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From the Editor

Félix Masud-Piloto

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The Legacies of 1848 and 1898

The year 1998 marked the anniversary of two transcendental events in Latin American history: the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo that ended the U.S.-Mexican War and the 100th anniversary of the Spanish-Cuban-American War. In 1848 the U.S., in a short and unjustified war with the Republic of Mexico, took more than half of that nation's territory and increased its own by more than one third. In 1898, in another short war against the dying Spanish Empire, the U.S. gained control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam. As a result of the Spanish-Cuban-American War, the U.S. also ascended to the status of world power, a position that it has now held for 100 years.

This issue of *Diálogo* is dedicated to the thousands of men and women who died in those wars. For unlike the historically inaccurate, euphemistic, cynical, and mocking terms in which some American historians and politicians have chosen to describe these bloody affairs—the “Mexican War” and the “Spanish-American War” a.k.a. the “Splendid Little War”—for the people of Latin America, these conflicts have left a bitter and painful legacy of hostility and aggression from our northern neighbor. For Mexicans, the war with the United States is more accurately referred to as the “American Invasion.” Likewise, Cuban historians reject the euphemism used by their American colleagues to describe the war of 1898. Clearly the title “Spanish-American War” negates the Cubans’ participation in the war, a war that Cubans fought for nearly thirty years, left tens of thousands dead, and the country’s economy in ruins. For the same reasons, the war was definitely not “little” or “splendid.” Calling it so adds insult to injury.

The insurrection in Chiapas, the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba, and Puerto Rico’s colonial status are constant reminders of how little U.S.-Latin American relations have changed during the past 150 years. Thus, to contribute to the historical debates that still rage over the conflicts of 1848 and 1898, and to explore their contemporary dimensions, *Diálogo* is pleased to publish a heterogeneous sample of research and opinions by scholars, students, and



Museo de la Historia, Habana, Cuba

community activists. As in the past, we hope that their voices will help advance Latin America’s centuries-old struggle for self-determination, sovereignty, and social justice.

In this issue, *Diálogo* showcases the mural photography of Marixa Alicea, a DePaul University faculty member and deputy editor of *Diálogo*. Her pictures capture the essence of “el arte del pueblo.” Public art developed through murals and free standing objects is another way in which our communities make their “diálogo” palpable.

Félix Masud-Piloto

FÉLIX MASUD-PILOTO
DePaul University,
Center for Latino Research