

# PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS: MCKINLEY'S ROLE IN THE SPANISH/AMERICAN WAR

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The McKinley administration's foreign policy particularly the war with Spain and the acquisition of America's colonial empire, has received considerable attention from modern historians.<sup>1</sup> Most of these studies, however, have been basically narrative in their orientation. As a result, there has not appeared a satisfactory discussion of the actual conceptualization and application of foreign policy objectives during this crucial period of American history.

Walter LaFeber's *The New Empire*,<sup>2</sup> and William Appleman Williams' *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*,<sup>3</sup> represent the most stimulating of the newer studies, but neither author provides sufficient insight into the actual decision-making process that created the American empire. LaFeber and Williams justly criticize the naive and counterproductive claims to national innocence that have characterized much of American diplomatic historiography. They have emphasized the relationship between economic interest groups and foreign policy decision making. In the case of the McKinley administration and the war with Spain, they agree that the American aggressiveness in dealing with Spain grew out of domestic chan-

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1. In particular, H. Wayne Morgan, *America's Road to Empire*, New York, 1966; Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power*, New York, 1961, Frank Freidel, *The Splendid Little War*, Boston, 1959.

2. Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion*, Ithaca, 1963.

3. William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, New York, 1959.

ges in the economic structure —the change from an agricultural exporting nation to an industrial exporting nation.

There is, however, a danger in using this conceptual model. That is, the concentration of attention by the historian on economic and social forces may obscure the impact of political behavior and political leadership in the direction of foreign affairs. National politicians are not simply representatives of socio-economic interest groups. They are also men whose careers are dependent upon reading correctly the drives and ambitions of their heterogeneous constituencies, and anticipating correctly the future electoral effect of current political policies. It is therefore imperative that the student of diplomatic history strike a meaningful balance between the socio-economic dynamic of the time and the political figures who represent that dynamic, but who also influence the society's future direction by their capacity to make historically significant decisions.

The long cherished view of McKinley, as a weak and vacillating politician pushed into the war with Spain, and later into the acquisition of colonies, by Roosevelt, Mahan, Lodge, and the public opinion they had been able to generate,<sup>4</sup> has been largely exploded by his two most recent biographers, Margaret Leech and H. Wayne Morgan.<sup>5</sup> Both authors have resurrected Olcott's<sup>6</sup> evaluation of McKinley as a strong and imposing politician clearly in charge of his life and his administration. But neither scholar has sufficiently projected these conclusions into the realm of foreign policy. Although both authors correctly identify McKinley as the major architect of his administration's foreign policy, neither has shown completely the coherence of his objectives, the consistency with which he pursued them or the implications which his success had on future relationships with other nations.

The skeletal outline of McKinley's foreign policy objectives was not dissimilar to the expressed ambitions of his Republican predecessors Benjamin Harrison, and Ulysses Grant: increased economic penetration of Latin America, international recognition of the United States as political and economic mediator in the hemisphere, acquisition of naval bases in the Caribbean, sole control of an interoceanic canal, and the possession of extra continental Pacific bases for exploitation of Asian markets. The war with Spain provided McKinley with the vehicle for implementing this «Large Policy.» It can not be substantiated that McKinley provoked this conflict solely to gain these ends; nor can it be denied that a genuine humanitarianism was generated in the American people by the excesses of the two protagonists in Cuba. However, these statements must be tempered with the realization that once war had been declared, McKinley manipulated both the diplomatic and military components of the war effort in order to gain for the United States the objectives of the «Large Policy.»

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4. Julius W. Pratt, «The 'Large Policy' of 1898,» *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIX (1932), pp. 219-242.

5. Margaret Leech, *In the Days of McKinley*, New York, 1959; and, H. Wayne Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, Syracuse, 1963.

6. Charles S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley*, 2 vols., Boston, 1916.

American interest in the Caribbean as a gateway to the Pacific and the rich markets of the East can be traced to the earliest days of the Republic. But, attempts to implement these ambitions had languished as national attention and national energies were absorbed by continental expansion, early industrial development, and the working out of a post civil war political accommodation. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, a combination of internal and external factors made possible the fulfillment of these policy objectives, and the assertion of a more ambitious world role.

The Harrison administration actively promoted extra continental expansion when it sought to purchase the Danish Caribbean colonies of St. Thomas and St. John, and promoted the efforts of resident Americans in Hawaii to overthrow the native government and seek annexation to the United States. The preliminary nature of these acquisitions was clearly seen by James G. Blaine when he wrote that the Danish colonies «... lack strategic value. They are destined to become ours, but among the last of the West Indies that would be taken.»<sup>7</sup> In addition to Hawaii there were only two other areas, Blaine thought, of immediate interest to the United States. These of course were Cuba and Puerto Rico. The twin objectives of territorial expansion in the Caribbean and Pacific, and the building of an interoceanic canal were given their fullest articulation in the writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan and the political expansionists like Henry Cabot Lodge:

«In the interests of our commerce and of our fullest development we should build the Nicaragua canal, and for the protection of that canal and for the sake of our commercial supremacy in the Pacific we should control the Hawaiian Islands and maintain our influence in Samoa. England has studded the West Indies with strong places which are a standing menace to our Atlantic seaboard. We should have among those islands at least one strong naval station, and when the Nicaragua canal is built, the island of Cuba...»<sup>8</sup>

The advent of the Democratic administration of Grover Cleveland thwarted the passage of Harrison's Hawaiian annexation treaty. But even this rigid opponent of Hawaiian annexation and intervention in Cuba seized upon the British-Venezuelan boundary dispute as an opportunity to articulate a tough and aggressive interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. As Henry Cabot Lodge expressed it in a letter to Arthur Balfour, «To you the question in Venezuela involves some thousands of square miles of territory —nothing more... For us there is at stake there a principle... vital to our safety and our peace.»<sup>9</sup> The adamancy with which the United States responded to British ambitions in Venezuela can only be explained in the context of contemporary events in other hemispheres.

The effects of the so-called New Imperialism of the nineteenth century were

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7. Albert T. Volwiler (ed.), *The Correspondence Between Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blaine*, 1882-1893, Philadelphia, 1940, p. 173.

8. Henry Cabot Lodge, «Our Blundering Foreign Policy,» *The Forum*, XIX (March, 1895), p. 17.

9. Quoted in, Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, New York, 1962, p. 89.

immediately observable to even the most novice American observer. In the short space of a decade the African continent and sizable areas in Asia had been seized by the major European states in an ongoing rivalry which seemed to intensify with each new adventure. The portent for America was awesome: «These powers have already seized the islands of the Pacific and parcelled out Africa. Great Britain cannot extend her possessions in the East. She has pretty nearly reached the limit of what can be secured in Africa. She is now turning her attention to South America,» wrote Lodge in 1895.<sup>10</sup>

The possibility of this heightened European colonial rivalry being projected into the Western Hemisphere was, of course, remote; but the advances of the European powers in Africa and Asia seemed to hold out the possibility that the United States would assert itself too late on the world stage; and would find itself excluded from the potentially rich markets of the underdeveloped world. Therefore, the immediate effect of the «New Imperialism» was to give a sense of urgency to the efforts of the American expansionists, and through them the Venezuelan boundary dispute was magnified until hemispheric partition seemed imminent.

As Lodge, speaking in the Senate, summed it up:

«If England can do it [seize portions of Venezuela] and is allowed to do it by the United States, every other European power can do the same, and they will not be slow to follow England's example. We have seen them parcel out Africa, and if we do not interpose now in this case the fate of large portions of South America will be the same.»<sup>11</sup>

Cleveland's apparently successful use of the Monroe Doctrine as a justification for the assumption of hemispheric police powers was not lost upon the expansionists. John Proctor writing in *The Forum* stated, «We have but recently proclaimed that our country is paramount on this hemisphere; and we have had that claim acknowledged by the only great World-Power possessing ability to dispute it.»<sup>12</sup> That both Cleveland and Proctor had misread British ambitions is historically unimportant. What is important is that American policy makers had assumed the imperial point of view and rationale for action which would characterize the McKinley administration's response to the revolution in Cuba and the war with Spain that followed.

McKinley consciously avoided making foreign policy statements during the presidential campaign of 1896. Currency and the depression were the major issues attacked by Republican orators. Free silver not Free Cuba held the attention of McKinley and his party throughout the campaign.<sup>13</sup> McKinley's strength as a con-

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10. Henry Cabot Lodge, «England, Venezuela and the Monroe Doctrine», *North American Review*, CLX (June, 1895), p. 658.

11. Henry Cabot Lodge, *Speeches and Addresses, 1884-1909*, Boston, 1909, p. 234.

12. John R. Proctor, «Hawaii and the Changing Front of the World,» *The Forum*, XXIV (September, 1897), p. 35.

13. This statement can be verified by reference to a series of campaign books compiled by Joseph P. Smith and printed by The Repository Press of Canton, Ohio. Authorized by the Republican National

tender for the Republican nomination, in fact, was based upon his fiscal regularity and party loyalty not his abilities as a critic of foreign affairs or advocate of empire. His reputation rested on his work in the House Ways and Means Committee, which had culminated in the McKinley tariff of 1890, and his electoral showing in the Ohio gubernatorial race in 1891.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, McKinley's election was greeted with a universal sigh of relief by the expansionists. Cleveland's adamant refusal to act on either Hawaii or Cuba had frustrated their every move. Soon after the election, Lodge traveled to Canton to sound out McKinley on foreign policy and reported to Theodore Roosevelt:

«He is entirely prepared to face the responsibilities at the earliest possible moment and deal with them. Indeed his whole attitude of mind struck me as serious, broad in view, and just what we all ought to desire. I brought from it many good hopes.»<sup>15</sup>

McKinley was also sought out by members of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, headquartered in New York, and their response was generally as favorable as Lodge's. McKinley was seen as a «friend of Cuba,» ready to act on her behalf.<sup>16</sup>

The potential force of presidential leadership in the area of foreign affairs was forged into reality by the character of McKinley's cabinet selections. McKinley's first Secretary of State, John Sherman of Ohio, was entering a period of physical and mental decline that bordered on senility. As a result the President by-passed Sherman on crucial matters, utilizing instead Judge William R. Day and Alvey A. Adee, a department professional. Sherman's rough treatment drove him out of the Cabinet, soon after the outbreak of war, and into the anti-imperialist camp.<sup>17</sup> Day remained Secretary throughout the war period but his inexperience seriously handicapped his ability to develop and augment policy.

Other Cabinet posts that could have been used to influence foreign policy during the eventful months of 1898, also went to men unsuited by personality or political view-point to creatively affect government policy. John Davis Long of the Navy Department, neglected by historians in favor of his Assistant Secretary Theodore Roosevelt, was both bewildered and overwhelmed by the events in which he played a part. «I really believe I should like to have our country what it was in the first half of this century, provincial, dominated by the New England idea....»<sup>18</sup> Army

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Committee, these books contain portions of McKinley's major speeches during the Presidential Campaign.

14. H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896*, Syracuse, 1969, pp. 395-525.

15. *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918*, New York, 1925, vol. I, p. 240 (hereafter referred to as Selections.)

16. Gonzalo de Quesada to Tomas Estrada Palma, September 21, 1898, in, *Correspondencia diplomática de la delegación cubana en Nueva York durante la Guerra de Independencia de 1895 a 1898*, 5 vols., Havana, 1946, V, p. 77.

17. Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-imperialists, 1898-1900*, New York, 1968, pp. 197-203.

Secretary Russell Alger was even less prepared to deal with the responsibilities of office and soon drew the criticism of Mark Hanna and others, «Alger makes me tired and I am full of pity for him.»<sup>19</sup> This weakness in the Cabinet served to underscore and amplify the role of the President in foreign affairs, and reduce the importance of the State Department. The physical limitations of Sherman and the deaf Adee, combined with Judge Day's reticence, had led one diplomat to comment: «The head of the Department knows nothing, the First Assistant says nothing; and the Second Assistant hears nothing.»<sup>20</sup> Presidential secretary George Cortelyou accurately characterized the Cabinet when he stated: «He [McKinley] is the strong man of the Cabinet, the dominating force.»<sup>21</sup>

Upon assuming the Presidency, McKinley's first statement on foreign affairs is found in his instructions to the new ambassador to Madrid, James Woodford:

At this juncture our Government must seriously inquire whether the time has not arrived when Spain, of her own volition, moved by her own interests and by every paramount sentiment of humanity, will put a stop to this destructive war and make proposals of settlement honorable to herself and just to her Cuban colony and to mankind. The United States stands ready to assist her and tender good offices to that end.<sup>22</sup>

This statement, however, was basically little more than a reiteration of the policy pursued by the Cleveland administration.

The essentials of this policy consisted of a statement to the Government of Spain that the United States considered the situation in Cuba intolerable, and an admonition to Spain to develop a compromise with the rebellious Cubans or face American intervention:

... you will not disguise the gravity of the situation, nor conceal the President's conviction that, should his present efforts be fruitless, his duty to his countrymen will necessitate an early decision as to the course of action which the time and the transcendent emergency may demand.<sup>23</sup>

The practical result of this bankrupt policy was to encourage the rebels to persevere in their rejection of Spanish compromise efforts, since they realized that the continuation of the war would eventually bring American intervention and the end of Spanish rule.<sup>24</sup>

The final act in this decade-long drama of military coercion clothed in the rhe-

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18. Lawrence S. Mayo (ed.), *America of Yesterday as Reflected in the Journal of John Davis Long*, Boston, 1923, p. 213.

19. Mark Hanna to John Hay, March 24, 1896, John Hays Papers, John Hay Library, Brown University. (Hereafter referred to as Hay Papers.)

20. Quoted in Leech, *McKinley*, p. 152.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 234; see also John W. Foster, *Diplomatic Memoirs*, 2 vols., Boston, 1909, I, p. 173.

22. *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1898*, Sherman to Woodford, Washington, 1901, p. 559 (hereafter referred to as *Foreign Relations*).

23. *Ibid.*, p. 559.

24. *Foreign Relations*, Woodford to McKinley, March 9, 1898, p. 682.

toric of selfless humanitarianism was the appropriation of fifty million dollars by Congress following the Maine disaster. Ambassador Woodford took this occasion to offer a final «compromise» to Spain: the purchase of Cuba. The response of the Spanish intermediary illustrates the futility of American policy,

... he had seen in the papers rumors of the willingness of the United States to buy Cuba, but that Spain will never sell Cuba to the United States. That no Spanish Government could do this and live.

Pressing the «businesslike» nature of the offer Woodford elicited,

... that the vote of fifty million by the American Congress ended all hope of the succes of autonomy therefore of compromise, as it would encourage the rebels to persevere.<sup>25</sup>

McKinley's final decision to go to war and his subsequent formulation of war aims were largely determined by a confluence of factors outside his control or influence. The German seizure of Krachow in January, 1898 followed soon by Russia's advances into China that culminated in the acquisition of Port Arthur in May indicated to Americans that the partition of China was immanent. The result of such a partition would be the exclusion of American business from this potentially rich area. As John Proctor phrased it,

The time is approaching when the cotton-growers of the South, the wheat-growers of the West, the meat-producers on our plains, and the manufacturers and wage-earners all over our land will realize that exclusion from Asian markets will be disastrous to their best interests.<sup>26</sup>

This new burst of imperial aggrandizement in the Orient heightened the anxiety of the American expansionists that if America did not act immediately to assert her place in the world community, she would face being relegated to a position of minor influence. As *The American Banker* of May 11, 1898 put it

That a war with Spain should have transpired at precisely this time, when Europe is tending to divide a considerable section of the inhabited earth, is a coincidence which has a providential air.<sup>27</sup>

These events, however, are transparently not coincidental, but are rather two incidents of the same phenomenon. The war with Spain was not undertaken in isolation. The McKinley administration was forced to consider the responses its policies would provoke from the other interested governments.

To ascertain the European reaction to his Cuba policy, McKinley directed his

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25. *Ibid.*, p. 684.

26. Proctor, «Hawaii,» p. 40.

27. Quoted in, Julius W. Pratt, «American Business in the Spanish American War,» *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XIV (May, 1934), p. 192.

Ambassador to Spain, General Woodford, to undertake a circuitous route to Madrid, stopping in the major capitals and sampling opinion. In addition, Ambassador to Spain, General Woodford, to undertake a circuitous route to Madrid, stopping in the major capitals and sampling opinion. In addition, Ambassador to Britain, John Hay, and private citizens like Charles Dawes and Andrew Carnegie also reported to the President. The reports were initially unencouraging. Public and governmental opinion in both Germany and France were overwhelmingly hostile to the position assumed by the United States. John Hay summing up his conclusions in a letter to Lodge in the spring of 1898 wrote, «... the jealousy and animosity felt toward us in Germany is something which can hardly be exaggerated. They hate us in France, but French hate is as straw fire compared to Germany.»<sup>28</sup>

The exception was Great Britain. Despite the flare-up over Venezuela in 1895, Great Britain welcomed and encouraged America's new aggressiveness in foreign affairs. The reasons were twofold. First, the general popular acceptance of the Malthusian and Spencerian world view promoted fears in both nations that failure to emerge victorious in the fast-paced expansion of the period, would mean national economic and political disaster. Rapid industrial progress and expanded agricultural production seemed to presage a day when economic disaster would only be averted by control of substantial portions of the world markets. As Albert Beveridge put it in his defense of imperialism,

American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours. And we will get it as our mother England has told us how.<sup>29</sup>

This overtly expansionist view, however, was not seen as self interest, but as the vehicle of world peace and prosperity. The *Fortnightly Review* of 1897 capsuled the advantages of Anglo-Saxon cooperation in these terms,

The Englis-speaking nations, if they act in harmony, and if they prove worthy of their high destiny, hold the fate of the world in their hands. They can make right triumph over mere might; they can render wars impossible without their permission; they can introduce an era of peace and prosperity such as has been unknown in history.<sup>30</sup>

The second factor promoting Anglo-American cooperation was the growing diplomatic isolation of Great Britain in Europe. Excluded from the French-Russian and German-Austrian combinations by virtue of her expansionist zeal; Britain's traditional policy of alliance with a major European landpower had to be abandoned.

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28. Quoted in Alfred L. P. Dennis, *Adventures in American Diplomacy, 1896-1906*, New York, 1928, p. 98. For further information on foreign opinion of American policy see also, L. M. Sears, «French Opinion of the Spanish American War,» *Hispanic American Historical Review*, VII (1927); and, L. B. Shippee, «Germany and the Spanish American War,» *American Historical Review*, XXX (1925).

29. Quoted in, Claude G. Bowers, *Beveridge and the Progressive Era*, Boston, 1932, p. 69.

30. Quoted in, Geoffrey Seed, «British Reaction to American Imperialism Reflected in Journals of Opinion, 1898-1900,» *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXIII (1958), p. 262.



Excluded from Europe and overextended as a result of recent expansions in Africa, Britain was unable to militarily and diplomatically assure the Open Door in China, or if China was partitioned, to successfully compete with her less glutted continental rivals.

Britain's apparent acceptance, during the Venezuelan crisis, of Cleveland's claim to hemispheric imperium, and the growing popularity of the Anglo-American world mission reported by Hay and others, led McKinley to assert his right to mediate in the Cuban revolution. Ambassador Woodford manifested this growing aggressiveness over the Cuban question in an interview with his British counterpart in Madrid:

«I endeavored to impress upon him [the British Ambassador] that the sugar of Cuba is as vital to our people as are the wheat and cotton of India and Egypt to Great Britain.»<sup>31</sup>

Woodford's statement asserted a relationship between the United States and Cuba that had previously been unexpressed. That is, the special economic relationship between Cuba and the United States carried political implications as well. British acquiescence to this new position was recorded by Woodford as early as August 10, 1897, «They [British officials] probably expect that Cuba will eventually come under the control of the United States either by a virtual protectorate or by actual annexation.»<sup>32</sup>

A more practical indication of British support arrived soon after war had been declared. Andrew Carnegie, a strong advocate of an Anglo-American detente, who had been flying a home-made flag combining the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes over his summer home in Scotland for years,<sup>33</sup> wrote to McKinley reporting a conversation with the Prince of Wales:

It is no secret from Queen down they are with us ... Germany and Russia and France, they regard with suspicion and antipathy-evident that a combination against Britain is only too probable in the opinion of England-with Britain standing by us you have nothing to fear from European action....

The letter also suggest that in a «pinch», Sir Julian [British Ambassador to Washington] could be seen about coaling stations and harbor facilities for action against Spain itself.<sup>34</sup>

The end result of Britain's growing diplomatic isolation in Europe and the racial enthusiasm of the time, was the freeing of McKinley's hands in dealing with Spain, and the encouragement of the administration to assume an imperial role once war had been declared. European intervention on behalf of Spain was im-

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31. *Foreign Relations*, Woodford to Sherman, September 13, 1897, p. 563.

32. *The McKinley Papers*, Woodford to McKinley, August 10, 1897.

33. Beisner, *Twelve...*, p. 172.

34. *The McKinley Papers*, Carnegie to McKinley, April 27, 1898.

possible without Britain's cooperation and support. This eventuality had been, at least partially, preempted by McKinley's appointment of anglophiles, like Hay, to the major European posts, where they strengthened the resolve of British leaders working for a detente.<sup>35</sup>

The first step in the implementation of the «Large Policy» was initiated by McKinley nine months prior to the outbreak of war. Hawaii had been left in limbo during the Cleveland administration: neither attached formally to the United States, nor returned to its former indigenous leadership. The importance of Hawaii to the expansionists was briefly outlined by Lodge in a Senate speech in 1895, «They are the key of the Pacific. If we are ever to build the Nicaraguan Canal, it would be folly to enter upon it if we were not prepared to take possession of those islands.»<sup>36</sup> That McKinley moved so quickly on behalf of annexation indicated the advent of a new aggressiveness in foreign affairs.

Early in June, 1897, the President decided, rather suddenly after a cabinet meeting, to frame a new annexation treaty.<sup>37</sup> Assistant Secretary of State Day assigned the task to the veteran diplomat, John W. Foster, without the knowledge of John Sherman. Caught in route to Europe, Foster hastily drafted a new treaty, drawing heavily on the ignored version of 1893. On June 16, 1897, McKinley forwarded the treaty to the Senate with the injunction: «Annexation is not a change it is a consummation.»<sup>38</sup>

Once again, however, the treaty bogged down in the Senate and it was not until war became imminent that its passage was pushed with energy. Hay telegraphed McKinley in March 1898 that the British would support American annexation before the war with Spain got underway. This indicated to McKinley a general support for the United States and specific support for Pacific expansion.<sup>39</sup> It was the exigencies of the war itself that assured McKinley's victory on the annexation issue. On May 3, 1898 Hay again wired reporting an «... excellent authority in German matters suggests prompt action in annexation of Hawaii before war closes as otherwise Germany might seek to complicate the question with Samoa or Philippine Islands.»<sup>40</sup>

Spurred by the possibility of European intervention McKinley used Roosevelt and Mahan to bring recalcitrant Republicans, like George F. Hoar of Massachusetts, into line. When this ploy failed McKinley resorted to personal interventions on behalf of annexation, suggesting that Japan would seize the islands by force if the United States did not act first.<sup>41</sup> Military expediency, however, only partially

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35. Beale, *Roosevelt...*, pp. 95-6.

36. Lodge, *Speeches...*, p. 183.

37. Morgan, *McKinley*, pp. 294-95.

38. Foster, *Memoirs*, II, pp. 172-74.

39. *The McKinley Papers*, Hay to McKinley, April 15, 1898.

40. Dennis, *Adventures*, p. 76.

41. Theodore Roosevelt to Alfred T. Mahan, Dec. 9, 11, 13, 1897, Elting E. Morison et al (eds.) *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Cambridge, 1951-1954, vol. I, pp. 725, 741.

explains McKinley's consistent and anxious interest. A broader explanation is suggested by his personal secretary in a June 8 note in his diary:

«The President is anxious about Hawaii. He is for annexation because he believes it will be for the best interests of the country. Speaking to me about it a few evenings ago he said: 'We need Hawaii just as much and a good deal more than we did California. It is manifest destiny'». <sup>42</sup>

Lodge also sensed this deeper commitment when he wrote to Roosevelt in July, «He did everything to secure the annexation of Hawaii and speaks of it as a step in a policy.»<sup>43</sup> What Lodge had correctly sensed was that McKinley was committed to extra-territorial expansion, the «Large Policy.» Hawaii represented the first step in a policy of colonial expansion made possible by the war with Spain.

During the Senatorial debate over McKinley's war message, the Cuban interventionists, who had been frustrated by Cleveland's obstructionism and angered by McKinley's slow response to the DeLorne note and the sinking of the Maine, rallied to support the Turpie-Foraker amendment to the resolution authorizing McKinley to act on the Cuban question. The amendment would have recognized the Cuban Revolutionary government, headquartered in New York, as the legitimate government of the island. McKinley viewed the amendment as a threat to presidential foreign policy prerogatives and bent the entire weight of his administration to defeat it.<sup>44</sup> Although his effort proved successful, the administration was forced to accept the Teller amendment that had also been added to McKinley's request for war powers. This amendment, like the Turpie-Foraker amendment, restricted the President's direction of foreign policy by stipulating that the United States would not establish sovereignty over Cuba. This famous «self denying» proviso, however, did not restrict the acquisition of naval bases or the application of military intervention to guarantee governments favorable to American economic interests. The amendment, nevertheless, was seen by both McKinley and the Republican jingoes as a compromise that would assure party regularity on the Turpie-Foraker vote. The advent of war reduced the incidence of congressional insurgency and provided McKinley with an opportunity to assert full presidential power in foreign affairs. Events in Asia obscured the once clear issue of Cuban sovereignty, and freed the administration's hand for the work of empire.

Plans calling for an assault on the Philippines in the event of a war with Spain had been developed in the Navy department by Lieutenant William W. Kimball as early as 1896.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, historians have persisted in crediting Roosevelt with being the evil genius of Pacific expansion; playing Mephistopheles to McKin-

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42. Olcott, *McKinley*, I, p. 379.

43. *Selections*, I, Lodge to Roosevelt, June 15, 1898, p. 311.

44. Paul S. Halbo, «Presidential Leadership in Foreign Affairs: William McKinley and the Turpie-Foraker amendment,» *American Historical Review*, LXXII (July, 1967), p. 1321-1335.

45. William Reynolds Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909*, Austin, 1958, p. 21.

ley's, Faust.<sup>46</sup> One of the most cherished scenes of the folklore of 1898 is that of the bewildered and overwhelmed McKinley sitting at his desk with a secondary school text trying to locate the Philippines after receiving word of Dewey's victory. Like most myths, this one also has its basis in fact, but McKinley's use of the textbook was the result of inadequate cartographical resources, not geopolitical naivete.<sup>47</sup> McKinley well informed of the strategic and commercial objectives vulnerable to American attack<sup>48</sup> had himself ordered the Pacific fleet to attack the Philippines on April 24.<sup>49</sup>

The first hint that McKinley's interest in the Philippines was not limited to military expediency was the decision taken on May 2, the day after Dewey's victory at Manila and three days before complete details of the battle were available. On this date McKinley ordered a land force of some fourteen thousand regulars and volunteers under General Merritt to the Philippines for the pacification of the archipelago.<sup>50</sup>

Dewey was officially congratulated by Navy Secretary Long on behalf of McKinley on May 7. Long also notified Dewey in the same telegram that the «USS Charleston» and the Pacific Mail Company steamer «Pekin» would leave immediately to resupply his fleet.<sup>51</sup> What was not included in this message was that before joining Dewey at Manila the «Charleston» was detoured to conquer the Ladrone Islands, a convenient coaling and supply station located between Hawaii and the Philippines.

The full import of this decision was quickly grasped by Lodge when later informed:

There is one thing that has given me great encouragement and that is the taking of the Ladrone Islands — he McKinley must have ordered this far back in May when the Charleston left San Francisco.

And more explicitly, «... now why the President should have taken those islands unless he expects to hold on to the Philippines I can not conceive.»<sup>52</sup> The preliminary decision, as Lodge suspected, was made in early May barely after formal notification of Dewey's victory.

The completeness of the naval victory in Manila Bay removed the possibility of a Spanish attack on either Hawaii or America's pacific coast. McKinley's decision, therefore, to send substantial ground forces to the Philippines holds out the possibility that the President sought a more permanent advantage from Dewey's

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46. Beale, *Roosevelt*, p. 69.

47. Henry S. Pritchett, «Some Recollections of President McKinley and the Cuban Intervention,» *North American Review*, .89 (March, 1909), p. 400.

48. *Selections*, I, Roosevelt to Lodge, September 21, 1897, p. 278.

49. Morgan, *Empire*, p. 71.

50. Morgan, *McKinley*, p. 387.

51. *The McKinley Papers*, Long to Dewey, May 7, 1898.

52. *Selections*, I, Lodge to Roosevelt, July 12, 1898, p. 323.

feat than the temporary protection of American shipping and harbor facilities. McKinley would later comment to a visitor that, «... the general principle of holding onto what we get ....» was wise.<sup>53</sup> The decision to send Merritt indicated that McKinley was unwilling to let «what we get,» depend on chance.

On May 19, the day of Aguinaldo's arrival in Manila, the President sent Secretary Long a copy of his political instructions to General Merritt. The Secretary was informed that the Army occupation forces would aim to destroy Spanish rule completely and assure «order and security» in the islands during American possession. His order made no provision for Philippine self-government, much less for independence. It left no place for either Aguinaldo, or his revolutionary party.<sup>54</sup> The end result of McKinley policy, undertaken in the first weeks of the war was to create a power vacuum of such substantial proportions in the Philippines, that the only real alternative open to the American peace negotiators in September was the institution of American colonial rule.<sup>55</sup>

The rapid success of American arms in the East momentarily diverted attention from the *causebelli*, the remnants of the Spanish colonial possessions in the Western Hemisphere. To Mahan and the other theorists of empire, American ambitions in the Far East were without substance unless the Caribbean components of the «Large Policy» were implemented as well. Without the construction of an interoceanic canal, the United States would be unable to wield sufficient power in the Orient to exercise even limited hegemony. In turn, the canal itself would never be secure without the acquisition of strategic bases to control the approaches to the canal. Mahan had detailed the necessity of this progressive expansionism in 1895:

For, granting that the Isthmus is in the Caribbean the predominant interest, commercial... but also military... it follows that entrance to the Caribbean, and transit across the Caribbean to the Isthmus, are two prime essentials to the enjoyment of the advantages of the latter canal. Therefore, in case of war, control of these two things becomes a military object not second to the Isthmus itself...<sup>56</sup>

With Cuban annexation, at least in the traditional sense, removed from the realm of expansionist options by the Teller amendment, McKinley soon focused the administrations attention on Spain's other major hemispheric possession, Puerto Rico. McKinley's interest in Puerto Rico soon found eager echos in the expansionist

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53. *The Lodge Papers*, Massachusetts Historical Association, Boston, Mass., W. M. Laffan to Lodge, July 14, 1898.

54. McKinley to Long, May 19, 1898, Office of Naval Records and Library, National Archives, Records Group 45, Area 10 File.

55. On May 21 in accordance with a War Board recommendation to fortify Manila harbour «... if it was the intention to hold the Philippines...» McKinley ordered the island fortified. Sicard to Long, May 20, 1898, with McKinley's endorsement, Records Group 45, Area 10 File.

56. Alfred Thayer Mahan, «Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea,» in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, XCV (October, 1897), is an excellent short presentation of the author's view of the area's importance for future American development, p. 688.

press. Mayo Hazeltine, writing in the *North American Review*, characterized the Teller amendment as «... the somewhat hasty and gratuitous resolution passed by Congress,» and pointed to Puerto Rico as a secondary objective for Caribbean expansion.<sup>57</sup>

But gratuitous or not, the amendment did restrict, if not deny, American use of Cuba as a strategic base from which the Isthmus could be controlled. The realization of this limitation caused a curious readjustment of priorities in the rhetoric of the leading expansionists. Henry Cabot Lodge, who had earlier characterized United States intervention on behalf of the Cuban revolutionaries as «... an unselfish, a pure, a noble demand...»<sup>58</sup> altered his position to the rather curious, «... as to Cuba I am in no sort of hurry. Our troops are fresh and raw. They ought to be hardened up.»<sup>59</sup> In the eyes of both McKinley and the expansionists, like Lodge, the freeing of Cuba had become a secondary objective. The primary objective was seen as the acquisition of extraterritorial possessions from which the United States could assert power and influence in Latin America and Asia. The island of Puerto Rico, therefore, became a military objective of major importance.

Puerto Rico, like Cuba, had experienced the rise of opposition political groups throughout the nineteenth century, but unlike Cuba, the demographic and geographic limitations of the island prevented these nascent independence movements from becoming armed insurrections. Unable to foresee success in continued agitation, those irreconcilable to Spanish rule accepted exile or emigration. The most highly politicized segment gathered in New York City and evolved a working relationship with the Cuban Revolutionary Junta and sought to promote American intervention.<sup>60</sup>

For the majority of Puerto Ricans, politics was a luxury they could scarcely afford. The pressures of population growth upon the ancient and limited economic structure had not yet reached crisis proportions, but illiteracy and hunger were the lifetime companions of most of the island's population. When questioned in 1897 about a rumored revolt at Yauco, the American consul wrote, «The natives have no discipline, no arms, no spirit, no resources, and no leaders.» More specifically, «No revolution exists and none will be attempted in Puerto Rico.»<sup>61</sup>

Those Puerto Ricans who were politically active, yet were unwilling to emigrate, sought to amend the Spanish imperial system so as to gain a readjustment in the decision making process in favor of local leadership and local personnel. These groups were generally mollified by the promise of local autonomy by Spain in late 1897.

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57. Mayo W. Hazeltine, «What is to be Done with Cuba?» *North American Review*, 167 (September, 1898), p. 319.

58. Henry Cabot Lodge, *Speeches*, p. 308.

59. *Selections*, I, Lodge to Roosevelt, May 24, 1898, p. 299.

60. George W. Auxier, «The Propaganda Activities of the Cuban Junta in Precipitating the Spanish-American War, 1895-1898,» *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XIX (1939), p. 289.

61. *Despatches from United States Consular Representatives in Puerto Rico. 1821-1899*, J. D. Hall to Secretary of State Sherman, April 22, 1897 (hereafter referred to as *Despatches*).

Porto Ricans are generally jubilant over the news received from Spain concerning the promised Autonomy and the nation generally believes that Spain will grant them such a form of Home Rule as will be in every way satisfactory to them.<sup>62</sup>

Following the first elections held under the Autonomous Charter on March 27, 1898, Consul Hanna wrote, «I see no reason why the new form of government in this Island should not become a success.»<sup>63</sup>

The initial justification for the seizure of Puerto Rico by the United States was military necessity. General Miles, picked to head the Puerto Rican expeditionary force, summed this up in a letter to Alger in May:

«The possession of Porto Rico would be of very great advantage to the military.... It could be well fortified, the harbor mined, and would be a most excellent port for our Navy.»<sup>64</sup>

Schely's victory over the Spanish fleet off Santiago de Cuba on July 3,<sup>65</sup> however, had removed the immediate threat of Spanish action against the North American coast and reduced the poignancy of the military argument.

It was the Puerto Rican members of the New York Junta that provided McKinley's continued interest in Puerto Rico with the veil of legitimacy. Dr. Julio J. Henna, president of the revolutionary group, and Roberto Todd, his representative in Washington, had actively promoted United States intervention on behalf of their party.<sup>66</sup>

The Junta, by positing itself as representative of «free» Puerto Rico, undertook the task of justifying the expedition to American and world opinion,

In view of the projected invasion of Porto Rico by the American Army, and authorized by a number of Porto Ricans now residing in the United States... we will satisfy them that the purpose of the American invasion is to redeem the natives from the ignominious yoke of the tyrant, and not to conquer them with the sword and enslave them again under another flag and master...<sup>67</sup>

Thus, even though Puerto Rico no longer represented a military threat to the successful completion of the announced American purpose of entering the war: the freeing of Cuba, McKinley was able to justify the expedition and the subsequent prolongation of the war on moral grounds.

It involves no ungenerous reference to our recent foe, but simply a recognition of the plain tea-

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62. *Ibid.*, Hanna to Day, December 3, 1897.

63. *Ibid.*, Hanna to Day, March 28, 1898.

64. *Correspondence Relating to the War With Spain*, 2 vols., Washington, 1902, I, Miles to Alger, May 27, 1898, p. 262 (hereafter referred to as *Correspondence*).

65. Braisted, *United States Navy*, p. 28.

66. John A. Porter (sec. to McKinley) to Roberto Todd, July 28, 1898, McKinley Papers; also *Correspondence*, Henna to Alger, July 23, 1898, p. 314; and Edward J. Berbusse, *The United States and Puerto Rico, 1898-1900*, Chapel Hill, 1966, p. 62.

67. *Correspondence*, Henna to Miles, June 20, 1898, p. 313.

chings of history, to say that it was not compatible with the assurance of permanent peace on and near our own territory that the Spanish flag should remain on this side of the sea.<sup>68</sup>

The strategic considerations, however, proved the primary factor in McKinley's decision to prolong the war, in order to acquire Puerto Rico from Spain. The value of Puerto Rico to America's new world role was summarized by Mahan in 1899:

This estimate of the military importance of Puerto Rico should never be lost sight of by us as long as we have any responsibility, direct or indirect, for the safety and independence of Cuba. Puerto Rico, considered militarily, is to Cuba, to the future Isthmian Canal and to our Pacific coast, what Malta is, or may be, to Egypt and the beyond...<sup>69</sup>

Control of Puerto Rico would give the United States preminence in the Caribbean and subsequently control of the Isthmus and the prospected canal. Our ambitions in the Orient were without means of fulfillment unless the Caribbean and canal were ours. Without these two hemispheric objectives, possession of Hawaii and the Philippines would not insure Asian supremacy for the United States.

The decision to acquire Puerto Rico is first hinted at by Senator Burrows of Michigan on May 4, who when leaving a White House conference told reporters, «Everything is moving along smoothly and well. What we want now is Puerto Rico. We ought to have that tomorrow.»<sup>70</sup> The lack of further substantiation limits the credulity of Senator Burrows, but by May 24, Lodge could write Roosevelt, «Puerto Rico is not forgotten and we mean to have it. Unless I am utterly and profoundly mistaken, the Administration is now fully committed to the large policy that we both desire.»<sup>71</sup>

McKinley had avoided making any public statement about American war aims during the major portion of the war. This reticence led the government of Great Britain to inquire, on June 3, through Ambassador Hay, as to American objectives in a peace settlement. Although not formally replying to the British note until June 30, Secretary of State Day cabled John Hay on June 3 that the United States would seek Puerto Rico in lieu of any cash indemnity from Spain.<sup>72</sup> This note to Hay contained the basic outline of the later peace protocol signed with Spain on July 30.<sup>73</sup> Lodge, unaware of McKinley's decision could not report definitive information until after a conversation with Secretary Day on June 15, «... there is of course no question about Porto Rico, everyone is agreed on that, the only question for us to consider is how much we should do in the Philippines.»<sup>74</sup>

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68. *Foreign Relation*, McKinley to Peace Commissioners, September 16, 1898, p. 907.

69. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Lessons of the War with Spain*, Boston, 1899, p. 28.

70. Quoted in, Walter Millis, *The Martial Spirit*, Boston, 1931, p. 176.

71. *Selections*, I, Lodge to Roosevelt, May 24, 1898, p. 299.

72. Quoted in Dennis, *Adventures*, p. 99.

73. *Foreign Relations*, Day to Almodovar del Rio, July 30, 1898, p. 821.

74. *Selections*, Lodge to Roosevelt, June 15, 1898, p. 311.



In the interim between the Hay correspondence and the Lodge conversation, McKinley received a telegram from the Paris Embassy on June 13,

He [French Minister of Foreign Affairs Harrotaux] supposes an armistice will be suggested or asked as a means of opening negotiations, but that of course cannot be conceded now. Spain, he believes, is ready for making peace now, when she may still save something.<sup>75</sup>

Neither McKinley nor the State Department responded to this communication. Given the later role of the French Government in initiating the peace negotiations and the consistently friendly relations between it and Madrid throughout the war period, this note probably represented a peace feeler undertaken with the foreknowledge of the Spanish Government. McKinley's behavior then represents not callousness, but rather an incompatibility between the war aims cabled to Hay on the Third and the desire of the Spanish Government to «save something.»

McKinley feared that if negotiations were begun prior to an actual American occupation of Puerto Rico, European diplomatic pressures would make acquisition difficult, if not impossible. The Germans in particular had consistently sought advantages from the war. Ambassador White reported a conversation with German Foreign Minister von Richthofen who, «... in his remarks generally on this subject... seemed to me to indicate a very strong wish that Germany should be able to secure something in a territorial way at the final settlement.»<sup>76</sup> German ambitions reported to Washington by the Embassy had acted as a spur throughout the war prompting McKinley to move quickly on the question of Hawaiian annexation and reinforcing his decision to send occupation troops to the Philippines.<sup>77</sup> McKinley, therefore, aware of German territorial ambitions and encouraged by British support<sup>78</sup> ignored the French note and pushed General Miles to undertake the expedition without delay.<sup>79</sup>

The actual invasion of Puerto Rico preceded the agreement on a peace protocol by less than a week. The invasion, as predicted by Dr. Henna and Roberto Todd, met only token resistance and American government in the form of martial law was established. The protocol discussion had shown the United States intransigent on the issue of Puerto Rico: its surrender was a non-negotiable precondition to ceasefire. With the acceptance of the protocol by Spain the full program of the «Large Policy» had been implemented.

The uncompromised success of this adventure in imperialism also promoted a rather novel use for the soon to be Americanized island of Puerto Rico. The Teller amendment had prevented American seizure of Cuba, but did not restrict annexation if proposed by the Cubans. W. D. Washburn writing in March of 1898 forecast Cuba's immediate future:

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75. *McKinley Papers*, Portor to McKinley, June 13, 1898.

76. Quoted in Dennis, *Adventures*, p. 95.

77. Quoted in Dennis, *Adventures*, p. 98.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

79. *Correspondence*, Alger to Miles, June 6, 1898, p. 264; and Corbin to Miles, July 1898, p. 283.

The ultimate future of this island is foreordained. She will be given her chance to redeem herself. She will probably fail, as has almost every other Spanish-American people. Cuba will then be merged into the United States....<sup>80</sup>

That this prospect had at least a dim echo in administration circles is recorded in the Journal of Charles Dawes:

«The President, of course, will decide this question as he decides all, but I hope it will be along lines which will retain such points in the Philippines as will secure to us the maximum of commercial advantages... and hold for us absolutely Porto Rico and Cuba 'until pacified.' The latter logically under conditions now and hereafter to exist in Cuba means ultimate annexation.»<sup>81</sup>

Dawes later mentions a conversation between Governor Allen of Puerto Rico and McKinley which suggests a further possibility of imperial expansion:

He [Allen] is enthusiastic over the prospects of Porto Rico and is determined that the first foundations of the government there shall be bedded on the rock of right principle. He believes that Porto Rico can be made such an example of the benefits of American supervision that Cuba will voluntarily seek annexation with the United states after some efforts to get along independently have been made with doubtful success.<sup>82</sup>

As the last vestiges of Spanish military power crumbled in mid-summer, the McKinley administration redirected its attention to the Philippines. Dewey and General E. S. Otis, who had succeeded Merritt in command of the land forces, had effectively destroyed the Spanish colonial structure in accordance with the President's instructions. The commanders in the field, and McKinley discounted Filipino self-government as an alternative to some form of American or European control.<sup>83</sup> The naval attaché at the Berlin embassy had telegraphed the Navy Department in July that Germany had hoped to gain a, «... naval station in the Philippines,» as a reward for her, «... good will.»<sup>84</sup> Once again European aggressiveness reaffirmed the will of the American expansionists, and provided the rationale for territorial acquisition.

Lodge had seen the administration resolutely implement the «Large Policy» he had worked for. The final objective he sought was in the East, «... I hope they will at least keep Manila, which is the great prize, and the thing which will give us the Eastern trade.»<sup>85</sup> Lodge and Mahan had labored to illustrate the importance of Manila to American commerce. They sought out Judge Day and other influential administration figures and lobbied for maintaining a presence in the Philippines.<sup>86</sup>

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80. W. D. Washburn, Jr., *Our Island Problems*, Minneapolis, 1899, p. 4.

81. Charles G. Dawes, *A Journal of the McKinley Years*, Bascon N. Timnous (ed.), Chicago, 1950, p. 165.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

83. Braisted, *United States Navy*, p. 64-69.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

85. *Selections*, I, Lodge to Roosevelt, August 15, 1898, p. 337.

86. *Ibid.*, Lodge to Roosevelt, June 24, 1898, p. 313.

Their efforts were rewarded when Secretary Day presented McKinley with a plan for creating a naval base on Luzon. McKinley, however, tabled Day's proposal, commenting that Day wanted only a «hitching post» in the Philippines. Later the President confided to the Judge that he, «... was afraid it would carry». <sup>87</sup> This first indication that McKinley sought more than a Philippine naval station was finally confirmed in his instructions to the United States Peace Commission. The United States, he informed them, would seek no less than the entire island of Luzon. <sup>88</sup> By mid October McKinley's position had hardened still further and John Hay, newly returned from London to become Secretary of State, cabled the Commission that the United States had decided to take the entire island group. <sup>89</sup> With this decision McKinley had completed the work of empire. The outline he had drawn would be augmented and filled in by his twentieth century successors, but the decisions made during this eventful administration shaped the future course of American foreign policy.

McKinley had skillfully used the powers and prerogatives of his office to control the direction of foreign affairs. Surrounded by a weak, unimaginative cabinet, he had become his own Secretary of State. This was immediately grasped by Hay when he returned from Europe, «He [McKinley] seems well and strong; but says he feels tired. He scared me by saying he would not worry anymore about the State Department. He has evidently been Secretary of State for the past year.» <sup>90</sup>

Understanding a President's tremendous power to take the political initiative, McKinley committed the United States to a series of *faits accomplis* before any effective protest could be made: ordering Dewey to Manila, sending a naval force to Guam, securing the results of Dewey's victory with American land forces, and dispatching a compliant peace commission to Paris to negotiate the treaty. These events occurred within the space of a few months, and it would have taken an extraordinarily strong, united, and determined opposition to check McKinley during this period. That no such opposition developed is indicative of McKinley's political skill and administrative ability.

*The New York Sun* of June 10, 1898 stated that, «to maintain our flag in the Philippines we must raise our flag in Hawaii.» <sup>91</sup>

To McKinley and the American expansionists the maintenance of the American flag, and subsequently the maintenance of American commerce and prestige in the Orient required the raising of the American flag in the Caribbean and on the Isthmuses as well. The signing of the treaty of peace in Paris marked the near fulfillment of the expansionist credo as outlined by Mahan and explicated by Lodge and Roosevelt. But none of these men were responsible for the successful im-

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87. Olcott, *McKinley*, II, pp. 57-75.

88. McKinley to Peace Commissioners, September 16, 1898, U.S. Congress, *Papers Relating to the Treaty with Spain*, Senate Document, No. 148, 56th Congress, first session, p. 7.

89. *Ibid.*, Hay to Day, October 26, 1898, p. 35.

90. Hay to Clara Stone Hay, September 29, 1898, *Hay Papers*.

91. Quoted in Morgan, *Empire*, p. 76.

plementation of this ideal. They were representative of a significant body of American opinion, and as individuals and in alliance with other men of power and influence; they must be accepted as having a major importance in coloring the political milieu of the McKinley era. They were not, however, privy to the decisions that have so greatly affected the subsequent history of the United States. From the decision to send Merritt to the Philippines and the «Charleston» to the Ladrões; to the decision to take and keep Puerto Rico, William McKinley remained the architect and builder of his administration's foreign policy and the creator of the American Empire.