

The Arts of Autonomy: A Living Anthology of Polemical Literature

Pierre-Héli Monot, ed.

Volume #9

James Buchanan, John Y. Mason, and Pierre Soulé

The Ostend Manifesto

A Commented Edition Including Contextual
Sources and a Facsimile of Buchanan, Mason, and
Soulé's Original Pamphlet

Edited by
Gregory Jones-Katz





The Arts of Autonomy

In this series of publications, we provide basic editions of polemical texts. Massively polemical texts inherently pose specific risks to scholarly work, not only because they may be subjected to censorship, but also because they may pose liminal-case problems to methodology and are often poorly edited. We provide quotable editions of historically important texts, including an introduction and contextual sources.



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Soulé
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Victor Gillam (1867-1920), "Untitled," 1896. CC-BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>.

Preface

1. Introduction

From October 9th to 11th 1854, at the suggestion of Secretary of State William L. Marcy and at the request of President Franklin Pierce, three United States diplomats stationed in Europe—James Buchanan for Britain, John Y. Mason for France, and Pierre Soulé for Spain—secretly met in Ostend, Belgium. There, and then at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), in Prussia, from October 12th to 15th, the three, as tasked by Marcy, discussed possible ways to defuse a foreign policy crisis. On March 1854 in Cuba, but approximately 140 km off the coast of Florida and then one of two Spain's New World colonies, the second being Puerto Rico, Cuban officers had detained an American merchant ship, the *Black Warrior*; the steamer, having stopped at the Cuban port of Havana on a regular trading route from New York City to Mobile, Alabama, had refused to hand over a cargo manifest. The episode heightened tensions between the Americans and the Spanish, with the former taking the rather trivial incident to be a serious offence made by the latter. A former U.S. Senator from Louisiana and member of the Young America movement, which called for a stronger American presence in the Caribbean and in Central America, Soulé himself delivered an ultimatum to the Spanish to return the ship.¹

But this was not all of the contemporary factors intensifying tensions between America and Spain before the meeting at Ostend and Aix-la-Chapelle. There was also the fact that the seizure of Cuba from Spain was a long-term goal of American slaveholding expansionists. Slavery's existence, a plantation economy, and a geographical location all oriented Cuba to American Southern influence. Further, during pro-Southern Democrat President Pierce's term, commenced a year prior in 1853, slaveholders hoped to annex new territory for slavery's extension in America. Southern expansionists were, in fact, openly calling for the acquisition of Cuba as slave state. Soulé was an outspoken supporter of such an action. That these slave owning expansionists also feared that a rebellion of enslaved people in Cuba might spread to the American South lent a disturbing urgency and added historical meaning to the March 1854 incident and, more generally, southerners' desire to annex Cuba.

¹ See Theodore McDermott et al., (2013) "Ostend Manifesto" in: Thomas Riggs, ed., *The Manifesto in Literature, Vol. 1: Origins of the Form: Pre-1900*, Detroit, Michigan: St. James Press, 2013, p. 142-145.

It was amidst these intertwined domestic and international contexts that Buchanan, Mason, and Soulé co-drafted their letter of recommendation in Europe to Secretary Marcy. In the text, written in fairly dry language and which became known as the Ostend Manifesto, or the Ostend Circular, the three diplomats described the justifications for the United States to outright annex Cuba; they also implied that, if Spain refused to hand over the colony, then the U.S. ought to declare war. Buchanan was supposed to have written the document; Mason's Virginian roots inclined him to agree with the slaveholders' sentiments articulated in it; and Soulé was believed to be the primary architect of the policy behind it.

After being sent to Washington on October 18, 1854, the Ostend message, due to Soulé's willingness to publicly air his views, would cause unwelcome attention in Europe and the United States. For, in the new year, Soulé encouraged partisan newspapers to discuss the secret meetings and publish the plan. Obliging, *The New York Herald*, a large-distribution newspaper opposed to slavery, leaked reports of what Buchanan, Mason, and Soulé discussed in Belgium. The disclosure of the meeting and plan, both meant to remain known only to the American diplomatic corps and the Pierce administration, provoked a firestorm.

Why exactly was the Ostend Manifesto so explosive—was it more for contextual or rhetorical reasons? Did the meaning of this initially internal document change once distributed in the public sphere? Though by Soulé et al.'s standards unsuccessful in the short term, the Ostend Circular encouraged pro-slavery elements in American society and United States government. In what ways did the Ostend Manifesto contribute to the climate that brought the nation one step closer to Civil War, the war between the Union and the Confederacy?

2. Bleeding Kansas, Bloody Kansas: More Domestic Context

While the Antebellum Period, which spanned the end of the War of 1812 to the start of the Civil War in 1861, was characterized by simmering tensions between northern and southern states, the 1850s were increasingly explosive. In the wake of heated debates, whether about slavery (an act of Congress abolished the slave trade between nations in 1800 though not the ownership or trade of slaves domestically), manifest destiny (the belief that American settlers were ordained to expand across the North American continent), or the Monroe Doctrine (U.S. foreign policy that opposed European colonialism in the Western hemisphere), the public disclosure of the Ostend Manifesto sparked great controversy, as it touched upon a most contentious issue: enslavement. This flashpoint was ready to explode years before the 1854 crisis with Spain over Cuba.

The issue, in fact, had origins at the top, in the executive branch. During this extraordinarily tense period in United States history, pro-Southern, Northern-born Democrat President Pierce renewed previous administrations' efforts to annex the island of Cuba.² American Founding Father, principal author of the Declaration of Independence, and lifelong slaveowner Thomas Jefferson had observed that, along with Florida, the acquisition of Cuba would provide the United States "control...over the Gulf of Mexico, and the countries and isthmus bordering on it, as well as all whose waters flow into it."³ Procuring Cuba would "up the measure of our political well-being." President James K. Polk once offered Spain \$100 million for the Island, but Spain refused the overture.⁴

President Pierce's support for the annexing of Cuba was thus part of a longer political tradition, and he supported its annexation as a slave state. "The policy of my Administration," Pierce declared at his presidential inauguration in 1853, "will not be controlled by any timid forebodings of evil at expansion."⁵ Possession of Cuba, Pierce believed, would also strengthen the South's position regarding northern abolitionists. Other Northerners (Pierce was born in New Hampshire) in his cabinet had Southern sympathies, and he even appointed expansionists to diplomatic posts throughout Europe, such as Soulé in Spain.

Not only the October 1854 drafting, but the timing of the Ostend Circular's dissemination in the new year in opposition newspapers intersected with the growing tensions between North and South. Consider the Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed on May 30, 1854. In addition to establishing the territorial boundaries of Kansas and Nebraska, the Kansas-Nebraska Act introduced "popular sovereignty" in the Kansas Territory. This principle permitted settlers to determine, by vote, whether the Kansas Territory would be admitted to the Union as a slave or free state. While opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act in the North led to the formation of the Republican Party, itself based on the principle of opposing slavery's extension to the western territories, pro- and anti-slavery activists poured into the Kansas Territory, attempting to influence the decision. The flooding of

² See John J. Patrick, Richard M. Pious, and Donald A. Ritchie, "Franklin Pierce," in: *The Oxford Guide to the United States Government*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 481-482.

³ Thomas Jefferson, quoted in Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin American*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 48.

⁴ Tom Chaffin, *Met His Every Goal?: James K. Polk and the Legends of Manifest Destiny*, Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2014, p. 19.

⁵ Franklin Pierce, "March 4, 1852: Inaugural Address," accessed March 5, 2023, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-4-1853-inaugural-address>

activists led to violent clashes; murder, mayhem, destruction, and psychological warfare swiftly became a way of life in Eastern Kansas and Western Missouri.

It was during this intense and violent period—"Bleeding Kansas"—that the Pierce administration's opponents in the House of Representatives began to investigate rumors, started by none other than Soulé, that the administration had formulated secret plans—in Europe—that aligned with Southern interests to extend slavery in Cuba. After calling on Pierce to release the Ostend Circular, Pierce's political opponents in the House successfully circulated the document. After its February 1855 public release, Northerners were infuriated; the Northern press branded it as a "manifesto" appealing to Southern opinion. The Pierce administration's efforts to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law, which required free states to cooperate in the return of slaves to their owners, had already upset American free-soilers (whose party merged with the Republican Party in 1854). The revelation of the so-called Ostend Manifesto further spread the wildfire spreading in Kansas.

3. Political Rhetoric, Political Reality, and Some More International Context

There are a number of ways in which the Ostend Manifesto's political rhetoric explosively intersected with its political contexts. Devoid of history, the Ostend Manifesto's language might appear simple and direct—it was a diplomatic note, a recommendation broken into two parts—the first outlining why "the United States ought...to purchase Cuba with as little delay as possible," the second advancing the view that "the government [Spain]...will prove willing to sell it"—and thus written in a formal fashion, without literary panache. However, the Manifesto proved controversial in part precisely because of the "diplomatic way" it recommended the course of action that the Pierce administration should take in response to the March 1854 incident in Cuba between. The diplomatic-speak of the Manifesto, in other words, used the tone of objectivity and neutrality and sober realism to mask a decidedly partisan political agenda.

While informed by deeper issues then dividing the American nation, the Ostend Manifesto also rhetorically appealed to an Enlightenment metaphysics of history. "We firmly believe," Soulé et al. wrote, "that, in the progress of human events, the time has arrived when the vital interests of Spain are as seriously involved in the sale [of Cuba], as those of the United States in the purchase of the island, and that the transaction will prove equally honorable to both nations." This explicit appeal to "progress"—that is, the development towards an improved or more advanced condition—was a trope familiar to Americans of all stripes and persuasions.

Modern thought, as Jean-François Lyotard has argued, legitimizes its position through references to “grand narratives of emancipation”—progress, reason, science, and the like—all of which are controlled by homogenous criteria and claim “universal knowledge.”⁶ In the Ostend Manifesto, the authors’ appeal to “the progress of human events” occludes, much like Lyotard and other post-structuralists worried, diverse and different narratives, for instance ones that tell the stories of oppressed or marginalized groups.

The Ostend Circular’s political rhetoric of progress and its call for the U.S. to exercise all feasible efforts to annex Cuba was not only an extreme articulation of an aggressive US posture in the Caribbean, but also married to the idea of Manifest Destiny, the belief that Americans had the divine right to settle all throughout America, until the Pacific Ocean. Manifest Destiny debates in certain corners erupted about whether the American government was justified in the violent and forced removal of Native Americans from their land and homes, while, as mentioned above, U.S. expansion intensified the issue of slavery as new states were added to the Union. In the Ostend Manifesto, ministers’ assertion that “Cuba is as *necessary* to the North American republic as any of its present members, and that it belongs *naturally* to that great family of states of which the Union is the Providential Nursery”⁷ is part of this Manifest Destiny debate. The Manifesto’s embodiment of the ideology of Manifest Destiny is also evident in the ministers’ claim: “The United States have never acquired a foot of territory except by fair purchase, or, as in the case of Texas, upon *the free and voluntary application of the people of that independent state, who desired* to blend their *destinies* with our own.”⁸ According to this outrageous statement, the U.S. government only expanded to territories where populations willfully merged their fate with America. The American Genocide of Indigenous peoples is chillingly and tellingly absent.

The Ostend Manifesto’s overall diplomatic tone of neutrality and objectivity did not, however, successfully cloak all of its highly partisan aims. The Manifesto, most notably, voiced the fear among prominent wealthy American slave owners of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), when Africans and their Haitian descendants who had been enslaved by the French overthrew the French regime and founded an independent democratic country. Calling the Haitian Revolution “the horrors of Santo Domingo,” American slave owners speculated about what might arrive on American shores and in their own states. The Ostend Manifesto echoed these anti-

⁶ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁷ Emphasis added.

⁸ Emphasis added.

abolitionist slave owning critics of the largest and most successful slave rebellion in the Western Hemisphere: “We should,” they wrote, “be recreant to our duty, be unworthy of our gallant forefathers, and commit base treason against our posterity, should we permit Cuba to be Africanized and become a second St. Domingo (Haiti), with all its attendant horrors to the white race, and suffer the flames to extend to our own neighboring shores, seriously to endanger or actually to consume the fair fabric of our Union.” With such violent and racist language, this document’s public exposure added fuel to the fire that set off the American civil war.

Finally, that the Manifesto’s recommendations were developed and then given in secret were key to its explosiveness. For opponents of slavery and those invested in this struggle, conducting, and possibly adopting, Buchanan, Mason, and Soulé’s political recommendations to seize Cuba as a slave state, was undemocratic and hypocritical. The authors wrote: “On this momentous question, in which the people both of Spain and the United States are so deeply interested, all our proceedings ought to be open, frank, and public. They should be of such a character as to challenge the approbation of the world.” The reality was that Soulé et al. quietly huddled together to meet in Europe so as to advocate for a major foreign policy decision that directly impacted domestic politics, and did so without being “open, frank, and public.” It was also against the wishes of a significant number of anti-slavery activists across the country.

4. Post-Publication and Aftermath

The dispatch’s eventual public disclosure in February 1855 during a period of intense and increasingly violent debates over slavery, states’ rights, and westward expansion cast Pierce and his administration in an embarrassing light. The disclosure not simply created controversy, but United States officials came to denounce it, and Pierce, after reading the document, rejected it, claiming its policy recommendations to be too perilous to pursue. Worried about the domestic political ramifications of reports about the Manifesto, as they would hurt him politically in the North, Pierce also referenced neither the controversy nor the Circular in his State of the Union address at the end of 1854.

After it was leaked to opposition newspapers, which helped bring the issue of enslavement to a simmering crisis, the Ostend Manifesto had other domestic and foreign political effects, ones unintentional on the part of the document’s architects. The Circular never led to the U.S. annexing Cuba, but it was one of many factors that led to the establishment of the Republican Party, also referred to as the GOP

("Grand Old Party"), which Abraham Lincoln would join in 1856. In fact, the Ostend Circular played no small role in the Republican Party's first political platform in 1856, using Ostend, "That the highwayman's plea, that 'might makes right,'" as a political foil, deeming it "in every respect unworthy of American diplomacy" that "would bring shame and dishonor upon any Government or people that gave it their sanction."⁹ What's more, the incident did, as Pierce worried, damage the Pierce Administration, with the ensuing controversy not only contributing to the Democratic Party's splintering. Pierce hoped for a second term as President, but his support for the Kansas-Nebraska Act hurt his standing within the Democratic Party, helping Buchanan, an author of Ostend Manifesto, who, his popularity rising in the South, received the party's nomination in the 1856 presidential election. Outside the United States, the incident led representatives from Spain, United Kingdom, and France to directly reproach the Pierce administration. Embarrassed by all the negative attention, Pierce ordered Soulé to cease discussion of Cuba. Soulé refused, and promptly resigned. In total, the incident further strained relations between politicians in the North and the South, bringing the nation one step closer to the Civil War.

⁹ The Republican Party, "Republican Party Platform of 1856," accessed March 10, 2023, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/273293>

A Note on This Edition

James Buchanan, John Y. Mason, and Pierre Soulé drafted their written foreign policy recommendation in October 1854, but its existence was only publicly disclosed several months later, in February 1855. The text, which did not have a title when sent to Secretary Marcy, became widely known as “The Ostend Manifesto,” or “The Ostend Circular,” unofficial titles that are both used in this edition.

This edition reproduces a facsimile of “The Ostend Manifesto,” titled “The Ostend Conference” in the United States Congressional record of 1855, and, in the Contextual Sources Section, images of portraits of the Manifesto’s authors, of key contemporary political figures, of two political cartoons, and of an anti-slavery poster from the time of “Bleeding Kansas.”

England could not bear to be suddenly shut out of our market, and see her manufactures paralyzed, even by a temporary suspension of her intercourse with us.

And France, with the heavy task now on her hands, and when she so eagerly aspires to take her seat as the acknowledged chief of the European family, would have no inducement to assume the burden of another war, nor any motive to repine at seeing that we took in our keeping the destinies of the New World, as she will soon have those of the Old.

I close this despatch in haste, as I have no time left me to carry it further.

Mr. McRae leaves for Liverpool within a few minutes. I intrust to him details which could not have easily found a place here, nor in the other despatch. He will impart to you what of my mind I am not able to pour out in these lines.

Respectfully, yours,

PIERRE SOULÉ.

HON. WILLIAM L. MARCY,
Secretary of State, &c.

AIX LA CHAPELLE, *October 18, 1854.*

SIR: The undersigned, in compliance with the wish expressed by the President in the several confidential despatches you have addressed to us, respectively, to that effect, have met in conference, first at Ostend, in Belgium, on the 9th, 10th, and 11th instant, and then at Aix la Chapelle, in Prussia, on the days next following, up to the date hereof.

There has been a full and unreserved interchange of views and sentiments between us, which we are most happy to inform you has resulted in a cordial coincidence of opinion on the grave and important subjects submitted to our consideration.

We have arrived at the conclusion, and are thoroughly convinced, that an immediate and earnest effort ought to be made by the government of the United States to purchase Cuba from Spain at any price for which it can be obtained, not exceeding the sum of \$

The proposal should, in our opinion, be made in such a manner as to be presented through the necessary diplomatic forms to the Supreme Constituent Cortes about to assemble. On this momentous question, in which the people both of Spain and the United States are so deeply interested, all our proceedings ought to be open, frank, and public. They should be of such a character as to challenge the approbation of the world.

We firmly believe that, in the progress of human events, the time has arrived when the vital interests of Spain are as seriously involved in the sale, as those of the United States in the purchase, of the island, and that the transaction will prove equally honorable to both nations.

Under these circumstances we cannot anticipate a failure, unless possibly through the malign influence of foreign powers who possess no right whatever to interfere in the matter.

We proceed to state some of the reasons which have brought us to

James Buchanan, John Y. Mason, and Pierre Soulé, "The Ostend Conference, etc.," 33d Congress, 2d Session House of Representatives, Executive Document Number 93, 127-132. CC-BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>.

this conclusion, and, for the sake of clearness, we shall specify them under two distinct heads:

1. The United States ought, if practicable, to purchase Cuba with as little delay as possible.

2. The probability is great that the government and Cortes of Spain will prove willing to sell it, because this would essentially promote the highest and best interests of the Spanish people.

Then, 1. It must be clear to every reflecting mind that, from the peculiarity of its geographical position, and the considerations attendant on it, Cuba is as necessary to the North American republic as any of its present members, and that it belongs naturally to that great family of States of which the Union is the providential nursery.

From its locality it commands the mouth of the Mississippi and the immense and annually increasing trade which must seek this avenue to the ocean.

On the numerous navigable streams, measuring an aggregate course of some thirty thousand miles, which disembogue themselves through this magnificent river into the Gulf of Mexico, the increase of the population within the last ten years amounts to more than that of the entire Union at the time Louisiana was annexed to it.

The natural and main outlet to the products of this entire population, the highway of their direct intercourse with the Atlantic and the Pacific States, can never be secure, but must ever be endangered, whilst Cuba is a dependency of a distant power in whose possession it has proved to be a source of constant annoyance and embarrassment to their interests.

Indeed, the Union can never enjoy repose, nor possess reliable security, as long as Cuba is not embraced within its boundaries.

Its immediate acquisition by our government is of paramount importance, and we cannot doubt but that it is a consummation devoutly wished for by its inhabitants.

The intercourse which its proximity to our coasts begets and encourages between them and the citizens of the United States, has, in the progress of time, so united their interests and blended their fortunes that they now look upon each other as if they were one people and had but one destiny.

Considerations exist which render delay in the acquisition of this island exceedingly dangerous to the United States.

The system of immigration and labor lately organized within its limits, and the tyranny and oppression which characterize its immediate rulers, threaten an insurrection at every moment which may result in direful consequences to the American people.

Cuba has thus become to us an unceasing danger, and a permanent cause of anxiety and alarm.

But we need not enlarge on these topics. It can scarcely be apprehended that foreign powers, in violation of international law, would interpose their influence with Spain to prevent our acquisition of the island. Its inhabitants are now suffering under the worst of all possible governments, that of absolute despotism, delegated by a distant power to irresponsible agents, who are changed at short intervals, and

who are tempted to improve the brief opportunity thus afforded to accumulate fortunes by the basest means.

As long as this system shall endure, humanity may in vain demand the suppression of the African slave trade in the island. This is rendered impossible whilst that infamous traffic remains an irresistible temptation and a source of immense profit to needy and avaricious officials, who, to attain their ends, scruple not to trample the most sacred principles under foot.

The Spanish government at home may be well disposed, but experience has proved that it cannot control these remote depositaries of its power.

Besides, the commercial nations of the world cannot fail to perceive and appreciate the great advantages which would result to their people from a dissolution of the forced and unnatural connexion between Spain and Cuba, and the annexation of the latter to the United States. The trade of England and France with Cuba would, in that event, assume at once an important and profitable character, and rapidly extend with the increasing population and prosperity of the island.

2. But if the United States and every commercial nation would be benefited by this transfer, the interests of Spain would also be greatly and essentially promoted.

She cannot but see what such a sum of money as we are willing to pay for the island would effect in the development of her vast natural resources.

Two-thirds of this sum, if employed in the construction of a system of railroads, would ultimately prove a source of greater wealth to the Spanish people than that opened to their vision by Cortez. Their prosperity would date from the ratification of the treaty of cession.

France has already constructed continuous lines of railways from Havre, Marseilles, Valenciennes, and Strausbourg, *via* Paris, to the Spanish frontier, and anxiously awaits the day when Spain shall find herself in a condition to extend these roads through her northern provinces to Madrid, Seville, Cadiz, Malaga, and the frontiers of Portugal.

This object once accomplished, Spain would become a centre of attraction for the travelling world, and secure a permanent and profitable market for her various productions. Her fields, under the stimulus given to industry by remunerating prices, would teem with cereal grain, and her vineyards would bring forth a vastly increased quantity of choice wines. Spain would speedily become what a bountiful Providence intended she should be, one of the first nations of Continental Europe—rich, powerful, and contented.

Whilst two-thirds of the price of the island would be ample for the completion of her most important public improvements, she might, with the remaining forty millions, satisfy the demands now pressing so heavily upon her credit, and create a sinking fund which would gradually relieve her from the overwhelming debt now paralyzing her energies.

Such is her present wretched financial condition, that her best bonds are sold upon her own Bourse at about one-third of their par value; whilst another class, on which she pays no interest, have but a nominal

value, and are quoted at about one-sixth of the amount for which they were issued. Besides, these latter are held principally by British creditors who may, from day to day, obtain the effective interposition of their own government for the purpose of coercing payment. Intimations to that effect have been already thrown out from high quarters, and unless some new source of revenue shall enable Spain to provide for such exigencies, it is not improbable that they may be realized.

Should Spain reject the present golden opportunity for developing her resources, and removing her financial embarrassments, it may never again return.

Cuba, in its palmiest days, never yielded her exchequer, after deducting the expenses of its government, a clear annual income of more than a million and a half of dollars. These expenses have increased to such a degree as to leave a deficit chargeable on the treasury of Spain to the amount of six hundred thousand dollars.

In a pecuniary point of view, therefore, the island is an incumbrance, instead of a source of profit, to the mother country.

Under no probable circumstances can Cuba ever yield to Spain one per cent. on the large amount which the United States are willing to pay for its acquisition. But Spain is in imminent danger of losing Cuba, without remuneration.

Extreme oppression, it is now universally admitted, justifies any people in endeavoring to relieve themselves from the yoke of their oppressors. The sufferings which the corrupt, arbitrary, and unrelenting local administration necessarily entails upon the inhabitants of Cuba, cannot fail to stimulate and keep alive that spirit of resistance and revolution against Spain which has of late years been so often manifested. In this condition of affairs it is vain to expect that the sympathies of the people of the United States will not be warmly enlisted in favor of their oppressed neighbors.

We know that the President is justly inflexible in his determination to execute the neutrality laws; but should the Cubans themselves rise in revolt against the oppression which they suffer, no human power could prevent citizens of the United States and liberal minded men of other countries from rushing to their assistance. Besides, the present is an age of adventure, in which restless and daring spirits abound in every portion of the world.

It is not improbable, therefore, that Cuba may be wrested from Spain by a successful revolution; and in that event she will lose both the island and the price which we are now willing to pay for it—a price far beyond what was ever paid by one people to another for any province.

It may also be remarked that the settlement of this vexed question, by the cession of Cuba to the United States, would forever prevent the dangerous complications between nations, to which it may otherwise give birth.

It is certain that, should the Cubans themselves organize an insurrection against the Spanish government, and should other independent nations come to the aid of Spain in the contest, no human power could, in our opinion, prevent the people and government of the United States

from taking part in such a civil war in support of their neighbors and friends.

But if Spain, dead to the voice of her own interest, and actuated by stubborn pride and a false sense of honor, should refuse to sell Cuba to the United States, then the question will arise, What ought to be the course of the American government under such circumstances?

Self-preservation is the first law of nature, with States as well as with individuals. All nations have, at different periods, acted upon this maxim. Although it has been made the pretext for committing flagrant injustice, as in the partition of Poland and other similar cases which history records, yet the principle itself, though often abused, has always been recognised.

The United States have never acquired a foot of territory except by fair purchase, or, as in the case of Texas, upon the free and voluntary application of the people of that independent State, who desired to blend their destinies with our own.

Even our acquisitions from Mexico are no exception to this rule, because, although we might have claimed them by the right of conquest in a just war, yet we purchased them for what was then considered by both parties a full and ample equivalent.

Our past history forbids that we should acquire the island of Cuba without the consent of Spain, unless justified by the great law of self-preservation. We must, in any event, preserve our own conscious rectitude and our own self-respect.

Whilst pursuing this course we can afford to disregard the censures of the world, to which we have been so often and so unjustly exposed.

After we shall have offered Spain a price for Cuba far beyond its present value, and this shall have been refused, it will then be time to consider the question, does Cuba, in the possession of Spain, seriously endanger our internal peace and the existence of our cherished Union?

Should this question be answered in the affirmative, then, by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain if we possess the power; and this upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the burning house of his neighbor if there were no other means of preventing the flames from destroying his own home.

Under such circumstances we ought neither to count the cost nor regard the odds which Spain might enlist against us. We forbear to enter into the question, whether the present condition of the island would justify such a measure? We should, however, be recreant to our duty, be unworthy of our gallant forefathers, and commit base treason against our posterity, should we permit Cuba to be Africanized and become a second St. Domingo, with all its attendant horrors to the white race, and suffer the flames to extend to our own neighboring shores, seriously to endanger or actually to consume the fair fabric of our Union.

We fear that the course and current of events are rapidly tending towards such a catastrophe. We, however, hope for the best, though we ought certainly to be prepared for the worst.

We also forbear to investigate the present condition of the questions at issue between the United States and Spain. A long series of inju-

ries to our people have been committed in Cuba by Spanish officials, and are unredressed. But recently a most flagrant outrage on the rights of American citizens and on the flag of the United States was perpetrated in the harbor of Havana under circumstances which, without immediate redress, would have justified a resort to measures of war in vindication of national honor. That outrage is not only unatoned, but the Spanish government has deliberately sanctioned the acts of its subordinates and assumed the responsibility attaching to them.

Nothing could more impressively teach us the danger to which those peaceful relations it has ever been the policy of the United States to cherish with foreign nations are constantly exposed than the circumstances of that case. Situated as Spain and the United States are, the latter have forborne to resort to extreme measures.

But this course cannot, with due regard to their own dignity as an independent nation, continue; and our recommendations, now submitted, are dictated by the firm belief that the cession of Cuba to the United States, with stipulations as beneficial to Spain as those suggested, is the only effective mode of settling all past differences and of securing the two countries against future collisions.

We have already witnessed the happy results for both countries which followed a similar arrangement in regard to Florida.

Yours, very respectfully,

JAMES BUCHANAN.
J. Y. MASON.
PIERRE SOULÉ.

Hon. WM. L. MARCY, *Secretary of State.*

Mr. Marcy to Mr. Soulé.

[No. 25.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, October 27, 1854.

SIR: In my despatch to you dated the 24th of June, I referred to one of 22d of that month, in relation to the case of the Black Warrior, and observed that, "though the President does not think it advisable, in view of what he has stated as to the commission, that you should take any further steps in regard to that case, he has no objection, but, on the contrary, desires her Catholic Majesty's government should know in what light he views its reply to our claim of reparation. You are therefore at liberty to read the accompanying despatch to the Spanish Minister of Foreign Relations, and may furnish him with a copy, if he desires it."

It was his expectation that the government of Spain should be apprized of the unsatisfactory character of its reply to our demands in that case, and of the distinct grounds on which the claim to indemnity and satisfaction rested. The department has your acknowledgment of the receipt of the despatch of the 22d of June, but no account of your proceedings thereupon. As the President may deem it proper to notice this case in his message, at the opening of the next session of Congress, he desires to be furnished with full information of all that has been

The Ostend Manifesto (Transcription)

Aix La Chapelle, October 18, 1854.

Sir: The undersigned, in compliance with the wish expressed by the President in the several confidential dispatches you have addressed to us, respectively, to that effect, have met in conference, first at Ostend, in Belgium, on the 9th, 10th, and 11th instant, and then at Aix-la-Chapelle, in Prussia, on the days next following, up to the date hereof.

There has been a full and unreserved interchange of views and sentiments between us, which we are most happy to inform you has resulted in a cordial coincidence of opinion on the grave and important subjects submitted to our consideration.

We have arrived at the conclusion, and are thoroughly convinced, that an immediate and earnest effort ought to be made by the government of the United States to purchase Cuba from Spain at any price for which it can be obtained, not exceeding the sum of \$.

The proposal should, in our opinion, be made in such a manner as to be presented through the necessary diplomatic forms to the Supreme Constituent Cortes about to assemble. On this momentous question, in which the people both of Spain and the United States are so deeply interested, all our proceedings ought to be open, frank, and public. They should be of such a character as to challenge the approbation of the world.

We firmly believe that, in the progress of human events, the time has arrived when the vital interests of Spain are as seriously involved in the sale, as those of the United States in the purchase, of the island, and that the transaction will prove equally honorable to both nations.

Under these circumstances we cannot anticipate a failure, unless possibly through the malign influence of foreign powers who possess no right whatever to interfere in the matter.

We proceed to state some of the reasons which have brought us to this conclusion, and, for the sake of clearness, we shall specify them under two distinct heads:

1. The United States ought, if practicable, to purchase Cuba with as little delay as possible.

2. The probability is great that the government and Cortes of Spain will prove willing to sell it, because this would essentially promote the highest and best interests of the Spanish people.

Then, 1. It must be clear to every reflecting mind that, from the peculiarity of its geographical position, and the considerations attendant on it, Cuba is as necessary to the North American republic as any of its present members, and that it belongs naturally to that great family of states of which the Union is the providential nursery.

From its locality it commands the mouth of the Mississippi and the immense and annually increasing trade which must seek this avenue to the ocean.

On the numerous navigable streams, measuring an aggregate course of some thirty thousand miles, which disembogue themselves through this river into the Gulf of Mexico, the increase of the population within the last ten years amounts to more than that of the entire Union at the time Louisiana was annexed to it.

The natural and main outlet to the products of this entire population, the highway of their direct intercourse with the Atlantic and Pacific states, can never be secure, but must ever be endangered whilst Cuba is a dependency of a distant power in whose possession it had proved to be a source of constant annoyance and embarrassment to their interests.

Indeed, the Union can never enjoy repose, nor possess reliable security, as long as Cuba is not embraced within its boundaries.

Its immediate acquisition by our government is of paramount importance, and we cannot doubt but that it is a consummation devoutly wished for by its inhabitants.

The intercourse which its proximity to our coasts begets and encourages between them and the citizens of the United States has, in the progress of time, so united their interests and blended their fortunes that they now look upon each other as if they were one people and had but one destiny.

Considerations exist which render delay in the acquisition of the island exceedingly dangerous to the United States.

The system of immigration and labor, lately organized within its limits, and the tyranny and oppression which characterize its immediate rulers, threaten an insurrection at every moment which may result in direful consequences to the American people.

Cuba has thus become to us an unceasing danger, and a permanent cause of anxiety and alarm.

But we need not enlarge on these topics. It can scarcely be apprehended that foreign powers, in violation of international law, would interpose their influence with Spain to prevent our acquisition of the island. Its inhabitants are now suffering

under the worst of all possible governments, that of absolute despotism delegated by a distant power to irresponsible agents, who are changed at short intervals, and who are tempted to improve the brief opportunity thus afforded to accumulate fortunes by the basest means.

As long as this system shall endure, humanity may in vain demand the suppression of the African slave trade in the island. This is rendered impossible whilst that infamous traffic remains an irresistible temptation and a source of immense profit to needy and avaricious officials, who, to attain their ends, scruple not to trample the most sacred principles under foot.

The Spanish government, at home, may be well disposed, but experience has proved that it cannot control these remote depositaries of its power.

Besides, the commercial nations of the world cannot fail to perceive and appreciate the great advantages which would result to their people from a dissolution of the forced and unnatural connection between Spain and Cuba, and the annexation of the latter to the United States. The trade of England and France with Cuba would, in that event, assume at once an important and profitable character, and rapidly extend with the increasing population and prosperity of the island.

2. But if the United States and every commercial nation would be benefited by this transfer, the interests of Spain would also be greatly and essentially promoted.

She cannot but see what such a sum of money as we are willing to pay for the island would effect in the development of her vast natural resources.

Two-thirds of this sum, if employed in the construction of a system of railroads, would ultimately prove a source of greater wealth to the Spanish people than that opened to their vision by Cortes. Their prosperity would date from the ratification of the treaty of cession.

France has already constructed continuous lines of railway from Havre, Marseilles, Valenciennes, and Strasbourg *via* Paris, to the Spanish frontier, and anxiously awaits the day when Spain shall find herself in a condition to extend these roads through her northern provinces to Madrid, Seville, Cadiz, Malaga, and the frontiers of Portugal.

This object once accomplished, Spain would become a centre of attraction for the traveling world, and secure a permanent and profitable market for her various productions. Her fields, under the stimulus given to industry by remunerative prices, would teem with cereal grain, and her vineyards would bring forth a vastly increased quantity of choice wines. Spain would speedily become what a bountiful Providence intended she should be, one of the first nations of continental Europe—rich, powerful, and contended.

Whilst two-thirds of the price of the island would be ample for the completion of her most important public improvements, she might, with the remaining forty millions, satisfy the demands pressing so heavily upon her credit, and create a sinking fund which would gradually relieve her from the overwhelming debt now paralyzing her energies.

Such is her present wretched financial condition that her best bonds are sold upon her own Bourse at about one-third of their par value; whilst another class, on which she pays no interest, have but a nominal value, and are quoted at about one-sixth of the amount for which they were issued. Besides, these are held principally by British creditors, who may, from day to day, obtain the effective interposition of their government for the purpose of coercing payment. Intimations to that effect have already been thrown out from high quarters, and unless some new source of revenue shall enable Spain to provide for such exigencies, it is not improbable that they may be realized.

Should Spain reject the present golden opportunity for developing her resources, and removing her financial embarrassments, it may never again return.

Cuba, in its palmist days, never yielded her exchequer, after deducting the expenses of its government, a clear annual income of more than a million and a half of dollars. These expenses have increased to such a degree as to leave a deficit chargeable on the treasury of Spain to the amount of six hundred thousand dollars.

In a pecuniary point of view, therefore, the island is an encumbrance, instead of a source of profit to the mother country.

Under no probable circumstances can Cuba ever yield to Spain one percent on the large amount which the United States are willing to pay for its acquisition. But Spain is in danger of losing Cuba without remuneration.

Extreme oppression, it is now admitted, justifies any people in endeavoring to relieve themselves from the yoke of their oppressors. The sufferings which the corrupt, arbitrary, and unrelenting local administration necessarily entails upon the inhabitants of Cuba, cannot fail to stimulate and keep alive that spirit of resistance and revolution against Spain which has, of late years, been so often manifested. In this condition of affairs it is in vain to expect that the sympathies of the people of the United States will not be warmly enlisted in favor of their oppressed neighbors.

We know that the President is justly inflexible in his determination to execute the neutrality laws; but should the Cubans themselves rise in revolt against the oppression which they suffer, no human power could prevent the citizens of the United States and liberal-minded men of other countries from rushing to their

assistance. Besides, the present is an age of adventure, in which restless and daring spirits abound in every portion of the world.

It is not improbable, therefore, that Cuba may be wrested from Spain by a successful revolution; and, in that event, she will lose both the island and the price we are willing now to pay for it—a price far beyond what was ever paid by one people to another for any province.

It may also be remarked that the settlement of this vexed question, by the cession of Cuba to the United States, would forever prevent the dangerous complications between nations, to which it may otherwise give birth.

It is certain that, should the Cubans themselves organize an insurrection against the Spanish government, and should other independent nations come to the aid of Spain in the contest, no human power could, in our opinion, prevent the people and the government of the United States from taking part in such a civil war, in support of their neighbors and friends.

But if Spain, deaf to the voice of her own interests, and actuated by stubborn pride and a false sense of honor, should refuse to sell Cuba to the United States, then the question will arise: What ought to be the course of the American government under such circumstances?

Self-preservation is the law of states as well as with individuals. All nations have, at different periods, acted upon this maxim. Although it has been made the pretext for committing flagrant injustice, as in the partition of Poland and other similar cases which history records, yet the principle itself, though often abused, has always been recognized.

The United States have never acquired a foot of territory except by fair purchase, or, as in the case of Texas, upon the free and voluntary application of the people of that independent state, who desired to blend their destinies with our own.

Even our acquisitions from Mexico are no exception to this rule, because, although we might have claimed them by right of conquest in a just war, yet we purchased them for what was then considered by both parties a full and ample equivalent.

Our past history forbids that we should acquire the island of Cuba without the consent of Spain, unless justified by the great law of self-preservation. We must, in any event, preserve our conscious rectitude and our own self-respect.

Whilst pursuing this course we can afford to disregard the censures of the world, to which we have been so often and so unjustly exposed.

After we shall have offered Spain a price for Cuba far beyond its present value, and this shall have been refused, it will then be time to consider the question; does

Cuba, in the possession of Spain, seriously endanger our internal peace and the existence of our cherished Union?

Should this question be answered in the affirmative, then, by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain, if we possess the power; and this upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the burning house of his neighbor if there were no other means of preventing the flames from destroying his own home.

Under such circumstances we ought neither to count the cost nor regard the odds which Spain might enlist against us. We forbear to enter into the question whether the present condition of the island would justify such a measure? We should, however, be recreant to our duty, be unworthy of our gallant forefathers, and commit base treason against our posterity, should we permit Cuba to be Africanized and become a second St. Domingo, with all its attendant horrors to the white race, and suffer the flames to extend to our own neighboring shores, seriously to endanger or actually to consume the fair fabric of our Union.

We fear that the course and current of events are rapidly tending toward such a catastrophe. We, however, hope for the best, though we ought certainly to be prepared for the worst.

We also forbear to investigate the present condition of the questions at issue between the United States and Spain. A long series of injuries to our people have been committed in Cuba by Spanish officials, and are unredressed. But recently a most flagrant outrage on the rights of American citizens and on the flag of the United States was perpetrated in the harbor of Havana under circumstances which, without immediate redress, would have justified a resort to measures of war in vindication of national honor. That outrage is not only unatoned, but the Spanish government has deliberately sanctioned the acts of its subordinates and assumed the responsibility attaching to them.

Nothing could more impressively teach us the danger to which the peaceful relations it has ever been the policy of the United States to cherish with foreign nations are constantly exposed than the circumstances of that case. Situated as Spain and the United States are, the latter have forborne to resort to extreme measures.

But this course cannot, with due regard to their own dignity as an independent nation, continue; and our recommendations, now submitted, are dictated by the firm belief that the cession of Cuba to the United States, with stipulations as beneficial to Spain as those suggested, is the only effective mode of settling all past differences, and of the securing the two countries against future collisions.

We have already witnessed the happy results for both countries which followed a similar arrangement in regard to Florida.

Yours, very respectfully,

JAMES BUCHANAN.

J.Y. MASON.

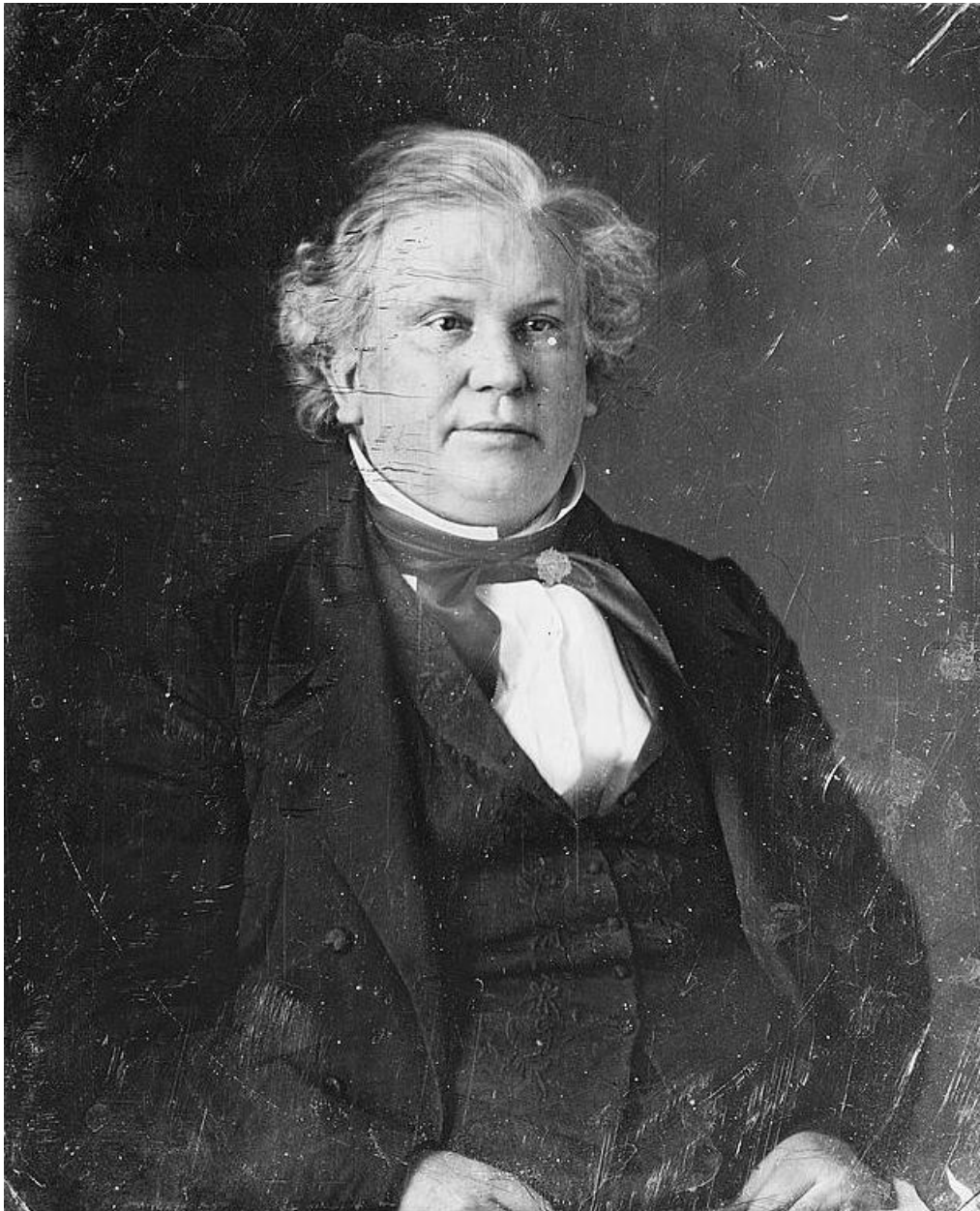
PIERRE SOULÉ.

Hon. Wm. L. Marcy, Secretary of State.

Contextual Sources



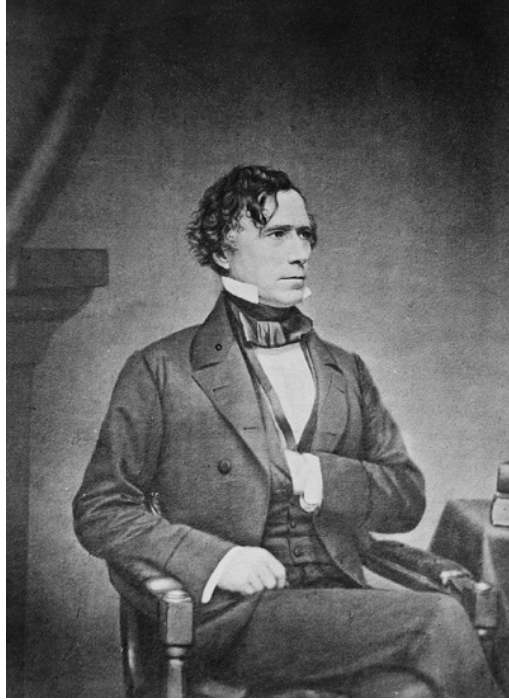
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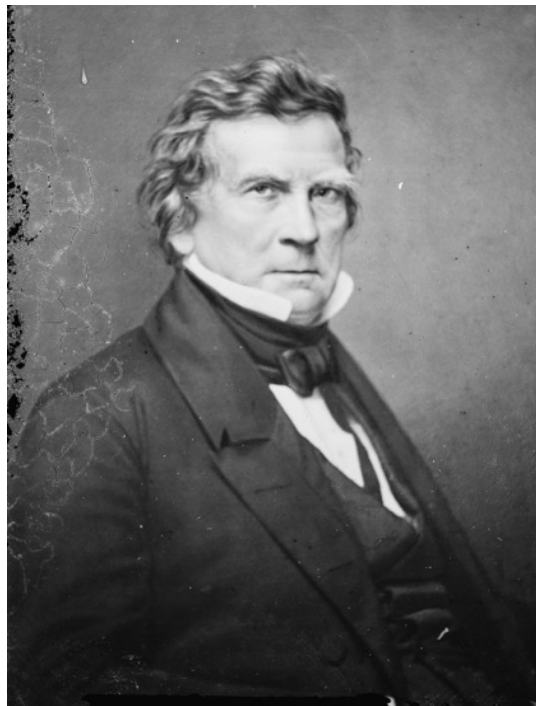
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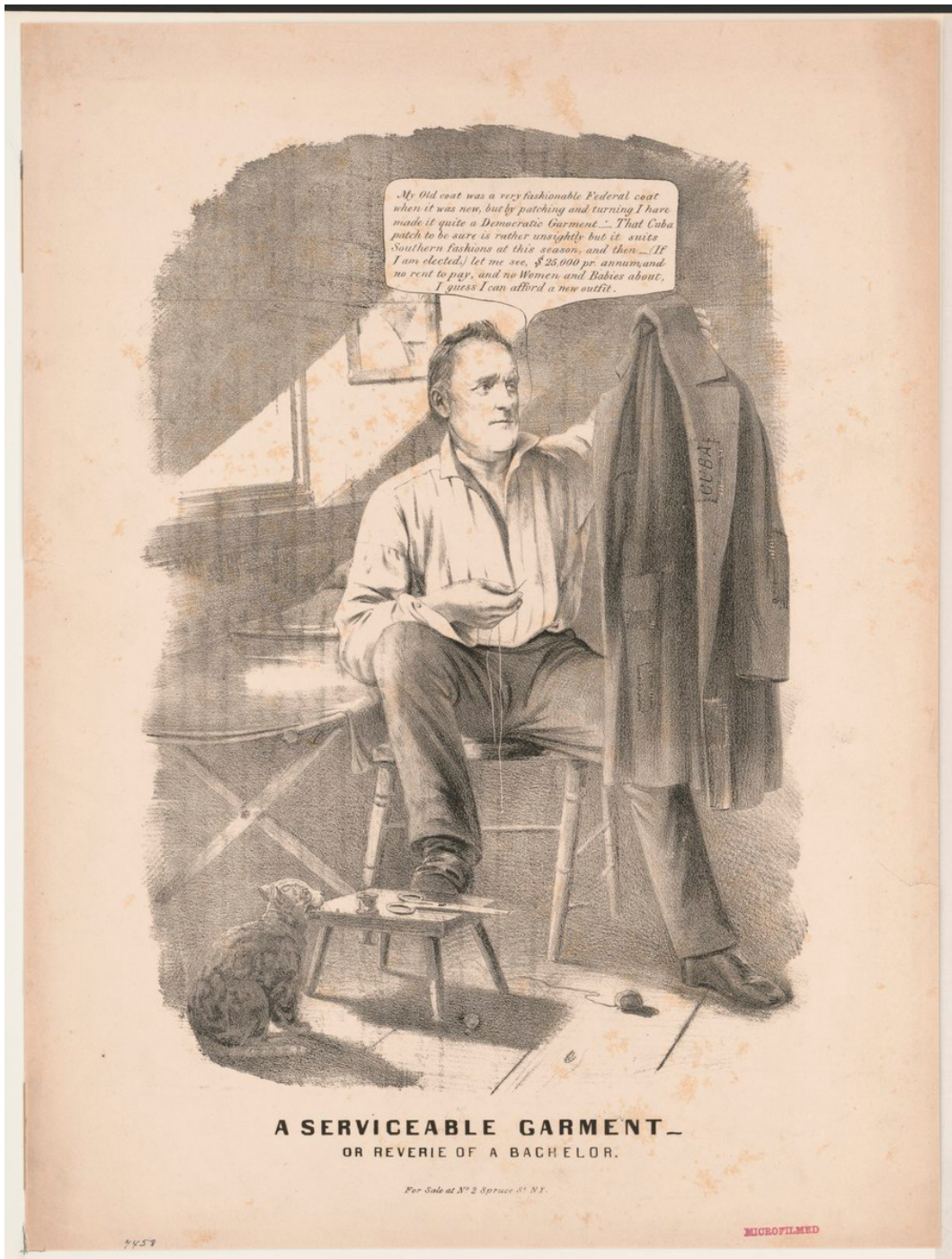
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**Squatter Sovereignty
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**NO WHITE
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The Squatters of Kansas who are favorable to **FREEDOM OF SPEECH** on all subjects which interest them, and an un-muzzled **PRESS**; who are determined to do their own **THINKING** and **VOTING** independent of **FOREIGN DICTATION**, are requested to assemble in

MASS MEETING

at the time and places following to wit:

The following speakers will be in attendance, who will address you on the important questions now before the people of Kansas.

City	Day	Time	Place	Speaker
Atchison	Monday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Tuesday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Wednesday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Thursday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Friday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Saturday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Sunday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Monday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Tuesday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
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Atchison	Saturday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller
Atchison	Sunday	7 P.M.	Wm. H. Miller	Wm. H. Miller

DR. CHAS. ROBINSON,
J. A. Wakefield, C. K. Holliday, M. F. Conway,
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TURN OUT AND HEAR THEM!

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