their walks and social gatherings, serving as the eyes and ears of Martí. Whas the Cuban learned was disheartening.

Guzmán of Nicaragua seemed "very much on the side of the United States." Guatemala was in the fold, "her intimate relations with the United States little less than odious." Venezuela's Bolet-Peraza was "a confessed Blainist." Who could be assured of Colombia, "although there was spunk in Hurtado?" Would Brazil resist

[7] Thomas F. McGann, *Argentina, the United States, and the Inter-American System, 1880-1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 130.

[8] Vicente G. Quesada, *Recuerdos de mi vida diplomática, misión en Estados Unidos (1885-1892)* (Buenos Aires: Librería de J. Menéndez, 1904), p. 53.

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its only market, especially after Henderson's kind treatment? And "who really was Caamaño of Ecuador?" Most frustrating of all, Romero of Mexico was an enigma. "Bitter and unenviable," wrote Martí to Gonzalo, "this gift of seeing men from the inside out." But what Gonzalo said of others kindled Martí's hopes. Quintana could become the "guardian of Latin America." The speeches of Bolivia's Velarde "were laying the foundations of a new America." He expanded with pride at "the prudent decency of our countries" after one of Sáenz Peña's speeches, which he publicized everywhere. The moment was critical, and Martí began in earnest his work to inform. He needed a forum, a newspaper perhaps, but in any case, he would mount the orator's platform. Until then, he advised Gonzalo to put before Sáenz Peña "the opinions on the Conference of the [New York] Tribune, El Avisador [Hispano-americano], the [New York] Post, the [New York] Herald, and the [New York] Times.[9]

During a break in the sessions, *La Nación*, on December 19, 1889, printed Martí's first in a series of informative articles. "From Independence down to today," wrote Martí, "never was a subject more in need of examination than the invitation of the United States to the Pan American Conference. The truth is that the hour has come for Spanish America to declare its second independence" (VI, 46), With urgency breathing in the short, nervous phrases, strung endlessly together, Martí explained the national characteristics of the United States and the origin and evolution of the Pan American idea. At the end, he challenged "those nations that had formed their own nationality so well for being so far from the United States" to affirm their independence. The Conference "would soon reveal who defends America, and who does not" (VI, 62).

A plan of impending United States intervention in Cuba, in addition to the disagreeable revelations in Gonzalo's letters, precipitated Martí's second major appeal. On November 30, 1889, in New York, he spoke on José María Heredia, Cuba's most famous nineteenth century poet. The delegates were in Washington, so he

[9] Martí, *Obras*, VI, 126, 128, 126, 125, 124, 125, 123; I, 248.

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had copies of the speech distributed to them there (VI, 127). It was a speech expressly intended "to inform and advise them," though studies have been made of its critical and literary opinions (XX, 157). Heredia emerges from the speech, a symbol of the Cuban revolutionary and his exile in the United States. In spite of the cold climate that led to his fatal illness, Heredia did, indeed find solace in the United States—"if not the Universal Republic, it was liberty in a worthy corner of the earth" (V, 169). But when that free land acquiesced in Cuba's tyranny, he began to die. In desperation, Heredia flung into Cuba's face the lines that Martí now recited to sting again the conscience of his Latin American audience:

> If a people do not dare
> to break their own chains
> They can exchange their master for another,
> But never their tyranny for freedom (V, 166).

Heredia also emerged as a symbol of Hispanic unity. "From the cradle to the grave, he joined us forever with lands that destiny had made us friends and brothers, from his father's Santo Domingo to his childhood Venezuela, and his death in Mexico" (V, 175). Recalling Heredia's famous ode to Niagara Falls, Martí added a final passage: "Oh Niagara, ask Him who giveth and taketh away, that all the peoples of the earth be free and just, that no people use the power of its new-won freedom to take it away from those worthy of it, that if one people dare to lay its hand on another, let not, without flooding your borders, Oh Niagara, let not its brothers help in the robbery!" (V, 175).

In a second speech, December 19, 1889, "a night of faith, in the snow," the Hispanic American Literary Society honored the delegates, who this time were able to attend because of the Christmas recess (VI, 133). That night Martí touched them all, welding them together in their need.

The turning point was not long in coming, presaged by personal tragedy for Blaine. Within a month he lost his daughter and his first born, his son and confident, Walker. "The salons of Washing-

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ton are humming with the news; it is said that the house of the Blaine's is a funeral home, haunted and humild" (VI, 73). Lacking Blaine's needed direction, the North Americans were taken by surprise by Argentina and Brazil, arm in arm, drafting their own arbitration treaty. And the ten United States delegates presented a spectacle even more disorganized than the Central American republics—coming out with three disparate opinions on the question of a common monetary coin. Conversely, the unity that Martí had desired showed when José Decoud of Paraguay, responding to a suggestion from one of the United States delegates that "little" Paraguay, lacking a port to the sea, would not have to subsidize an Atlantic merchant fleet, said: "Paraguay has both honor and money. You cannot exclude Paraguay with impunity" (VI, 76). Words that shone like gold, wrote Martí who greatly esteemed Decoud. And during the Customs discussions, Costa Rica, "tiny as an emerald," stunned Washington and quite possibly Martí: "My country is small, but small as it is, we have done more, if you really want to know, than the United States" (VI, 79). To such a degree had the victory over the United States on the Customs issue emboldened the Latin Americans! This triumph was led by Sáenz Peña whose phrase "America for Humanity" put the frosting on the argument and "brought the Latin American delegates to their feet, hands outstretched" (VI, 81). It was not yet time to proclaim victory, but Martí could not repress a prediction. "It could have been a humiliation, but it became the antechamber of a great union' whether because of the ties of the heart, of judicious counsel, or (and here he alluded to his own contribution) because of some leaven from without" (VI, 80).

His prediction proved accurate. On the "climactic day of the Conference," Martí was in Washington. The report he made of the arbitration debates was the only one to *La Nación* filed from that city. He wanted to be on hand personally "to plant an idea here and there," and perhaps more importantly, present to the delegates before dispersing to their homelands, "a private, discreet request in behalf of his country," particularly to Sáenz Peña, whom he credited with reducing the political threat to Cuba by his speeches

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(VII, 398). But on the dramatic clash on arbitration, it was Quintana who "became the voice and soul" of Latin America's point of view (VI, 86). He spoke first, explaining the draft, "not with words but with sense, neither weak nor belligerent" (VI, 90). He was followed by Mexico. "How much had been said of Mexico! Some could not understand Mexico, others said 'Mexico knows more than we do.' Kind, soft-spoken Mexico, moving from chair to chair, collecting, investigating, saying nothing, all the more when saying something." They could not comprehend Mexico's diffuseness, but someone mentioned the saying, "cunning is of glass, it needs be covered with straw." Mexico had made no enemies nor fallen behind. "Will it go with Chile and vote against arbitration? Will it abstain? Let us see." Romero spread out his typewritten pages, and one could see them filled with tiny notes, running on and on. He read "carelessly, like a fox, his voice innocent." What he said was that Mexico would approve "the articles it had instructions to approve, and any general ones that could be adjusted to them. As for the rest, 'instructions might be forthcoming in time' " (VI, 92).

With determined voice, in no uncertain terms, Chile abstained. The next day Cruz of Guatemala defended the draft that Argentina and Brazil had prepared, and his "resonant tones hung fire." No one in the room missed a word, because, until then, it was thought "in the backrooms of Washington" that all of Central America was corrupted by the hopes of gain that the United States had fomented with the canals. The North Americans "listened in astonishment; Latin America with affection" (VI, 94). Then came the manuevering: Chile abstained, and Mexico sidled to one side; Central America lifted up its head, and Argentina was in open revolt. The next day, foreseeing total defeat, Blaine replaced Peru's Zegarra at the President's chair. The United States had already had its own arbitration proposal substituted by that of Argentina and Brazil. It needed some sort of triumph, if only in form; therefore, it raised an issue over the signing of it. But it was a partial victory, nine voting to sign, as amended by the United States, and four against, with Brazil, Mexico and Chile abstaining.

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Latin America's victorious charge was taking on such proportions that on the last item of arbitration, fiercely fought for by the United States, the other fourteen Latin American republics prevailed on Quintana to graciously accept the United States demand. It was voted (Chile abstaining) 14-0, that conquest be forbidden for twenty years, instead of forever, as had been desired by Latin America. As Blaine read the final version, Quintana "read the congratulations of everyone reflected in their eyes." Only one "of our America, our family of peoples, left the conference with its head lowered" (VI, 106).

But all went away silently, their eyes opened. The five republics of Central America returned "more Central American than they had come." They had arrived "looking sideways at each other," and now they "tsrode together as if they understood that this manner of walking suited them better" (VI, 101). At a table at the Shoreham, from among the raised glasses, Velarde toasted Quintana who, surprised for the first time, replied "We are nothing more than one people, all of us of America." Then everyone turned to a corner where Martí sat "watching the noble scene with tears in his eyes" and with one compassionate voice, they drank to "the American without a country" (VI, 101). Eloquent proof of the change in attitude of the Latin Americans was the fact that only two delegates, "one from Colombia, the other from Venezuela" took the second excursion trip on the "gold-plated train" (VI, 103). It was to have taken all eighteen delegations on a tour of Richmond, Atlanta, and New Orleans, to appease the South for the coming elections. How they complained when the government interrupted the trip at Richmond, claiming "with reason, that it was not worth the expense," and ordered the train return to Washington! The two solitary delegates and their retinues angrily refused to return on the "gold-plated" train but paid their own way back, "one with his coat collar around his ears, and the other unshaven for three days" (VI, 106).

And what of the effect on the United States? The public began to demand permanent foreign correspondents south of the border to inform it more, shocked by the extent of its ignorance of an

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area that could produce such adversaries. "What class! Where have they come from! They know more about us than we do!" (VI, 110). And they seemed to Martí "to enjoy showing their appreciation and surprise" (VI, 108). The Argentines could not keep track of the "silver tray that came and went, to return this time with a shipbuilder's card, another with a capitalist's, or a railroad magnate's." Carnegie seated Quintana at his own table and opened up to him, man to man, "like his countryman Burns" (VI, 109). Recorded Martí, "Ah, there is nothing like facing a man to get him off your back!" (VI, 108). And Blaine? "So that was the great statesman?" ran the table talk, echoed by the press. "The whole affair, nothing but a campaign for votes." "Now I'm convinced," said one converted Yankee, "that all these years I've been chasing butterflies" (VI, 101). But was it really the end of Blaine and his quest for the presidency? Many of the delegates returned to their countries, satisfied with the results. Some, however, would be back in January, 1891, when the Inter-American Monetary Commission met to deal with the only unresolved item of the agenda, a common American currency. Martí saw this last act of the drama as a final struggle between Latin America and Blaine, trying to salvage something positive from the Conference.

Unlike before, Martí took direct part, representing Uruguay. But as before, he stood alone in opposing another gathering of American states. Nonetheless, a majority this time supported his and Uruguay's position: no alliances or agreements should come out of the Conference. Presiding, however, was Romero, a personal friend but ambiguous. Martí had once described him as a man "whose sole objective in life was to bring his country closer to the United States" (VIII, 99). And next to him sat José Ignacio Rodríguez, one of the two secretaries. He was a great childhood friend, and still very much so, but one who had "more faith in the Yankees" than Martí did (VI, 119). And, of course, there was Central America again. "Nicaragua tells me that there is no science in Hispanoamerica (VI, 179) . . . Honduras can't even speak Spanish" (VI, 162). At the other end of the table sat Lambert Tree

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and N. P. Hill, the United States delegates; one "talking of nothing else but the dance last night, the other gazing at the ceiling as if what was around him had no interest, and was attending only out of the generosity of his heart." Arthur W. Fergusson, the other secretary, he who could "catch Spanish on the wing and translate it without sweetening it or making it bitter" was "exercising his Turklike eyes." While Martí was doodling with a pencil, Rodríguez, at Romero's elbow, read the instructions for the third session, February 10, 1891. "Two good heads," admitted Martí, despite his misgivings (VI, 179).

The question was a proposal by the United States which, at once, aroused suspicion, and Zegarra, the Peruvian, exchanged glances with Martí. Zegarra winked. No one liked it, even Nicaragua opposed it, and it was voted down. But the first real skirmish came when Hill suggested a lengthy adjournment, because he needed time to properly study the Commission's work. Romero seconded Hill's motion "out of courtesy for the nation that invites us." Zegarra proposed March 10, but Honduras feared the hot weather. At this point Brazil rebelled: What was the difference, Mendonça asked, whether now or a month from now? As long as there was no agreement with Europe, Brazil would not vote for an American coin. "Brazil ñao!" Martí, accepting some of Hill's points, suggested a somewhat shorter interval. Hill, however, was insistent, and Martí records that the delegate very nearly lost his aplomb. Hill said that he could not accept a shorter period; he was a silver advocate, that the day would come when the United States would be "powerful enough to impose their silver coinage upon the world," and he even extended his proposal to the middle of April. For a moment it seemed that "this demand so rudely presented in such crude language would be accepted." At a critical moment, sensing some wavering, Martí proposed the 20th of March, almost one month shorter than Hill's date. It carried unanimously. "But that is Good Friday!" said Secretary Rodríguez. Martí amended it to the 23rd, and it passed. The relative strength of the two sides had been tested; the Latin Americans, led by Martí, had joined hands. Martí later wrote: "Uruguay had not been alone."

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To Gonzalo: "We came out of this first session with credit and independence" (VI, 179-180).

The next session brought surprise. The United States proposed an end to the Conference because of European opposition to an international coin based on silver. It was good news for Martí, who had opposed the Conference in the first place, who was nervous about its continued existence within easy reach of Blaine's "smooth hand." Of course, Martí saw the Presidential hand of Harrison in the proposed adjournment, but domestic politics did not matter to Martí as long as his purposes were server. "A robust exposition of monetary truths," was his phrase praising Tree's reasons for the cancellation (VI, 163). The United States had shown "complacent America the dangers of following the United State's own hasty steps" (VI, 164). It was voted to prepare a report on the proposals, with Martí to write it. The same positive attitude with which Martí had initially received the United States motion was lavishly expressed in he report. Only one proposal was rejected—that the Commission convene a Universal Monetary Conference. This rejection followed logically from Martí's instructions to stay clear of any binding agreements.

There followed the debate of the report, and, at this point, Latin America's unity broke down. First Venezuela opposed the report, and instead, laid out a detailed draft of a treaty in which the new coin would be called a "Columbus" whose value would be the "constant vigil" of a committee "based in Washington" (VI, 165). This, just after the nation that had invited them had declared such a coin impossible, astounded Martí. And when Romero proposed a recess untill January 1, 1892, or until after the House of Representatives had voted on the question, Martí was convinced that the Blaine party was trying to force the issue, especially since the United States themselves had repeatedly said that the real obstacle to a common coin was the resistence of Europe.[10] Blaine's faction wanted some kind of victory, even if apparent, to come out of

[10] *Ibid.*, VI, 166. Lizaso notes that Brazil proposed the recess but omits the fact that Romero suggested the recess before Brazil. *José Martí en la Comisión Monetaria Internacional Americana, Washington, 1891, Actas de la Comisión*... (La Habana: Banco Nacional de Cuba, 1957), p. XX, 63.

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the Commission. Almost the last straw for Martí was when "a plain and prudent request from one delegate to accept the propositions of the United States" was ignored, and another delegate "who spoke no Spanish, requested and got a suspension of the meeting in order to study the propositions further" (VI, 166). Martí does not name the defectors, but the *Minutes* provide most of the names: Romero, Mendonça, Rowan W. Stevens of Honduras and Vetancourt Rendón of Venezuela.

Romero's suggestion for a recess was the critical issue for Martí, for it meant that an assembly of American republics would be left standing at a time when Blaine would perhaps be the leading candidate for the presidency. Romero's proposal was referred back to the same committee that had written the report, the same in which Martí exercised great influence. The committee ran the gamut of emotions—meditation, fear, urgency, and the risk that "such an assembly," if allowed to exist, "in the hands of a ruthless candidate might yield to the United States more than befitted the respect and security of the Hispanic American peoples." To compromise now would be a sign of weakness. Prudence dictated taking advantage of the opportunity to act energetically without endangering anything. And as for danger, what was safer than choosing one's hour, and with coolness, to act with decision? One can almost hear Martí and Romero going round after round. Despite the natural caution of "those nations nailed at the edge of North America" and despite other reasons common to all, the Commission did not compromise (VI, 167). What Uruguay had maintained at the outset, almost alone, at the end prevailed, for it was resolved "to bring the Commission's sessions to a close" (VI, 184). And the call for a universal monetary conference was also deleted. Martí, of course, was elated. It was the definite end of the Pan American Conference and of Blaine. "The North Americans themselves, using the Conference like a dagger, have stuck it in [Blaine's] continental policy and his reciprocity schemes" (VI, 181). Thirteen months later, on the eve of the Republican nominating convention, Blaine abruptly resigned as Secretary of State. Six months after that he yied. For Martí, the last supreme task of his life was at

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hand. "Free at last," he writes to Gonzalo, "free and better prepared to organize... the revolution of Cuba with our hands untied!" (VI, 181). There was to be a victory banquet at the Literary Society, and, rubbing it in, he asked, "Who knows if Mr. and Mrs. Romero will attend!" (VI, 182).

Martí felt all along that the soul of the Pan American Conference was Blaine, in his eyes, a negative spirit, especially when contrasted with Cleveland. Unfortunately, what Cleveland exemplified was not very much in evidence at the Conference. Martí admired to the point of envy the qualities that Cleveland possessed. "Although for every Latin American sin you could find two of the same in the United States, there were virtues in the United States that we lacked, born, alas, of fathers that were not Puritans" (X, 260). Toughness mixed with humility by an iron discipline were those virtues. "He had to be a great tamer of men who could tame himself." Martí had suffered greatly at the rough hands of the Yankee's spirit, yet he wanted the "nervous, sensitive Latin" to acknowledge the worth, the high nobility and the heroism of a culture different than its own (X, 244-5).

Martí's reaction to Blaine was totally the opposite. He was "the coldest, the most insolent enemy Cuba ever had, the arch instigator of every prejudice known to the United States" (III, 49). Yet Martí was drawn to his personality. Perhaps something of the Celtic in Blaine touched the Mediterranean in Martí when he said "there is a Latin sparkle in the acts and feelings of this eloquent North American." Which made it all the more necessary to forewarn Latin America and defend it against the charm of that hallucinating personality. Alone Seeing how completely the Pan American Conference fitted into Blaine's plans, Martí opposed its calling. That the great majority of Latin Americans accepted the invitation only increased his anxiety for their unity.

His mood did not change until the Argentines disembarked on that rainy morning in New York. Thereafter, groups formed: Mexico, Central America, Venezuela and Colombia favoring closer relations with the United States; Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, less. Chile, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador were a separate problem. Chile's

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threat to its neighbors was a family squabble, and when it came to a choice between the United States and Latin American unity, blood proved thicker than water. It was inevitable that Martí, given his attitudes and ideas, would join the South Americans. Mexico's proximity to the United States inhibited it too much. Moreover, Martí liked Sáenz Peña's aggressiveness. Romero intrigued him, because Romero fought like a serpent. The one disappointment for him was Venezuela—Bolet Peraza in the Conference proper, and Rendón in the Monetary Commission. But as the Conference progressed, Martí watched with pleasure the small and the great nations of his America rally round the Argentines, until with his own contribution in the Monetary Conference, he declared the Conference a success. He considered it both a triumph of Latin America's "second independence" and of the ideals of the United States. Historically the Conference was a political manifestation of a new era of Spanish American unity, commonly known as "Modernism." Martí was to figure prominently as one of its literary initiators, and he has become today a symbol of Latin America's ideals and bids fair to becoming a myth. In 1891 he was their spokesman, the leader of the Cuban independence movement, a first-rate personality, and most important at that moment, their best interpretor of the United States.

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