diplomatic historians who focused on Latin America, enthusiastically supported U.S. policy in the region, which he referred to as "the Panama Policy": this policy, based on "self-interested benevolence," was thought of as a rational, logical expression of U.S. power in a region where (according to the historians of the time) rationality was sorely lacking. Bemis focused on political and diplomatic considerations, and failed to consider profit as a motivator in the Panama Policy. Later revisionist historians would examine U.S. policy from a more "market driven" perspective.

Roosevelt's ideology concerning Latin America was formulated into policy through the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1904). This was, essentially, a doctrine of intervention. Given that the United States had successfully used force in the region between 1898 and 1903, the president believed that military force was the most efficacious manner of affecting "positive" change in the region. He announced to the world in 1904 that a "civilized nation" might need to intervene in nations wracked by "chronic wrongdoing." The terms were clearly established, and Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine led to multiple interventions between 1904 and the beginning of the Great Depression in Latin America. One such intervention involved a brief but unpopular invasion of Mexico on April 21, 1914, at Veracruz. In this section of our book, readers will find excerpts from President Woodrow Wilson's address to Congress when he defined the "crisis" in Mexico (ostensibly concerning little more than military honor) before committing U.S. troops to a military operation that cost around two hundred lives and came at the height of the decade-long Mexican Revolution (1910–1920).

The realities of World War I and changes in the global economy resulting largely from the conflict created U.S. prosperity followed by collapse. That collapse, generally referred to as "The Great Depression," began in October 1929. Raw materials and markets were significant features of the U.S. interest in Latin America during this period, but decades of military and political intervention had greatly strained U.S.–Latin American relations. The Policy of the Good Neighbor, generally associated with the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933–1945), sought to redirect tensions and mistrust within the hemisphere. The policy was also guided by economic and political realities that forced Roosevelt to form alliances and partnerships with Latin American nations. Bryce Wood writes of the Good Neighbor plan and its emergence as policy during the late 1920s and 1930s. He emphasizes the complexity of factors, issues, and interests involved in policy making and does not hesitate to question U.S. motives in policy formulation.

Taken together, the three chapters in this section and President Wilson's speech help to explain U.S. policy as it applied mostly to the Caribbean and Central America during the first half of the twentieth century. The three authors provide radically distinct interpretations of U.S. policy shaped by both the time period in which they wrote and the material on which they chose to focus.

9

Leonard Wood and the White Man's Burden

Lester D. Langley

In 1983, Historian Lester D. Langley published The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898–1934. *That book presented U.S. policy in the Caribbean basin as a long series of military interventions designed to impart U.S. objectives in the region. Cuba, of course, was the first "test case": the 1898 intervention was designed, ostensibly, to promote Cuban "independence"; the reality, as Langley points out, involved military and political control of the island, and the author focuses on the case of Brigadier General Leonard Wood, Governor of Santiago, whose writings, work, and objectives on the island framed the cultural and historic chasm separating the distinct development of Cuba and the United States.*

Almost exactly two months after the declaration of war against Spain in 1898, the United States launched a military invasion of Spanish Cuba.

Still flushed with pride over Admiral George Dewey's tremendous victory over the Spanish at Manila Bay on May 1, the American people expectantly awaited an equally glorious triumph in Spain's New World empire. Their perspective of the Cuban rebellion, shaped by exaggerated tales of Spanish wickedness and Cuban resourcefulness, almost unquestioningly followed the accounts of the sometimes rabidly pro-Cuban press and the propaganda dispensed by the Cuban juntas scattered along the east and Gulf coasts. The war on the island, the president had solemnly declared, had by spring 1898 deteriorated into a gruesome spectacle that shook America's moral sensibilities, and it was our humanitarian duty to end it. A conquering army of a republican nation would be dispatched to complete the campaign begun by the Cuban rebels: to destroy the four-hundred-year Spanish empire on the island and, because Congress had declared we were waging a war of liberation and not of conquest, to lay the foundation for a new republic.

The army that landed in eastern Cuba in June 1898 was typically American in its makeup of volunteers and a small cadre of career officers. It had no experience in tropical war. Its officers were either aging veterans from the Indian campaigns or thrill seekers like Theodore Roosevelt. Its leader was a three-hundred-pound, gout-ridden brigadier general, William Rufus Shafter, whom Roosevelt considered "criminally incompetent." The secretary of war, Russell Alger, a well-intentioned but irascible Michigan politician, was incapable of directing the war with the chaotic bureaucracy of the War Department. Alger quarreled so incessantly with the commanding general of the army, Nelson A. Miles, that President McKinley eventually bypassed both and directed the war himself.

The mission of this army was the defeat of Spain and Spanish authority on the island of Cuba, not the expansion of American territorial domain. But it would become in the course of the war an army for empire. Its troops would storm El Caney and San Juan Hill, take Puerto Rico, and pacify Manila. A meager contingent of 25,000 before the war, the American army would expand rapidly into a mighty force of 100,000 in the summer of 1898, 70,000 serving outside the continental United States, 30,000 in the Philippines on the other side of the globe. At war's end its commanding officers found themselves in the uncommon role of colonial administrators in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. And in August 1898 President William McKinley would at last find the perfect administrator for this empire in Elihu Root, a corporation lawyer who became secretary of war after Alger became involved in a bitter political fight in his home state and was compelled to resign.[1]

The war brought impressive victories—Manila Bay, San Juan Hill, Santiago—but it also taught painful realities. One of the first myths shattered was the prewar image of craven Spaniard and noble Cuban. American troops landing at Daiquirí for the great assault against the Spaniards expected to be greeted wildly by their Cuban allies. Instead they were met by a ragtag guerrilla force, unkempt in appearance and darker in color than the drawings of Cuban rebels in New York newspapers. These wretches were less interested in camaraderie and battle tactics than in American rations. The Americans fed them but grew irritated when they refused to fight according to preconceived American notions of valiant warriors. This harsh judgment was in part explained by their tatterdemalion appearance. Grover Flint, who wrote a popular account of his wartime experience (*Marching with Gómez*, 1898), attributed Cuban disheveled to sacrifice, but many others, including Theodore Roosevelt, simply believed that Cubans would be of little use in a fight.[2] American soldiers were similarly shocked when a Cuban squad, which had captured a Spanish spy, decapitated its prisoner.

If Cubans were inferior, as American soldiers came to believe, then it easily followed that Spaniards were superior—at least superior to Cubans. When Sherwood Anderson wrote that Spaniards had "dark cruel eyes" he imagined himself

dispatching some evildoer in the glory of war and expressed a common prewar sentiment. But Americans serving in Cuba soon discovered that Spaniards could fight and fight bravely. At Las Guásimas the Rough Riders, who had landed contested at Daiquirí, encountered stubborn resistance and suffered seventy casualties. El Caney and San Juan Hill, probably the two most fiercely fought land battles of the campaign, swept away all notions of Spanish incompetence or cowardice in American minds. "No men of any nationality," Roosevelt said in a rare tribute to the Hispanic, "could have done better." When a group of American seamen tried to block the passageway to Santiago harbor, where the Spanish fleet was moored, by sinking an old collier in the channel, they were captured by one of Admiral Pascual Cervera's gunboats. The American commanders despaired of their fate but soon received a reassuring message from Cervera himself stating that all were well and would be fairly treated. Of this gesture Captain Robley D. ("Fighting Bob") Evans observed: "Never [have I witnessed] a more courteous thing done in war."[3]

The second reality for which neither the War Department nor the army was prepared was the condition of the battlefield. Most Americans who went to Cuba had some vague knowledge about the island's climate and terrain—after all, the rebellion had been covered in detail by the large eastern newspapers—but they greatly underestimated the exacting toll tropical climate can take on men and matériel. Troops were either inadequately supplied or provided with useless equipment. And their medical treatment became a national scandal. Men could be ordered to march in step, but officers were hard pressed to convince the individual soldier that drinking water must be boiled, latrines constructed, and drainage channels dug. By midsummer, in the stifling heat and malarial atmosphere, the army that had won a rousing victory at El Caney and San Juan Hill had been devastated by sickness. In one regiment—that of the unforgettable Private Charles Post—almost half of the nine hundred men were incapacitated. One by one the buglers came down sick, and there was no one to blow reveille or taps.[4] Elsewhere, the toll of diseased and disabled rose to alarming heights. When the Spanish surrendered Santiago, it was estimated, 90 percent of American soldiers were unable to continue fighting. The deposed secretary of war confirmed this grim statistic in his account of the war; 90 percent of American troops disembarking in New York, wrote Alger, were either ill or convalescent.[5]

Whatever the cost of the war to American soldiers, the physical toll on Cuba and its people was much greater. The years of struggle against Spanish rule and Spain's punitive retaliation had exacted a terrible price. Cuba had lost a tenth of its population, the census of 1899 revealed, a loss explained for the most part by rebel casualties and the harshness of Spain's counterrevolutionary measure, the *reconcentrado* program. The civilian population of the revolutionary eastern provinces had been herded into fortified towns in the garrisoned west, where they had died of starvation and neglect. More ominous was the terrible sacrifice

of Cuba's children: In 1899, in a population of 1.5 million, the island counted only 131,000 children four years old and under, 226,000 between five and nine.

Neither countryside nor town had been spared in the devastation. The acreage farmed plummeted to 0.9 million from the 1.3 million acres tilled in 1895. Some provinces, such as Havana and Matanzas, had been severely damaged; Pinar del Rio, the westernmost province, cultivated more farmland in 1899 than in 1895, but its towns had been systematically burned in Antonio Maceo's western campaign. Where land was being farmed in 1899, hopelessly entangled laws made sale, transfer, or purchase difficult. Many of the large sugar plantations had been burned or could not operate; in Matanzas, center of Cuban sugar production in the nineteenth century, there were 434 mills in 1894, but five years later there were only 62. A similar precipitous drop in the number of mills occurred in other provinces.[6] Two-thirds of the island's wealth had been destroyed.

In June 1898 the American army had arrived as invader of Spanish domain; in the course of the war it had become conqueror of Cuba. Now, in 1899, despite a prewar congressional resolution disavowing any intention of annexing Cuban soil, American troops constituted an army of occupation.

In the debate over intervention, McKinley had declared his opposition to formal recognition of the Cuban republic. Thus, at war's end, the Cuban revolutionary junta, which had called for a free united Cuba in 1895, could rejoice in Spain's departure but faced an American army that intended to remain until the island was, in the official pronouncement, "pacified." During the war the people of Oriente province had elected a provisional government, composed mostly of rebel officers who organized an executive council, assessed taxes, and obtained supplies for the rebel army. Outside Oriente, however, the provisional government exercised little influence and was virtually ignored by the Americans. Its president, Bartolomé Masó, urged cooperation with the United States in the hope of obtaining American recognition. But the American government was of the view that Cubans were disunited. When the vice president of the provisional government, Domingo Méndez Capote, arrived in Washington in May 1898 to ascertain American policy, he learned that Cuban and Spanish conservatives were already pressing the Americans to remain after the Spanish surrender. McKinley's intentions were likewise known from his special message to Congress: "To secure in the island the establishment of a stable government, capable of maintaining order and observing its international obligations insuring peace and tranquility and the security of its citizens as well as our own."[7] The genesis of the Platt Amendment of 1901, defining Cuba's "special relationship" to the United States, had appeared.

After the Spanish surrender, the War Department created a Division of Cuba and divided the island into seven military departments, corresponding to old Spanish jurisdictions; in mid-1899 it consolidated these into four—the city of Havana, Havana province and Pinar del Río, Matanzas and Santa Clara, Santiago and Puerto Principe, each headed by an American general. Inevitably there were allusions to the Reconstruction Acts dividing the South into five military districts after the Civil War. (One of the governors in Cuba was Fitzhugh Lee, a southerner, formerly American consul general in Havana.)

The most capable of the military governors was probably William Ludlow, governor of Havana, an engineer who was sufficiently incensed at the wretched condition of the city that he advocated an American occupation "for a generation." But the departmental commander with the best political connections was Brigadier General Leonard Wood, a physician and career soldier, governor in Santiago, who instituted a regime of cleanliness in the city and meted out public whippings to citizens who violated sanitary regulations. Wood wrote detailed and perceptive reports on Cuban conditions for the secretary of war; his letters to the most influential of his friends, Theodore Roosevelt, were filled with savage comments on American mismanagement. One of Wood's aides published in the *North American Review* an equally strident condemnation of army misrule.

The commanding officer of these opinionated and occasionally troublesome proconsuls was Major General John R. Brooke, a Union hero at Gettysburg and, in 1898, commander of the First Corps. In December 1898, while Cuban and American civilians quarreled about the island's future, McKinley appointed Brooke military governor but failed to give him precise instructions about American policy. The result was that Brooke ran the military government on a day-to-day basis, taking care of immediate problems by the most expedient course. He reestablished the civilian bureaucracy, reopened schools, collected revenue, and ordered the streets cleaned. In most cities the Spanish bureaucracy had ceased to function. In Havana, for example, the Spanish city officials had stopped burying the dead—leaving corpses in the street—and had stripped public offices of furniture and supplies. His relief measures probably kept the population from starving.[8]

But he failed to appreciate, as did Leonard Wood, that the American presence in Cuba was as much political as military. Brooke might dispense food to starving Cubans or reopen the schools, but he made the mistake of reappointing Spaniards to their old positions in the bureaucracy, thus angering the Cubans who had fought not only for an independent Cuba but also for political office in the new republic. By the summer of 1899 criticism of the military governor was widespread, even among his subordinates. Root had already become dissatisfied with Brooke's perfunctory reports; he was much impressed with the stern regimen of Wood in Santiago. In the backstairs gossip of the McKinley administration, Brooke's cause was severely damaged, and Brooke hurt himself by censuring Wood for refusing to share the revenues of Santiago with the other provincial commanders.

McKinley remained customarily aloof in this bickering, but by the end of the year it was obvious that the campaign against Brooke (which Brooke called "malicious and wicked") had worked. In December 1899 the president named

Wood military governor of Cuba and instructed him to prepare the Cubans for independence.[9]

The official goal may have been the preparation of Cuba for independence, but Wood had uncommonly broad authority to accomplish that task. He was, wrote his biographer, "practically a free agent." Ecstatically optimistic about his task, he declared to the press a few weeks after his appointment that "success in Cuba is so easy that it would be a crime to fail."[10]

But governing in Santiago, where he ruled as virtual master over conquered Spaniard and war-weary Cuban, and ruling an entire country from Havana were quite different matters. He had already learned not to make Brooke's mistake of retaining the old Spanish bureaucracy. Cubans who took their places in the governmental machinery run by Wood now had a place, if not a sinecure. The problem was a gaggle of former rebel generals and political aspirants demanding more reward and power than Wood or the United States was willing to give. Maximo Gómez, the old Dominican, was offered what amounted to a sinecure for his acquiescence in behalf of the military government and haughtily refused. Most of the Cuban generals cynically believed that the American government intended to annex the island, despite the Teller Amendment and McKinley's—and Wood's—public disclaimers. The Cubans argued for universal manhood suffrage; Wood wanted an electoral code based on property holding as a requirement for suffrage. When General Rius Rivera, who served in the military government, proposed a plan for immediate independence, Wood peremptorily rejected it, and the Cuban resigned.

Wood attributed much of Cuban obstinacy to the long years of Spanish rule and Cuban inexperience in democracy:

> The great mass of public opinion [Wood wrote McKinley] is perfectly inert; especially is this true among the professional classes. The passive inactivity of one hundred and fifty years has settled over them and it is hard to get them out of old ruts and old grooves. . . .
>
> For three months I have had commissions at work on laws, taxation, electoral law, etc., and after all this time the only result is the adoption of practically the original plans submitted by the Americans to the commissions as working models. . . . The people . . . know they are not ready for self-government and those who are honest make no attempt to disguise the fact. We are going ahead as fast as we can, but we are dealing with a race that has been going down for a hundred years and into which we have to infuse new life, new principles and new methods of doing things. This is not the work of a day or of a year, but of a longer period. We are much hampered by the lack of practical experience on the part of the really influential men and much tact has to be used to steer and divert them without offending and causing pain.[11]

Wood was already demonstrating the "practical" approach to nation building. He arose each morning at 5:30 and began a day of furious routine, signing directives, giving orders, hearing complaints, and undertaking inspections of schools, hospitals, road construction, and public projects. He would even investigate the routine operation of a municipal court. He ran the military government like an efficient plantation owner with a show of southern charm for his Cuban wards coupled with a Yankee sense of organization and efficiency. He dined with the Cuban social elite and conversed with the lowliest *guajiro* (rural dweller) in the countryside. For sheer intensity of commitment, Wood was unmatched by any Cuban executive until Fidel Castro. Cubans who remembered the old three-hour workdays under the Spanish now had to adjust to Wood's bureaucratic regime of 9:00 to 11:00, 12:00 to 5:00, six days a week. Wood's office ran on a twenty-four hour schedule, with the day-to-day business supervised by Frank Steinhart, who later became U.S. consul and in 1908 took over Havana Electric Railway.

The American military in Cuba was, by 1901, a skeletal force, its numbers drastically reduced since Wood became military governor in December 1899. Following the war, the Americans had paid off the Cuban rebels (at roughly seventy-five dollars per man) and created a Rural Guard, presumably apolitical, that undertook the task of policing the countryside and maintaining order in the towns. Though American officers occasionally mediated disputes, American soldiers still in Cuba did little police work. An army of occupation, Wood believed, increased Cuban apprehensiveness about American intentions.

When Wood stepped down in May 1902 Cuba was not militarily occupied in the same way as, say, Germany after 1945, but it had already felt the imprint of American ways and techniques, expressed through a military regime and a stern-minded physician turned professional soldier. Mindful of the biblical injunctions on cleanliness, Wood had proceeded to sanitize the island's towns by strict regulations on garbage disposal (the Habaneras had always thrown their refuse in front of the house), paving of streets, and whitewashing of public places. Wood was convinced that filth explained Cuba's epidemics of yellow fever, though an eccentric Cuban scientist (of Scottish ancestry), Dr. Carlos Findlay, argued correctly that the culprit was the mosquito. Wood's vigorous sanitary campaign nonetheless probably helped to control another Cuban scourge, typhoid.

Preparation of Cuba for independence meant, of course, an educational system worthy of a young republic. Brooke and Wood had inherited a Spanish educational structure that had 541 primary schools and 400 private academies, most of them run by clerics. Brooke used the Spanish model, but Wood wanted the Cubans to have a "practical" education in civics, history, science, and vocational training. The model curriculum, written by an officer on the governor's staff, was patterned on the "Ohio Plan" and emphasized preparation for citizenship and the acquisition of skills or the learning of a trade. Hispanic tradition was intentionally denigrated. The texts were translations of American books (modified to Cuban conditions), and the Cuban teachers, before entering their classes

of six-to-fourteen-year-old students, were themselves drilled in American credos of instruction. School boards and superintendents, as in the United States, supervised the curriculum and instruction. At the head of Cuba's new educational system stood Alexis Frye, a driven pedagogue who frantically converted old barracks, warehouses, and unoccupied dwellings into 3,000 schools, with 3,500 instructors and 130,000 students. Wood and Frye had a falling-out over the inclusion of what Wood called "radical" methods in class instruction, but their collective energies inspired what seemed to be a great educational experiment. Yet the enthusiasm did not survive, and an investigation in 1906 showed that school population had actually dropped to 1899 levels.[12]

One concern, more than any other, dominated Leonard Wood's thoughts during his governorship of Cuba, and that was the future of the Cuban-American relationship. To him the solution to what some commentators called "our Cuban problem" was not military but political. America had promised not to annex Cuba but had dispatched a conquering army to its shores; it had annexed Puerto Rico and promptly begun demonstrating toward its Caribbean possession a salutary neglect. It had annexed the Philippines but had to wage a grisly military campaign against Filipinos in a guerrilla war that left some Americans, such as Mark Twain, who had supported the Cuban intervention, with feelings of remorse and even revulsion at American practice.

Within a year of Wood's appointment, the Cuban political system took democratic forms. The governor permitted the creation of political parties—three quickly appeared—and participation in local elections. In November 1900 the constitutional convention began its deliberations. From the outset the delegates seemed anxious about the future of the island's relations with the United States. When McKinley or Root or Wood spoke of Cuba, their comments were laced with references to its "special importance" or "strategic position" in the American geopolitical scheme. Cuba was vital and vulnerable—vulnerable to European machinations, a nineteenth-century American fear now made even more obvious by Germany's naval aspirations in the West Indies, and vulnerable within from political inexperience and financial uncertainty. By removing Spanish authority, Root argued, the United States had become responsible for stable government in Cuba. The war against Spain had been a "moral" crusade, the preservation of Cuba's independence a matter of American self-interest.[13]

America's guarantee of Cuban independence thus became the central feature of the Cuban-American relationship, the formal criteria spelled out in the Platt Amendment, an attachment to the Army Appropriation Act of 1901. The amendment embodied Wood's and Root's prescription for Cuba. The republic must maintain a low public debt, so as to prevent financial calamity or misuse of funds; avoid violating American rights in its treaty relations with other nations; grant the United States the right to intervene to protect American lives and property and enforce sanitary measures; and provide long-term naval leases to the United States.

When the Cuban convention got word of the Platt Amendment, a furious debate ensued as to American intentions. Cuban sovereignty was clearly violated, as the more radical delegates pointed out. A special commission delivered a formal protest to Wood, who castigated the group as ungrateful for American contributions to Cuba's welfare. Another delegation arrived in Washington to protest directly to McKinley and discovered that he had already signed the Platt Amendment into law. Even Henry Teller, whose name had been attached to the 1898 resolution forswearing any intention to annex Cuba, supported the amendment. Root himself, one of its coauthors, lavishly entertained the Cubans, then followed with a six-hour discussion about American rights under the Monroe Doctrine. The Platt Amendment would be narrowly interpreted, he told his guests, and Cuban sovereignty would not be violated.

The mollified Cubans returned to Havana with American reassurances and tried to modify the amendment before incorporating it into the Cuban Constitution, as the United States required. But Wood insisted that no alterations would be permitted and that American troops would remain until the amendment became a part of Cuba's fundamental law. Wood believed he understood the reason for Cuban fears. Cuban critics of the Platt Amendment, he wrote Root, "have attempted to make it appear that the intervention will take place at the whim of the officers occupying naval stations." The remark referred to the practice in which naval officers sometimes landed forces or even conducted negotiations without specific orders. The presumption in Wood's comment was that modern communication had made this practice unnecessary. "One thing you can be sure of," Wood concluded, "there will be no serious disturbance in Cuba."[14]

Wood went on to become governor of the Philippines, but he never achieved in that faraway American colony the triumphs that he had enjoyed as proconsul of Cuba. The army returned to Cuba in 1906 in a second tour of occupation, but Wood did not command it.

When American troops left Cuba in mid-1902, Theodore Roosevelt had been president for less than a year. He was to find new opportunities in the emerging Caribbean empire of the United States; to exploit them, he employed a military service with more experience than the army in policing the tropics—the navy.