



The Cuban Speech: The United States Goes to War with Spain, 1898

Wayne Soini

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In February, 1898, an explosion lit up the Havana night sky as the battleship Maine sank, killing over two hundred men and raising immediate suspicions of Spanish sabotage. The explosion and the famous later battle cry, "Remember the Maine" both obscure the fact that it was not a bomb on a battleship but a speech in the United States Senate that triggered the all-volunteer War of 1898. In this book, Wayne Soini first tracks doughty Senator Redfield Proctor's eventful life, then follows Proctor's spur-of-the-moment trip to Havana after the Maine sank, a trip that turned into a far more extensive tour of Cuba and incidentally of the world's first concentration camps. Moved by what he saw to dedicate himself to relieving the reconcentrados, Proctor delivered his most important address on March 17, 1898. On that day, after several unplanned and unexpected encounters, Proctor stood before his colleagues and the country's press as an eyewitness to mass suffering and two-hundred-thousand civilian deaths. Stirred by Proctor's unemotional but honest report of a Caribbean Holocaust, Americans joined ranks for the first major American humanitarian military intervention overseas. The Cuban Speech follows history's winding and twisting path as the United States went to war in early 1898 behind a Vermont Yankee of few words.

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