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STATEMENT

CUBA.

D.A. No. 1, Socialist Trade & Alliance, On the Issues
Involved.

DON'T CHANGE MASTERS.

**The Disputes Between Capitalist Countries and Capitalist Classes are Settled
at the Expense of the Working Class—Latest Development of the Colonial
Policy—True Emancipation.**

To the Working People of Spain, Cuba and the United States.

COMRADES—When a dispute arises between plutocratic governments, and a war is threatened with all its consequent burdens upon the laboring classes of the nations involved, the plain duty of International Socialism is to issue a warning and take such measures as the case requires; so that, indissolubly united throughout the world for the purpose of universal emancipation, the wage workers may not anywhere be diverted from the pursuit of their common aim and hurled against each other in murderous conflict at the dictation of their exploiters.

A dispute of this character is now raging between Spain and the United States in relation to Cuba. On both sides violent appeals are made to “public opinion” in the desecrated name of justice, and the people of the two countries are invited by their respective rulers to a bunco game of patriotism, the real stake of which is NOT the political dependence or independence of Cubans, but their further economic enslavement by the plutocracy of the winning nation. In the mean time the Cubans themselves are being mercilessly slaughtered at an enormous cost of Spanish blood and treasure, and whatever the issue of the present struggle may be, the “Pearl of the Antilles” must soon be a desert, to be repopled by its future possessor with an exotic set of wage slaves.

Manifestly, the voice of International Socialism should now be heard upon this “Cuban question.” We therefore submit the following statement, and we appeal for united action to the proletarian classes of the three countries involved, namely, Spain, Cuba and the United States.

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Not until modern machinery first made its appearance in England little more than a century ago, could capitalism enter that phase of development through which it has attained its present power. But the preliminary condition of its existence and growth was supplied three centuries before by the discovery of America under the Spanish flag. From that moment the policy of European governments, which for a thousand years had been exclusively continental and feudal, became more and more colonial and mercantile. Now, more than ever, their chief ambition is to preserve or extend their sway over vast areas, peopled or unpeopled, widely separated from the seat of empire by a broad expanse of ocean.

In their struggle for colonial supremacy, as in the use they made of their colonial possessions, the various governments displayed various degrees of intelligence or stupidity. But their object was identical, and until England learned from the American Revolution a lesson which Spain has blindly ignored to this day, in spite of her similar experiences on a still larger scale; their treatment of the colonists was substantially alike in its characteristics of political despotism in the service of capitalistic greed. Let us briefly review the facts; a correct understanding of the past is essential to a clear comprehension of the present.

1—AS TO THE PURPOSE OF COLONIAL DOMINION.—It was calculated that by the conferring upon private or corporate favorites valuable grants of land and trading privileges for a comparatively small consideration, the political rulers—all monarchs in those days—could increase the public revenue and at same time enrich themselves without apparently overtaxing their subjects. The expenditure at home of the wealth derived from the enterprise of adventurers and the labor of slaves in the colonies would benefit numbers of the common people in the mother country, such as artisans, traders, etc., whose attachment to their “benefactors” and to the King would, it was thought, be intensified by their prosperity in economic dependence. Little was it dreamed, at that time, that a great middle class would thus be built up, to the power of which the Crown itself would of necessity become humbly subservient; and that, from this very middle class a plutocracy would issue, which would take the sceptre in its hands and more despotically than any king govern the world.

2—AS TO THE EXPLOITATION OF THE COLONIES AND ITS EFFECTS UPON THE MOTHERLANDS.—This, as already observed, varied according to the intelligence, or stupidity of metropolitan rulers. The principle of {or?} policy common to all, however, was that the entire wealth produced in transoceanic possessions should be made to flow into the mother country without equivalent in return. With this end in view, chattel slavery, which had long disappeared on the European continent, was reinstated in the colonies, first by Spain, then by England; while under British rule especially, industry of any kind, other than the production of raw materials and of the most elementary necessities of life, was either discouraged by every possible device, or

even absolutely prohibited by law. It never occurred to the Christian philanthropists of England that “in the eyes of the Lord” slavery was as much an abomination in Jamaica as it was in Lancashire, until the supply of chattel labor in the colony was much greater than the oversupply of free labor at home, and competition between “free” men could not fail, therefore, to be more profitable than slavery in Jamaica, since it was so in Lancashire. The Spaniards were not so quick to perceive the mundane benefits that would be made to flow from a timely application of “Christian” doctrine, and the still greater rewards of capitalistic enterprise in combining domestic with colonial industry. While the British capitalists transformed England into a vast factory, in which the raw materials that could be extracted from her own soil were added to those obtained from her colonies, the Spanish traders were content to exchange their colonial produce for British, French and other foreign manufactures. Therefore, while the natural wealth of Great Britain was brought to light and wrought out into capitalistic and political power, the far greater natural wealth of Spain remained dormant. Again, while the employments, status and mode of life of the British masses were completely transformed—though not always for the better—by the modern system of production, the condition of {the} Spanish peasantry remained substantially as it was during the Middle Ages, but the Spanish artisan was not less effectually wiped out by the competition of foreign manufactures than he could have been by the development of domestic industry. In {the} comparatively few mills of Spain, the operatives are still more appallingly exploited and degraded than their fellow-slaves of capitalistic machinery in England.

3—AS TO THE EFFECTS OF THE COLONIAL POLICY ON THE COLONIES.—A system of exploitation so thoroughly selfish and despotic could not fail in the end to provoke rebellion among those who, born in the possessions, but issued from the possessing race, deemed themselves deprived of their “natural rights” to the fruits of the soil on which they lived, whether these fruits were the outcome of their own personal exertions or of the exertions of hired men or slaves. In the North American colonies, of England, especially, there was a sturdy population of British and Dutch origin, imbued with the trading spirit, anxious to share in the benefits which British capitalism was already deriving from invention, and therefore chaffing under the restrictions imposed upon colonial industry. These were the first to establish their political independence; and the governmental form which they adopted—namely, a republic guaranteeing to every citizen the property which he might acquire, not only by his own labor, but by the labor of others, or by speculation and adventure, or by legislative grants of public lands and public privileges—was actually the very best that could be devised for their individualistic purposes and capitalistic aspirations. In due time the Spanish colonies followed in rebellion and, as their object was exactly the same as that which the United States had achieved, they naturally adopted similar forms of government.

It is, then, a fact—a portentous fact, the significance of which cannot too strongly be impressed upon the people on both sides of the Atlantic—that EVERY COLONIAL REBELLION ON THE AMERICAN CONTINENT WAS ESSENTIALLY A REBELLION OF COLONIAL CAPITALISM IN ITS INFANCY AGAINST METROPOLITAN CAPITALISM IN A MORE ADVANCED STATE OF DEVELOPMENT, and that, in the colonies which have won their political independence, the wage working class, that freely gave its blood for “Liberty” at the call of the middle class “revolutionists,” is as poor and as dependent as in the motherland. The laborer is no better off in the United States than in England, or in Mexico than in Spain.

And Cuba is no exception to this rule. Her economic conditions, precisely because of the commercial interest which American capitalists have in her chief products, are even less promiseful of betterment to her working people—to the people who now so bravely fight and die for “freedom”—than were the conditions, of the other Spanish colonies when they threw off the heavy yoke of the Spanish Crown.

Conducted from New York by a “junta” composed of capitalistic schemers calling themselves “Cuban patriots,” the insurrection is eagerly watched by the American Sugar Trust, the American Tobacco Trust and other American sharks, ready to take actual possession of the island in the name of King Dollar, and to pour into it, as wage slaves, the famished laborers of the Southern States.

Comrades, we say: Let Cuba be truly free! And not Cuba alone, but Spain and the United States! Free, not from political tyranny alone, but from capitalistic oppression. To this end let us, wage workers, repudiate diplomatic trickery, plutocratic patriotism and international war; and let us unite everywhere under the banner of International Socialism, for it is under this banner alone that the enslaved people of any country can victoriously march to their emancipation. Fraternally.

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[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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