

The U.S. Intervenes in Cuba

Introduction:

The blowing up of the U.S.S. **Maine** in Havana harbour provided an excellent excuse for America to enter into the war. The ship was docked in the harbour in February 1898 to protect American life and property in Cuba.



Wreckage of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana harbour

American Life

1. In 1897 American Red Cross members had entered Cuba to provide essential supplies of food and clothing for the suffering Cubans.
2. As you would imagine due to their extensive investment in Cuba, there were quite a number of U.S. businessmen residing on that island: foremen, accountants, managers and so on.

American Property

1. They had **\$50Million** worth of investments that was worth defending!
2. American Steamship involved in the lucrative trade with Cuba. According to steamship owners the war was costing them some \$100Million per year.
3. It was reported that as the war gathered momentum the rebels using guerilla tactics burnt plantations and sugar mills throughout the island. Remember that the U.S. owned quite a number of sugar plantations and mills in Cuba.

Suddenly the ship was mysteriously blown up killing all **266** Americans reported to be on board. The Yellow Press went into frenzy! Headlines after headlines rang out, demanding U.S. intervention.

Here is a nice example:

Remember the Maine to Hell With Spain

The U.S. pointed fingers at Spain who looked puzzled!! Could it have been the Cuban nationals eager to force the U.S. involvement in the war so they could be assured of victory against their Spanish masters? Or could it have been an accident? The Americans interpreted it as an act of war and immediately took offensive measures.

April 19, 1898

The U.S. demanded compensation for her damages. She presented an ultimatum to Spain, which called for her (Spain) to withdraw from Cuba and declare the island free. Of course Spain refused!

April 25, 1898

President W. McKinley with Congress permission of course, declared war on Spain. The war now changed from **the Cuban War of Independence to The Spanish American War**. The U.S. was assured of military victory. Spain was now a weak power. She was defeated in three (3) months.

The 'war' took place in three countries:

1. Philippines

An American squadron led by Commodore George Dewey seized the Spanish naval base at Manila. Troops were sent to occupy the island.

2. Cuba- especially in Santiago province

3. Puerto Rico

Results

1. Cuba gained its independence from Spain
2. The U.S. paid Spain \$20Million for the loss of her territories
3. A Peace Treaty was signed in Paris December 1898 to seal the above decisions.
4. The U.S. immediately took full control of the new nation of Cuba. She underwrote the cost of repairing much of the damage done during the war. She also opened schools and started other social projects.
5. The people who had been in the **reconcentrados** (concentration camps) were given food, seeds, cattle and equipment to start their lives over again
6. The United States got **Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines**. The last two territories afforded them a foothold in the Pacific Ocean.