

Cuba Seeks Independence

Cubans began seeking independence from Spain three years after the American Civil War. The beginning of the Cuban civil war was similar to the beginning of the American Civil War. While the American Civil War began with “the shot heard round the world,” the Cuban civil war began when shots were fired in a small town named Yara.

Soon, word of the *Grito de Yara* spread throughout Cuba. *Grito de Yara* means “cry of Yara.” As word spread, Cubans banded together to fight the Spanish. These revolutionary fighters were called *insurrectos*. The *insurrectos* had many problems. The Spanish soldiers were more skilled and had better weapons.

While many Cubans were willing to fight the Spanish, not all Cubans wanted to break away from Spain. Many rich and powerful Cubans, many of which were of Spanish descent, did not want to break away from Spain. The citizens that did not want to break away from Spain formed a militia called the *voluntaries*. When the civil war began, this militia actually outnumbered the official Spanish troops.

The Cubans and the Spanish fought for ten years, and Cuba still did not gain independence. Both sides then entered into a peace agreement. Many Cubans disagreed with the peace agreement and vowed to continue fighting the Spanish. Some revolutionaries that continued to fight were actually exiled from Cuba.

Jose Marti was one of the leaders of the Cuban exiles. Marti had grown up in Havana. Havana is the capital of Cuba. When he was only sixteen, he was jailed for supporting the war for independence. He was exiled when he was eighteen. Eventually, Marti settled in New York City. Marti was a journalist, novelist, lawyer, and poet. Once he settled in New York City, he gave several speeches and published articles that were designed to promote the Cuban effort for independence.

Marti started the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892. He was elected to be the first president of this party. Marti then began forming a plan to try to win Cuba’s independence. Marti and his followers planned to act upon their plan on January 1, 1892.

The plan was to have three ships carry Marti and a thousand soldiers, as well as weapons and ammunition, from Florida and Costa Rica to Cuba. Marti’s plan was unsuccessful because the government of the United States learned of the plan. The US government did not want to anger the Spanish by allowing Marti to proceed with his plan. The US Navy refused to allow two of the ships to leave port and seized the third ship.

While it may have seemed that the war for independence was over, many Cuban patriots were still determined to fight for their independence. Marti never lived to see an independent Cuba. He died on May 17, 1895, in battle.

Name _____

Date _____

Cuba Seeks Independence (Cont'd)

Eventually, the Cuban patriots began winning their civil war. Spain sent more troops, but many Spanish citizens were no longer in favor of the war. Many wanted to simply give Cuba their independence. In the United States, the media was trying to get the US to join the fight to help Cubans win their independence, but the US government still wanted to maintain good relations with Spain.

Since the civil war was becoming increasingly violent, the US Navy sent a ship to Havana to help US citizens that were caught in the fighting. This ship was named the *Maine*. The *Maine* was not sent to Cuba to attack or join the fighting.

The *Maine* sank on February 15, 1898, due to an explosion. Studies have now shown that the explosion may have been caused by an accident on the ship, but, at the time, many Americans blamed Spain. The sinking of the ship killed 260 Americans. American newspapers blamed Spain, and Americans demanded war against Spain. On April 25, 1898, the US declared war on Spain. The Spanish-American war was over by August 12, 1898. A peace agreement was signed between the US and Spain. As part of the agreement, Cuba was given independence.

Name _____

Date _____

Cuba Seeks Independence Questions

Multiple Choice:

1. The name of the US ship that sank when it went to Havana to help US citizens caught up in the fighting in Cuba:
 - a. the *Maine*
 - b. the *Mississippi*
 - c. the *Havana*
 - d. the *Costa Rica*

2. This man started the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892:
 - a. Martin Jones
 - b. Juan Valdez
 - c. Jose Marti
 - d. Carlos Rodriguez

3. *Grito de Yara* means:
 - a. beautiful Yara
 - b. cry of Yara
 - c. great Yara
 - d. poor Yara

4. Cuban revolutionary fighters were called:
 - a. insurrectos
 - b. voluntaries
 - c. exiles
 - d. yara

5. The capital of Cuba is:
 - a. Yara
 - b. Spain
 - c. Havana
 - d. Costa Rica

True or False:

- ___ 6. Cubans began seeking independence from Spain three years after the American Civil War.
- ___ 7. The Spanish-American war began on August 12, 1898.
- ___ 8. Cuba never gained freedom from Spanish rule.

Cuba Seeks Independence Answers

Multiple Choice:

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