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Vedado.

Havana, Cuba,

September 26th, 1898.

Honorable R. A. Alger,
Secretary of War.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

There are some phases of this Cuban problem, which appear to me, to require special consideration. The problem is much more racial and social, than political, and should be dealt with accordingly.

The Spanish population is, as a rule, corrupt and merciless in their relations to the Government, and to the classes regarded by them as inferior in the social and racial scale. They are, however, not likely to give trouble. Representing, in a large measure, the higher intelligence, education and wealth of the Island, self-interest, if no higher incentive, would induce them to be conservative and regard with favor any scheme of government that promised tranquility and peace. I shall expect to find a large proportion of this branch of the population favoring annexation. While all classes are now suspicious and guarded in their expressions from habit, prudence and fear, there are already indications in that direction. Our real trouble is going to be with the Insurgents and their sympathizers, if they are not handled with care and cleverness. In a disjointed, irregular way, they have been conducting a desperate struggle for three years, against the direst tyranny and oppression that ever afflicted mankind, and although they did not achieve their independence and get relief by their unaided efforts, they feel that they made a gallant struggle for liberty, and

are entitled to consideration on that account. In this I agree with them. Of course, in extending this consideration, I should not go to the extent of recognizing their Government, or giving them control of the affairs of the Island. Either act would produce consternation and alarm among the conservative classes, and retard good government immeasurably. I am told they are a very sensitive people, as all people similarly situated are. For generations they have been regarded by the Spaniards, as, in every sense inferior to themselves, when as a matter of fact they are not. They felt the heel of oppression and chafed under its burdens and exactions, and are therefore, from habit suspicious and sensitive.

For three years they have been practically outlawed, by the Spaniards, their families outraged and murdered, their houses destroyed, and they find themselves at the end of that time, with arms in their hands, their ancient enemies struck down by a strong, friendly power. It would be but human, if strong feelings of resentment, and desire for revenge, should take possession of them. Their conduct under the circumstances, has been, and is, most exemplary, their moderation most praiseworthy. I do not therefore think the backs of our hands should be turned towards them. On the contrary, they should be taken hold of by us, in a kindly, friendly spirit and encouraged in their moderation and self-restraint.

My policy with them would be to induce them to disarm, and when disarmed, we should employ such of them as desire to engage themselves, as a constabulary force for the country, organized and controlled by

U. S. Officers. Their acclimation, knowledge of the country, of the language, and habits of obedience to the laws of discipline, would be invaluable to our Government in the work before it. Every Cuban thus employed would dispense with a U. S. soldier. Another and a stronger reason for such a course would be, taking away from them the temptation, and perhaps necessity, of becoming foot-pads and highwaymen, many of them, to supply themselves with food. A few of them as Bandits, could and would give us untold trouble. Furthermore their leaders would be deprived of their influence and control over the rank and file of their followers. Diaz, the Mexican President, understands the Latin races better than any man now living. He has broken up the Banditti of Mexico by taking them into his service and pay, and having them shot when they violate his orders. It would hardly be fair to place the Cuban Insurgents in the category of Bandits, but it might require very little inducement to make them so. In the process of disarmament a number of them might, and doubtless would, prefer to return to their homes, where they have not been destroyed, and go to work. Such as do, could be assisted, by having advanced to them supplies and farming implements for one year, to be paid for, out of proceeds of the first crop, or perhaps the two crops next succeeding the advances. Of course, I shall not in this connection attempt to work out the details of the proposition, but our experience with the freedmen and Indians ought to suggest a feasible plan. It is entirely reasonable to assume, that the expenses incident to the execution of these measures, could be borne from the revenues of the Island of Cuba, without taxing the resources of the U. S. Government.

The suffering and starvation among the poor of the Island is most distressing. Relief in some form ought to be forthcoming, care being taken to so dispense it, as not to encourage idleness and vagrancy, and at the same time relieve the appalling starvation afflicting the poor inhabitants in all parts of the Island.

I take the liberty of enclosing a statement made to me yesterday by Mr. Artis, a Cuban, and a large sugar-planter near Caibarien. I got his consent to have it translated and taken down in shorthand.

If you think the views I have expressed of sufficient importance, you will please lay them before the President.

Very truly yours,

(Signed)

M. C. Butler Maj Gen U.S.A.
Mil Com. to Cuba