

The New York World, "This War Must Be Ended" (1897)

In trying to suppress the Cuban revolt, the Spanish commander, General Valeriano ("Butcher") Weyler, established concentration camps for rebels and their families. Atrocities on both sides were inevitable, but the United States heard little of Cuban misdeeds. Locked in an intense competition for newspaper subscribers, Joseph Pulitzer's New York World and William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal engaged in sensational reporting that came to be called "yellow journalism." The phrase derived from the first color newspaper cartoon, "Hogan's Alley." It was enormously popular and featured the Yellow Kid. Hence, "yellow journalism" was born when two competing New York newspapers fought over rival versions of this cartoon. Stories highlighted horrifying tales of Spanish cruelty and atrocities. A World reporter claimed that slaughtered Cuban rebels were fed to dogs, and that children of high-ranking Spanish families used ears from dead Cubans as playthings. The following editorial in Pulitzer's World urged the American government to take direct action to end the fighting in Cuba.

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]¹ 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 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?

1. Editorial insertion.

[From "The War Must Be Ended," *New York World*, 13 February 1897.]