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Implicit Costs of Empire: Bureaucratic Corruption in Nineteenth-Century Cuba*

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Abstract. Cycles of bureaucratic corruption in nineteenth-century Cuba evolved according to institutional conditions shaped by interest groups, financial needs, imperatives of colonial governance, and internal conflicts and war. Corrupt gain inimical to general public interest was not a consequence of cultural constants, but of unreconstructed institutional flaws and weaknesses. The risks of engaging in bureaucratic corruption diminished under the systematic condoning of administrative faults, collusive allowance of illegal slave trafficking, and a code of illegal rewards expected by loyalist officials opposing colonial reform. Despite some few anti-corruption initiatives, the prosecution and punishment of corrupt officials was lax. The implicit, yet significant, financial, institutional and political costs of corruption contributed to the demise of Spanish imperial dominion over Cuba and left a damaging burden and legacy for Cuban civil society.

Corruption in public administration has been widely recognised as a serious historical problem in Latin America.[1] The issue of corruption has had peculiarly important political and social repercussions in Cuba.[2] Yet, despite its importance, corruption in Cuba has not been explained satisfactorily in

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[1] Among the many recent titles, see Joseph Tulchin and Ralph Espach (eds.), *Combating Corruption in Latin America* (Washington, DC, 2000); Keith Rosen and Richard Downes (eds.), *Corruption and Political Reform in Brazil: The Impact of Collor's Impeachment* (Coral Gables, 1999); Walter Little and Eduardo Posada-Carbó (eds.), *Political Corruption in Europe and Latin America* (London, 1996); and Mitchell Seligson, 'The Impact of Corruption on Regime Legitimacy: A Comparative Study of Four Latin American Countries,' *Journal of Politics*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2002), pp. 408–33.

[2] Corruption scandals have been crucial features in Cuban political and social conflict since the first republican administrations and during the regimes of Gerardo Machado, Fulgencio Batista, Ramón Grau San Martín, and Carlos Prío Socarrás. Serious corruption issues preceded the suicide of politician Eduardo Chibás in 1951, the Revolution of 1959, and the execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa in 1989. See Guillermo Alonso and Enrique

terms of the institutional factors and vested interests that condition it. Moreover, surprisingly little is known of the long-term, institutional and economic costs of persistent and cyclical corruption. A detailed analysis of bureaucratic corruption – the unlawful rent-extraction by those with privileged access to public office for personal or group gain inimical to public interest – in the prominent case of Cuba is still wanting.[3] New contributions to the study of corruption in Cuba should begin by explaining its colonial roots.

During the nineteenth century Cuba became the most important colonial possession of a weak and diminished Spanish empire aspiring at revival. The island's sugar economy provided badly needed colonial revenues that supported a succession of financially strapped governments struggling for political stability in peninsular Spain. Massive peninsular migration to Cuba occurred in several waves, especially in the 1820s, 1860s and 1880s. Political and social quagmire and conflict in Spain and Cuba had important repercussions on each other. From the Carlist Wars in 1833–9 and 1873–6 to the 1868 'La Gloriosa' revolution, events in Spain had disrupting counterparts in Cuba.[4] Conversely, Cuban movements for annexation (to the United States), reform, and independence led to two destructive civil wars in 1868–78 and 1895–8 that intensified serious crises in the Spanish peninsula. Spain and Cuba were intimately tied through economic, social, political, and bureaucratic links. Most significantly for this study, bureaucratic corruption made corroding inroads in both the metropolis and its colony.[5]

Cuba was the preferred destination for under-remunerated yet ambitious military and civil officials determined to gain rapid promotion, personal wealth, and political power. Several peninsular military leaders, liberal and liberal-conservative alike, with decisive roles in Spain's intricate political affairs served as military governors (captain generals) in Cuba. The island became a strategic hub for corrupt networks of nepotism and favouritism plaguing the Spanish state bureaucracy and delaying much needed colonial

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Vignier (eds.), *La corrupción política y administrativa en Cuba 1944–1952* (Havana, 1973), and Hugh Thomas, *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom* (New York, 1998).

[3] On the definition and analysis of different types of corruption see Arnold Heidenheimer et al. (eds.), *Political Corruption: A Handbook* (New Brunswick, 1989); Douglass North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York, 1981); and Robin Theobald, *Corruption, Development, and Underdevelopment* (London, 1990).

[4] On Spanish historical background, see Charles Esdaile, *Spain in the Liberal Age: From Constitution to Civil War, 1808–1939* (Oxford, 2000), and José Varela Ortega, *Los amigos políticos. Partidos, elecciones y caciquismo en la Restauración (1875–1900)* (Madrid, 2001).

[5] On bureaucratic malfunctions, corruption and other institutional problems in Spain, see Philip Keefer, 'Protection Against a Capricious State: French Investment and Spanish Railroads, 1845–1875,' *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 56, no. 1 (1996), pp. 170–92; Martin Blinkhorn, 'Spain: the "Spanish Problem" and the Imperial Myth,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1980), pp. 5–25; and Robert Kern, *Liberals, Reformers, and Caciques in Restoration Spain 1875–1909* (Albuquerque, NM, 1974).

reform in Cuba. The system of provincial *caciquismo* (patronage), underpinning the early Restoration regime (1874–98) in Spain, articulated closely with transatlantic interest groups fuelled by colonial incentives in Cuba. Corrupt bureaucratic and private groups actively fought and lobbied against Cuban creole reformists to keep Cuba under strict control at any cost, including colonial conflict and war.

This article examines the specific cycles, causal factors and long-term costs of administrative corruption in Cuba during the nineteenth century. The study first analyses the roots of colonial bureaucratic corruption in the early part of the century when unofficial rules shielding illegal slave trade and other unruly loyalist transgressions defeated previous efforts at administrative reform. Colonial bureaucratic corruption is then examined in two successive periods of dictatorial power: that exerted by captain generals (1833–68) and that prevailing in colonial civil war (1868–78). In these institutional settings authorities mostly condoned corruption under pressure from loyalists demanding unlawful reward or compensation for their militant support to Spain's stern control in Cuba. Finally, the article addresses the persistence of relatively high levels of corruption despite partial colonial reform (1879–95), and ultimate separation from Spain (1898).

Different types of bureaucratic corruption discussed include bribing, graft, connivance in the contraband of goods and slaves, embezzlement, administrative abuse and accounting fraud.[6] The object of this wide research survey is to clarify the specific ways different modalities of corruption affected the general public interest of the Spanish colonial state and Cuban civil society, and to identify which specific groups within the colonial administrative and business sectors were principally involved. The essay also provides estimates of relative financial and fiscal costs associated with corruption (as indicators of actual levels of bureaucratic corruption reported by internal administrative investigations), especially for the periods 1868–78 and 1880–90 when unequal press and literary coverage indicated varying public perceptions of corruption.

In more general terms this essay makes a case for a historical and institutional perspective in the study of corruption.[7] Historians can use an array

[6] Analysis in this study centres on administrative corruption rather than electoral corruption. This is in part due to the minor role played by elections in Cuba's insufficiently reformed colonial system until the 1880s. On late colonial elections see Inés Roldán de Montaud's pioneering *La Restauración en Cuba. El fracaso de un proceso reformista* (Madrid, 2000). For a general historiographical approach to electoral corruption see Eduardo Posada-Carbó, 'Electoral Juggling: A Comparative History of the Corruption of Suffrage in Latin America, 1830–1930,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2000), pp. 611–44.

[7] Institutional approaches to the study of corruption recognise it as a serious problem for efficient economic rules, property rights, transaction costs, democratic governance, civil

of declassified, confidential government and judicial records to gauge in detail fluctuating levels of corruption over time, the economic and institutional costs of corruption, as well as its political and ideological impact. Although the analysis of public perceptions of corruption may be a useful though indirect tool for the study of corruption,[8] historians do not need to rely exclusively on perceptions to estimate real levels of corruption in different periods and institutional settings.[9] Historical analysis can also identify established corruption patterns and the interest groups behind them.[10] All this historical evidence can be used to disprove the supposed benefits of corruption as a 'lubricant' in overly regulated and bureaucratised systems.[11] Likewise, an historical institutional perspective is useful to challenge recent culturally deterministic views on corruption.[12]

Bases of colonial corruption (1800–33)

In reaction to the occupation of Havana by British forces in 1762, Spain implemented strategic changes that ultimately transformed Cuba into the crown jewel of nineteenth-century Spanish colonialism. Unlike other less successful Bourbon reforms elsewhere in Spanish America, the military and administrative reforms in Cuba produced a more efficient management of

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society, and economic growth in developing countries that strive for economic and institutional reform: Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (New York, 1990); Kimberly Elliott (ed.), *Corruption and the Global Economy* (Washington, DC, 1997); Alan Doig and Robin Theobald (eds.), *Corruption and Democratisation* (London, 2000); Robert Williams and Alan Doig (eds.), *Controlling Corruption* (Cheltenham, 2000).

[8] Statistical studies of contemporary corruption are based on more or less static, comparative models of indices measuring 'perceptions of corruption' on the basis of interviews and polls. These perception indices can fluctuate radically with periodic corruption scandals. Paolo Mauro, 'Corruption and Growth,' *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 110, no. 3 (1995), pp. 681–712.

[9] Joel Hurstfield, *Freedom, Corruption, and Government in Elizabethan England* (London, 1973), chap. 4, argues a difference in real levels of corruption in two distinct periods of institutionalised political patronage; Linda Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (Boston, 1990), chap. 1, limits her analysis to enhanced public perceptions and rhetoric.

[10] On recent approaches to 'hard data' on corruption, R. Di Tella and W. Savedoff (eds.), *Diagnosis Corruption: Fraud in Latin America's Hospitals* (Washington, DC, 2001); Graham K. Wilson, *Interest Groups* (Oxford, 1990).

[11] Nathaniel Leff, 'Economic Development through Bureaucratic Corruption,' *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1964), pp. 8–14. See also Heidenheimer et al., *Political Corruption*. This perspective has been overtaken by the recent eruption of corruption studies, but it remains influential, especially among Latin Americanists.

[12] Seymour Martin Lipset and Gabriel Salman Lenz, 'Corruption, Culture, and Markets', in Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (eds.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York, 2000), pp. 112–24.

colonial finances and effective relaxation of extreme restrictions to trade. Reforms were sustained by a negotiated official collaboration with Havana patricians representing sugar, cattle and commercial interests.[13] These changes challenged customary venal procedures, articulating local interests with imperial needs to meet the administrative costs of the colony.[14] The overhauled and better-paid colonial administration addressed corruption in Cuba as a damaging and punishable practice against state interests.[15] Gradual liberalisation of trade conceded to the Cuban elite between 1765 and 1818 reduced incentives for corrupt liaisons between business interests and the colonial bureaucracy.

Despite the progress made by the Bourbon reforms toward administrative and financial efficiency in Cuba, barriers to an effective curbing of bureaucratic corruption persisted in the early 1800s. Colonial officials in collusion with smugglers defied the efforts of zealous and empowered treasury intendants. Trade liberalisation conceded to local interests was only partial, and tariffs for imported goods remained high. Lingering internal and external trade regulations on items besides sugar and slaves still provided some incentives for a corrupt link between provincial business interests and colonial officers. The outgoing contraband of heavily regulated cattle and tobacco and other local products, and the incoming contraband of cheap foreign goods, was recognised as very difficult or impossible to eradicate.[16] However, the occasional prosecution and imprisonment of corrupt treasury officers, and official rewards for the interception and seizure of smuggled articles,

[13] On the degree of success of the Bourbon reforms, see Stanley Stein, 'Bureaucracy and Business in Spanish America, 1759–1804: Failure of a Bourbon Reform in Mexico and Peru,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 61, no. 1 (1981), pp. 2–28, and ensuing debate. For the Cuban case see: Allan Kuethe, 'Guns, Subsidies, and Commercial Privilege: Some Historical Factors in the Emergence of the Cuban National Character, 1763–1815,' *Cuban Studies*, vol. 16 (1986), pp. 123–39, and *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville, 1986); Allan Kuethe and G. Douglas Inglis, 'Absolutism and Enlightened Reform: Charles III, the Establishment of the *Alcabala*, and Commercial Reorganisation in Cuba,' *Past and Present*, no. 109 (1985), pp. 118–43; and Josep Fradera, *Gobernar colonias* (Barcelona, 1999), pp. 109–11.

[14] Robert W. Patch, 'Imperial Politics and Local Economy in Colonial Central America 1670–1770,' *Past and Present*, no. 143 (1994), pp. 77–107; Lance R. Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, 1997); Kenneth J. Andrien, 'Corruption, Inefficiency, and Imperial Decline in the Seventeenth-Century Viceroyalty of Peru,' *The Americas*, vol. 41 (1984), pp. 1–20; Anthony McFarlane, 'Political Corruption and Reform in Bourbon Spanish America,' in Little and Posada-Carbó (eds.), *Political Corruption*, pp. 41–63; Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, *Santiago de Cuba desde su fundación hasta la Guerra de los Diez Años* (Santiago de Cuba, 1996), p. 57.

[15] 'Instrucción de D. Juan Ign[ac]io Urriza a Dn. José Pablo Valiente sobre la Intendencia [de Ejército y Hacienda] de la Habana,' Havana, 24 May 1787, Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana (hereafter BNJM), Colección Manuscrita (C.M.) Vidal Morales, vol. 82, no. 2, pp. 41–2.

[16] 'Instrucción de Urriza a Valiente', pp. 42–3.

contributed to keeping overall levels of corruption under control before the 1820s.[17]

Leaders of the Havana elite had exerted legal and political efforts to deepen trade liberalisation and eradicate monopolies that restricted theit growing interests in foreign trade, sugar, and the supply of slaves. This approach implied keeping bureaucratic corruption under certain limits. Francisco Arango y Parreño (1765–1837) opposed the tobacco monopoly and other restrictive policies that bred corruption in public administration. Arango led a long and complex struggle that achieved liberalisation of the slave trade (1788–9), abolition of the tobacco monopoly (1817), and freer general trade (1818). His reformist efforts also targeted lingering corrupt practices in the colonial treasury administration. Inevitably Arango and his supporters clashed with venal officials associated with dishonest local interests and the royal favourite Manuel Godoy (1792–1808).[18] For a short yet crucial period (1824–5) Arango also served as treasury intendant general at a time when that post still had a degree of autonomy from the captain general. The management strategy followed by Arango as intendant general was to reduce costs and increase revenues in part by curtailing scandalous cases of contraband and corruption in Havana's customs. He introduced a new tariff code to simplify and rationalise customs collection and administration.[19] This action followed the enactment of a free-trade edict in 1818 and official regulation against fraud and smuggling.[20] Key policy incentives for corruption were thus momentarily curtailed. Arango's innovative fiscal administrative reforms were initially continued by his successor and protégé, Claudio Martínez de Pinillos, the Conde de Villanueva (1780–1852). A creole in charge of the treasury intendancy with some short interruptions between 1825 and 1851, Villanueva was responsible for an unprecedented increase in the Cuban customs revenues.[21]

[17] *Ibid*., pp. 25–31. See also Sherry Johnson, ' "La Guerra Contra los Habitantes de los Arrabales": Changing Patterns of Land Use and Land Tenancy in and Around Havana, 1763–1800,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 77, no. 2 (1997), pp. 181–209.

[18] Francisco Ponte Domínguez, *Arango y Parreño. El estadista colonial* (Havana, 1937), p. 168; Anastasio Carrillo y Arango, *Elogio histórico del excelentísimo señor D. Francisco Arango y Parreño* (Madrid, 1862), p. 52; Francisco Arango y Parreño, *Obras de don Francisco Arango y Parreño* (Havana, 1952), vol. 1, p. 44; William W. Pierson, 'Francisco Arango y Parreño,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1936), p. 473, note 34. On the corrupt liasons of Rafael Gómez Roubaud, former treasury intendant and enemy of Arango, see Martínez de Pinillos to Arango, Cadiz, 23 April 1811 and 17 Sept. 1812, in BNJM, C. M. Morales, vol. 82, no. 5; *Suplemento al Diario de la Habana*, no. 700, in BNJM, C. M. Morales, v. 79.

[19] Ponte Domínguez, *Arango y Parreño*, pp. 282–3.

[20] Pierson, 'Arango y Parreño,' p. 475, note 38.

[21] Ramón de La Sagra, *Breve idea de la administración del comercio y de las rentas y gastos de la Isla de Cuba durante los años de 1826 a 1834* (Paris, 1836), pp. 1, 8; Gil Gelpí y Ferro, *Historia de la revolución y guerra de Cuba* (Havana, 1887–9), vol. 1, p. 23. Under Villanueva fiscal revenues increased 40 per cent between 1825 and 1826, Candelaria Sáiz Pastor, 'El colonialismo

Creole-led legal struggles for political economic and administrative reforms, although helpful in limiting exaggerated corruption, certainly did not eliminate entrenched corrupt practices. Publicised charges against intendant general Alejandro Ramírez in 1820, and the rebuttals they stirred, led to a heightened public awareness of the issue of corruption.[22] Cases of embezzlement (*desfalco*) of royal funds in Havana's treasury and mail administration were periodically discovered and prosecuted.[23] Corruption among the military before 1825 included thefts by officers who had gambling habits.[24] Key words used at the time to designate cases of administrative corruption included *desfalco*, *fraude*, *defraudación*, *abusos* and *alcances*.

The dubious implementation of the official ban of the slave trade (1820), and the enlarged military and loyalist presence in the island, following the independence of mainland Spanish America in the early 1820s, were the two main factors that contributed to the ultimate derailment of reformist efforts at controlling administrative corruption in the island. Among the consequences there was a well-documented and dramatic increase in the levels of colonial bureaucratic corruption in Santiago de Cuba. Authorities in Havana and Madrid received a rising number of complaints and accusations against local governors, treasury employees, judges, and lawyers of Santiago. In two petitions sent to Madrid in 1830 and 1831, a group of distinguished members of the regional elite accused Santiago's governor, Francisco Illas, and his associates of serious administrative and moral corruption. Illas was said to have bought powerful official protection from the Spanish minister of war and two royal counsellors of the Council of Indies, through the mediation of Illas' son, a military officer living scandalously in Madrid. Illas misappropriated funds of municipal public works for personal gain, accepted bribes for abusing his authority in favour of some neighbours and against others, and intimidated the city dwellers with vengeful acts.[25]

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español en el Caribe durante el siglo XIX: el caso cubano', in Consuelo Naranjo and Tomás Mallo (eds.), *Cuba perla de las Antillas* (Madrid, 1994), pp. 213–21.

[22] 'Documentos relativos a las difamaciones publicadas en el *Tío Bartolo* contra el Intendente de Hacienda Alejandro Ramírez en el manejo de su cargo,' Alejandro Ramírez, *Exposición del Intendente del Ejército Alejandro Ramírez al público de la Habana sobre imputaciones que le hace de haberse enriquecido a expensas del erario público* (Havana, 1820), in BNJM, C. M. Morales, vol. 79, nos. 28–29; *Tío Bartolo*, no. 6 (1820), pp. 21–4.

[23] A conspicuous case of *desfalco* involved a long and costly process of investigation and prosecution (1826–1838) of two successive top administrators of the mail service, José Fuertes, who died in 1817 owing 125,816 pesos, and Félix López Ayllón. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereafter AHN), Ultramar-Cuba-Gobierno (U.C.G.), leg. 4605, exps. 1–5, 9.

[24] In 1824 First Corporal Ignacio Gonzales deserted and fled after gambling and losing 400 pesos he was transporting from Villa Clara to pay the salaries of the troops at the garrison of Jagua. ANC, Intendencia General de Hacienda (I.G.H.), año 1824, leg. 417, exp. 15½.

[25] 'Instancia sin curso. 9 de agosto de 1830 y 10 abril 1831. Representaciones de varios individuos de Santiago de Cuba contra el Gobernador D. Francisco Illas,' signed by

In 1831 Captain General Dionisio Vives received one signed and two anonymous letters with bitter complaints and threats, this time against the provincial intendant and other treasury officers of Santiago de Cuba. Six retired petty officers and soldiers signed the first letter of crude handwriting and grammar. They complained that, despite 'spending our youth at the service of our beloved sovereign with full loyalty, tainting the soil with our own blood', some of them had been forced to peddle the streets because their wages had been delayed for three months. They attributed this abusive delay to the corrupt actions of the local treasury officers. This problem was not new; it had existed for at least the past five years. The provincial intendant (officially earning only 4,000 pesos a year), treasurer and customs' wardens were considered 'shameless thieves for whom all the treasury proceeds were not enough'. They all had arrived poor or heavily indebted to occupy their posts and, in a short time, had acquired enough money to gamble, rent or buy luxurious houses and coffee groves, fancy carriages and horses, and support mistresses.[26] The anonymous letters complained about delays in pay and also denounced obvious cases of contraband allowed by local customs officers. Vives forwarded all these letters to the treasury intendant general, Conde de Villanueva, who, the ever-cautious top bureaucrat, acknowledged that he had received similar complaints against Santiago's officials. Citing passion and revenge as possible motives for such charges, Villanueva suggested that Vives request a confidential, independent report from the military commander of the eastern province.

The provincial commander's report was a scathing confirmation of the suspected illegal practices of Santiago's treasury officers. A very negative, and potentially dangerous, public opinion had been formed against those officials. Despite local revenues being higher than the expenditures, the army's local battalions had not been paid for more than three months. The reason for this state of affairs, according to public opinion and ample evidence corroborating it, was the 'vice of corruption among those who handle funds … the greed of corrupted employees [that] has no limits'.[27] A sweeping investigation and prosecution of corrupt officials active during 1829–34 was carried out by a special *visitador* (judge), who uncovered enough evidence to

Augusto Portuondo, Francisco Moro, Félix Pruna, Fernando Kindelán, José E. Maldonado, Manuel Justiz, and Manuel Miyares. AHN, Ultramar-Cuba-Hacienda (U.C.H.), leg. 2852 (no exp. number). Illas had been reinstated in his post allegedly thanks to the influence in Madrid of the minister of war and his wife, the high-ranking bureaucrat Jorge Latorre and the *consejeros de Indias* N. Albizu and Francisco Javier Caso.

[26] Pedro Ferrera, José Aguilar, Agustín Casero, Juan León, José Gazas, and Miguel More to Captain General, Santiago de Cuba, 5 Aug. 1831, ANC, I.G.H., año 1831, leg. 417, exp. 16.

[27] Confidential report by the commander general of the Departamento Oriental, attached to letter by Vives to Villanueva, Havana, 7 Dec. 1831, ANC, I.G.H., año 1831, leg. 417, exp. 16. See also Villanueva to Captain General, Havana, 17 Oct. 1831, *ibid.*

sentence the ousting of several mid-ranking officers, thereafter prohibited from holding public office. However, the guilty individuals were not imprisoned. The mild punishment inflicted in these legally verified cases of corruption was also inefficacious because, years later, at least one of the ousted officers held another public post.[28] In other corruption trials in Santiago de Cuba, the judges and lawyers accused of bribery and sponsoring illegal slave deals remained unpunished.[29]

The liberalised slave trade to Cuba was challenged by the 1817 agreement between the British and Spanish crowns to prohibit the slave trade in Spanish possessions by 30 May 1820.[30] This measure, which also outlawed the purchase of slaves from illegal shipments, was supervised by the British navy and diplomatic agents. Planters in Cuba needed slaves from Africa (*bozales*) to supply the labour necessary for sugar production, but the ban increased the cost of importing slaves to Cuba, jeopardising the interests of planters and the exorbitant profits of slave traders.[31] Consequently, a conniving understanding between planters, slave traffickers (*negreros*) and corrupt officials facilitated the clandestine and systematic arrival of *bozales*, who were swiftly taken to private estates where authorities seldom enforced their inquiries. This type of corruption did not cause loss of official revenues since Spanish fiscal authorities could no longer charge duties on illegally imported slaves. However, illegal entry of slaves to Cuba, oiled by the bribing of authorities, caused social and human harm for the personal gain of a few, and it placed Spain's diplomatic prestige and foreign credit at stake. Moreover, this unofficial set of rules seriously undermined legal and institutional bases in Cuba.[32]

[28] ANC, Hac., año 1834, leg. 418, no. 39. In 1842 Morales Tulleda held the position of *comisario ordenador* paid by the Ministry of the Navy, Provincial Intendant José Aguila to the Ministry of Hacienda, Santiago de Cuba, 19 April 1842. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 637 (2), exp. 34, doc. 2.

[29] AHN, Ultramar-Cuba-Gracia y Justicia (U.C.G.J.), leg. 1613 (1), exp. 5, docs. 3 and 5; exp. 1, doc. 1.

[30] On official corruption linked to illegal slave trading, see David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1980); Robert Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict Between Empires Over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown, CT, 1988); and Enrique Sosa Rodríguez, *Negreros catalanes y gaditanos en la trata cubana 1827–1833* (Havana, 1998).

[31] See, for example, the case of Antonio Frías, a conspicuous slave merchant, father of Francisco Frías y Jacot, Conde de Pozos Dulces, and father-in-law of Narciso López: 'una empresa como la de embiar un barco en busca de esclavos al Africa, decide la suerte y la fortuna de negociantes acaudalados, y de un golpe los deja u opulentos o miserables'. Petition in the name of Frías, Madrid, 1 Oct. 1819. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 808 (2), exp. 17, doc. 4, ff. 26v–27v.

[32] Another formal treaty outlawing the slave trade signed between Brazil and Great Britain in 1826 was not enforced until 1850 (Queiroz Law), when the Brazilian political elite decided to effectively eradicate the illegal trade of slaves, according to one specialist, in order to preclude slave rebellions, especially among recent arrivals. Unlike Spanish colonial authorities in Cuba, Brazilian authorities thus acted to avoid jeopardising the institutions and

The first officially recorded case of illegal slave trade was that of the Spanish brigantine *Fellus* conspicuously arriving in Havana with 168 slaves on November 1 1820, a date beyond that allowed by the 1817 treaty.[33] Among the numerous subsequent, and more covert, entries of slaves, one of the most prominent occurred through the port of Mariel in 1833 under the organisation of Lieutenant Colonel Antonio López Mendoza. Yet, Captain General Mariano Ricafort did not punish López. To avoid inquiries into his own administration, Ricafort simply pointed to his past meritorious service and faithful compliance with the royal prohibition on the slave trade.[34] Other captain generals also engaged in such shady deals and administrative permissiveness for personal and political motivations.

In conjunction with official sheltering of the prohibited slave trafficking, increased administrative corruption in the 1820s intertwined the strategic and political interests of loyalist bureaucrats, the military, and the senior colonial authorities. The honesty and discipline of public servants and troops had declined considerably during the administration of Captain General Vives (1823–32) and that of his successor Ricafort (1832–4). Spain had lost almost all of its Spanish American colonies by the mid 1820s, resulting in an intensified loyalist influx that was a factor in the weakening of colonial bureaucratic regulation within Cuba. Vives made a shrewd use of his enhanced political-military powers to repress any signs of creole pro-independence movements and conspiracies inspired by other Spanish American struggles. He had to establish a pragmatic understating with the emergent peninsular and loyalist military personnel arriving from an absolutist Spain and its former Spanish American territories. The declining morale of the defeated forces, combined with notorious indiscipline among new recruits arriving from Spain, threatened to weaken Vives' stance against Cuban pro-independence conspiracies.[35] Therefore, in return for a staunch, loyalist support of Spanish rule

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stability of their imperial constitutional order. Dale Graden, 'An Act "Even of Public Security": Slave Resistance, Social Tensions, and the End of the International Slave Trade to Brazil, 1835–1856,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 2 (1996), pp. 249–82.

[33] Captain General Juan Manuel Cagigal to Intendant Alejandro Ramírez, Havana 11 Dec. 1820, ANC, Gobierno Superior Civil (G.S.C.), año 1820, leg. 1675, no. 83715.

[34] 'Espediente formado sobre la queja que da el administrador de rentas reales del Mariel con respecto al desembarco de un cargamento de negros bozales por el bergantín [español] 'Tres Amigos' cuya descarga dispuso se hiciera el comandante Dn. Antonio López Mendoza', ANC, G.S.C., año 1833, leg. 1022, no. 35425. For Ricafort's request to be exonerated from a *juicio de residencia*. AHN, U.C.G.J., leg. 1613 (2), exp. 39.

[35] As early as 1823 political and administrative conflicts and abuses in Puerto Príncipe were stirred by the presence of the unruly expeditionary regiment of León stationed there. Public outrage in Puerto Príncipe and Havana demanded the captain general's compliance with royal orders to transfer the regiment elsewhere. 'Nuevas ocurrencias en Puerto Príncipe,' *El Americano Libre*, No. 38, 9 February 1823, pp. 6–8; 'Puerto Príncipe,' *El Revisor Político Literario* (Habana, 1823), no. 38, 28 May 1823, pp. 1–7.

(*españolismo*) in Cuba, Vives condoned flagrant administrative abuses that constituted different forms of corruption.[36]

The unprecedented informal rules condoning illicit administrative activities established a new ratio between the costs and benefits of engaging in corruption, a calculation that increasingly favoured corrupt options among the colonial administrators. The allowance granted to loyalist rank and file contributed furthermore to their unruliness and to a rise in overall crime levels by the time captain general Miguel Tacón took command of the island on 1 June 1834.

Evolving corruption (1834–68)

During his administration Tacón (1834–8) aimed at improving the enforcement of public order and military and administrative discipline. He faced an alarming degree of demoralisation and corruption in Cuba just after Fernando VII's death, which unleashed a serious dynastic and political turmoil in Spain known as the first Carlist War.[37] Tacón attributed the high incidence of crime in Havana and its environs to the presence of thousands of unemployed, white and coloured persons often engaged in gambling, fraud, and fraudulent litigation. Havana was a haven for many loyalists defeated and dispossessed by Spanish American independence as well as being a destination point for unruly peninsular recruits and political exiles from war-torn Spain.[38]

According to Tacón, the municipal police in Havana was ineffective against crime as well as abusive toward store-owners and the public.[39] Private contractors supplying food to prisoners effectively maximised their profits by starving them. Abuses in the administration of military hospitals were notorious. Military discipline had reached very low levels. Troops performed custodial services for private parties. Even worse, troops 'employed

[36] Justo Zaragoza, *Las insurrecciones de Cuba. Apuntes para la historia política de esta Isla en el presente siglo* (Madrid, 1873), 2 vols., cited by Benjamín de Céspedes, *La prostitución en la ciudad de la Habana*, prologue by Enrique José Varona (Havana, 1888), pp. 71–2. One such case of bureaucratic condoning of zealousness and abuse involved accusations against a 36-year-old retired sergeant of the coloured Batallón de Pardos, Pedro Cortés, for supposedly pronouncing subversive words against Spaniards in a *fonda* owned by a Spaniard: ANC, Comisión Militar (C.M.), año 1826, leg. 4, exp. 2.

[37] Reactionary protest against liberal change in Spain opposed the succession of Fernando's daughter, Isabel, favouring his brother Carlos. Civil war and regional factionalism ensued: Esdaile, *Spain*, pp. 65–8.

[38] Manuel Moreno Fraginals and José Moreno Masó, *Guerra, migración y muerte* (*El ejército español en Cuba como vía migratoria*) (Colombres, Asturias, 1993), pp. 47–50.

[39] Miguel Tacón, *Relación del Gobierno Superior y Capitanía General de la Isla de Cuba estendida por el Teniente General don Miguel Tacón, marqués de la Unión de Cuba al hacer entrega de dichos mandos a su sucesor el Exmo. Señor Joaquín de Ezpeleta* (Mexico, 1838), pp. 5–7.

themselves in protecting precisely that which they were supposed to punish'.[40] After the mandatory three or four years of military service, common soldiers were not sent back to Spain because new recruits were not arriving in sufficient numbers. Many forced recruits had been sentenced for crimes in Spain and were 'corrupted people' who contributed to the low morality of the army's units.[41] Tacón attempted to reorganise the army and police to gain the loyalty of the 'worthy defenders of the rights of Isabel II and national integrity'.[42]

It is not surprising that corrupt practices at higher levels did not surface sufficiently in Tacón's official governmental account of 1838. His open enmity toward the creole elite, and his reliance on peninsular capitalists linked to the forbidden slave trade, attracted harsh criticism.[43] Tacón was accused of receiving bribery payments per each slave illegally introduced to Cuba up to a total of 450,000 pesos.[44] (At the time an adult male slave was worth 400 pesos.) His contracting deals for military and public works were also questioned, especially contracts for arms supplies with slave trader Julián de Zulueta, and the building of a new fish market, and the Teatro 'Tacón' with the rag-to-riches Catalan businessman and slave trader Francisco Martí y Torrens.[45] Creole reformists, such as José Antonio Saco, who insisted on the strict observance of the laws banning the slave trade, became sworn enemies of Spanish authorities, *negreros*, and loyalists.[46]

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 44–5.

[41] Report by Francisco Velasco, commander of the Havana regiment, to Tacón, 16 Oct. 1834, *ibid.*, appendix 5, pp. 65–7.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[43] According to Tacón – embittered by the 'ingratitud de los Americanos' he had experienced in other parts of Spanish America – the 'hijos del país' in Cuba carried 'en la masa de la sangre su tendencia a sacudir su dominación de la Metrópoli … Proporcionaseles ocasión de desplegar su genio, y ella abortaría otra república quizá más borrascosa y menos morigerada que las que se dan en los antiguos dominios españoles'. Tacón to Secretario de lo Interior, No. 13 Reservado, Habana, 31 Jan. 1836 (re-affirming and citing his own previous report on 30 June 1835), Servicio Histórico Militar, Madrid (hereafter SHM), Documentos de Cuba (D.C.), caja 65, doc. 5745.6, pp. 4–10.

[44] Juan Pérez de la Riva, 'Introducción: el general don Miguel Tacón y su época', in Pérez de la Riva (ed.), *Correspondencia reservada del Capitán General don Miguel Tacón con el gobierno de Madrid, 1834–1836* (Havana, 1963), pp. 41–3, citing Domingo del Monte, *Escritos* (Havana, 1929), vol. 1, p. 143; Paquette, *Sugar is Made With Blood*, pp. 92, 135; José Cayuela, *Bahía de Ultramar. España y Cuba en el siglo XIX. El control de las relaciones coloniales* (Madrid, 1993), p. 233.

[45] Paquette, *Sugar is Made With Blood*, p. 218; Angel Bahamonde and José Cayuela, *Hacer las Américas. Las élites colonials españolas en el siglo XIX* (Madrid, 1991), pp. 34–5; Anonymous, *Apuntaciones de un empleado de Real Hacienda en vindicación de la Superintendencia General Delegada de la Isla de Cuba, bajo el mando del escelentísimo señor conde de Villanueva* … (Key West, 1838), p. 9.

[46] Fernando Ortiz, 'Prologue,' in José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el Nuevo Mundo y en especial en los países américo-hispanos* (Havana, 1938), pp. xxv–xxiii.

The local financial needs of Tacón's government and its venal peninsular entourage collided with Intendant General Villanueva's local and overseas financial responsibilities. Villanueva supervised the allocations and expenses of the local bureaucracy, military, official contractors, development office (Junta de Fomento), and other semi-official educational and charitable agencies in Cuba. Pressed by mounting local expenditures and fund transfers to Spain under his responsibility, Villanueva denied Tacón the allocation of public funds for his special projects and military operations, including an expedition in 1836 against General Manuel Lorenzo's radical liberal uprising in Santiago de Cuba.[47] In consequence, Tacón used less orthodox means to raise funds, setting up an account in the local branch of the government's Banco de San Fernando aided by the bank's director, the conspicuous peninsular slave trafficker Joaquín Gómez, and the peninsular merchant and landowner Conde de la Reunión de Cuba. This bank account received so-called 'voluntary donations' from private depositors, who were granted preference in the 'consignment of seized illegal slaves (*negros emancipados*) under established rules and responsibilities'.[48]

Villanueva was in a particularly delicate situation as intendant general in the 1830s and 1840s, when the deficit-ridden metropolitan treasury depended heavily on Cuban revenues. Villanueva was committed to providing the metropolitan government and its foreign creditors with a reliable source of income.[49] Villanueva's position and prestige depended on securing and delivering these requests from Spain for income, whereas Tacón engaged with loyalist, anti-creole, peninsular capitalists and slave traders.[50] Villanueva, a former representative of the reformist creole elite with strong local interests, had reached an accommodation with suspect royal circles, and a sizable portion of the transfers Villanueva sent officially to Spain provided the official personal emolument (*asignación*) of approximately a million pesos per year to the queen regent, María Cristina.[51]

[47] Anonymous, *Apuntaciones de un empleado*, pp. 3–4.

[48] Tacón, *Relación del Gobierno Superior*, p. 43.

[49] Spanish short-term debt was financed through interest- and discount-bearing IOUs (*libranzas*) honoured by the Cuban treasury. The Spanish government's creditors included the Rothschilds of London. At their maturity, the creditors' agents presented these *libranzas* for discount and payment in Havana. *Libranzas* yielded 11 per cent short-term interest and 18 per cent discount rate: AHN, U.C.H., leg. 618, exp. 10, doc. 1.

[50] In 1824 Villanueva provided the government in Madrid 400,000 pesos 'con su propio crédito' at a time of imperial crisis. Anonymous, *Apuntaciones de un empleado*, p. 21.

[51] Between 1834 and 1839 regular revenue transfers from Cuba conservatively amounted to approximately 9.5 per cent (more if extraordinary transfers are taken into account) of the total metropolitan overall revenues, a considerable increase from practically nothing in 1813–1819. Francisco Comín, *Las cuentas de la hacienda preliberal en España (1800–1855)* (Madrid, 1990), pp. 48–9, 84–5. In the 1830s Villanueva tapped fiscal resources to pay up to 3 million pesos per year in *libranzas*, issued in Spain against the Havana treasury and

Fig. 1. *An annexationist engraving mocking the succession of command between two captain generals. Leopoldo O'Donnell leaves Cuba with his family loaded with the spoils of corruption. Federico Roncali milks the cow of Cuba's treasury and wealth. Claudio Martínez de Pinillos Conde de Villanueva, treasury intendant general, assists by holding the cow's head. Other subaltern authorities demand their part. '**The milk cow and her milkers**'. Author unknown. Philadelphia, Hinckley Engraver, ca. 1848. Fondo Conrado W. Massaguer Díaz, ANC.*

Villanueva's strategic financial responsibilities attracted virulent accusations of corruption linked to the highest metropolitan authorities in the 1830s.[52] A later pro-annexationist cartoon depicted him as a creole administrator who assisted the plundering of Cuban funds by colonial authorities (see Figure 1). An expression of the interested view of a sector of Cuban public opinion in exile, this caricature expresses a radical political view bitterly opposed to Spanish colonial and financial control in Cuba.

In 1849 Villanueva acted as the legal representative of Agustín Muñoz Sánchez, Duque de Riansares – the plebeian second husband of the Spanish

secured by customs revenues and emergency war taxes. In 1840 regular and extraordinary obligations in *libranzas* amounted to 5.4 million pesos that year. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 621, exp. 7, doc. 15.

[52] Anonymous, *Verdaderas causas en que don Juan Alvarez y Mendizabal ha fundado su opinión para que en la isla de Cuba no rija la constitución política de la monarquía española* (Bourdeaux, 1837), pp. 5–17.

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queen mother María Cristina[53] – in establishing a partnership in Havana in 1844 between Muñoz, as shareholder and creditor, and Antonio Parejo, a slave trader and merchant.[54] Muñoz and María Cristina had been Villanueva's powerful contacts in Spain before their political fall in 1840. Muñoz's connections in Cuba contributed to public perceptions of glaring corruption at the very top of the Spanish administration.[55] María Cristina herself was identified as the head of an influential and wealthy 'slave-trafficking society' (*sociedad negrera*) based in Madrid with partners and agents in Cuba.[56] However, captain generals and other colonial authorities in Cuba had greater opportunities of becoming the main beneficiaries of the illegal slave trade.

Substantial evidence exists to show the leniency and interested collusion of several captain generals, and other high-ranking bureaucrats and military, with the slave trade. In fact, among Cuba's captain generals between 1834 and 1869 only Gerónimo Valdés and Juan de la Pezuela seem not to have been involved in the allowance of slave trading. Both displayed earnest efforts at curbing the slave trade. Valdés (1841–3) was recognised even by radical creoles as an honest authority that avoided illegal enrichment.[57] The efforts by Pezuela (1853–4) to mend diplomatic relations with Great Britain – by persecuting the banned slave trading, searching for illegally

[53] María Cristina had secretly married Muñoz in December 1833 soon after the death of her first husband, Fernando VII; the morganatic marriage was publicly formalised only in 1844 and Muñoz granted the title of duque de Riansares. Eduardo Rico, *María Cristina, la reina burguesa* (Barcelona, 1994); Wenceslao Ramírez, *La reina gobernadora doña María Cristina de Borbón* (Madrid, 1925), pp. 161–2; ANC, C.M., año 1834, leg. 10, no. 2, with inserts: 'De Oficio', *Diario de La Habana*, no. 122 (2 May 1834), p. 1, in reference to an article in *Le Courrier des États-Unis*, vol. 7, no. 11 (New York, 5 April 1834), p. 63.

[54] Bahamonde and Cayuela, *Hacer las Américas*, p. 312; deeds of formation (1844) and dissolution (1849) of Sociedad Comercial 'Agustín [Muñoz] Sánchez-Antonio Parejo', Archivo Histórico de Protocolos Notariales de Madrid, prot. no. 25,888. I thank Professor José Cayuela for providing xerox copies of these documents.

[55] Angel Bahamonde and José Cayuela, 'Entre La Habana, París y Madrid: intereses antillanos y trasvase de capitales de María Cristina de Borbón y el duque de Riansares (1835–1873),' *Estudios de Historia Social*, nos. 44–7 (1988), pp. 635–49; Esdaile, *Spain*, pp. 99, 105; 'Secuestro de Bienes de Sa. María Cristina de Borbón [Bienes Nacionales], 1841–1854.' AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos-Ministerio de Hacienda-Serie General, leg. 2581 (1). On María Cristina's investment in sugar estates see Thomas, *Cuba*, pp. 137, 154, 221, citing Juan Pérez de la Riva, 'Riesgo y ventura de San Martín', *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* (June 1967).

[56] Editors of *La Verdad*, *Cuestión negrera de la isla de Cuba por los editores y colaboradores de* '*La Verdad*' (New York, 1851), p. 5.

[57] Editors of *La Verdad*, *Thoughts Upon the Incorporation of Cuba into the American Confederation, in Contra-Position to Those Published by don José Antonio Saco* (New York, 1849), p. 4. Cayuela, *Bahía de Ultramar*, p. 233, confirms this opinion of Valdés; Paquette, *Sugar is Made With Blood*, pp. 145–6. British politicians agreed that Valdés did not take bribes, Murray, *Odious Commerce*, p. 183.

introduced *bozales*, and correcting abuses against *emancipados* – led him into serious conflict with local *negreros*, slave owners, and corrupt authorities.[58]

All the other captain generals of this period – Miguel Tacón, Joaquín Ezpeleta, Pedro Tellez de Girón, Leopoldo O'Donnell, Federico Roncali, José Gutiérrez de la Concha, Valentín Cañedo, Francisco Serrano, and Domingo Dulce – were lenient toward the illegal slave trade, actively protected it or received illegal payments by slave traders.[59] These corrupt activities were carefully monitored and documented by British diplomatic agents and navy officers. An important British informer, the radical abolitionist David Turnbull, certainly exaggerated some of his accusations, but evidence of official high-ranking corruption linked to illegal slave trading in Cuba is amply documented in British official diplomatic archives and publications.[60]

In July 1839, during Ezpeleta's administration, the coastal schooner 'Amistad' was violently hijacked by 53 *bozales* who were being transported from Havana to Puerto Príncipe. This action caused a major international scandal, which unmasked the double standards of authorities in Cuba regarding the slave trade.[61] O'Donnell (1843–8) expressly favoured slave traders, took bribes that made him wealthy (see Figure 1), and launched the cruel repression of the conspiracy of La Escalera that made scapegoats of prominent free blacks. Roncali (1848–50) believed in keeping creole demands at bay by preserving the relatively large size of the slave population.[62] This could only be achieved by allowing new, illegal shipments of slaves. During the first administration of Gutiérrez de la Concha (1850–2) the entrance of slaves remained undiminished. It increased dramatically by twofold under captain general Cañedo (1852–3).[63]

Captain General Pezuela unveiled a grim state of official corruption in 1854. He reported challenges to his authority by greedy 'peninsular

[58] Pezuela to Minister of War, Havana 21 Sept. 1854. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648 (2), exp. 37, doc. 2. Pezuela, however, had other racially biased, anti-annexionist motivations. See Joan Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets! Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (Pittsburgh, 1998), p. 69.

[59] Cayuela, *Bahía de Ultramar*, pp. 234–7; Murray, *Odious Commerce*, passim., Paquette, *Sugar is Made With Blood*, pp. 139, 145–6.

[60] Public Record Office (Kew, London), Foreign Office Records, F.O. 84 (Slave Trade), well researched by Murray and Paquette. See also *British Parliamentary Papers on Slave Trade*, and Juan Pérez de la Riva and Aurelio Cortés, '1860. Un diplomático inglés informa sobre la trata clandestina en Cuba: Jos. Tucker Crawford,' *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí*, vol. 63, no. 1 (1972), pp. 85–107.

[61] ANC, G.S.C., año 1839, leg. 1272, exp. 49909; Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad: The Saga of a Slave Revolt and its Impact on American Abolition, Law, and Diplomacy* (New York, 1987); Paquette, *Sugar is Made With Blood*, p. 188.

[62] SHM, D.C., caja 66, no. 5746.19, 133–50.

[63] Hondeau to Conde de Alcoy, Madrid 7 Feb. 1853. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 3549, exp. 1, doc. 3; *ibid.*, leg. 4642 (1), exp. 12, doc. 1.

Catalans',[64] 'traffickers of negroes and other people of low life', and a group self-denominated 'Friends of General Concha'. Among the latter group he identified 'drunkards and tricksters led by the clerical official [*oficial de secretaría*], on whose head dangled a death sentence … [Dionisio] Galiano … all of whom are set to transform through any means available the unfortunate government of this island into one of partisanship, intolerance, and exclusivity'.[65] Pezuela, acting as *ad hoc* treasury intendant general, ousted five employees of the customs administration in Matanzas due to their 'lack of morals and bad behaviour'.[66] He also ousted the lieutenant governors and treasury officials of Trinidad and Sancti Spíritus following the illegal introduction of 650 *bozales* in those jurisdictions.[67]

The alliance between corrupt officials, intolerant loyalists, slave traders, and government contractors was consolidated under the second, centralising administration of Gutiérrez de la Concha (1854–8). Gutiérrez de la Concha blamed Pezuela for risking the loss of support from loyalists (*partido peninsular*) with his moralising and anti-slave trade measures amid annexationist threats.[68] The formation of a volunteer militia, the Cuerpo de Voluntarios by Gutiérrez de la Concha in 1855, proved fateful in reinforcing the *partido peninsular* and the corrupt tendencies in its midst. The loyalist coalition played a central role in the growing tide of administrative corruption that reached its peak during the Ten Years' War (1868–78). Despite mounting corruption, Gutiérrez de la Concha gave only rhetorical support for the repression of the illegal slave trade. He admitted that limiting the slave trade was 'a sad necessity if we only consider the immorality and corruption that this widespread censured traffic carries with it'.[69]

In 1860 Captain General Francisco Serrano (1859–62) reported with embarrassment the scandalous landing of 600 *bozales* in Trinidad allowed by public officers bribed by Serrano's own relative, José Mariano Borrell.[70]

[64] Pezuela to President of Council of Ministers, Havana 18 May 1854. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4642 (1), exp. 6, doc. 1.

[65] Pezuela to Minister of War, Havana 21 Sept. 1854. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648 (2), exp. 37, doc. 2.

[66] Pezuela to President of Council of Ministers, Havana 17 Feb. 1854. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 688 (1), exp. 1. See also D.M. Estorch, *Apuntes para la historia de la administración del marqués de la Pezuela en la Isla de Cuba desde 3 de diciembre de 1853 hasta 21 de setiembre de 1854* (Madrid, 1856), pp. 8–10.

[67] SHM, D.C., May–July 1854, xerox copies kindly provided by José Cayuela.

[68] José Gutiérrez de la Concha, *Memoria dirigida al Exmo. Sr. D. Francisco Serrano y Domínguez, Capitán General de la Isla de Cuba* (Madrid, 1861), pp. 6–7.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[70] '1861. Desembarco de negros en Trinidad; cantidad destinada al marqués de Torremejía'. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648, exp. 16, docs. 1–9. Letters from Serrano to Minister of War, Havana 12 Nov. 1860; 12 Dec. 1860; 6 Jan. 1861, *ibid.*, docs. 1, 2, and 5.

Serrano attempted a swift closure of this affair without waiting upon a legal inquest, arguing that in Cuba it was impossible

> … to conduct judicial inquiries of satisfactory results. Everyone who brings in negroes thinks he is doing a great service to the country … I could cite not one but a multitude of examples of prominent persons of high social standing who defend with ardour the illegal entry of negroes … which is esteemed a meritorious deed often described as patriotic, and so no one is willing to declare as a formal witness against those authorities that betray their duties.[71]

In 1863 Captain General Dulce (1862–6, 1869) admitted having been deceived by the political governor of Havana, Pedro A. de Navascués, regarding 700 slaves smuggled through Cienfuegos and held in a dangerously crowded estate. The insubordinate Navascués received a substantial bribe from the traffickers and openly defied Dulce's authority.[72] Captain generals also faced a complex situation regarding the legal aspect of curtailing the slave trade. In 1853 Cañedo was confronted by the concerned authorities in Madrid, under diplomatic pressure by the British, to explain the increase in illegally introduced slaves under his administration. He replied that his previous efforts at persecuting the slave trade had clashed with three main obstacles: the lack of general collaboration due to a public opinion favourable to the slave trade; the division of jurisdictions which limited his authority; and the existing legal provisions (article 9 of the 1845 Penal Law) protecting slave owners and hindering official searches of *bozales* in private properties.[73]

Gutiérrez de la Concha, under similar pressure from Madrid during his second administration, also indicated the legal limits to his measures against the slave trade. Moreover, he added information on a sizable landing of slaves in Bahía Honda, in April 1855. Eighty-four sick and dying *bozales* had been abandoned in the nearby countryside to avoid the risk of exposing 'the officers who, as is always the case, are paid by *negreros*, a crime that is not possible to prove in court'.[74] Local authorities had inspected what turned out to be false registrations of slaves in adjacent sugar mills. Gutiérrez de la Concha admitted having left this deceit unpunished to avoid further legal problems with the sugar mill owners. He also admitted having been

[71] Serrano to Minister of War and Ultramar, 6 March 1861. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648, exp. 16, doc. 8.

[72] Dulce to Minister of Ultramar, Havana 28 June 1863. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648 (2), exp. 43, doc. 1; Navascués to Gutiérrez de la Concha, Havana 30 June 1863, *ibid.*, doc. 2.

[73] Cañedo to Minister of Ultramar (Conde de Alcoy), Habana 21 March 1853. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 3549, exp. 1, doc. 6. Cañedo had, in effect, informed Madrid in August 1852 about the landing of approximately 400 *bozales*, near Mariel, consigned by the notorious slave trafficker Joaquín Gómez. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4637 (2), exp. 61, doc. 1.

[74] Gutiérrez de la Concha to Minister of Ultramar, Habana 20 Feb. 1856. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 3549, exp. 5, doc. 4.

informed confidentially and in detail of every illegal arrival of slaves, but argued that he lacked the legal power to act against the offenders.[75]

Official complicity in sheltering the illegal slave trade was, then, not a secret. Offenders often justified this type of corruption originating at the top as a patriotic effort to keep Cuba under a re-centralized colonial rule buttressed by divisive racial policies.[76] The slave trade became a loyalist banner and a source of rewards for senior officials avowedly defending the colony against internal uprisings and external invasions. For example, the lieutenant governor of Guanabacoa, separated from his post in 1853 for collaborating with slave traders and gamblers, argued that he was being punished for his patriotic gestures and services.[77] Moreover, this festering source of duplicity at the top was penetrating the lower ranks of the colonial administration dominated by loyalist peninsular and pro-peninsular creole employees. As Gutiérrez de la Concha argued:

> … colluded malfeasance … is always very difficult to prove, and for that practiced by officers and slave traffickers it is absolutely impossible to obtain the slightest proof. State employees and officers who in public and notorious fashion connive with *negreros* turn against the authority seeking to punish them, accusing it of unfairness and arbitrariness with the certainty that nothing will be legally proven against them. The loss of an official post … is insignificant compared to receiving pile upon pile of gold ounces as reward for the officer's connivance … instead the honour and prestige of the government plummets, immorality and corruption reigns in all the administrative sphere, and new and grave problems occur between Her Majesty's government and that of Great Britain.[78]

This official recognition of corruption, expanding from a core linked to the illegal slave trade into other administrative sectors during the 1850s and 1860s, is corroborated by different sources including cumbersome and inconclusive legal proceedings.[79]

[75] 'Yo he tenido pues conocimiento de todos los incidentes de esos desembarcos; sé, pero todo confidencialmente, con toda seguridad, entre qué propietarios se han distribuido los negros, las fincas en que estaban, y la participación que han tenido los empleados y funcionarios del Gobierno, y hasta qué dinero han recibido', *ibid.*

[76] For confidential opinions of key captain generals, regarding a centralised control on Cuba through a conscious racial 'check and balance' of *peninsulares*, creoles, free people of color, and African slaves, see Roncali to Ministro de Gobernación, Havana 9 Set. 1850, SHM, D.C., caja 66, No. 5746.19, ff. 133–50; Gutiérrez de la Concha to Ministro de Gobernación, Havana 2 July 1851, *ibid.*, ff. 183–94.

[77] Exposición de Vicente Guillén Buzarán, 6 Oct. 1853. AHN, U.C.G., exp. 15, docs. 2 and 3.

[78] Gutiérrez de la Concha to Minister of Ultramar, Havana 20 Feb. 1856. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 3549, exp. 5, doc. 4.

[79] In explaining why there were several trials involving illicit slave trading with sentences pending, the chief judge of Havana wrote, 'Estos procesos se hacen por lo regular voluminosos. El delito principal suele producir otros que afectan la moralidad de los empleados públicos; son negocios complexos que dan lugar a incidentes varios, los cuales

Evidence also indicates that smuggling activities were on the rise during the same period. Customs officials had the difficult task of enforcing increasingly restrictive trade policies and higher tariffs that curbed Cuban foreign trade since the 1840s. For example, milling and overseas transportation interests in Santander, Spain, steadfastly supported drastic limitations to foreign wheat and its milling in Cuba.[80] These trade obstacles encouraged incoming contraband of wheat and flour from the United States and outgoing contraband of tobacco. A judge in the port of Nuevitas, investigating fraud and collusion between customs authorities and merchants in the dispatch of an American vessel, found it difficult even to start the inquiry lacking the support of official enforcement agents.[81] Customs employees were not paid enough for performing their duties, and small rewards for detecting contraband were insufficient to encourage honesty among mid- and lower-ranking customs officials.[82] In 1857, as a result of the illegal arrival of 250 barrels of flour in Matanzas, four customs *carabineros* and their chief lost their lowly paid posts.[83]

Corruption was also spreading to other branches of the colonial administration. The revenues of the profitable and popular lottery in Cuba, under official administration, were defrauded in the amount of 209,232 pesos in 1863–4 according to a protracted legal case against two successive treasury intendants.[84] In Havana, an important regulating institution employed officials

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obstruyen la marcha del procedimiento.' Juan Francisco Alcalde, *Discurso de apertura de la Real Audiencia de La Habana, leído el 2 de enero de 1867, por su regente interino* … (Havana, 1867), pp. 8–9.

[80] Junta de Comercio de Santander, *Exposición que la Junta de Comercio de Santander ha elevado a S.M. la Reina para que prohiba la introducción de trigos extrangeros en la isla de Cuba y Puerto-Rico* (Santander, 1849), p. 4. Against high duties on exports of manufactured tobacco, see Valentín Pardo y Betancourt, *Informe ilustrado y estadístico que de orden del Sr. Intendente … sobre los elementos de riqueza del tabaco* … (Havana, 1863), pp. 22–4. On the negative effects of tariff restrictions for Cuba's terms of trade, see Linda Salvucci and Richard Salvucci, 'Cuba and the Latin American Terms of Trade: Old Theories, New Evidence,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2000), pp. 197–222.

[81] Angel María Revolta to Treasury Intendant, Nuevitas 30 June 1854, in 'Expediente promovido por el Juzgado de la Intendencia sobre fraudes cometidos por la Aduana de Nuevitas en el despacho de la barca americana "Giralt" '. ANC, G.S.C., año 1854, leg. 1665, no. 83221.

[82] 'Distribución de [39,892] pesos que tubieron ingreso en la caja particular de comisos, importe del remate de 4,350 millares de tabaco que resultaron escedentes … en la fragata francesa "Clementina" …', Havana 19 Jan. 1852, in 'Expediente relativo a la reclamaciones suscitadas entre D. Ramón Martínez y D. Patricio María Paz …'. ANC, G.S.C., año 1854, leg. 1665, exp. 83211.

[83] 'Expediente … sobre la separación del aventajado Dn. Carlos Castro y varios carabineros a consecuencia de un desembarco de harina y café qe. trató de hacerse en Matanzas'. ANC, G.S.C., año 1857, leg. 1174, no. 45751.

[84] 'Espediente sobre el desfalco en la Renta de Loterías de 209,232 pesos [fuertes] y cargos que se hacen a los intendentes de Hacienda que fueron, en los años 1863 a 64, Sres. D. Juan

that repeatedly engaged in 'open insubordination … in the form of passive disobedience … and with proven incapacity of executing tasks of even average importance'.[85] Complaints were raised against official contractors of food supply, jail supervision, and public construction in the provinces.[86] The official contractor of the overseas mail transportation, Antonio López & Co. (the owner of which had been engaged in illegal slave trafficking since 1848) was heavily fined for irregularities in fulfilling its responsibilities.[87] In 1854 a civilian engineer and architect protested against the unfair monopoly and abuse exercised by military engineers in the inspection and design of every construction work in the island.[88] 'Abuses' and 'embezzlement' by provincial executive authorities and administrators were often denounced in official correspondence.[89]

Attempts at reforming the administration of colonial justice, widely recognised as corrupt and inefficient, included the establishment in 1840 of the Real Audiencia Pretorial of Havana aimed at stamping out deep-rooted 'abuses of the forum'.[90] Court rules were introduced against false statements and the bribing of lawyers, attorneys, and notaries.[91] However, as in the case of other half-hearted reforms, judicial overhaul floundered. Complaints against the bending of rules in the appointment of judges, and the excessive number of lawyers engaged in falsehood and collusion, were filed in 1843. Disgruntled critics alleged that many families had been ruined because of the

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de Ariza y Palomar y D. Isidro Wall conde Armildez de Toledo'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 800 (2), exp. 10, docs. 1, 3, 4.

85 Captain General to Minister of War and Ultramar, 29 Jan. 1863 [copy], referring to second officer D. Félix Barro, in 'Documentos sobre abusos cometidos en la Inspección General de Sociedad Anónimas, [Mercantiles], de Seguros Mútuos y Ferrocarriles'. ANC, Gobierno General (G.G.), año 1863, leg. 84, no. 3442.

86 'Expediente … promovido por varios vecinos de Matanzas sobre abusos que se cometen en el Presidio de aquella ciudad', ANC, G.S.C., año 1860, leg. 40, no. 2739; 'Expediente promovido sobre abusos en la construcción de un matadero. Guantánamo'. ANC, G.G., leg. 13, exp. 378.

87 'Multas impuestas a la empresa de vapores correos transatlánticos: 90 mil pesos fuertes. Por faltas cometidas en el cumplimiento de las contratas. López y Cia.', 1862–1863. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648 (1), exp. 18, docs. 1–3; Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, *Antonio López y López (1817–1883) primer marqués de Comillas. Un empresario y sus empresas* (Madrid, 1996), p. 16.

88 'D. Juan Augan, llamando la atención sobre un abuso que se comete en esta Isla por el cuerpo militar'. ANC, G.S.C., año 1854, leg. 18, no. 1028.

89 'Espediente incidental de otro promovido por el teniente gobernador de Sa. Ma. del Rosario de abuso de autoridad en los partidos de aquella jurisdicción'. ANC, G.S.C., año 1853, leg. 1116, no. 41519; 'Expediente promovido por el alcalde de Villa Clara preguntando si el desfalco ocurrido en la administración de aquella población ha ocasionado perjuicio al servicio público'. ANC, I.G.H., año 1863, leg. 774, no. 50.

90 Joaquín Ezpeleta y Erice, *Discurso que en la solemne apertura de la Real Audiencia Pretorial de la Habana el día 2 de enero de 1840 pronunció su presidente* … (Havana, 1840), pp. 3–4.

91 Audiencia Pretorial de la Havana, *Auto acordado de la Audiencia Pretorial de la Habana en 24 de febrero de 1840* (Havana, 1840), pp. 3–7, in AHN, U.C.G.J., leg. 1626 (2), exp. 20, doc. 3.

abusive legal profession and excessive, biased litigation.[92] Corrupt practices permeated even the clergy. A bold attempt in 1866 to bribe the minister of overseas colonies (Ultramar) in Madrid is revealing. The minister was offered 12,000 escudos (6,000 pesos) for securing an appointment to the post of archdeacon of Havana's cathedral. An undercover investigation found that the person seeking to bribe the colonial authority was the priest Julián González de Benito.[93]

The combination of all these problems, from misconceived economic policies to distorted incentives and abusive, corrupt administration encouraged in the 1860s a renewed movement toward administrative and colonial reform, which was fiercely opposed by loyalists and slave owners and traders. Two successive legal codes (1863–4) for administrative reorganisation, introducing stricter rules for the colonial bureaucracy, did not provide the comprehensive administrative and political-economic reform demanded by creole reformists and two reform-minded former captain generals.[94] According to the crime statistics of the Audiencia of Havana, offences involving 'the exercise of public duties and professions', punishable with 'dismissal and suspension', increased almost 100 per cent between 1862 and 1866.[95] These signs of advancing bureaucratic corruption exploded into widespread corruption, almost beyond control, during the Ten Years' War.

[92] 'Francisco Alvarez de Guevara ['español'] acude en queja de los empleados de la Isla de Cuba', Havana 30 Nov. 1843. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 629, exp. 2, doc. 2. He complains against the irregular appointment of creole Fernando O'Reilly in replacement of 'un juez que vendía la justicia como libras de peras', and citing among the main problems in Havana 'el número de cinco mil y pico de personas entre abogados, bachilleres, pica pleytos, oficiales de causa y testigos falsos, que causan la total ruina …'.

[93] 'Intento de cohecho', Madrid 1866. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648 (2), exp. 41, docs. 3–12.

[94] On official centralising re-organisations, see Francisco Permanyer, *Proyecto de decreto presentado a S.M. por el Ministro de Ultramar … para que se reorganizen las plantillas de empleados del Gobierno Superior Civil de Cuba …* (Madrid, 1863) and Government of Spain, *Reales disposiciones organizando la carrera administrativa en las provincias de Ultramar como también la administración civil y la de Hacienda de la Isla de Cuba* (Havana, 1864). On creole reform projects, see Anonymous, *Algunas reformas de la Isla de Cuba* (London, 1865), a pamphlet published originally in Madrid, according to the Minister of Ultramar in a letter to authorities in Cuba and Puerto Rico, Madrid 12 June 1866, forbidding the circulation of this pamphlet. AHN, U.C.G., leg. 4648 (1), exp. 7, docs. 2–3; and Cuban Delegates to the Junta de Información, *Información sobre reformas en Cuba y Puerto Rico* (New York, 1867), vol. 1, pp. xxix–xxxix. On pro-reform stances of former captain generals, see Domingo Dulce, *Informe presentado por el Excmo. Sr. D. Domingo Dulce marqués de Castellflorite al Ministro de Ultramar en enero de 1867* (Madrid, 1867), pp. 7–10, and Francisco Serrano, *Informe presentado por el Excmo. Capitán General duque de la Torre al Ministro de Ultramar en mayo de 1867* (Madrid, 1868), pp. 10–29. On stern opposition to political reforms in Cuba, see Antonio L. de Letona, *Isla de Cuba. Reflexiones sobre su estado social, político y económico; su administración y gobierno* (Madrid, 1865), pp. 7–8.

[95] Alcalde, *Discurso de apertura*, appendices 4–5. These prosecuted crimes increased from a total of 25 in 1862, to 49 in 1865, and 47 in 1866.

Unbridled corruption, informal power (1869–1878)

The increasingly intolerant opposition to colonial and administrative reform in Cuba in the 1860s coincided with a growing new wave of peninsular immigration, military presence and anti-creole sentiment in the island.[96] Cuban discontent and the liberal September Revolution ('La Gloriosa') in Spain produced favourable conditions for a major separatist insurrection in eastern Cuba in October 1868 that sparked the destructive Ten Years' War. The peninsular and loyalist masses reacted with virulence against anyone suspect of sympathising with reformism and separatism. Extreme, conservative loyalists lashed out against what they perceived as weak liberal authorities in Cuba and Spain.

On 2 June 1869 Captain General Domingo Dulce sent his last telegram from Havana. The message to authorities in Madrid was succinct yet bitter: the *voluntarios* had rebelled against his authority during the night and forced his resignation. Officials under his command had shown weakness under dangerous pressure. Not a single regular soldier was at hand to repel the militia's uprising. Dulce announced his departure from Cuba within two days.[97] Simultaneous rebellions of *voluntarios* in Matanzas, Cárdenas and Güines deposed their military governors under the menace of violent actions.[98] Thus started an escalation of loyalist abuses of power and administrative corruption that thoroughly undermined colonial authority and discipline.

Some days after these reactionary rebellions, the mayor of Boca de Sagua witnessed how a group of *voluntarios* 'grabbed a North American man who did not speak Spanish and who was being beaten to the extreme of making him scream desperately for help'. When the mayor tried to stop the bullies they replied that there was no other authority there but them.[99] They proceeded to insult and threaten the mayor with sabres and rifles. Circumstances of internal war had unleashed the reaction and intolerance of unruly loyalists.

The Ten Years' War was fought on two main fronts. In the countryside of the central and eastern provinces the regular army carried out a radical offensive against unconventional separatist warfare. Summary executions multiplied and the earliest version of *reconcentración* – the forced relocation of rural population to inhospitable urban settings to preclude logistic support

[96] Jordi Maluquer, *Nación e inmigración. Los españoles en Cuba* (Oviedo, 1992), pp. 15–20, 34–5; Moreno Fraginals and Moreno Masó, *Guerra*, pp. 55–72.

[97] Telegram, Dulce to Madrid, Havana 2 June 1869, SHM, D.C., caja 67, exp. 5747.2.

[98] Telegram, Felipe Ginovés Espinar to Madrid, Havana 4 June 1869, *ibid.*; Brigadier José López Pinto to Captain General, Matanzas 3 June 1869, informing details of *voluntarios*' sedition against his authority, SHM, D.C., caja 84, doc. 5764.10.

[99] 'Boca de Sagua. Ocurrencia entre voluntarios y unos americanos'. SHM, D.C., caja 84, doc. 5764.25.

to insurgents – was implemented by December 1869. In the second front, in cities and towns especially in the western provinces, the *voluntarios* and civilian public servants played an indispensable role of policing, spying, and harassing people suspected of disloyal behaviour. In both fronts abuse and punishment of innocent civilians included widespread seizure of private property, deportation, and imprisonment. The policy of *embargo e incautación de bienes* (sequestration and confiscation of property), introduced in April 1869 by Dulce in a vain attempt to appease the loyalists, opened ample opportunities for bureaucratic abuse and graft.[100]

From Puerto Príncipe – the province that suffered the worst effects of war and expropriation – soon came reports of administrative conflict and graft in the handling of property seizures. The local agency of expropriations, the Junta de Vigilancia, rejected the authority of inspectors and administrators working for the central administration of expropriations, the Consejo Administrativo de Bienes Embargados e Incautados, in Havana.[101] These inspectors reported the theft and illicit slaughter of confiscated cattle, for private gain, in a city afflicted by starvation. Such an illegal 'monopoly' of meat supply was allowed and openly condoned by local authorities.[102]

The central administration of expropriations had an unprecedented degree of autonomy and was initially headed by the drastic and corrupt loyalist leader Dionisio López Roberts.[103] This agency's accounting reports were chronically delayed and in a state of thorough disorder. It misplaced provincial accounts and was unable to elaborate statistics.[104] In 1874 the senior accountant of the colonial treasury informed Madrid that, despite incessant requests and instructions, the expropriations' accounts had not been submitted for official inspection, because of 'the great many difficulties that exist in all the administrative branches of the island as a consequence of the war'.[105] Such an excuse did not deter the chief of the corresponding section of the foreign ministry in Madrid to conclude that these accounting violations were sufficiently grave and punishable by law. The colonial treasury's central offices (Administración Central de Propiedades and Contaduría General de

[100] Alfonso Quiroz, 'Loyalist Overkill: The Socioeconomic Costs of "Repressing" the Separatist Insurrection in Cuba, 1868–1878,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 2 (1998), pp. 261–305.

[101] 'Incidente formado por desconocerse las facultades del Sor. Admor. Inspector de Puerto Príncipe por aquella Junta local'. ANC, Bienes Embargados (B.E.), año 1870, leg. 204, no. 85.

[102] 'Puerto Príncipe. Expediente instruído sobre robo de reses pertenecientes a Bienes Embargados y otros abusos'. ANC, B.E., año 1870, leg. 212, no. 24.

[103] Fermín Valdés Domínguez, *Tragedy in Havana: November 27, 1871* (Gainsville, 2000), pp. 21–3.

[104] ANC, B.E., año 1872, leg. 202, no. 25.

[105] 'Sobre el estado de la contabilidad de bienes embargados, año 1874'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 852 (2), exp. 48, doc. 1, ff. 5v–6.

Hacienda) were also blamed for allowing such abandonment in administrative duties. The imperial authority asserted that the missing accounts most probably hid 'faults, abuses, and perhaps felonies' and that, since the start of the war, 'the previously existing administrative disorder in that province [Cuba] is increasing'.[106]

Despite official criticisms and successive royal orders urging their formal rendering, the expropriations' accounts remained incomplete in January 1877, when another official inquiry took place. Colonial authorities indicated that the main causes of this frustrating pattern of inefficiency since 1872 were 'the passive and even open resistance of different officers … the vanishing of officers in charge of submitting accounts, as well as the loss of much of the necessary information due to fire in the agency's archives'.[107] Also, many custodians of expropriated goods had not submitted their formal accounts or had fled the island, as in the case of a piano originally expropriated in 1871 from the 'disloyal' Francisco Agramonte of Santiago de Cuba. The assigned custodian (*depositario*), Juan Tarrida y Ferratges, had moved, taking the piano with him to Barcelona. In 1878 the Spanish treasury demanded from Tarrida the payment of the piano's estimated value of 2,000 pesos, as well as 1,341 pesos for the labour of an expropriated slave also under Tarrida's temporary custody.[108]

A few Spanish-born authors published scathing criticisms against the abuse and corruption inherent to the implementation and administration of expropriations, and their partial subsequent restitution. Expropriations had caused the misery of innocent persons, many of whom sided with the insurrection only after such abuse had been inflicted on them. The custody over expropriated slaves and Asian indentured servants, and slaves who had quit the insurrectionist camp (*presentados*), was often granted to private holders through cronyism. One writer argued that these injustices were due to the 'lack of morality' among unworthy administrators. Only 'the most corrupted individuals' benefited from expropriations.[109] A novel published abroad mocked the notorious graft of the agency in charge of the expropriations' business (*negociado de embargos*).[110]

Abuse in the administration of expropriations during the Ten Years' War was by no means isolated. In fact, according to multiple sources, it was just

[106] *Ibid.*, ff. 9–15.

[107] Gobernador General to Minister of Ultramar (copy), Havana 23 Jan. 1877. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 852 (2), doc. 22.

[108] 'Reclamación de D. Francisco Agramonte de un piano a D. Juan Tarrida, 1878'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 859 (2), exp. 26, docs. 1, 2, 8, and 11.

[109] Francisco Costa y Alvear, *Apreciaciones sobre la insurrección de Cuba* … (Havana, 1872), pp. 14–15; Nicolás Azcárate, *Votos de un cubano* (Madrid, 1869), pp. 16–17.

[110] Jacinto Hernández, *Cuba por dentro* (New York, 1871), pp. 10–13.

the tip of unmanageable corruption permeating almost every sector of the colonial administration. Authorities trying to contain corruption believed this phenomenon was in part due to the critical economic, social, and political conditions and overall disorder generated by the war itself, as well as the legacy of previous corrupt administrators.[111] However, those same authorities also noted that loyalist public officials and *voluntarios* considered it their right to obtain informal or illegal rewards for their efforts at defending Spain's territorial 'integrity' in Cuba. Wages and other official payments to loyal employees were meagre due to the state's financial difficulties during the war. Formal rewards were clearly not sufficient for the heightened expectations of loyalists. The *voluntarios* collectively demanded monuments in their honour as well as the assignment of urban plots and buildings for their institution's own use.[112] They only obtained very limited official concessions. Instead, bureaucrats loyal to Spain obtained the rewards they felt they were entitled to, through corrupt and insubordinate means. Mechanisms of administrative control and supervision (*visitas*) were relaxed, abandoned, or otherwise made ineffectual.[113] Treasury Intendant General Joaquín M. de Alba explained the underlying reason of widespread bureaucratic corruption during the war in the following terms:

> In the critical moment of the first patriotic enthusiasm among the Spanish-born, they armed and stocked themselves, and dressed in uniforms, at their own expense. They became the supporters of national integrity. However, these efforts left them short of funds and [now] … they believe they have the perfect right of permissiveness in administrative action …[114]

In April 1871, Alba, having obtained information of the abuses perpetrated in the Administration of Rents, commissioned a trusted accountant to perform an inquiry.[115] The first guilty employees soon surfaced but could not be imprisoned due to the protracted legal actions and counter accusations that ensued. The extensive fraud that was discovered required a formal commission of inquiry headed by a treasury officer, Cayetano Palau, to examine revenue accounts since 1868. The commission found such complete disorganisation in the accounts that it could not ascertain the exact magnitude of the fraudulent deficit (*alcance*), which could only be estimated, in June

[111] Alba to Minister of Ultramar, Havana 30 June 1871. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 3, doc. 20.

[112] Caballero de Rodas to Minister of Ultramar, Havana 26 Feb. 1870. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 859, exp. 14, doc. 2.

[113] Hermógenes Peliner y Tolosa (visitador del papel sellado) to Minister of Ultramar, Havana 30 June 1871. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 859 (1), exp. 1, doc. 2; exp. 4, doc. 2.

[114] Alba to Minister of Ultramar, 30 June 1871. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 3, doc. 20.

[115] 'Sobre algunos abusos cometidos en la Administración de Hacienda de la capital, 1871'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 2, doc. 1, ff. 1–1v.

1871, at 241,608 escudos (120,804 pesos).[116] However, a month later the total amount unaccounted for had reached 310,908 escudos (155,454 pesos), with 169,874 escudos missing from the *emancipados* accounts and 141,034 escudos from the state-administered liens (*censos del Estado* and *de regulares*).[117] A score of provincial revenue officers defrauded the royal treasury and fled before being arraigned.[118]

Accounting problems in the *ramo de emancipados* ('one of the most important agencies of this island') were particularly grave. All matters pertaining to illegal slaves seized and officially managed by Spanish authorities were constantly under British and legal scrutiny. The *emancipado* agency was in charge of collecting duties from private individuals and companies for the use of slave labour granted to them by the state. The inquiring commission discreetly contacted these 'sponsors' (*patronos*) to ask them to exhibit payment receipts (*cartas de pago*). The examination of these receipts revealed the modality of the fraud: receipts had been falsified and the supposed payment amounts not entered in the official accounts.[119] Palau advised caution in considering legal actions against two implicated officials – administrator Félix María Callejas and accountant Joaquín Güell y Renté[120] – due to the importance of the colluded persons and companies holding vitiated receipts.[121] Alba, on the other hand, believed that both the administrators and the revenue debtors had to share the responsibility of the offence.[122] An appeal by the lawyer of the prosecuted officials led to the temporary discharge of Palau, the official inquirer.[123] In the meantime, one of the main culprits, Ramón Olazarra, the head of the *emancipado* section in 1869–70, had remained at his desk after his official discharge and continued to forge documents. The Ministry of Ultramar indicted Olazarra in 1874. He did not even bother to contest the well-proven case against him for administrative fraud of up to 133,445 escudos (66,723 pesos).[124]

Other slave-related administrative sections were also plagued with fraud, corruption, disorder, and insubordination. The officials in charge of the collection of emergency taxes on slave ownership (*capitación de esclavos*) were

[116] AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 2, doc. 5. [117] AHN, U.C.H., doc. 11, 10 July 1871.

[118] 'Año 1871. Desfalco en la colecturía de Colón por D. Joaquín Marty', a fraud of approximately 11,400 pesos. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 1, doc. 1; 'Incidente sobre reparos de las cuentas de D. Jorge Conder y D. Vicente Herrera de la Puerta administrador y contador que fueron de Pinar del Río'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 852 (1), exp. 1, docs. 1 and 6.

[119] AHN, U.C.H., 790 (1), exp. 2, doc. 22, 25 Sept. 1871; doc. 24, 13 Nov. 1871.

[120] Güell to Minister of Ultramar, 15 Nov. 1873. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 4, doc. 19.

[121] Palau to Alba, Havana 12 Oct. 1871. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), doc. 27, ff. 1–1v.

[122] Alba to Minister of Ultramar, Havana 30 June 1871. AHN, U.C.H., exp. 3, doc. 20.

[123] AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 3, docs. 18, 19.

[124] 'Año 1874. Espediente gubernativo formado a D. Ramón Olazarra, oficial que fue de la Administración de Contribuciones [de la Habana]'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 800 (2), exp. 21, doc. 1.

responsible for a fraudulent loss of revenue of approximately 96,350 pesos during the year 1873. An inquiry in 1874 had found 'absolute lack of order and formality in the accounting'.[125] Falsified receipts, proving the officials' guilt and leading to their prosecution, were seized only in 1876 at the residence of an associate.[126]

Another key agency in trouble was the Junta Central Protectora de Libertos, dealing with slaves recruited by the insurrection (*libertos*) and who had deserted to the Spanish camp with the expectation of obtaining a promised official freedom. In early 1874, its Havana section, the Junta Jurisdiccional de la Havana, under the presidency of the loyalist and former slave trafficker Julián de Zulueta, was immersed in confusion and disorder only a few months after its formation. Serious complaints, filed against the section for abusing 'unfortunate slaves', led to attempts at reforming it and prosecuting its employees. However, neglect in its administration, failure to present reports and statistics, and a marked disobedience of higher orders continued despite the official inquiries.[127]

Evidence of similar or worse corrupt practices abounds for other important sections of the colonial treasury administration. A general inventory of delayed and inactive cases, involving administrative irregularities and heavy losses for the treasury, listed thirty voluminous files in 1876. These neglected files were 'tangible evidence of the state of abandon of the treasury's administration'.[128] Among such cases there was one against the *hacendado* Conde de Casa Barreto for an unpaid fiscal debt amounting to 116,583 pesos in 1872. According to Casa Barreto, the main officials of the collecting fiscal agency, Ricardo Brusola y Sarria and José Fernández de la Peña had proposed to unburden him from that huge debt if he paid them 4,000 pesos. 'Insufficient evidence' thwarted the prosecution of Brusola and Fernández.[129]

Evidence reveals that traditional bribing of customs officials also increased during the war. Public opinion at the time cast customs officials in

[125] 'Año 1877. Fallo dictado en el expediente de desfalco de capitación de esclavos contra D. José Rodríguez Barcaza, D. Diego Guillén Bucarán, D. Jacinto Deheso y D. Luis de la Luz'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 814 (2), exp. 12, doc. 1.

[126] '[Certificación de] D. Cayetano Palau y Benvenuti, comisionado especial de la Dirección General de Hacienda', Havana 21 Aug. 1876. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 814 (2), exp. 12, doc. 3.

[127] 'Expediente promovido por la Central de Libertos contra el secretario de la jurisdicción de esta capital por abusos cometidos'. ANC, G.G., año 1876, leg. 566, exp. 28180.

[128] 'Medidas para corregir la morosidad que se advierte en el cumplimiento de órdenes de este Ministerio [de Ultramar, Dirección de Hacienda] recordando servicios atrasados en la Isla de Cuba. Año 1876'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 859 (1), exp. 3, doc. 1.

[129] 'Expediente del conde de Casa Barreto sobre crédito a favor de la Hacienda. Año 1874'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 800 (2), exp. 20, docs. 1 and 3.

a worse light than other public servants.[130] In 1872 just one fraudulent case discovered in Havana's customs amounted to 776,794 pesetas (234,681 pesos) in lost revenues. The head supervisor, Mariano Pérez del Castillo, and other customs officials were discharged from public duty in Cuba but not indicted due, once again, to 'lack of evidence'.[131] Spanish consuls and foreign merchants in Liverpool, Glasgow, and London reported in detail customary smuggling strategies.[132]

From 1875 veiled public complaints against bureaucratic fraud were beginning to grow. Congratulatory news of successful military actions against the insurrection combined with a rising outrage at the 'dominant immorality' among officials. Outright criticism against public officials and authorities was, however, restrained, according to one source, in order to avoid 'dismal loss of prestige'.[133] Most of the officers responsible for administrative corruption remained free or fled the island without exemplary punishment and protracted legal proceedings within Cuba inevitably floundered.[134] In 1876 a scandal involving smuggled lard and opium through the customs of Cárdenas was reported. This time, however, growing public concern contributed to the imprisonment of the guilty officials. A letter published by the loyalist newspaper *La Voz de Cuba* stated that the affair

> … alarmed the spirits of this city's patriotic and honest neighbours who saw in all this a lamentable corruption, and a powerful reason why the government finds itself at times incapable of attending pressing commitments. The country is forced to make sacrifices that would not be as burdensome as they are now if there was probity and honesty in the payment and receipt of the official duties.[135]

From the fragmentary information collected it is possible to make an estimate of the total loss of fiscal income as a result of corruption and

[130] '… siendo dichos funcionarios [de aduanas] los que la opinión pública calificaba más desfavorablemente, en cuanto a pureza y rectitud'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (2), exp. 24, doc. 1.

[131] Authorities in Cuba feared that lack of legal indictment could mean 'la vuelta a aquella aduana de todos esos funcionarios [la cual] produciría malísimo efecto'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (2). docs. 8 and 1.

[132] 'Abusos denunciados por el cónsul de España en Liverpool al Comisario Regio en la isla de Cuba sobre fraudes en las oficians de almacenage de la Habana. 1876'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 807, exp. 3, doc. 1. Other reports of disorder and fraud in the customs administration in *ibid*., exps. 4, 5, 13, 16, 25; and leg. 817, exps. 4 and 11.

[133] Director of Círculo Hispano Americano to Minister of Ultramar, Barcelona 15 June 1875, in '1876. Legajo reservado. Denuncia del Círculo Hispano Ultramarino de Barcelona sobre abusos en la administración de la isla de Cuba'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 807 (3), exp. 25, docs. 1–2.

[134] 'Resumen del proceso', *ibid*., doc. 21. Only in 1878 some rules were introduced to prohibit the flight of officials before an official inquiry (*residencia*). AHN, U.C.H., leg. 816 (2), exp. 25, doc. 1.

[135] *La Voz de Cuba*, año IX, no. 24 (Havana 27 April 1876), 1, in AHN, U.C.H., leg. 817 (2), exp. 15, doc. 4.

malfeasance, the *vicios orgánicos de administración*, during the critical period of 1868–78. Uncollected accounts due to official 'neglect' added to 1,777,094 pesos (5,885,474 pesetas).[136] Sundry malfeasance in the treasury administration can be estimated conservatively at 30 million pesos. Fraud in the customs administration amounted approximately to 20 million pesos. The loss in assets and revenue due to the abusive handling of expropriations added to 70 million pesos. Corruption-related financial costs of the growing public debt can be estimated at 2.5 million pesos per year (10 per cent per year of the tainted half of the total debt of approximately 50 million pesos) or 25 million pesos for the ten-year period. The addition of the above-itemised financial costs of corruption results in a total of 147 million pesos or 14.7 million pesos per year for the period 1868–78. This corresponds roughly to 50 per cent of Cuba's average annual fiscal budget during the same period.

The financing of the mounting public debt during the war relied heavily on the inflationary issue of paper money by the Spanish government's main creditor in Havana, the Banco Español de la Habana. Consumers and the business sector in Cuba were clearly affected by the ever-increasing need to finance deficits with bank bills. A dangerous monetary and economic crisis developed by 1873. The government's debt to the bank reached approximately 70 million pesos in 1874. Increased emergency taxation, and appeals to the 'abnegation' and 'patriotism' of the military and civilian personnel to cushion the impact of shrinking official salaries, contributed little to lowering inflation.[137] Public employees lost approximately 20 per cent of their salaries due to inflation and fiscal reform.[138] General administrative, fiscal and debt reform, was begun in 1876 by José Cánovas del Castillo, brother of the conservative political architect of the Spanish Restoration, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo.[139] However, distrust of shady deals at high levels and suspicion of favouritism towards conspicuous government creditors and contractors continued to prevail. Discriminatory debt consolidation in favour of the two semi-official banks, the Banco Español de la Habana and the new Banco Hispano-Colonial (formed in 1876 by speculative creditors headed by shady contractor Antonio López) was still debated in 1881.[140]

[136] Juan del Nedo (visitador) to Intendant, Havana 6 Sept. 1879. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 790 (1), exp. 3, doc. 68.

[137] 'Medidas adoptadas para mejorar la Hacienda en la Isla de Cuba. Año 1874'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 800 (1), exp. 1.

[138] 'Año 1874. Espediente sobre descuento del 20% de sus haberes a los funcionarios públicos de Cuba'. AHN, U.C.H., leg. 859 (1), exp. 10, doc. 1.

[139] AHN, U.C.H., leg. 859 (1), exps. 16 and 17. See also José Gutiérrez de la Concha, *Empréstito de Cuba. Discursos pronunciados por el marqués de la Habana* (Madrid, 1877).

[140] Francisco A. García Mariño, *Unos bonos sin abono. Injusticias sufridas por los suscritores al patriótico empréstito de 9 de agosto de 1872, colocado en la Isla de Cuba en 31 de enero de 1873* (Madrid, 1881); Rodrigo, *Antonio López*, pp. 147–8.

Fiscal and debt problems caused by the war, as well as administrative corruption, deeply affected the ability to pay the military. Under stern war discipline, fraud by military administrative officials was severely penalised. The strict general Blas Villate Conde de Valmaseda even considered executing those who embezzled military funds.[141] The most common cases of embezzlement (*desfalco*) involved military officials in charge of pay who gambled the embezzled funds and then fled the country. Measures to expel professional gamblers from Cuba were also considered by authorities. Between 1872 and 1874 there were 8 cases of *desfalcos* in army units and battalions amounting to 251,483 pesos.[142] Existing rules required other senior officers of the defrauded army units to restore the lost amounts. Valmaseda himself, during his second administration as captain general in 1875, and his predecessor captain general Jovellar (1873–5), were accused of mismanagement and fraud in the contracting of food supplies for the troops.[143] Corruption among the military was becoming a major problem.

Inherited and detested corruption (1879–98)

The grave troubles posed by wartime corruption were by no means ended after 1878. A short insurrectionary recurrence in 1879–80, the Guerra Chiquita, led by hard-core separatists and abolitionists, provoked corrupt handling of the contracts, purchase of supplies, and accounting of the Spanish army and navy. An extensive investigation and trial ended with prison sentences for the guilty navy officers and private contractors.[144]

The ensuing peace contributed to the gradual introduction of political and social reforms, including the outright abolition of slavery in 1886. Although late and partial, these reforms together with freer speech and printing, contributed to narrowing somewhat the opportunities and incentives for rampant corruption. Public opinion was awakened by increased press coverage and the exposing of scandalous bureaucratic frauds, including one involving 100,000 pesos in debt bonds, perpetrated by a group of public officers and private stockbrokers headed by accountant Luis Oteiza in 1889.

[141] Telegram by Valmaseda to General Second Corporal, 9 April 1872, in 'Desfalco y malversación. Espediente de las disposiciones dictadas sobre dichos delitos'. SHM, C.G.C., caja 1108, no. 4416.

[142] 'Expediente referente a los desfalcos o estafas hechas en cuerpos de esta isla hasta el año 1879', *ibid.*

[143] X. de X., *Las contratas para suministros de víveres del ejército en Cuba en tiempo de los generales Valmaseda y Jovellar comparadas. Refutación de las calumnias contra la adminsitración de 1875* (New York, 1876), pp. 7–12.

[144] *Real orden del Ministro de Marina del 16 de setiembre de 1882 … causa instruída en la Isla de Cuba contra varios jefes y oficiales de la Armada y cuerpo administrativo* (Madrid, 1882).

Another scandal led to the prosecution of Havana's treasury intendant in 1885.[145]

In January 1890 Captain General Manuel de Salamanca wrote a long letter to the Minister of Ultramar, Manuel Becerra, reporting persistent corruption at different levels of the administration. The direct antecedents of scandalous embezzlements and false IOUs (*libramientos falsos*), amounting to almost 23 million pesos, dated back to the Guerra Chiquita.[146] General Salamanca had been quite outspoken in press interviews in Spain about his intention to eradicate corruption before he travelled to Havana to occupy his post.[147] In his letter he simply requested Becerra's support in ratifying the drastic measures he was considering and the appointment of honest officials from Spain to replace those he planned to fire or transfer:

> … we are at the critical moment of saving and ordering the island, or making impossible its government in which case … we will lose [the island] very soon … this is very rotten, and you know that I am surrounded by enemies and not able to trust anyone … because here there is the well rooted idea that one does not risk the dangers and discomforts of a long sea voyage, vomit, fevers, and harsh climate to just 'eat' what is formally served. The few among us that do precisely that have difficulty in making people believe us, and those who believe us call us dunces.[148]

Salamanca named the stern opponents of his inquiries and measures, among them loyalist conservative leaders (*caciques*) Conde de Casa Moré and Manuel Calvo, their agents in Madrid, and the corrupt officials implicated in sizable frauds. Salamanca also deplored the lack of an effective punitive system against corruption as well as the legalistic, inefficient judicial procedures. Although a Liberal himself, Salamanca considered prior Liberal appointees to Cuban posts in the 1880s to be the main culprits. Among the most scandalous *desfalcos* he listed those connected with war and military supplies, transport, *libramientos*, and private contractors for a total of

[145] *Causa sobre supuesta malversación de 100,000 pesos de la deuda de Cuba. Sentencias de la Audiencia y del Tribunal Supremo* … (Madrid, 1893); Antonio Zaragoza, *Juicio oral y público. Audiencia de la Habana. Causa de Oteiza. Reseña de las sesiones publicada en el diario 'El Comercio' y adicionada con la opinión del cronista y dos apéndices que contienen un breve resumen de la prueba documental leída y la sentencia pronunciada* (Habana, 1892); *Opinión que la prensa madrileña ha emitido espontáneamente con presencia de las dos exposiciones que Cuervo Arango ha dirigido al Sr. Ministro de Ultramar … defraudadores y los malos empleados siendo intendente de la Habana el Sr. Castro Serrano* (Madrid, 1885).

[146] Salamanca to Becerra, Havana 30 Jan. 1890. Archivo General de Indias, Seville (hereafter AGI), Diversos, Colección Polavieja (D.C.P.), leg. 10, exp. 168, docs. 1 and 2. I thank Professor Joan Casanovas for the reference to this important source and for the detailed notes and transcriptions he graciously shared with me.

[147] Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!* p. 183; Francisco Moreno, *El país del chocolate.* (*La inmoralidad en Cuba*) (Madrid, 1887), p. 5; *El País*, 13 March 1887, press clipping in BNJM, C. M. Morales, vol. 2, no. 28.

[148] Salamanca to Becerra, 30 Jan. 1890, AGI, D.C.P., leg. 10, exp. 168, doc. 2, pp. 1–3.

15,737,563 pesos since 1879. To this amount Salamanca added 754,648 pesos defrauded from the central treasury and 1,318,705 pesos lost to malfeasance in the expropriations' administration. He also estimated the fraud of false IOUs in several army units in approximately 5 million pesos.[149] Additionally he counted 4,854,326 pesos in customs fraud at Havana, and no less than 15 million pesos defrauded from provincial collection offices, and 2 million pesos in sundry petty fraud and embezzlement. Corruption among the officials of the volunteer militia can be added to Salamanca's grim inventory.[150]

Salamanca's total estimate of the fiscal costs resulting from these diverse administrative improprieties added to a grand total of 44,665,842 pesos, or 4.5 million pesos per year, for the 1880–90 period.[151] After adding the annual cost of 4 million pesos for corruption-related public debt, the yearly total fiscal cost for colonial administrative corruption was 8.5 million pesos. This latter figure represented approximately 20 per cent of Cuba's average annual budget during the years 1880–90. Nevertheless, the cost of corruption in the 1880s was lower than that of 50 per cent of the average annual budget for the period 1868–78.

Salamanca's general claims can be corroborated in part by tracing the files of fraud inquiries in the archives of the Ministry of Ultramar, especially those concerning the cases of stamped forms (*efectos timbrados*) and provincial collecting offices.[152] His revelations of corruption also coincided quite closely with an extremely detailed treatise on administrative corruption and nepotism published by Francisco Moreno, a peninsular loyalist writer and journalist, in 1887.[153] Moreno described instances of corruption in all sections of the colonial administration: bartering of posts (*tráfico de credenciales*), fraudulent IOUs, customs fraud, condoned direct taxation; all kinds of fraud in the administration of the treasury, public debt and loans, judicial affairs, public works, jails, communications, municipal governments; and even fund raising for charity, among others. Moreover, he attributed the sad state of administrative honesty to reasons of 'high politics' linking Spanish political leaders with the powerful interests of the Compañía Transatlántica (formerly Antonio López y Cia.), the Banco Hispano-Colonial, and other unscrupulous

[149] This fraud 'consiste en figurar como oro en las Cajas crecidas cantidades que son papel y cuya diferencia en pago ha de pesar sobre los Generales que autorizaron las operaciones por abandono u otras causas de que se han derivado crecidas fortunas y lujos', Salamanca to Becerrra, 30 Jan. 1890, *ibid*., pp. 10–11.

[150] A *voluntario* accountant unlawfully diverted funds ('malversación') to the amount of 35,521 pesos in 1886, Sub-Inspección General de Voluntarios de Cuba. SHM, S.V.C., caja 171.

[151] Salamanca to Becerra, 30 Jan. 1890, op. cit., pp. 11–17.

[152] AHN, U.C.H., leg. 851 (1), exp. 12, doc. 16; exp. 3, doc. 1; leg. 852 (2), exp. 37, doc. 1; exp. 49; leg. 852 (1), exps. 7, 10, 14, 15, 17, 21, and 28.

[153] Moreno, *País del chocolate*, p. 43, estimates 8 million pesos in revenue loss due to corruption in 1887 alone.

capitalists. Moreno also predicted that Spain would lose Cuba due to the extent and official toleration of corruption.[154]

Several other creole authors articulated ideological and political criticism against colonial administrative corruption during the post-1878 period of partial reform and freedom of expression. Juan Gualberto Gómez was among the first to launch a radical attack on the political, administrative, and moral conditions that fuelled corruption. A black abolitionist and separatist who had been exiled and imprisoned in the early 1880s, Gómez took advantage of restored Spanish constitutional rights to publish his views in Madrid. He quoted Spanish political, military and police authorities to demonstrate the corruptive consequences of the colonial system in Cuba.[155] Gómez continued a political and ideological tradition, dating back to Cuban exiles of the 1840s, of equating corruption and low morality with colonial oppression and injustice. According to Gómez, bureaucratic and 'moral corruption' had visibly deteriorated since the onset of the Ten Years' War and their effects were still visible in 1884.[156] Gómez also complained that Cuban-born government employees were proportionally fewer and occupied mostly the lower ranks whereas the fortune-seeking Spanish-born employees occupied the higher posts thanks to favouritism and patronage (*padrinos*) rooted in Madrid.[157] Gómez recommended, among other reforms, improved morality in public administration by allowing local institutions to appoint public employees.

Other creole writers decried, in *archetypal* literary form, the insatiable bureaucratic nepotism, gambling and corruption of ignorant Spanish-born immigrants, in contrast to the tragic destiny of honest and hardworking Cuban men and women.[158] In 1887 Raimundo Cabrera published a popular

[154] Moreno, *País del chocolate*, pp. 14, 15, 24, 39.

[155] Gómez cites former Captain General Arsenio Martínez Campos as someone aware of 'los malos empleados, la peor administración de justicia … Las promesas nunca cumplidas … los abusos de todo género … la exclusión de los naturales de todos los ramos de la administración', Juan Gualberto Gómez, *La cuestión de Cuba en 1884. Historia y soluciones de los partidos cubanos* (Madrid, 1885), p. 2. He also refers to alarming official reports by police Brigadier Denis and army Brigadier March, *ibid.*, p. 58.

[156] 'Cuba, from the viewpoint of 1884, has no resemblance at all with that of 1869 … corruption has increased very swiftly … Probity has disappeared from business activities … Bureaucrats still oppress as before but they now steal more than ever. The police share the valuables stolen by thieves. Civil guards act even worse; they rob and then assassinate their victims.' Gómez, *La cuestión de Cuba*, pp. 57–58.

[157] *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 31; *La Unión Constitucional*, 16 March 1889, press clipping in BNJM, C. M. Morales, vol. 2, no. 31.

[158] Ramón Meza, *Mi tío el empleado* (Madrid, 1993), pp. 90, 104, 107 (1st ed. Barcelona, 1887). See also Cirilo Villaverde, *Cecilia Valdés, o, la Loma del Angel* (Madrid, 1992; 1st ed. Havana, 1839; New York, 1881); Nicolás Heredia, *Un hombre de negocios* (Matanzas, 1883).

book, subsequently republished several times in Spanish and English,[159] as an ideological response to a satirical book on Cuban way of life authored by the Spanish-born Francisco Moreno.[160] Cabrera's main goal was to demonstrate Cuban's high level of 'civilized' virtue and honesty in contrast to the low morals and corruption of Spanish-born people in Cuba. Moreno had mocked and denigrated Cuban customs (especially African-inspired dancing), politicians, intellectuals, press and creole men and women in general. He also denounced the different means of colonial bureaucratic corruption for which there were terms such as *chocolate*, *manganilla* and *filtración*. Cabrera reacted indignantly in defence of Cuban values, intellectual life, inhabitants, and, especially, Autonomist authors and idealised Cuban women.[161]

By the time of the Second War for Independence (1895–8) the issue of administrative corruption in Cuba, recognised as a serious problem by creole reformist and Spanish-born critics alike, was embraced vehemently by exiled separatist propaganda in the United States. Cabrera, renouncing his Autonomist affiliation, travelled to New York where he edited the separatist journal *Cuba y América*. In this journal Cabrera published inflammatory cartoons by one of the most important Cuban cartoon artists, Ricardo de la Torriente (1869–1934), who ridiculed the predatory spoils of corrupt Spaniards in Cuba and celebrated the growing interventionist policies toward the Cuban question by the US government (see Figure 2).[162]

Despite creole assertions of the honest character of Cuban-born leaders, the fledgling Cuban Republic, established in 1902, inherited serious bureaucratic corruption. The word 'goat' (*chivo*), signifying a dirty deal or cheating, became an iconic fixture in the post-independence political lexicon and satiric press and cartoons.[163] Republican administrative corruption was pervasive and taken for granted as part of the system's implicit rules.[164] The reformed educational system, for example, showed early signs of corrupt politicisation and centralisation.[165]

[159] Raimundo Cabrera, *Cuba y sus jueces* (*rectificaciones oportunas*) (Havana, 1887). Subsequent editions (1889, 1891, 1895, 1896) include additional information and illustrations.

[160] Francisco Moreno, *Cuba y su gente. (Apuntes para la historia*) (Madrid, 1887).

[161] Moreno, *Cuba y su gente*, pp. 57, 149–155; Cabrera, *Cuba y sus jueces*, p. 134. For the lexicon of colonial corruption, see Fernando Ortiz, *Nuevo catauro de cubanismos* (Havana, 1985), p. 211. See also the ideologised debate between creole and Spanish-born authors over the causes of prostitution in Cuba: Gómez, *Cuestión de Cuba*, p. 58; Céspedes, *Prostitución en Habana*, pp. 73, 77, 91, 101; Pedro Giralt, *El amor y la prostitución, replica a un libro del Dr. Céspedes* (Havana, 1889), pp. 14–15, 39.

[162] On Torriente, see Adelaida de Juan, *Caricatura de la República* (Havana, 1981).

[163] Ortiz, *Nuevo catauro*, pp. 205–10.

[164] Louis Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York, 1995), pp. 217–18.

[165] Alfonso Quiroz, 'La reforma educacional en Cuba, 1898–1909: cambio y continuidad,' in John Coatsworth and Rafael Hernández (eds.), *Culturas encontradas: Cuba y los Estados Unidos* (Havana, 2001), pp. 113–26.

Fig. 2. *Spain suffers from indigestion due to embezzlement, contraband, theft, monopoly, contracts, and the budget. The barrel or* cuba *representing Cuba is broken. Uncle Sam is ready to provide a forceful remedy bearing the name of General Stewart Woodford, the US Minister in Spain. The child-king Alfonso XIII watches.* '***She ate plenty when the barrel could still hold***'. *By Ricardo de la Torriente. In* Cacarajícara, *New York, vol. I, no. 1 (9 Oct. 1897), p. 3. Publicaciones Periódicas, Colección Cubana, BNJM.*

Some authors have argued that US military occupation, economic penetration, and their legacies had a corruptive influence in Cuba.[166] They cite a corruption scandal in the US-administered Cuban post office and

[166] José Cantón Navarro et al., *La neocolonia. Organización y crisis. Desde 1899 hasta 1840* (Havana, 1998); Jorge Ibarra, *Cuba: 1898–1921. Partidos políticos y clases sociales* (Havana, 1992); Rolando Rodríguez, *La forja de una nación* (Havana, 1998), vol. 2.

improprieties in the Havana naval arsenal.[167] Others have argued, following the lead of writer Carlos Loveira, that colonial corruption survived thanks to fraudulently enriched Spanish-born businessmen who remained in Cuba after independence, former Autonomist politicians who sold out, and cheating former separatist military leaders.[168] Loveira's theses on the origins of republican corruption is partly corroborated by widespread unlawful and criminal activities among separatist fighters (*mambises*) described by former slave Esteban Montejo in his edited memoirs.[169]

Space and focus does not allow a full analysis of the causes of persistent corruption after 1898–1902. Ample evidence exists on corruption among militaristic and authoritarian former separatist leaders and officers who benefited as war veterans, US occupation appointees, and local chieftains such as José Miguel Gómez, Mario García Menocal, Alfredo Zayas, and Domingo Méndez Capote. Similar to their colonial loyalist counterparts, these separatist veterans expected substantial individual rewards for risking their lives for Cuban independence.[170] Veterans expressed disillusionment with the outcome of the war, foreign occupation, and having to leave active service without major compensation. Discontent persisted despite the speculative and scandalous payment received by some veterans from borrowed public funds.[171] The educated civilian leadership was dangerously weakened and divided after the war of independence.[172] In the absence of a dominant

[167] On the embezzlement of approximately $100,000 by two US officials in charge of the Cuban post office, and their swift punishment, see Thomas, *Cuba*, pp. 445–6. On labour and administrative troubles in Havana's arsenal, see José de Mora y Saavedra to Máximo Gómez, ANC, Fondos Personales, Archivo Máximo Gómez, leg. 21, no. 2896.

[168] Carlos Loveira, *Generales y doctores* (Havana, 1972; 1st ed. Havana, 1920); see also Francisco Suárez y Cepero to Máximo Gómez, Güines 4 April 1899, ANC, Fondos Personales, Archivo Máximo Gómez, leg. 21, no. 2893A.

[169] Esteban Montejo, *Biografía de un cimarrón*, ed. by Miguel Barnet (Havana, 1996).

[170] Loveira wrote of the character El Nene, a separatist veteran, 'En vez de ennoblecerse con ser veterano, se ha envilecido. Porque ha explotado su veteranismo para mantener vivos los vicios de la colonia. Además, sobre todas las cosas, es un burro'. Loveira, *Generales y doctores*, p. 340. See also José M. Hernández, *Cuba and the United States: Intervention and Militarism, 1868–1933* (Austin, 1993).

[171] Juan Veloso to Máximo Gómez, Remedios 25 April 1899. ANC, Fondos Personales, Archivo Máximo Gómez, leg. 21, no. 2900A; Francisco Suárez to Gómez, Güines 4 April 1899, *ibid.*, No. 2893A; Jesús Rabí and Saturnino Lara to José Miró, Baire 21 June 1900, *ibid.*, No. 2925; also José Miguel Gómez (Gobernador Civil de Santa Clara) to Carlos Roloff, Santa Clara 28 abril 1900, ANC, Archivo Roloff, leg. 1, no. 343 (2). On speculative corruption in payments to army veterans, see Thomas, *Cuba*, p. 471.

[172] Fernando Ortiz, 'La irresponsabilidad del pueblo cubano', in Ortiz, *Entre cubanos. Psicología tropical* (Havana, 1987), pp. 26–28, a collection of articles written in 1906–8. Ortiz wrote in 1919, 'El más grave peligro de Cuba es la incultura de sus clases dirigentes, más aun que la corrupción. Si fuesen verdaderamente cultas no serían corrompidas', Ortiz, 'La crisis política cubana, sus causas y sus remedios', in *Orbita de Fernando Ortiz*, ed. by Julio Le Riverend (Havana, 1973), p. 112.

civil society and strong democratic institutions, ambitious veteran chieftains appear to have been the main inheritors of the unofficial and illegal legacy of corruption that continued to distort the institutional structure of twentieth-century Cuba.

Conclusion

This analysis has detected a deterioration of colonial administrative integrity after the mid-1820s. Efforts to keep Cuba a Spanish possession, without effectively abolishing the slave trade and conceding further economic and political reforms to the creole elite, implied higher levels of bureaucratic corruption. Increased colonial corruption was a consequence of the systematic weakening and, at times, violent destruction of the local institutional bases of Cuban autonomy through discrimination, racial checks, war, expropriation, and exile. Corruption engulfed the top as well as the rank and file of the colonial administration, most significantly during the Ten Years' War. Despite some isolated official efforts to curtail corruption, higher levels of corruption had overbearing costs for colonial subjects and the insufficiently reformed colonial system in terms of lost revenues, mounting debt, inefficiency, and eroding legitimacy.

The loss of colonial revenues due to bureaucratic corruption became an implicit yet substantial cost of the declining Spanish empire. Relative ratios of administrative corruption (as indicators of real levels of corruption) in Cuba varied from an alarmingly high level of 50 per cent of annual budgets in 1868–78 to a serious level of 20 per cent of annual budgets in 1880–90. However, the level of public perception of corruption, indicated by increased press coverage, was higher in the 1880–90 period. In the 1880s and 1890s Cuban civil society had to sustain the increasing financial burden of the public debt, generated in part by administrative corruption, and had to endure a biased and abusive institutional base that limited economic development in the island. This mounting financial, institutional and legitimacy costs of corruption contributed significantly to the demise of Spanish colonial rule in Cuba.

The detailed study of Cuban colonial corruption during the nineteenth century illustrates how corruption can thrive under weak and flawed institutional bases that benefit privileged interests and pressure groups. Rather than constituting a cultural constant, corruption fluctuates under changing institutional circumstances, socio-political tension, repression and war, when the costs and benefits of engaging in corrupt activity vary significantly. Particular connections among and between different pressure groups weakened or reinforced rules and property rights. Colonial reform in the 1880s and 1890s was only partial, and it came too late due to the delaying pressure of

narrow interests of privileged colonial businessmen, financiers, and despotic administrators. These colonialist interests – as Jeremy Bentham had already warned Spanish constitutional legislators during the liberal interlude of 1820–3 – had a 'corruptive influence' favouring only 'the ruling few' and working against a more representative constitutional form of government and efficient economy in Spain itself.[173]

A product of weak or flawed institutional bases, corruption can also contribute to further weaken institutions. If corruption is bred by undemocratic regimes and is left unchecked long enough, unofficial rules produce unintended, damaging consequences for civil society. Such an extreme situation was reached in Cuba during the Ten Years' War. At those critical junctures gradual transformation and reform are considerably more difficult. It is not sufficient to reform the system to curb corruption although that is an important step, as shown by the politically motivated British economical reforms in response to allegations of Old Corruption in the early nineteenth century.[174] Entrenched interests resist and deflect the efficiency of reforms, making it necessary to apply strictly the law and prosecute corrupt public administrators and their networks.

Colonial authorities in Cuba and Spain lacked the decision and local bureaucratic support to reduce widespread corruption significantly despite honest efforts by a few captain generals (Valdez, Pezuela, Salamanca) and other authorities. Since the 1820s senior Spanish authorities depended heavily on corrupt medium- and lower-ranking officials to secure control of the island. Detection, prosecution, and punishment of corrupt public servants became lax and inefficacious. Emboldened loyalist officials expecting corrupt rewards charged a costly bill for their services through lost revenues and chronic debt. This unintended, implicit cost of empire in Cuba proved exceedingly expensive for Spain and bore heavily on the shoulders of the Cuban colonial subjects. Bureaucratic corruption not only contributed to the demise of Spanish dominion in Cuba, it also left a costly legacy after 1898.

[173] Jeremy Bentham, *Colonies, Commerce, and Constitutional Law: Rid Yourselves of Ultramaria and Other Writings on Spain and Spanish America*, ed. by Philip Schofield (Oxford, 1995), pp. 24, 47, 85–6, 197–276.

[174] Philip Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption': The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779–1846* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 6–7.