

Declaration of War (1898)

President McKinley found it impossible to resist the mounting public and political pressure for war against Spain. In requesting a declaration of war from the Senate on April 11, 1898, he listed several concerns but stressed the nation's humanitarian sympathy for the Cuban independence movement. He said little about the long-range implications of war.

First. In the cause of humanity and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation, and horrible miseries now existing there, and which the parties to the conflict are either unable or unwilling to stop or mitigate. It is no answer to say this is all in another country, belonging to another nation, and is therefore none of our business. It is specially our duty, for it is right at our door.

Second. We owe it to our citizens in Cuba to afford them that protection and indemnity for life and property which no government there can or will afford, and to that end to terminate the conditions that deprive them of legal protection.

Third. The right to intervene may be justified by the very serious injury to the commerce, trade, and business of our people and by the wanton destruction of property and devastation of the island.

Fourth, and which is of the utmost importance. The present condition of affairs in Cuba is a constant menace to our peace and entails upon this Government an enormous expense. With such a conflict waged for years in an island so near us and with which our people have such trade and business relations; when the lives and liberty of our citizens are in constant danger and their property destroyed and themselves ruined; where our trading vessels are liable to seizure and are seized at our very door by war ships of a foreign nation; the expeditions of filibustering that we are powerless to prevent altogether, and the irritating questions and entanglements thus arising—all these and others that I need not mention, with the resulting strained relations, are a constant menace to our peace and compel us to keep on a semi-war footing with a nation with which we are at peace.

These elements of danger and disorder already pointed out have been strikingly illustrated by a tragic event which has deeply and justly moved the American people. I have already transmitted to Congress the report of the naval court of inquiry on the destruction of the battleship *Maine* in the harbor of Havana during the night of the 15th of February. The destruction of that noble vessel

has filled the national heart with inexpressible horror.

Thinking Questions

A Contrast/Compare McKinley's argument + approach

to Pulitzer

A How might these professions influence their voice?

STW

AP US HW - Read by
1/12 (B) + 1/13 (A)

I. Joseph Pulitzer Demands Intervention (1897)

The oppressed Cubans revolted in 1895, and the Spanish commander, General Valeriano ("Butcher") Weyler, tried to crush them by herding them into pesthole concentration camps. Atrocities on both sides were inevitable, but the United States heard little of Cuban misdeeds. The American yellow press, with Joseph Pulitzer's New York World and William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal competing in sensationalism, headlined lurid horror tales. The basic principle of the so-called new journalism seemed to be "Anything to Sell a Paper," regardless of the truth. A World reporter wrote from Cuba that slaughtered rebels were fed to dogs and that children of high-ranking Spanish families clamored for Cuban ears as playthings. The following edi-

torial in Pulitzer's World demanded action. What point or points probably made the heaviest impact on the American public?

How long are the Spaniards to drench Cuba with the blood and tears of her people?

How long is the peasantry of Spain to be drafted away to Cuba to die miserably in a hopeless war, that Spanish nobles and Spanish officers may get medals and honors?

How long shall old [Cuban] men and women and children be murdered by the score, the innocent victims of Spanish rage against the patriot armies they cannot conquer?

How long shall the sound of rifles in Castle Morro [in Cuba] at sunrise proclaim that bound and helpless prisoners of war have been murdered in cold blood?

How long shall Cuban women be the victims of Spanish outrages and lie sobbing and bruised in loathsome prisons?

How long shall women passengers on vessels flying the American flag be unlawfully seized and stripped and searched by brutal, jeering Spanish officers, in violation of the laws of nations and of the honor of the United States?

How long shall American citizens, arbitrarily arrested while on peaceful and legitimate errands, be immured in foul Spanish prisons without trial?

How long shall the navy of the United States be used as the sea police of barbarous Spain?

How long shall the United States sit idle and indifferent within sound and hearing of rapine and murder?

How long?

Thinking Questions

- ★ Identify rhetorical strategies/literary devices used by Pulitzer.
- ★ What impact does this piece have on you?

NER →