

Nothing Remains Anymore

THE LAST DAYS OF SPANISH RULE

Writing from New York, Alejandro Ángulo Guridi—born in Puerto Rico, raised in the Dominican Republic, professionally trained in Cuba—published an open letter about Spanish defeats on Dominican soil. Even Spanish soldiers who had been seasoned in the Caribbean were succumbing to guerrilla warfare and tropical diseases, dying in great numbers. Spain was clearly losing. “Cubans! Cubans!” Guridi exclaimed. “What do you do? What do you think?”¹ Guridi traveled to Washington, DC, lobbying for independence. He moved on to New York, where he met up with a vibrant group of Latin American activists. The famous Cuban author Cirilo Villaverde edited Guridi’s opposition pamphlet, *Santo Domingo and Spain*.² Three more itinerant stops took him to the Turks and Caicos, Saint Thomas, and Venezuela before he returned to Dominican territory. Guridi worked in tandem with Provisional Government ministers, who threw their efforts into making regional allies simultaneously. Old networks percolated with new energy. In Curaçao, exiles and allies formed a Dominican revolutionary club, defiantly flying the republican flag.³ A wealthy Curaçao merchant was so implicated in arms sales that the Provisional Government named him an official agent; he took to addressing his notes “Citizen” and signing them “God and Liberty.”⁴ “Brothers in South America: Come fight in Santo Domingo and you will be fighting for the liberty of a brother people and for your own,” a government writer exhorted. “Come, Come, . . . to defeat the already decrepit Spanish power, and shout with delirious enthusiasm: ¡Long live America and the republics that people it!”⁵

As the anticolonial fighting raged, Spanish authorities tried to maintain day-to-day government functioning and to restrict the local circulation of news about the war. In a rare mention of regional opposition, a writer at *La Razón* called Jamaicans' 1861 anti-Spanish petition "the machinations of clowns," but otherwise, the pro-occupation journals maintained a studious silence.⁶ Cuban and Puerto Rican periodicals did the same, only mentioning boat movements and the barest of other details. To stanch local trading ties, authorities blockaded the northern Dominican coast with twenty-two Spanish ships. The captains of small crafts from Saint Thomas, Turks and Caicos, Haiti, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Curaçao, and other sites, however, simply eluded them.⁷ In addition to this bustling contraband trade, human witnesses to the conflict arrived steadily to Spanish docks at San Juan, Santiago de Cuba, and Havana. Injured soldiers, arriving for treatment, described the rebels' guerrilla victories, the crumbling occupation, and the growth of the revolt. Beginning in the battles of late 1864, Cuban and Puerto Rican soldiers joined Spanish regiments, and Dominican reserve corps merged with them. Spanish, Cuban, and Puerto Rican deserters joined Dominican rebels, too, in jails as far away as Cádiz and Ceuta.

News crisscrossed the Atlantic as well. Spain's press was fractious and strident. Progressive Madrid journalists were acerbic critics of the war, especially as the fighting utterly exploded annexation's voluntary premise. Journals like *La Discusión* arrived in Caribbean ports, to the chagrin of local officials. From Santo Domingo, the captain general prohibited the paper's circulation, but *La Discusión* reached Santiago de los Caballeros all the same.⁸ Provisional Government journalists reprinted key articles.⁹ In Cuba, the only Spanish periodical to be admitted was a trade circular, *Comercio de Cádiz*.¹⁰ The Cuban governor, desperate, banned discussion of abolition in Cuba in June 1862, and Spanish officials tried to enact the same ban in Spain the next fall.¹¹ Empire-wide censorship continued through the summer of 1865, even after the last Spanish soldier left Dominican soil.¹² Foreign observers sent news, too. Many consular agents from Hanover, Hamburg, Prussia, the United States, and Austria who had been in Puerto Plata took refuge in the Turks and Caicos Islands, where they continued to send accounts; Santo Domingo-based U.S. observers like William Cazneau and William Jaeger reported on Spanish defeats with unrepentant glee from the relative safety of the capital city, and newspapers in New York, Boston, Chicago, and other sites reprinted their accounts eagerly.¹³ Critical voices from Cuba reached a Washington, DC, newspaper, for example, in a report that complained that

Cuba's colonial defenses were being "weakened to sustain a war whose results could be summarized as *defeat*."¹⁴

Quickly, Spanish debate over withdrawal focused as much on the dangerous example of Caribbean defeat as on cost or logistics. The original champions of annexation were gone. Serrano, the Cuban governor who was Santana's coauthor, left Cuba in late 1862; in Spain, O'Donnell's administration fell the following spring. For a short time, wealthy loyalists from Cuba and Puerto Rico offered goods and funds to help quell the rebellion, but as the fight continued, a "general disgust" grew in Havana and other sites.¹⁵ Meanwhile, everyone, of all political orientations, civil and military, on the islands and across the Atlantic, commented on the example and significance of guerrilla warfare. Spanish military figures and politicians suggested crushing the Dominican rebels with a massive display of force. "A shameful withdrawal?" a Spanish official in Cuba asked contemptuously in 1864. "What a beautiful and useful lesson that would be for the blacks and mulatos of Puerto Rico and Cuba."¹⁶ Others were more apocalyptic about an impending race war, predicting the collapse of Spanish empire and the white race if Spain admitted defeat.¹⁷ But the progress of the fighting was undeniable. In late January 1865, the Crown initiated steps to withdrawal.

At the end of a whirlwind of fighting, and in a devastated landscape, Dominicans defeated Spain's massive mobilization without any formal alliances. Major imperial powers largely failed them. Lincoln expressed sympathy, but his government remained neutral. French officials kept totally silent. Britain finally recognized Dominicans as belligerents when the fighting was almost over.¹⁸ Politicians from a number of South American republics, critically eyeing European intervention in Mexico, French intervention in the U.S. Civil War, and annexationists in Guatemala and Ecuador, expressed support for the Dominican rebels.¹⁹ The only enduring alliances, however, were the ones Dominican rebels forged, unofficially and often secretly, with their Caribbean neighbors. Networks of trade, exile, finance, and friendship grew tighter. Meanwhile, *independentistas* in Cuba and Puerto Rico, busily organizing, watched Spain fight, and lose. Forty-one thousand Spanish soldiers, joined by twenty thousand more Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican reserve soldiers, could not crush the popular resistance.²⁰ In Santiago de Cuba, a poet praised the victorious Dominicans and predicted the future of his own island:

Glory and honor to the American world,
the holy idea of liberty triumphs,

. . . raised and victorious
the noble Dominican flag waves . . .
Hispaniola was the cradle of [Spain's] empire,
and today it is the tomb.²¹

Our Cry of INDEPENDENCE! Regional and International Responses

Peruvian authorities condemned the annexation from its first days. Already embroiled in a conflict with Spain (known variously as the “Chincha Islands War,” the “Spanish-Peruvian War,” and the “Spanish-Chilean War”), Peruvian officials looked upon the Dominican cession with particular disapproval. They sent a circular around to other governments, condemning the act as “an attack on democratic institutions and continental security”; Nicaragua, Bolivia, Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela all expressed support.²² “A common peril for America,” the annexation was “neither free, nor legal, nor in accordance with the Rights of Peoples, nor the practice of Nations, nor the spirit of the century,” the Peruvian chancellor argued. He warned Venezuela of a possible military expedition from Cuba as well and demanded “an alliance to reject the reconquest.”²³ Peru, Venezuela, and New Grenada recognized the Dominican Republic via confidential agent in July 1864; the Peruvian consul even offered to help procure arms from Curaçao to Cap-Haïtien.²⁴ As conflict continued off the Peruvian coast, the Peruvian president was forced out of office in November 1865, primarily for having failed to take a stronger stand against the Spanish. One Peruvian, Fruto Fuentes, participated in the fierce fighting of Puerto Plata in 1863.²⁵

Venezuelans, long politically linked to Santo Domingo, were divided by their own civil war. Nevertheless, representatives of the Dominican Provisional Government were in regular contact with Venezuelan arms dealers, buying at least five thousand guns and other supplies from Coro in the summer of 1864. Caracas and other coastal cities hosted a significant and high-profile exile population, who wrote back to Dominican papers that they were eager to return.²⁶ Juan Pablo Duarte, in exile since the 1840s, allegedly sought guns and supplies from the Venezuelan government, to be facilitated by the commercial houses of Curaçao.²⁷ Manuel Rodríguez Objío shuttled back and forth from Santiago de los Caballeros to Caracas in 1863–64.²⁸ “Our brothers fight for the holy cause of independence. . . . [We] have common cause with those who want to sustain the integrity of the world of Columbus,” a Venezuelan federalist paper praised in early 1864. “Continuous, heroic, the Dominican patriots,” the editorial began, noting, “There, too, there are those who know how to love liberty.” The author urged Venezuelan heads of state to

send an emissary at once to Spain. “It is upon the Venezuelan Government to give this step of *americanismo*, of diligent and forthcoming friendliness,” the paper reiterated, “in honor of the holy ashes of Bolívar.” Perhaps Venezuelan mediation would help, the author supposed. “We are the closest to Spain and to Santo Domingo,” he urged.²⁹

Venezuela’s own conflicts interrupted state-level diplomacy, but individuals continued to directly lobby, advocate, and even take up arms, with the Dominicans. It was a Venezuelan man, Manuel Ponce de León, who penned the *Acta de Independencia* on behalf of the fledgling Provisional Government; a Venezuelan general, Candelario Oquendo, became an important rebel leader.³⁰ Other individual Venezuelan soldiers participated in the fighting from its first days.³¹ Capital city officials, suspicious, ordered all arriving from Venezuela without a passport to have someone vouch for them (a *fianza*). A small number of well-connected opponents in Madrid, such as conservative Venezuelan writer Pedro José Rojas, lobbied in Dominican favor. Other prominent Venezuelans lobbied hard for Dominican independence through the national press and in Washington; the Provisional Government thanked them officially via the Peruvian agent in Saint Thomas. “Send the titles . . . with some sentences that praise their *americanismo* . . . as thanks,” the agent suggested.³²

Residents of nearby British islands were even closer to the conflict. The Turks and Caicos Islands were reception sites for refugees and well-documented gun entrepreneurs.³³ The press openly favored the rebellion. Editors at the *Royal Standard and Gazette of the Turks and Caicos Islands* republished the rebel Provisional Government’s protest letter to the queen and reported optimistically on Dominican gains. In the Parish Church of Saint Thomas, Grand Turk, congregants heard a sermon on the fight and took up a collection “in aid of those poor distressed Dominicans” who were living there.³⁴ Meanwhile, the gun trade was steady. A pair of cannons reached the rebels in Puerto Plata in 1863, followed by “war equipment, food, and supplies of all kinds.”³⁵ British-registered ships like the *Elisa*, which ran the Turks–northern coast route, were under constant Spanish suspicion. In those instances in which the Spanish managed to intercept the ample microtrade between the two areas (Monte Cristi equally as implicated as Puerto Plata), the ships’ crews alternately abandoned ship or fought back. Those unlucky enough to be jailed appealed to the British consulate for recourse. “It is obvious that one of the main causes of the war’s duration is precisely the continuous sending of aid, organized in Nassau and the Turks Islands above all else,” Spanish officials wrote, asking the British government to use “all direct or

indirect means . . . to impede, or at least limit, the brazen and practically public sending of aid.”³⁶ The Spanish admitted that local ship crews had been thrown into crowded cells with Dominican prisoners of war, an unpleasant and likely radicalizing experience.³⁷ Despite official condemnation—the British consul categorized the Dominican insurgents as rebellious Spanish subjects, and the Nassau governor agreed to forcibly return rebels—local support continued.³⁸

For reasons of precedent, security, and cost, Cuba’s new governor, Domingo Dulce, came to detest the annexation. He was pessimistic about the gravity of the rebellion, and he balked at the request to send five more battalions from Cuba in September 1863. “Even, by some luck, if order is reestablished,” he argued, in the first weeks of fighting, “will it be the last attempt by the Dominicans to reestablish their autonomy? It is practically obvious that it will not.” “The annexation was not the work of the nation: it was that of a party who dominated by terror, and who, worried for its future, negotiated for its own advantage,” he wrote with lucid skepticism, continuing, “The people did not want nor pine to be governed by its old metropolis: and at every instance that has arisen to demonstrate as such, they have done so as ostentatiously as possible.” The queen’s “maternal benevolence . . . has bettered its miserable situation at the cost of Cuba,” he allowed, but he doubted that Dominican territory, with its tiny economy and minimal infrastructure, could become profitable. And of the difficulty of the fighting, the governor was decidedly pessimistic. The guerrilla movements were “every day more powerful,” he noted, and their logistical advantages were “obvious.” The most dangerous aspect of the uprising, however, was the precedent it set: “These repeated rebellions, even when defeated and punished, establish a fatal example in [Cuba], where the spirit of independence began a while ago and remains robust,” Dulce warned. He worried about the security of Cuba as it sent away its regiments. He suggested a show of force, “reducing the rebellious subjects to obedience, renouncing dominion of the territory of Santo Domingo, and re-establishing in it the same government . . . offering it a protectorate,” he argued.³⁹ Upon hearing of the revolution’s increasingly critical state, he reiterated his suggestion for abandonment. “A revolution that is not immediately crushed is a terrible example in the Antilles,” he insisted.⁴⁰

Despite the Cuban governor’s position, administrative, financial, and military ties to Cuba and Puerto Rico made connections to Santo Domingo inevitable and constant. The Spanish consul asked for U.S. cooperation in restricting boat travel that might triangulate between Cuba, the United

States, and Santo Domingo, noting, “It is extremely important that there be no contraband, illicit traffic, nor communication between the ports of Havana and the rebels against this Government.” There is no evidence that U.S. officials cooperated.⁴¹ Steamship mail service, private British boats, and other vessels connected the islands. Spanish authorities wanted to build a telegraph cable between Port-au-Prince and eastern Cuba after the fighting started, without immediate result. Still, island-to-island communication proceeded regularly enough, and it had the attention of neighboring publics. Havana’s *Gaceta Oficial* necessarily reported the naval blockade of Santo Domingo, for example, because it was patrolled by Cuban ships. Even as Spanish-Cuban periodicals like *El Redactor de Santiago de Cuba* sought to put the most positive possible spin on the fighting—“the roots [of the rebellion] are being destroyed in el Cibao,” it reported hopefully—their point-by-point coverage of the battles themselves represented raw material for more rebellious interpretations.⁴² In Guantánamo, authorities accused a Spanish merchant of holding meetings with free and enslaved people of color to read newspapers about the unfolding events in neighboring Santo Domingo. He exaggerated Spanish losses, officials accused indignantly.⁴³

Soldiers and officials traveled, too. Santiago de Cuba was a key port of embarkation. Injured soldiers brought word of the fighting in person. Yellow fever massively hurt Spanish ranks, sending thousands to Cuba for treatment. Several thousand passed through eastern Cuban hospitals during the fighting, and more were sent to other sites.⁴⁴ Santiago authorities used a cannon captured from the Dominicans as a trophy of war in the atrium of the main cathedral of the town. More than fifteen hundred soldiers were present to witness its dedication on 6 June 1864, as it was paraded through the street in a military procession accompanied with fireworks. A new *danza* entitled “El Cañón” celebrated the event.⁴⁵ More Antilles-based Spanish soldiers embarked than ever before; fourteen thousand troops from the Ejército de Cuba left for Santo Domingo in the beginning of 1864. Later that year, Spanish officials both solicited volunteers from Cuba and Puerto Rico and merged the Spanish and reserve regiments. Nonmilitary Spanish officials moved back and forth between the islands, too, asking for multiple-month sojourns in their former stations of Puerto Rico and Cuba to reestablish their failing health.⁴⁶

No neighboring official wanted to receive the Dominican deportees, whose provenance ranged from wealthy merchants to illiterate day laborers. The Puerto Rican governor wrote, not a little perturbed, that he had received a group of thirty-five men thought to be leaders of the Dominican insurrection. He immediately put them into isolation. “I have ordered them to be

put in the basement of the Morro Castle, where they will be unable to communicate with the rest of the fort,” he wrote anxiously.⁴⁷ Prison correspondence emanating from the lower floors of the San Juan fortress was censored carefully, for both “obscene words and [secret messages] from the gang of bandits,” the governor reported.⁴⁸ These men had been arrested in a roundup in the early hours of the morning in the Dominican capital, days before. Many of them were released into Puerto Rican towns but kept under high vigilance. They were supposed to report to authorities once a day.⁴⁹ As the fighting continued, the groups of arrestees got larger. More than 150 men arrived in Viques; hundreds passed through Havana as a way station before being sent on to the peninsula. Even when the accused did not stay in Havana, their arrival at the docks provoked commentary and gossip.⁵⁰ Among their ranks were a few Spanish men as well, such as sailor León Mate, sent back to Havana for his complicity in the Puerto Plata uprisings of August 1863 (the bulk of Spanish infractors, soldiers, remained within their ranks in Santo Domingo).⁵¹ Like the Puerto Rican authorities, officials in Havana were uneasy about both the spectacle presented by and the possible communication from the insurgents. The Cuban governor suggested that deportees be sent not to the peninsula but to Ceuta.⁵² Although there is no evidence that the transfer occurred on a large scale, at least a few were transferred to north Africa, and their subsequent supplication for some sort of daily support left an archival trail.⁵³

Dominican families pleaded for their exiled members, and the deportees themselves entreated for mercy. From Puerto Rico, Havana, and Cádiz, petitions combined plaintive (and outraged) descriptions of the conditions of incarceration, the impossible cost of daily sustenance, and the pain of separation from their lives on the island. Some were prominent men, merchants from Puerto Plata and the like; paterfamilias supplicated for the right to return to their numerous children and grandchildren. Other prisoners were younger laborers who enlisted the help of literate men to plead their case. Juan Francisco Cuello and Domingo de Leon entreated, after five months of being locked in “tight, terrible” cells in San Juan, that they be given a chance to prove their faithfulness to Spain. They and others urged that neighbors could attest to the fidelity of their conduct. “We have never had the most remote idea against the peace and tranquility of our country . . . [and] are faithful to our Mother Country,” one prisoner entreated.⁵⁴ From Cádiz, one man wrote of how he had been surprised in his home in the much-surveilled *extramuro* community of San Carlos, near the capital, precipitating a nightmarish chain of events. Escorted in shackles away from his home, into a

ship, and to a cell in Havana, he was then summarily moved again, across the Atlantic. From his cell in southern Spain, he begged for clemency, some aid in the means of subsistence, and most dearly, freedom. He requested a passport “for any of the Antilles,” to bring him closer to his numerous family. Authorities denied his “inopportune” request; he repeated his entreaties in subsequent months.⁵⁵ Mothers pleaded on behalf of their adult children. “It would be a grand and worthy act of Your motherly soul, to free the father of a family, today reduced to misery,” one petitioned the queen pointedly.⁵⁶

The guilt or innocence of deportees—even if loyalty were any sort of stable index in the fast-changing climes of the raging conflict—was inscrutable at best. Such was the case of Ildefonso Mella, who found himself jailed in Havana after an arrest outside of Puerto Plata. Mella had merely traveled to the eastern outskirts of the town with his daughter for fresh air, his sister and mother insisted, but damning witnesses were just as intransigent. Authorities acceded to his family’s entreaties, and Mella was permitted to board a ship back to Hispaniola.⁵⁷ A number of prisoners made similarly compelling cases. One local government official wrote that his imprisonment in Cádiz was “some mistaken measure, or perhaps a victim of malintentioned persons.” He explained, “The whole neighborhood can attest . . . to my constant adhesion and respect for the throne of Your Majesty.” Furthermore, he had been close friends with Santana. “Your Majesty, pardon this benign old man,” he concluded.⁵⁸ The Spanish were wrong about Ildefonso Mella, it turns out, and probably many others. Mella went on to be mayor of Puerto Plata long after the Spanish were gone, and his rebel loyalties proved as unshakable as his irreverence to conservative authorities in the capital city. In subsequent years, the governor of Cuba would write outraged complaints about Mayor Mella’s “open sympathies for Cuban [independence] conspirators,” to the defiance even of other Dominican officials.⁵⁹

In Puerto Rico secret sites of anticolonial organizing grew. In Mayagüez, “a true *antillanista* cenacle” formed.⁶⁰ If Spanish surveillance meant that few guns could traffic through there, rebels still could. Father Fernando Antonio Meriño—a high church official, subsequently canonized as “the Father of Dominican oratory”—found himself summarily exiled to Puerto Rico for his staunch (and openly defiant) opposition of Santana. He hastily made his way to the port city, found other rebels there, and wrote to others constantly.⁶¹ From Mayagüez on the Noche de los Muertos, he gave a dramatic sermon in the town cemetery, reporting he had seen the shadows of Hidalgo and Morelos (priests who had led anti-Spanish fighting in Mexico). Trinitario José

María de Serra lived in Mayagüez, as did Félix Delmonte, former minister of war. Delmonte was so influential in “leading political opinion astray” that he was exiled again several years later.⁶² Both Delmonte and Meriño met often with Ramón Emeterio Betances, whose peripatetic activism during the years of Dominican fighting was matched only by his clandestine abolitionist and *independentista* organizing in eastern Puerto Rico itself. Betances met Luperón and José María Cabral while in exile in Saint Thomas and spent at least some of the fighting in Santo Domingo and Caracas. Moving on, he lobbied for recognition of the Provisional Government in Paris and London.⁶³ Much of his organizing was in secret. Years after the fighting, Dominican journalists thanked Betances “for all the generous services he privately lent the Republic in moments of the War of Restoration.”⁶⁴

Organizers in Cuba also arranged secret aid. Private boats from Cuba seem to have arrived at Samaná, instead of the commercial docks of Puerto Plata and Monte Cristi. Spanish authorities seized one such ship, carrying an inventory billed to a resident of Matanzas, for having gone off of its charter.⁶⁵ Dominican Carlos Pulien, working in Samaná’s Spanish administration, was caught receiving multiple dozens of letters from Cuba that had no apparent commercial content whatsoever.⁶⁶ José Ysnaga, born in Cuba but a longtime resident in Venezuela, was “a fan of mixing himself up in political questions and a drunk,” the authorities wrote, when they expelled him.⁶⁷ In New York, prominent Dominicans mingled with Cuban exiles; Cuban nationalist Juan Manuel Macías penned the 1865 pamphlet “Las Colonias Españolas y la República Dominicana” for the Sociedad Democrática de los Amigos de América, founded just the year before. The society called annexation “a bloody farce” and exulted, “No Dominican doubts the happy success in restoring free institutions.”⁶⁸ Some ships sailed from New York under the rebel Dominican flag, authorized by a letter of marque from the Provisional Government. Rumors from as far as Paris linked Havana, Matanzas, New York, and Boston.⁶⁹ The Provisional Government observed and supported these covert networks. Ministers published a decree encouraging generals to purchase weapons and tighten political bonds in nearby islands.⁷⁰

Various communities in the United States covertly organized in favor of the effort, and they connected it directly with political struggles of their own. Dominican emissary Dr. Francisco Basora made secret appeals to the Chilean mission in New York, although it is not clear if they bore fruit.⁷¹ New York’s Spanish-language newspapers began to appear in Puerto Rican ports. The authors heartily supported the Dominican rebels, Spanish authorities noted grimly.⁷² Spanish authorities suspected it was Cuban exiles—and, per-

haps more improbably, U.S. filibusters—who were outfitting ships in Boston. Spain seized one U.S.-registered boat with seven hundred guns, two hundred barrels of gunpowder, rice, rum, and other supplies.⁷³ Mostly, they speculated wildly about the amount and provenance of aid coming from the north that potentially eluded the blockade dragnet. The Spanish consul in Washington, DC, even suspected that unnamed allies were preparing a boat in Halifax, Nova Scotia.⁷⁴ Boston's vice-consul had slightly more specific information—even the names of two British and two American ships—but no one could easily intercept the boats: they were directed to Cap-Haïtien.⁷⁵ American citizens in Dominican territory tried to lobby for U.S. opposition, but to no avail.⁷⁶ English-language papers covered the conflict regularly. It was Puerto Rican and Cuban activists and exiles, however, who had immediate plans.

When Spain called for military volunteers from both islands in 1864, anti-Spanish sentiments in Puerto Rico flared. “A Regiment of Volunteers has been forcibly taken to assassinate their brothers in Santo Domingo,” Betances decried in a pamphlet. “Let us not be their instruments; and if they take us by force, as has been the case with others, let us go to the lines of our brothers of Santo Domingo,” he urged. Betances invoked an indigenous history of anti-Spanish resistance. “The jíbaros of Puerto Rico, sons de Agüebana el Bravo, have not lost our pride,” he wrote, “and [we] know how to prove to our tyrants, as the brave Dominicans are doing, that we . . . will not suffer abuse with impunity.”⁷⁷ He claimed that some Puerto Rican volunteers were deserting in Dominican territory. “Some of them have dispersed and gone into hiding in the montes,” he described, “and some have even hung themselves before agreeing to go to kill and rob our brothers.” Furthermore, Dominicans were receiving these Puerto Rican deserter allies “with open arms and shower[ing them] with blessings,” he claimed. Another pamphlet from 1864—the grammar and syntax of which suggest a different author who was not Betances—also called for immediate action in Puerto Rico:

Let us not sleep: the occasion is magnificent: there are no SOLDIERS on the island, and even if there were the war of SANTO DOMINGO should have shown us that one Gíbaro with a machete in his hand is worth one hundred SPANIARDS. RISE, PUERTO RICANS!

. . . our cry of INDEPENDENCE will be heard and supported by friends of LIBERTY; and there will be no lack of aid in arms and weapons to drown in the dust the DESPOTS OF CUBA, PUERTO RICO, AND SANTO DOMINGO!⁷⁸

May the Devil Take Me If I See Resolution to This

As 1865 dawned, Dominicans challenged Spanish authority everywhere. Even with the basic necessities of daily life lacking, citizens became confident that victory was near. Caricatures circulated freely, and the Provisional Government celebrated the festivities of 27 February, albeit with a ban on costumes.⁷⁹ Where the Spanish remained, tension was constant. One loyal reserves captain, drinking until dawn in the Azua encampment, suddenly turned on his superior officer at some unknown provocation, calling him and the rest of the Spanish officers present “unos pendejos.”⁸⁰ A civilian man named Marcos allegedly lashed out at a Spanish soldier, also while drunk, brandishing a knife and proclaiming that “all Spaniards are robbers, pigs, traitors, and that the [guerrillas] were with him.” “He said the Spanish were all cunning and that all they knew how to do was steal,” another Spanish witness confirmed.⁸¹ Thirty-three-year-old music professor Sebastian Morcelo admitted responding “Dominicano libre!” to a watchman’s call of “Who’s there?” “I meant to say Spain,” he deadpanned. His brother called after him as he was being arrested, “Don’t worry! There are plenty of us to save you!” The commission condemned Morcelo, who was not armed, to serve one month in jail for a simple “lack of judgment.”⁸² Others shared his conviction. Socorro Sánchez—a single, twenty-six-year-old, literate businesswoman in the capital—sent a letter in the care of a young bread seller to San Cristóbal seeking provisions. The content of her letter was not revolutionary, but it was irreverent in its assurance. “You [should] help me, even if it is just for the good friendship you had with your *compadre* Francisco Sánchez,” she wrote. “I am his sister, and I live with his widow, we work together,” she explained, “Given that the war will very soon be over, send me good sugar . . . wax, dried cowhide, and tobacco leaves.” She appealed to a male cousin as well. For the *comuniqués*, she spent late spring and early summer of 1865 in jail, as did her young messenger.⁸³

Meanwhile, Spanish soldiers suffered greatly from a lack of supplies and illness. Without bread or salt, many of the Spanish troops on campaign subsisted on chunks of meat.⁸⁴ “The Spanish soldiers could be seen wandering around like squalid ghosts, supporting themselves with walking sticks and moving laboriously,” a Spanish commander reflected. Where men could be dispatched to sleep, comforts were exceedingly few. Even in occupied towns, soldiers “are mostly lodged in huts in horrible condition, at grave risk to the health of the soldier and the discipline of the corps,” the governor complained, but no funding for new barracks was forthcoming.⁸⁵ Endless fall

rains in late 1864 dampened spirits and supplies. The treasury official asked for thousands of pesos to fix roads around the capital, where rain and heavy transit had made the roads nearly impossible, even for individuals; word arrived three months later that his request was denied until the colony's status was clear.⁸⁶ Overland, the marching was "excruciating," the governor related to the peninsula. "The rough roads, or rather paths, of this island have no resources of any kind, [troops] having to cross rivers with water up to one's waist," he continued.⁸⁷ The Dominican reservists were perhaps even more poorly provisioned. "They marched mostly barefoot, with their pants rolled up to their knees," one Spanish general wrote in his memoirs, and "others were so sick it made the camp look like a hospital."⁸⁸

Unluckily for those who might have found themselves in serious need of medical attention, the makeshift hospitals were no place to recuperate. Hospitals were most often "nothing more than a barrack hut made from tree branches and sticks, under which refuge the sick rested, laid out on the ground," a Spanish commander observed.⁸⁹ Sickness compounded the misery. Yellow fever fatalities were high even in the summer before the fighting.⁹⁰ A mystery illness flooded hospitals in the fall of 1863; although it was mild, the governor estimated he had better send some of the sick soldiers to Cuba for treatment.⁹¹ The U.S. agent observed that poor drainage in the capital city made it "at times a perfect graveyard."⁹² The cleanliness of smaller towns would have brought little comfort to soldiers laboring and injured there; it was in the interior that scarcity was the worst. Medicine was hard to come by and expensive; improvised hospitals lacked staff, even sheets to cover the improvised bedding. "Hospital is a magic and terrible word that the soldiers instinctively reject," one report summarized, "One can well imagine the morale of the average soldier . . . , especially those recently arrived from Spain, a country with [modern supplies] . . . a disconsolate portrait. . . . Overcome with pain, they can only announce their impending end, mouthing constantly, 'I'm dying.'" ⁹³ Typhoid fever "ran through all the housing and left barely a soldier useful" in Samaná; the hospital had burned, but staff were without the means to bleach instruments for use again, authorities remarked gravely. An anonymous complaint from a soldier protested that most in the military hospital did not have nearly enough to eat.⁹⁴ Only in larger towns did some Spanish troops receive limited aid from charitable loyal Dominicans, "without which they would have perished in the hospital," one soldier reported.⁹⁵ Others could not have been so lucky.

More Spanish troops deserted, even though soldiers faced harsh punishment. Desertion during wartime carried the threat of shooting by firing

squad. One young Spanish soldier from Cartagena (serving in the Regimiento de la Habana), absent for a month, pleaded that he had only left to find food, that he had been reduced to sleeping in abandoned huts, and that his consorting with Dominicans had been only out of necessity. Officials evidently took pity on the man, but he faced a decade in prison.⁹⁶ Those who had formerly been stationed in Cuba and Puerto Rico fled the most.⁹⁷ The Second Cuban Crown Regiment was not to be separated from the First Crown Regiment, the governor wrote, and they should be sent back to Cuba for reasons of discipline.⁹⁸ According to rebel pamphlets, Cuban and Puerto Rican volunteer regiments deserted at an astronomical rate.⁹⁹ Officials proposed that 1845-era Cuban penalties be brought against deserters. In Monte Cristi, the military commission surveyed the troops, asking them if they had witnessed others expressing great dissatisfaction with service, speaking with or being friends with the “enemy,” facing punishment, or simply pining for their families.¹⁰⁰ Everything dampened morale. Occasionally, a deserter sent back an infuriating letter to his fellow soldiers, sometimes anonymously, sometimes directly. One deserter, who asserted, “The Captain knows my name very well,” wrote, “A few months ago I was in your ranks, submitted to Buceta’s despotism in Samaná. . . . Dominicans are just and virtuous. Everything I say to you is true, and I say it with my hand over my heart. [The Dominicans] don’t need us; they have enough people, they are just trying to save us from torment. Countrymen, flee those proud and unnatural Commanders who are just trying to reduce us to ashes.” He called select Dominican loyalists “scum.”¹⁰¹ Editors at the *Boletín Oficial* gleefully republished a letter from another Spanish soldier, insults and all:

I am taking advantage of the short break we have to write and give you news of this famous campaign, which is nothing like the one we did in Morocco. Well, this mess is capable of irritating even a saint. One minute we go there, the next we come back. . . . May the Devil take me if I see the resolution to this. These damn *indios* are always out of sight; as soon as you see them one place they disappear, and just when we think they’re defeated, they show up shooting. . . . And they’re not bad shots. In fact it appears that the damn [people] have spent their whole life hunting, well when they aim, Jesus, the only thing one can do is cross oneself. . . . And that with not all of them armed. . . . What will happen, then, the day that these cunning devils get good precision weapons? . . . When will we be able to pacify such a vast country, cut off on all sides by mountains and narrow paths; populated by a damn ruffraff [*canalla*] who live

just as easily in the *montes* as in a palace; who know the territory like you know your bedroom, while we cannot completely trust any who present themselves as friends. . . . And that would be nothing, if we had better superior officers, what cowards! What rogues! They are soldiers for a theater.¹⁰²

Another soldier was even more succinct in his frustration:

Me c . . . , c . . . , en Colón,
en Cortés y el los Pizarros . . .
en los Estados Unidos
y en el seno Mexicano . . .
por uno y otros oceanos.¹⁰³

[I s—, s— on Columbus,
on Cortés and on the Pizarros . . .
on the United States
and the interior of Mexico . . .
on this ocean and that one.]

By the spring of 1865, many troops must have felt aimless. In the capital, “some individuals who claimed to be officers of the King’s Regiment” drunkenly broke down the doors of a number of single women’s residences, to the chastisement of authorities the next day. Four women brought a collective case against them, and they won.¹⁰⁴

The Last Days of Spanish Rule

Facing the rebellion, Madrid authorities issued policy changes month by month. In the spring of 1864, the Crown had demanded victory at any price, and de la Gándara himself hoped for thirty thousand more troops. By fall, both the queen and the general had become convinced of the futility of the fighting. Madrid authorities authorized evacuation from all of Seybo and froze any new embarkation of troops. De la Gándara was relieved at the new orders, which permitted an orderly Spanish retreat. “It frees us from expenses and embarrassment, and saves the sad remains of our most virtuous Division from complete ruin, now resting in the relatively healthy districts of Azua and Baní,” he confessed.¹⁰⁵ All the while, however, some in Madrid forcefully argued for the continued strategic and economic value of the colony.¹⁰⁶ “The island of Santo Domingo is ours . . . has been ever since it opened its eyes to civilization,” argued one author. He characterized the rebellion as “a handful of bandits followed by some thousands of

a strange race,” and concluded more decisive military action would save the endeavor. “Colonization demands great sacrifices,” he insisted.¹⁰⁷ Manuel Buceta—perhaps the most hated military figure of the Cibao—also argued for continuing the hostilities.¹⁰⁸ The conservative, inveterate racist Marques de Lema gave an impassioned speech to the Senate that was quickly reprinted in pamphlet form. Point by point, he attempted to refute the pro-abandonment arguments about Dominican fidelity, cost, and futility. Nearly 40 million pesos had been spent decorating the Puerta del Sol in Madrid; “a small amount of this” could have pacified Santo Domingo, he claimed. Without sufficient resources to suffocate “the African insurrection,” Spain’s honor had been compromised, he argued.¹⁰⁹ News of these debates reached President Geffard even before the Spanish governor in Dominican soil; some suspected, probably correctly, that he rushed the news of Spanish division to the Dominican side.¹¹⁰ As of 19 January, the decision to abandon Santo Domingo was irrevocable.

In a final review for the Crown of the social and political conflicts of annexation, Spain’s ministers did not shy away from frank discussion of Spanish racism and slavery. “Since emancipation, Santo Domingo has held as an unbreakable canon the most complete equality not only of race and condition but also social, civil and political order,” the ministers remarked. “So the *negro* and the *moreno* put on the sash of General, dress in the most distinguished uniform, flaunt the most prized insignia and decoration, and take part in the governance and administration of the island,” they continued, “while the wretched of their race groan in servitude in the other Antilles, fourteen and sixteen *leguas* away.” They were sober in their assessment of the impact of the failure of the project on Cuba and Puerto Rico: “The slaves of Cuba and Puerto Rico must see day in and day out their brothers in so different a condition; can it be believed for one second that this spectacle, this living provocation, would not produce dismal results in our other Antilles?” They repeated the islands’ proximity again and again. “An Antille fourteen and sixteen *leguas* distant from the others could not govern itself with a different regimen from the others, and they in turn could not use the one Santo Domingo desired, without grave danger to their respective interests; the problem was unsolvable,” they concluded finally.¹¹¹ There was nothing left to do other than to admit failure.

The ministers’ withdrawal recommendation of January 1865 and the Dominican diplomatic response were emphatically principled and calm. The reincorporation had been an “act of laudable patriotism,” the Spanish ministers asserted, and so its end ought “to reflect the intentions that brought it

about.” With measured tone, they recapped an unwavering official narrative of the project’s brief trajectory: peninsular authorities had seen potential annexation as onerous, even as they sought to tighten ties with Spanish America; they accepted annexation only as a benevolent measure, and contingent on Dominican consent “not as a breach of rights, but as part of their politics,” spontaneous and voluntary. Once undertaken, the project had failed because politically, socially, and religiously, the former republic was too different from the neighboring Spanish projects. What remained was an extraordinarily costly project of conquest and military occupation, “not a case of quelling a rebellion but of conquering a territory.” As such, continued occupation would be fruitless and costly. Spain had spent 13.5 million pesos in four years, more than 70 percent of that from Cuba’s coffers, about 10 percent from Puerto Rico, and the remaining 20 percent from the peninsula. “So much blood spilled and so much treasury wasted,” the letter lamented. The next step, the ministers concluded, ought to be withdrawal.¹¹² Dominican emissaries, for their part, were relentlessly civil. Peace will be achieved “as Spain is an educated nation, [and] Santo Domingo is an extremely generous pueblo,” one official offered.¹¹³ “Think, Queen, where there were flourishing cities, now there are just piles of ruins and ashes,” another wrote. He described a bloody scene and an exhausted people. “Blood has been running this way and that for sixteen months . . . the blood of a pueblo rudely treated, resigned to all types of sacrifices, resolved to bury itself under the mounting ruins and ashes around them,” he observed gravely, “before ceasing to be free and independent.” Despite the “homicidal drama,” however, he insisted that there was no rancor, concluding, “Between this people and the Spanish nation, there can exist neither animosity nor hate . . . there is no fault on either side.”¹¹⁴

For an awkward interim, Spanish officials in Dominican territory attempted to continue quotidian governance, with limited success. Prominent officials left steadily; the archbishop found wartime not at all to his liking, requesting evacuation as early as fall 1863.¹¹⁵ Azua, still under Spanish control, had burned, but there were just sixty-five pesos in the treasury to resume affairs.¹¹⁶ The government of the eastern province of Seybo retreated to the capital in February, four months after Madrid first authorized it. The evacuating officials managed to bring with them the court paperwork but not the prisoners. “Given the absolute lack of a secure jail, and the absolute lack of resources, [the prisoners] went around the City procuring their sustenance, some were armed and added to the provincial reserves,” a report confessed. It continued, “At the moment of retreat there was neither the

time nor the means to gather them up and bring them along.” Once in the capital, the officials tried to continue with judicial paperwork, borrowing the *escribano* from La Vega, but lawyers were also lacking.¹¹⁷ Also in the capital, the *Gaceta de Santo Domingo* was eerily silent on the conflict. The paper, which stuck to official announcements and was always less garrulous than its polemic counterpart, *La Razón*, barely mentioned the fighting at all in the early months of 1865, except to note honors given to some, and the freeing of Spanish and reservists from the Dominican camp in April.¹¹⁸ It remained doggedly on message about projects of industry, however. In January, the paper began a multipart series on tobacco; later that month, the back page ran an ad for reprints of the famous Dominican developmentalist text *La idea de valor en Santo Domingo* (never mind that it had called for more slave importation as a central tenet).¹¹⁹ The capital city administration was totally paralyzed by late spring. The governor reported a number of the government’s scribes had passed to the rebels.¹²⁰ More and more prisoners and exiles were permitted to return. One man asking to return was a high-ranking general in the Dominican army, “or so he calls himself,” Cádiz officials noted. A royal order from 10 April 1865 decreed that “he, like everyone,” could return to the island.¹²¹

Evacuation preparations proceeded fairly smoothly. Prisoner exchanges were general and inclusive. Many Spanish prisoners of war were finally freed in late spring, some after a captivity of nearly two years.¹²² President Geffrard continued to mediate, urging compassionate treatment of the Dominican reservists who had left Spanish ranks for reasons of necessity. They should be allowed to return to Spanish service if they so desired, he lobbied kindly.¹²³ The evacuation order promised “help and support” for Provincial Reserves “who had loyally and bravely supported [the Spanish] cause,” but decommissioning loomed.¹²⁴ Spanish officials in the capital began ordering the recall of weapons from individuals in the Provincial Reserves in mid-May, although, true to his word, General de la Gándara oversaw the payment of Azua and Baní reservists to the very day of departure.¹²⁵ Dominican women came under intense scrutiny as Spanish officials perceived the discipline of their troops faltering further. Authorities blamed Dominican women who were “the enemies of Spain” for using “seduction” to “demoralize” the troops. Twenty-three soldiers had disappeared just from the town square of the capital in January and early February alone; women, particularly those living near the quarters, were the primary witnesses called to trial, and several found themselves in jail.¹²⁶ One woman in Azua, Petronila Núñez, was

very nearly executed for her perceived influence in causing a soldier to desert. An Azua man, Honorio de los Santos, received no such pardon. "I cannot hide that it affects me greatly such severe punishments . . . but I must repress it with all the rigor of the law," the governor wrote.¹²⁷ The *Gaceta Oficial* announced De los Santos's execution in the capital.¹²⁸ Displaced Dominicans, meanwhile, asked the administration for help. Josefa Roman, an émigrée from Puerto Plata, wrote to the governor on behalf of one Guillermo Vives, former administrator of customs, also living in the capital. The ostensibly formerly wealthy man "has lost all of his goods . . . is indigent," Roman entreated for her colleague. His and many other indemnity petitions likely went unfilled, lost in the spiraling costs and chaos of conflict and the juridical limbo of slow steps made to evacuate.¹²⁹

A small civilian diaspora left for Puerto Rico and Cuba. Some, like Juan Caballero from Cádiz, decided to move to Port-au-Prince permanently during the fighting.¹³⁰ A number of Spanish colonists, especially widows, applied for return passage to Spain. Many others requested transfer to Cuba and Puerto Rico. Some took big families, leaving immediately.¹³¹ Among the applicants, one evacuee to Puerto Rico made a remarkable claim on the Spanish state: her freedom. In her own petition, Victoria Medina, born in Aguadilla, described how she had arrived in Santo Domingo and been kept covertly enslaved to a man named Nicolas Danbon. In her own hand, Medina described the details of her case. By May 1865, Danbon had left the capital, Medina explained, and she wanted to secure proof of her free status. Medina petitioned for a *carta de libertad*, so that she could return to Aguadilla with her family. Spanish authorities ruled her petition null, but they also acknowledged her freedom. They concluded "extraofficially" that Danbon had already granted Medina's freedom in the neighboring island, and secondly, as she was also asserting, "the mere fact of coming to [Santo Domingo] made her cease to be a slave."¹³²

Departing authorities debated about Dominican émigrés. In early spring de la Gándara described the "delicate and grave question" of émigrés of color. He planned to encourage most officials and their families to settle in Curaçao and Saint Thomas. "I will inspire them with confidence in the good faith of the Government, that they will be paid their pensions regularly through the consuls, and persuading them of the benefit of living where their race is more respected, and from where they can most easily return to Santo Domingo," he wrote to the neighboring governors. "Those islands must remain *incomunicado* with Cuba and Puerto Rico," he warned.

If it proved too impolitic to order the nonwhite officials to these locations—“the white families can choose their destination,” he asserted—and they chose Cuba, the general recommended they be directed to eastern areas like Baracoa, where some recent colonization projects had occurred.¹³³ Several months later, his restrictions for Cuba tightened further. In a private communication to a commander in Baní, he advised that loyalist Dominican colonial officials seeking reassignment outside of the island should be steered by color: to Cuba, only white Dominicans, “and even then, one must be circumspect whom will be permitted”; men of color were to be ushered to Puerto Rico, Curaçao, Saint Thomas, the Canaries, the Balearic islands (off the coast of Cataluña), Spanish outposts in Africa and Asia, or the peninsula itself, he ordered.¹³⁴ The Cuban governor did not want to receive anyone at all. He wanted the ministry to send all Dominicans to the Canary Islands, Africa, or the Philippines.¹³⁵

When it was time to load the ships in early June, evacuation proceedings were orderly and without incident. Most troops embarked from San José de Ocoa (Maniel), Azua, and Baní. About thirty-three hundred tons of goods and supplies, seven thousand large packages (*bultos*), needed evacuation from the capital alone; four more ships’ worth of cargo, or almost the same amount, awaited on the northern coast.¹³⁶ Some loyalist Dominicans requested transfer to Cuba well before fighting ended, even though they had never served in the Spanish state at all. Such was the case of wealthy Ramón Paredes, who wrote that he had not served militarily as he “had never been inclined to military life.” His loyalty to Spain had cost him his bakery, his house, his brother, and several nieces, “just for the fact that he had always been satisfied with [Spanish] good government,” he wrote sorrowfully.¹³⁷ A number of women expressed a desire to follow the Spanish troops to Cuba as well.¹³⁸ Before evacuations had even become widespread, some sneaked onto supply ships as stowaways; a few were caught “by chance,” but a number of others probably escaped.¹³⁹ Of the poor people from southern towns who attempted to follow the soldiers, even to the point of trying to board the ships, *de la Gándara* was less empathetic. “I gave orders that absolutely prohibit the embarking of any person of that class,” he observed.¹⁴⁰ Already in Cuba, the departed governor expressed real affection and sentiment for the reservist troops he had left behind in Azua and Baní, three days earlier. Worried about reprisals, the general took the unusual step of leaving them arms, confident that the queen would also accede to the “sincere recognition of . . . their worthiness and distinction.”¹⁴¹ A popular rhyme was more sardonic about their fate:

Se fueron los españoles,
¡cosa buena nunca dura!
Y quedaron los azuanos
Recogiendo la basura.¹⁴²

[The Spanish left
¡nothing good ever lasts!
And the Azuans stayed behind
Picking up the trash.]

Santiago Was . . . Nothing Remains Anymore

Everywhere, there was devastation. Fighting “floods the city with blood and swells the land with cadavers,” a newspaper lamented, in the fall after the Spanish left.¹⁴³ The injured, widowed, and homeless numbered in the thousands. In towns across the territory, bad news broke excruciatingly slowly. Some prisoners never made the return trip from Jerez to Santo Domingo, as widows like María de Jesús Gantreau sorrowfully learned. Her husband had died in custody nearly seven months earlier.¹⁴⁴ Elsewhere, the toll of fire alone was incredible: in the south, little but the capital was safe. Azua burned in 1863 (along with Bani).¹⁴⁵ Azua had burned again in early 1865, reducing seventy houses to ashes, “among them the most prominent of the population,” an official observed. For residents not involved in the fighting, it amounted to a “terrible accident. . . . Azua has always shown unequivocal proof of her unwavering faithfulness,” de la Gándara had written empathetically at the time.¹⁴⁶ Each new sweep through the towns had brought pillaging, too, as rebels gathered both supplies and personal goods.¹⁴⁷ San Cristóbal passed back and forth between rebel and Spanish control, suffering the ravages of fighting on multiple occasions. Life in the Cibao, the source of nearly 65 percent of the country’s exports, had been totally upended. Tobacco fields were fallow, towns burned nearly to ashes, countless were homeless, and even more were wounded. A Spanish observer described the approaching flames as Santiago burned for the first time as a “whirlwind of fire,” visible from a great distance in “the rich and populous capital.” The man described “a horrible bonfire . . . [that] was devouring almost its entirety.” The first fire to rip through Puerto Plata had lasted three whole days; it had been “an implacable war of blood and fire,” an aghast witness recorded.¹⁴⁸ In Samaná, schools, churches, and missionary houses had burned.¹⁴⁹ “Santiago was . . . nothing remains anymore,” mourned Rodríguez Objío of the ashes of his city in November 1864.¹⁵⁰ “Light ashes cover

all of the homes where opulence lived; and an occasional breeze . . . mocks the mundane insanity,” he marveled, in horror.

Javier Ángulo Guridi grappled with the devastation in his 1866 novel, *La campana del higo*, ostensibly set on the eve of another independence, the year 1842. An earthquake had devastated the landscape of the Cibao. Guridi described an apocalyptic rural landscape, “an indescribable scene in which nature seems to lose its equilibrium and threatens to commit massive homicide . . . even the survivors cannot cry enough tears to commiserate the absolute ruin.”¹⁵¹ The people, in their sober virtue, tried to show “they were all a family, not even arguing, not even a complaint or gripe among any of their infinite members,” he wrote. Celestial instability had made them fearful, he explained, and they sought to avoid anything that might “cast a shadow on the tranquil sky.”¹⁵² *Higo* tells no happy tale; it is a vengeance tragedy, in which an innocent daughter, Florinda, has been assaulted. Her father becomes so obsessed with revenge that he cannot cultivate his field. “You are still not satisfied!” he cries wildly at his unseen enemy. “The hyena comes back after devouring its victim, to drink the very last drop of blood spilled on the field!”¹⁵³ The text ends with Florinda’s real paramour in exile, “far from his family and his patria.” He longs to return to Dominican soil, a “country as unhappy as it was worthy of a better fate.”¹⁵⁴

Slowly, however, life began again. A man in the capital city christened his new barbershop The Hills (La Manigua), in proud reference to *manigueros*, the rural fighters. He promised that the youth of the capital would find “complete satisfaction” in his services.¹⁵⁵ On the streets of Puerto Plata, one man spotted his old burro, lost during the fighting, and he took it back.¹⁵⁶ Nearly six months after the last Spanish soldier embarked, townspeople were finally starting to return home. “We welcome back all our lost brothers,” a journalist observed, softly.¹⁵⁷ Others started a new life away from the island. Máximo Gómez left in anonymity. Born in Baní, he was one of the loyal Dominican reservists whom Spanish authorities scattered throughout rural eastern Cuba after evacuating from Dominican soil. When independence and antislavery fighting began in Cuba in 1868, however, Gómez resolved to fight for liberation. He captured Venta del Pino in just two weeks. Another Dominican man helped free Bayamo.¹⁵⁸ “Everything I did in Cuba, as a fervent and humble soldier of liberty,” Gómez later wrote, “I did it in the name of the Dominican people, whose eyes were fixed on me.”¹⁵⁹