

5. Sonora

Early in 1852, as soon as Walker received the news of his mother's death, he set in motion his military expedition against Sonora. He met at Auburn (30 miles from Marysville) with Watkins and other friends who sent two agents to Guaymas to obtain a grant of land in northern Sonora. The agents failed in their mission because the Mexican authorities adamantly refused to grant any land to Americans and were relying instead on French adventurers from California to protect the frontier from Apache Indian raids and from Anglo-Saxon manifest-destiny marauders.

Early in 1853, the French had been expelled from Sonora and conditions seemed favorable for Walker and his Southern friends to carry on their scheme of spreading slavery to the Pacific coast. They met at the then State capital, Benicia, to perfect their plans. They had the support of men in high places, and among the leaders of the venture were important members of the Legislature. Chief promoter was Senator Henry A. Crabb, a boyhood friend of Walker and notorious slavery propagandist in California since 1851.

To raise funds for the undertaking, they illegally sold the future Republic of Sonora at five hundred dollars for each square league of land. The Independence Loan Fund receipts, issued on May 1, 1853, were signed "Wm. Walker, Colonel of the Independence Regiment." Walker's original plan was to invade northern Sonora by land. To facilitate matters, the pro-slavery legislators introduced bills in the Assembly and in the Senate authorizing them to organize and equip private military companies under the pretext of protecting the southern California frontier and of apprehending a famous elusive "bandit," Joaquin Muriata.

But Walker had to change his plans early in May, when U.S. Army Commanding General Ethan Allen Hitchcock announced that he would not permit the expedition to pass the cordon of military posts located in the Southern district; consequently, the proposed military bills were promptly defeated in both the Assembly and the Senate. Unable to invade Sonora by land, Walker sailed for Guaymas on June 11, aboard the British brig Arrow, to reconnoiter the field for a new plan of action. He was accompanied by Watkins and several others.

Upon landing at Guaymas, on June 30 Walker and his party were refused permission to travel to the interior. Unfortunately for Walker, the Mexican consul at San Francisco

had advised the authorities of his true designs. But during Walker's stay at Guaymas, the news of Apache attacks throughout the State were causing alarm; moreover, the government coffers were empty. More importantly, there were only two hundred Mexican troops in Sonora, and it would take three months for reinforcements to arrive. Consequently, Walker formulated a new plan of action.

He returned to San Francisco on the Arrow. As soon as he landed, on September 9, he and his slavery backers set to work organizing an expedition to Sonora by sea: they planned to land in the neighborhood of Guaymas and then spread tall tales of fabulous riches in Sonora to lure adventurers into joining and facilitate recruiting.

By October 1, they had enrolled 200 men to sail on the Arrow. They had drafted a Constitution for the future Republic of Sonora and had raised considerable money by issuing sixty-five million dollars in paper currency made payable in lands or gold upon annexation to the United States. Although the ostensible object of the expedition was to drive the Apaches from the mining regions of northern Mexico, it was public knowledge that the leaders of the venture were Southern men who designed to make Sonora a slave territory.

General Hitchcock again thwarted their efforts when he sent a squad of U.S. Army soldiers to take possession of the brig Arrow at the wharf and seize all the arms and supplies for the military forces on board. Walker and his friends immediately endeavored to regain possession of the vessel and cargo, suing the general for \$30,000 damages.

Legal arguments dragged on, but despite the concerted efforts of influential politicians and judges, the filibusters failed to regain possession of the Arrow or its cargo. No private pleadings by Senators William M. Gwin and Henry A. Crabb, nor public writs from the Superior Court, could possibly sway the general. Hitchcock preferred to resign rather than give in. Though he stood almost alone in the community in opposing the expedition, he wrote that he knew was "right, and that is enough for me." When he wrote those words in his private diary, on October 17, the issue of the Arrow was irrelevant: Walker's expedition had already departed from San Francisco on the barque Caroline at one o'clock that morning.

The barque belonged to the American consul at Guaymas. Walker had made a contract with Howard A. Snow, the captain, to convey the party for \$20 a head, but they were to furnish their own provisions. The Caroline cleared for Guaymas with normal passengers and cargo. As it began moving away from the wharf, Walker's men, arms and supplies were transferred from a small steamboat that came alongside and tugged it to sea. Some of the men were completely drunk.

At sunrise, reveille sounded by drum, and the filibusters rushed on deck for a head count: forty-five men in military formation headed by First Captain John Chapman, under the command of William Walker whom they gave the title of Governor of Sonora. Their arms consisted of twenty-five rifles and seventy cavalry muskets, one hundred cans of gunpowder and several bars of lead, in addition to two six-pounders which belonged to the vessel.

The *Caroline* also carried its regular passengers: eighty-five Mexicans and Germans totally ignorant of any hostile design against Sonora, as well as an American lady, Mrs. Chapman, wife of the filibuster captain. Henry A. Crabb was supposed to be on board, but at the last moment he changed his mind and left the vessel. He undoubtedly knew that the odds were too great to run the risk.

Walker didn't worry about the odds. As weapons were distributed to the forty-five filibusters formed on deck, he made a speech: he referred to the sixteenth of October as a memorable day in the annals of civilized and enlightened nations and urged his soldiers to battle against the savages; his men responded with rousing cheers. Before they had reached the tip of the Lower California peninsula, Captain Snow had joined Walker's forces and had been appointed Admiral of Walker's Navy.

But even Walker knew that it would be suicidal to land in Sonora with only forty-five men. Hence, on November 3, 1853 he landed at La Paz, the capital of Baja California. The *Caroline* entered the bay flying the Mexican flag, as usual. Walker, Snow, Chapman, and a few others landed and paid a friendly visit to Governor Rafael Espinosa. Finding Espinosa unsuspecting and the town defenseless, they landed in force and captured the city in less than thirty minutes.

The filibusters then lowered the Mexican flag in front of the Governor's house and hoisted their own flag, made during the trip by Mrs. Chapman: three horizontal stripes, red, white, and red, with two golden stars in the white, representing independent Sonora and Chihuahua. They grabbed Governor Espinosa by the necktie and took him prisoner aboard ship. Walker immediately issued a Proclamation announcing the birth of the new nation and declaring himself President of Lower California.

From the men he had, he appointed a Cabinet complete with Secretary of State, Secretary of War, and, naturally, Secretary of the Navy, Admiral Snow. Next day he re-embarked in a great hurry, carrying with him all the Mexican Government and Custom House papers and archives after he learned that two hundred men from the interior would attack at any moment. Indeed, that afternoon a detachment of cavalry and some of the former *Caroline* passengers attacked a party of filibusters sent ashore to gather wood, driving them back to the vessel under a barrage of bullets.

Walker ordered forty men to the boats and led them to battle. They landed under cover of a sharp fire of round shot, grenades, and canister from the ship's six-pounders. Walker advanced from the beach to a plateau half a mile away, through a thick chaparral of cactus with very sharp thorns. Since night coming on, he re-embarked. Seven Mexicans and four Americans lost their lives in Walker's first battle ever, the "Battle of La Paz," in which he promoted himself to Colonel.

At noon that day, shortly before the fight started, the ship Neptune from Mazatlán came into the harbor, bringing Col. Clímaco Rebolledo, the new Governor of Lower California. Walker promptly took him prisoner aboard the Caroline, where Rebolledo joined former Governor Espinosa in captivity.

Hastily driven out of La Paz by the Mexican soldiers, Walker then retreated towards Cape St. Lucas, carrying the entire "government" of Lower California on his ship, as well as the two Mexican Governors. On November 7, he issued at sea two decrees: One, abolishing all duties on imports and exports; the other, declaring that the Civil Code, and the Code of Practice of the State of Louisiana would be the rule and the Law of the land in his Republic of Lower California. As Louisiana was a slave state, he had skillfully introduced slavery into the new Republic without mentioning the word slavery, even though his so-called "Republic" was a fiction, for his domain didn't encompass a single inch of land.

Cruising up the Lower California peninsula on November 29, Walker landed at Ensenada, a cove about seventy miles below the U.S. border. He promptly hoisted his new flag on shore and established his Republic in the lonely adobe house in the harbor. From the household members, he obtained what information he could on local matters, so he could plan his next moves.

Walker sent a foraging party to procure horses and saddles at a nearby farm, paying for them with a useless I.O.U. His Secretary of State, Frederick Emory, then rode to San Diego, bearing the official documents from the Lower California Republic and an Address of President Walker to the People of the United States, explaining that he had created another Republic because Mexico had failed to perform its "duties" in the Peninsula.

Next, he sent a party to La Grulla, a hamlet twenty miles south of Ensenada, in search of Antonio María Melendres, a young rebel leader whom he hoped would join him and provide his Republic the indispensable native support it lacked. The party didn't find Melendres, who hid from the Americans and then reported to Col. Francisco Xavier García Negrete at Santo Tomás.

After gathering fifty-eight men from the region, Negrete and Melendres attacked

Walker at Ensenada at dawn on December 5. Walker had thirty-five men fit for duty. The Mexicans cut off the filibusters' water supply and captured and disabled a boat, their only connection with the Caroline lying at anchor a mile away. Walker lost a dozen men, and the adobe house under siege was named "Fort McKibben" in honor of Lieut. John McKibben who was killed.

The siege continued for several days. On three occasions, Melendres sent a flag of truce asking Walker to surrender, but the latter returned his messages unanswered. Inside the fort, Mrs. Chapman attended the sick and wounded, loaded and passed arms to the men, and repeatedly fired upon the Mexicans through the loopholes. Admiral Snow had become a foot soldier, cut off from his ship.

The Caroline's mate, an Englishman named Alfred Williams, with a crew of five, was in charge of the vessel, guarding the two governors held captive on board. When it became apparent that Walker was surrounded by superior forces on shore, Williams sailed away and released the governors at Cape St. Lucas, delivering the vessel to its owner at Guaymas.

On repeated sallies in the following days, the filibusters routed Melendres and finally broke the siege on December 14. According to their estimates, in the final battles they killed twenty Mexicans and wounded twenty more, while only one filibuster was wounded. Without resources in the sparsely populated Frontier, Negrete and Melendres were unable to raise additional troops and Walker was no longer attacked at Ensenada.



J. M. Reid, "The Ensenada," *The National Magazine*

Two months to the day after the "Forty-Five Immortals" had left San Francisco, the flag of the Two Stars waved triumphantly over Fort McKibben. The Republic of Lower California briefly established, although its navy had vanished with the Caroline, carrying away all the military stores and provisions and its entire population consisted of only thirty able-bodied men, one woman, and

six wounded filibusters, all resided in one adobe house. But all of them had full confidence in Colonel Walker, who had proven to be a brave leader in battle. And they

**IMPORTANT NEWS
FROM LOWER CALIFORNIA!**

GREAT EXCITEMENT

BATTLE OF LA PAZ!!!

**LOWER CALIFORNIA DECLARED
A REPUBLIC!**

**COL. WM. WALKER,
DECLARED
PRESIDENT!!**

The *Globe* arrived last night from San Diego, bringing us the *Herald* of the 3d inst., containing the most important and interesting news that has ever been received from that part of the country, and which is now absorbing the attention of every individual who has heard it.

The intelligence of the battle of La Paz, and the declaration of the independence of the Filibusters and the establishment of a Republic, was brought to San Diego by Mr. Emory, Secretary of State of the new Government. It was received there, says our correspondent, by the American population, with the wildest expressions of joy and delight. Referring to his letter in another part of the paper for further particulars, we present the official documents of the young Republic as published in the *San Diego Herald*. They give a succinct history of the whole movement.

Alta California, San Francisco, California
December 8, 1853

all pinned their hopes on Secretary of State Frederick Emory's mission to the sister Republic of the North, due to bear fruit at any moment.

After Walker sailed on the *Caroline* from San Francisco, U.S. District Attorney S.W. Inge, ignoring the evidence accumulated by Gen. Hitchcock and without his consent, dismissed the suits against the *Arrow*. The vessel then cleared for Sydney, as Crabb & associates made no effort to reinforce Walker, obviously believing him doomed to fail.

When Emory arrived from Ensenada, the startling news he brought to San Francisco on December 7 produced a sudden surge of popular support for Walker. Within a few days, his backers organized four companies of fifty men each, led by Mexican War veterans and openly recruited, armed, and equipped without interference from the authorities. Watkins bought an old 235 ton ship, christening it the *Anita*, placing it under the

British flag, and filling it with abundant provisions and ammunition. He had it ready to sail in less than a week.

The steamer *Thomas Hunt* towed the *Anita* out to sea on December 13, its decks crowded with filibusters armed with rifles, revolvers, and knives—all of them more or less drunk. As the steamer left the *Anita* outside the bay, it accidentally tore away the port bulwarks. A stiff breeze was blowing, which soon became a gale, tearing the foretopsail and jib into ribbons, since there were no sober men to furl them, and the sea washed the deck fore and aft. Almost all the ship's contents slid about and tumbled overboard. When the *Anita* landed its troops at Ensenada on December 18, it brought very few supplies for Walker.

Walker then ordered sixty-five men to advance to Santo Tomás, which they took without a fight, confiscating all the cattle, horses, and corn they could lay their hands on. The terrified inhabitants fled. The *Anita* returned to San Francisco for urgently needed arms, provisions, and reinforcements. In addition, the monotonous diet of beef and corn caused dissatisfaction, and desertions rapidly mounted in Walker's Republic.

Walker waited, confident that his friends in San Francisco would send what he needed, including a steamer, to proceed to Sonora.

Consequently, on January 18, he issued four more decrees, changing the name of his Republic of Lower California to that of Republic of Sonora, and defining its boundaries to encompass both regions. Two days later, he issued an "Address to the Army," telling his men that they were about to cross the Colorado river to defend a helpless people from the attacks of merciless savages. And on January 24th, after making "a very powerful and animated address to his troops," he requested them to hold up their right hand and swear "before Almighty God, to stand by him through weal or woe, until his flag was planted upon the walls of Sonora."

Most of the men raised their hands and took the oath, but about fifty refused to do it. Walker, thereupon, very excited, proclaimed that all such were at liberty to leave. As a result, forty-six men started on foot from Fort McKibben towards San Diego, taking with them their rifles and a little boiled corn in their pockets. One hundred and forty filibusters remained loyal to Walker.

Some of the more violent stood in front of the camp with a brass artillery piece loaded with cannister, ready to fire upon the mutineers, but Walker forbade it. Instead, he and a party of fifteen well-armed officers pursued those who had just left, and on overtaking them, begged them to leave their arms behind because his men needed those rifles to fight the Mexicans. Only two gave them up; the rest either hid theirs or smashed them against the rocks and continued their march to San Diego.

6. Disowned

1853 was the year of the Gadsden Purchase, a milestone marking the end of an era in U.S.-Mexican relations. The “Gadsden Territory” was the final piece of real estate taken by Manifest Destiny from Mexico. But the territory was only a small portion of what Secretary of War Jefferson Davis wished to acquire, and the Walker expedition to Sonora played an important role in the purchase.

Davis wished to push the international boundary down to the Sierra Madre in the center, and extend it east and west so that the United States would encompass, in whole or in part, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Sonora, and Baja California. In May, 1853, Davis was responsible for the selection of General James Gadsden as minister to Mexico, giving him instructions for the negotiated purchase of over 125,000 square miles of land.

In order to coerce Mexico into selling, Davis reinforced U.S. Army troops along the border and sent General John Garland to New Mexico, ready to start a war at short notice, while the entire Pierce Administration gave the filibusters free rein to invade Sonora. In September, when Walker publicly prepared his expedition on the Arrow, with the help of Senator Gwin and the Federal officers in San Francisco, there were two U.S. Navy ships in the harbor: the frigate St. Lawrence, flagship of the Pacific Squadron, and the sloop-of-war Portsmouth. Both immediately left, one for Peru and Chile, and the other for Honolulu, conveniently leaving the California sea-lanes wide open for Walker’s descent upon Mexico.

But General Hitchcock ruined Davis’ scheme to add three or four slave states to the Union when, acting on his own, he seized the Arrow. When Davis learned of the seizure, he removed General Hitchcock from his post; and when Hitchcock applied for permission to return home via the Far East, Davis, chagrined, chastised him and simply told him no.

When Gadsden presented his credentials to President Santa Anna on August 17, the official correspondence from the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs fittingly opened, on the 20th, recounting Walker’s June “visit” to Guaymas and the reports of his forthcoming invasion of Sonora. Gadsden immediately wrote to the Federal Authorities in California—to his fellow slavery propagandists who backed Walker’s venture—that “they had been informed against and were watched.”

When Santa Anna refused to sell what Gadsden wanted, the envoy tried to convince the Mexican President that the filibusters would eventually prevail, and that it would be wise for Mexico to sell the extensive northern regions that it was bound to lose anyway. The Mexican laughed at the threat, for by then he knew that General Hitchcock had reduced the grandiose filibustering scheme to a handful of marauders cooped inside an adobe house at Ensenada.

Gadsden was then forced to limit his proposal to a much smaller slice of territory, 18,000 square miles in northern Sonora and Chihuahua, which the United States thought it needed for the Southern railroad route to the Pacific; and he warned Santa Anna that if he didn't sell it, the United States would take it anyway, by force if necessary.

Santa Anna reluctantly accepted Gadsden's proposal on November 30; final arrangements were worked out, and the treaty was signed on December 30, 1853. Gadsden left Mexico City early next morning, landed in New Orleans on January 12, and two days later the Government at Washington received his dispatches, confirming the telegraph reports from New Orleans that the treaty had been signed. On January 18, President Pierce issued an "Important Proclamation" to the world, denouncing Walker's expedition as "criminal," exhorting all good citizens to discourage and prevent such criminal enterprises, and calling upon all officers of his government, "civil and military, to arrest for trial and punishment every such offender."

The timing of the proclamation irrevocably sealed the administration's complicity with Walker's "criminal enterprise." As early as May 17, 1853, the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs had informed the American government that a filibustering expedition against Sonora was being organized in San Francisco. Washington did nothing to stop it. Many subsequent communications kept Pierce's cabinet informed of developments, without eliciting any response. But when the news was received in Washington that General Gadsden had arrived in New Orleans with his treaty, President Pierce suddenly issued his proclamation against Walker.

The facts of the matter indicate that Walker was allowed to proceed freely as a useful tool to coerce Mexico into signing the sale of territory. As soon as the sale was completed, Walker was instantly disowned and discarded. And, by then, Walker's fallen fortunes had already made him expendable.

Immediately after the sailing of the *Anita* in December, the *Alta* had published in San Francisco a series of articles exposing in detail the slavery connection of Walker's expedition, turning public sentiment in California against him. Long before then, his pro-slavery financial backers had given up on Walker and deserted him. From mid-December to late January, Walker's agents scoured the mining districts of California in

search of reinforcements and material aid, but without success. At that point in time, when Walker's filibuster movement was already dead in California, President Pierce killed an undertaking that was already moribund.

The same Federal officers who in October had midwived Walker's expedition to Sonora, now served as undertakers for its burial. They chartered the steamer Columbus to proceed to Ensenada accompanied by the sloop-of-war Portsmouth. Upon arrival on February 9, the Portsmouth blockaded the harbor and the steamer evacuated the sick and wounded from Walker's camp.

The revolting wretchedness of Walker's "military hospital" at Ensenada was then ascertained. By some strange oversight or neglect, not a single surgical instrument had been provided for his army. The surgeon was consequently compelled to sharpen the iron handle of a bucket with which he probed wounds, extracted bullets, and occasionally pulled teeth. There was no medicine, except some calomel and rhubarb.

One of the wounded, Lieut. Col. Charles H. Gilman, had shrunk to skin and bones. His leg had frightfully swollen and the flesh from his ankle and foot was sloughing off from decomposition. He had lain there for eighty-four days, and though his sick couch was only ten feet from Walker's quarters, Gilman received but three visits from him during the whole period of his sufferings.

With the U.S. Navy blockading Ensenada, Walker moved on to a new location to wait for the steamer he was expecting for the invasion of Sonora. He headed south with his entire Republic—some mounted, the greater part on foot—flag, cattle, sheep, and two small pieces of artillery. On February 21, at San Vicente, he issued another proclamation, ordering all the inhabitants in the region to congregate in his camp within five days and threatening severe punishment for those who failed to comply. Don Manuel Fernández de Córdova, part owner of the adobe house at Ensenada, served as Walker's private agent, spy, and interpreter.

Don Manuel also took a letter to Melendres, who hovered near San Vicente with his men. Walker offered to guarantee Melendres his life and property and to appoint him Governor of Lower California, if he should present himself at headquarters with Córdova. Melendres declined.

On the 28th, after another ominous presidential proclamation and considerable effort in compelling the attendance of the terrified inhabitants, Walker held a "Convention" at San Vicente. A table was set on the parade ground within a square formed by his soldiers. Two flags of his Republic were placed in front, crossing each other so as to make a sort of arch. On one side stood President Walker and his Cabinet and Staff, and on the other a member of the "judiciary" with an interpreter.

Thirty-six natives were penned up in that corral, some 120 bayonets serving as walls for the same. Walker took note of the names of the people present and addressed them in a speech which concluded: "And I call upon you to swear allegiance to this flag. Thus your President commands you."

Eight Indians took the oath, making the sign of the cross and kissing the hand of His Excellency, and passed as loyal subjects. Twenty-eight refused to do it, and were directed to stand aside. Walker then made another speech, telling them to be aware that their lives and property were at his disposal, and that he would treat them as enemies and rebels. The effect of his words was wonderful, for immediately all took the oath.

On the following day, Walker forced them to sign a document directed to him and drawn up by himself, by which the proceedings of the so-called convention were ratified. The gracious reply of his Excellency the President came the same day, thanking his subjects for their loyalty and devotion and pledging that all their rights would be respected.

The truth of the matter was that Walker's men had forcefully appropriated all the provisions they wanted at gun point. Most of the stock in the country was either already destroyed, or in the hands of the filibusters. The greater portion of the male population had fled; approximately one hundred destitute people had escaped across the border, on foot, and the citizens of San Diego had raised funds for their relief.

But in the wake of the San Vicente oath of allegiance, Walker ordered a court martial for five of his men accused of attempting to desert and to pillage the cattle-farms on their way to Upper California. Two were sentenced to death, one to fifty and the other to twenty-five lashes, and the sentence was executed on March 3d. The fifth was acquitted on the ground that he was a good cattle driver.

Córdova and Emory then left for Upper California, on official business for Walker's Republic. In San Francisco, Watkins had been unable to get the steamer for the invasion of Sonora. In a final act of desperation, he shipped what recruits he could gather, some sixty restless and hardened men, on the Anita, after he changed its name to Petrita and placed it under the Chilean flag to conceal its identity.

Unable to communicate with Walker because of the blockade at Ensenada, the Petrita went on to Guaymas. Upon landing, on March 4, the filibusters pretended to be peaceful colonists, but alert authorities instantly suspected their true intentions and imprisoned them. Depositions and documents soon convinced the Mexicans that they held a contingent of Walker's filibusters.

That ended Watkins' efforts to help Walker. Moreover, the situation changed abruptly in San Francisco upon the arrival of President Pierce's proclamation. U.S. District

Attorney Samuel W. Inge promptly obeyed the new instructions from Washington and instituted legal proceedings against Watkins and other Walker agents. Watkins was arrested in San Francisco on February 23d. Dr. David Hoge, the surgeon evacuated from Ensenada, was detained the same day. Emory and Córdova were arrested at San Diego on March 8 and sent to San Francisco for trial. The authorities thus broke the filibuster "ring" in California six months too late, when recruiting for Walker had already died a natural death.

By the middle of March, 1854, the demise of the Republic of Sonora at San Vicente was at hand. Most citizens had fled; its coffers were empty; its army, thinned by desertions, contained only 120 men. The Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Quartermaster General, the Army Surgeon, the principal spy, and the chief recruiting agent had all been locked behind bars in San Francisco. Enemy vessels blockaded its port; Mexican expeditionary forces were reported to be moving in for the kill; and Antonio Melendres with his band of "rebels" hovered about the "Republic," patiently waiting for an opportunity to strike.

William Walker, however, was not thinking of surrender or retreat. On the contrary, on or around March 20, at the head of a ninety-man army, he departed from San Vicente for the conquest of Sonora, after making necessary plans and issuing pertinent orders for the forthcoming drive to victory and the planting his twin-star banner on the walls of Guaymas. He left a garrison of twenty men at San Vicente, under Dr. Joseph W. Smith, Minister of Interior and Exterior, who then became Commandant of the Northern Frontier. But as soon as Walker was out of sight, Smith and his men surrendered to Melendres.

Walker's journey from San Vicente to the Colorado covered a distance of over a hundred and twenty miles. Secretary of War and State John M. Jernagin, Secretary of the Navy Howard A. Snow, Surgeon General S.S. Richardson, Army Major Timothy Crocker, Captain of the Navy William T. Mann, and many other officers, assisted His Excellency the President, Commander-in-Chief William Walker. Adjutant Samuel Ruland recorded events for posterity. Wagon Master S. Glasscock took charge of hauling the one-gun Artillery Corps. And Quartermaster General Norval Douglas watched over the one hundred head of cattle that constituted the entire food supply of the nation. Nobody took care of the Treasury Department, simply because there was no "treasury" to watch.

At the end of March, Walker reached the Colorado six miles above its mouth, at Howard's Point, which was a landing place for ocean vessels coming up the Gulf. He expected to find the Petrita and a steamer with reinforcements from California on which

to proceed to Tiburón Island, about one hundred miles above Guaymas, which would be his base of operations against Sonora. He waited several days at Howard's Point, hoping against hope, but no vessel arrived. He had reached the end of the line. The deep and wide Colorado river stood between him and the Promised Land. But the chasm that separated him from his goal was much wider and deeper, for his Republic of Sonora was about to die.

In fact, his "soldiers of Sonora" were both miserable and destitute; they wore the same clothing, now tattered and ragged, with which they had arrived in Lower California. Walker himself was no better clad than the rest; he wore one boot and a fragment of another boot. The cattle were so emaciated that they couldn't cross the river by swimming. Meager rations consisted of beef alone.

Dissatisfied, exhausted, naked, and famished—over fifty men then deserted and headed for San Diego and Los Angeles via Fort Yuma, up river. Thirty-eight remained loyal. The remnants of his New Republic consisted of himself, his two Ministers, the Surgeon General, the Wagon Master, one major, three captains, five lieutenants, four sergeants, two corporals, and nineteen privates. On April 6, they began to retrace their steps to San Vicente and thence to San Diego.

At the Rancho La Calentura, on April 13, Walker lost two men in his first skirmish with Melendres' forces. On the night of the 19th, Walker personally led twelve men on a surprise attack to Santo Tomás, killing two and wounding several Mexicans. On the 26th, upon receiving reinforcements, Melendres sent a flag of truce to Walker, offering him and his men a free pass out of the country if he would lay down his arms and make a formal surrender. Walker read the message and responded by trampling the letter under his foot, "then, by a series of well applied kicks, ejected the courier from his presence."

Melendres attacked in full force the same afternoon, but withdrew after a three hour battle in which he was fortunate that only three of his men were killed, for at close range the filibusters fired twelve Colt's bullets for each rifle shot of the Mexicans. Walker then began to retreat towards the border while Melendres followed closely, skirmishing from time to time. On Saturday, May 6, Walker reached and took possession of the Rancho La Tiajuana, two and a half miles below the boundary line. Melendres encamped in the vicinity, blocking the filibusters' way to San Diego.

But when Walker marched from La Tiajuana to the border, on May 8 (his thirtieth birthday), Melendres let him pass unmolested. Halting his command—thirty three men—upon Mexican territory, Walker crossed the line at the monument and surrendered to Major J. McKinstry and Capt. H.S. Burton, U.S. Army.

Altogether, less than 300 men had accompanied Walker in Lower California. At least twenty-three lost their life and a like number were wounded. Mexican casualties were not tabulated, but were probably higher. As assessed at the time, his conduct in the peninsula created widespread antagonism towards the United States; brought financial loss to the invaders; caused devastation in the invaded country; led to prolonged suffering among some of the families that were reduced to abject poverty; and lastly, because of the outcome, brought shame and ridicule upon such an ill-conceived expedition.

When Walker and his men returned to San Francisco aboard the steamer from San Diego on May 15, there were no welcoming bands to greet them nor kind words from the press. Friend Nugent in the Herald simply printed the details of the surrender without comment. The Alta remarked that the bubble of the great republic of Sonora, with all its sins of slavery-extension, robbery and murder, had burst; that after months of hardship, toil, privation and suffering, the remnant of the Republic's army had returned to the place of its enlistment, with its banners trailing in the dust; and it expressed the hope that the whole tale of folly, crime, and misery would halt the reckless spirit of Filibusterism in the future.

Walker faced trial at the United States District Court in San Francisco, for violation of the neutrality laws. The trial was held in October; Crabb and Snow appeared among the witnesses for the prosecution; Edmund Randolph and another attorney appeared as counsel for the defense, and Walker himself made a long defense speech; the jury deliberated exactly eight minutes and rendered a verdict of Not Guilty.

After his return from Lower California, Walker again earned a living as a journalist and immersed himself in politics. Early in June, 1854 he went to work for Democratic party boss David Broderick, who first assigned him to assume the editorial charge of the Democratic State Journal, in Sacramento. But he transferred him a few days later to the Commercial Advertiser in San Francisco, and, in October, back to the Journal in Sacramento.

Broderick's single aim in life was to sit in the U.S. Senate chamber in the Washington Capitol, a place where his father had worked as a stone-cutter. In 1854, as he mounted his campaign to unseat Senator Gwin, journalist William Walker was extremely useful to him. From his first day to the last at the Advertiser and the Journal, Walker unrelently attacked Gwin and his pro-slavery faction—the "arch-traitors" who had deserted his cause and had sent the U.S. Navy to blockade Ensenada.

7. Nicaragua

In June, 1854, when Walker took over as editor of the Commercial Advertiser, the news arrived in San Francisco that a revolution led by democratic forces had just started in Nicaragua. In frequent conversations with Walker, a fellow journalist in the paper, Byron Cole, urged him to give up the idea of settling in Sonora, and to devote his labors to the Central American country. Cole himself had recently become a partner in the Honduras Mining and Trading Company, which aimed to work the placers of gold in the head waters of the Patuca river, in eastern Honduras.

In August, Cole and another partner, William V. Wells, left San Francisco aboard the Nicaragua Transit Company steamer Cortes, on their way to Honduras. When the travelers passed through León, the revolutionary capital, the rebels and the government had reached a stalemate after four months of fierce fighting and heavy casualties. Cole then signed a contract with rebel leader Francisco Castellón to bring two hundred mercenaries from California for his service and hurried back to San Francisco, where he offered it to Walker.

After modifying the contract into a "colonization grant," to pay lip service to the neutrality laws, Walker resigned from his post at the Journal in Sacramento and moved on to San Francisco to organize his expedition to Nicaragua. To raise the necessary money, on March 1st, 1855, he issued one hundred shares of stock at one thousand dollars each, which entitled the owner to one hundredth part of the 52,000 acres of land granted by Castellón to the mercenaries in the Cole contract.

On paper, Walker's "Nicaragua Colonization Company" was worth one hundred thousand dollars, but in fact it was worthless because at that time a financial crash of major proportions shook California, brought on by the failure of several large banking houses, making it almost impossible to obtain loans on any securities whatsoever. Moreover, Walker's second duel contributed to delay his preparations.

The affaire d'honneur between Col. William Walker and Mr. William H. Carter, employee in the Custom House, took place at seven o'clock a.m., March 13, 1855 at San Souci, in the vicinity of San Francisco, in the midst of a heavy gale that hit the city that morning. Nobody mentioned the difficulty leading to the encounter, but since all Custom House employees belonged to the Gwin faction of the democratic party, it is safe to assume that the "betrayal" of Walker in Baja California by his Southern confederates was at the bottom of the issue.

The weapons were duelling pistols, and the distance eight paces. At the first fire, Carter's bullet wounded Walker in the left foot, but not a muscle was seen to move; and it was not till after some seconds had elapsed that his friends discovered the accident, when he quietly brushed some sand, with his right foot, over the wounded part. That ended the affair.

Although Walker's wound was not at all serious, it was very painful and it kept him off his feet until the middle of April. Once able to walk, he sold one share of his Nicaragua Colonization Company stock to Broderick's paymaster and cashier, Joseph C. Palmer, and borrowed what money he could—fifty dollars at a time—from anybody willing to lend it. Forced to make what arrangements he could, he chartered an old brig, the *Vesta*, and to secure provisions for the voyage he paid with Nicaragua stock. But an old creditor of the owner of the ship sued the owner, and the parties who furnished the supplies then changed their mind and started legal proceedings for payment in hard currency. As a result, the sheriff seized the vessel.

By the time Walker satisfied both creditors, on May 3d, he had nearly spent his last penny and couldn't pay the sheriff's costs of three hundred and fifty dollars. The Deputy Sheriff had the vessel in charge. At midnight, Walker requested him to step below to examine some papers which it was necessary to see by candle light. He then held him prisoner in the cabin while a steamer tugged the *Vesta* out to sea, on May 4 at one o'clock in the morning. Once outside the bay, the Deputy Sheriff was transferred to the tug, and the old brig sailed on to Nicaragua.

The *Vesta* carried Walker with fifty-seven followers. Each had to pay \$40 passage money, with Walker fitting out those who were too poor to do so. Nearly all were Mexican War veterans; some had fought under López in Cuba or under Walker in Baja California. No person was allowed to join the expedition who could not bring satisfactory proof of previous military service, or who was not known for his courage and determination in San Francisco.

Such adventurous men, of course, were seeking fame and fortune in a foreign land. Their leader, having failed with the Tehuantepec project in New Orleans and with the Sonora venture in California, sought to carry out his Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire from a new base in Nicaragua. And at that moment there were rivals in the field who aimed to take possession of a country that seemed ripe for the taking.

With 250,000 inhabitants in a territory the size of New York state, Nicaragua had been the scene of constant civil war since its independence from Spain in 1821. The current war pitting the Legitimist (conservative) government at Granada against the Democratic (liberal) rebels at León, was then entering on its second year, leaving the

country utterly divided, exhausted, battered and helpless: vulnerable to any foreign band of marauders.

Its Atlantic port, San Juan del Norte (called Greytown by the British), was occupied by England under the pretense of protecting a fictitious Mosquito Indian Kingdom. Nicaragua's valuable transit route belonged to a Transit Company controlled by American speculators and crooks. Another gang of filibusters, under Col. Henry L. Kinney, was descending upon the country on the Atlantic side simultaneously with Walker on the Pacific.

Kinney had established a trading post in Texas which became Corpus Christi and had served as Gen. Taylor's quartermaster in Mexico. He had turned his attention to Nicaragua at the suggestion of President Pierce, his old companion-in-arms during the Mexican War. He aimed to establish his own slave empire in Nicaragua, for which he had the support of the slavery propagandists in President Pierce's cabinet and in the South.

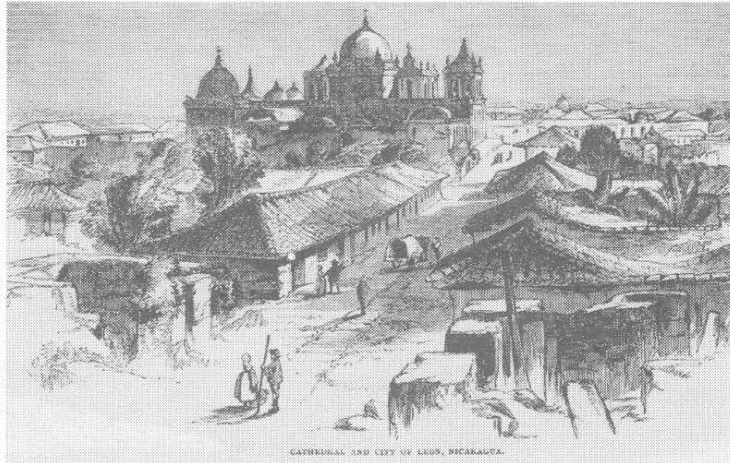
The slavery connection of the Kinney enterprise naturally extended to the Pacific Coast, drawing Henry A. Crabb and other Californians into the plot. Shortly after Crabb testified at the Walker trial in October, 1854, he travelled East in the company of Thomas F. Fisher, founder of the Know-Nothing party in California. Fisher was a Southern filibuster like Crabb and Walker—Captain in the Louisiana Regiment under López at Cárdenas in 1850 and afterwards Major in the Confederate Army during the Civil War.

After attending the National Know-Nothing Convention at Cincinnati, Fisher returned to San Francisco via Nicaragua accompanied by two other filibusters, Collier Clarence Hornsby and Julius DeBrissot. He then obtained from General Jerez, commander-in-chief of the Leonese Army, a contract to enlist 500 mercenaries with a promise of extravagant pay, in both money and lands: \$65,000 per month and 314,500 acres, respectively. On February 22, 1855, he handed the contract to Crabb in San Francisco.

On learning that Walker was planning to descend on Nicaragua, Crabb "generously" offered the Jerez-Fisher contract to him. Walker thanked him for his offer, but refused it, preferring to act under the Castellón-Cole colonization grant. Crabb and Fisher then dedicated their energies to the organization of the Know-Nothing party in California, while Hornsby and DeBrissot joined Walker and went to Nicaragua with him on the Vesta.

The Vesta's fifty-eight filibusters landed at Realejo on June 16. Col. Félix Ramírez welcomed them in the name of Provisional Director Francisco Castellón, assisted by Dr.

Joseph W. Livingston and Captain Charles W. Doubleday, whom Castellón had sent along as translators. Walker at that time did not speak Spanish at all. Early next morning, Walker, Hornsby, and Crocker, accompanied by Ramírez, Livingston, and Doubleday, started for León, while the others remained behind, to wait for Walker at Chinandega.



Cathedral and city of León, Nicaragua
Harper's Weekly, May 16, 1857

What Walker saw and heard at León, pleased him very much. The Castellón revolutionary faction was struggling desperately, as the Legitimist forces advanced past Managua towards León. But far from being depressed by the news, which to some might have appeared gloomy, he saw that the Democratic party's weakness could ensure his own success. He felt that the more desperate the fortunes of the Leonese were, the more they would be indebted to the men who might rescue them from their danger, and hence be committed to any course or policy he might propose.

Walker was also pleased by the factionalism he found inside León, which also worked to his advantage. Commander-in-Chief Jerez had fallen into disgrace, and his comrades blamed him for their misfortunes following his failure to take Granada. In place of Jerez, Castellón had brought General José Trinidad Muñoz, who had been in exile in El Salvador, and gave him command of the Leonese army. Castellón's leftist hardcore supporters had no love for Muñoz, but with the enemy closing in for the kill, they desperately needed the general, since he was at that time renowned as the best soldier in Central America.

Upon taking command, Muñoz had made peace proposals to General Ponciano Corral, head of the Legitimist army. Although peace talks never advanced beyond the preliminary stages, the extreme left feared that Muñoz might sell them out to the enemy. Castellón welcomed Walker's American mercenaries as allies against Muñoz as well as against Granada.

Castellón received Walker with frank cordiality; Muñoz, on the other hand, diplomatically allowed the American to understand that he did not approve of his presence in Nicaragua. Outwardly, Muñoz pretended to treat the matter of the American alliance as unimportant in national affairs. In fact, under strikingly different exteriors, the general and the filibuster shared a Napoleonic megalomania that made them hostile to each other at first sight. Walker's manner was direct and abrupt, while his appearance was simple and plain. Muñoz, in contrast, was a handsome man with engaging manners and an agreeable smile, set off by the colorful uniform of a Major-General. He was an admirer of Napoleon and wore his chapeau, top-boots, and coat, à la Bonaparte.

After Muñoz took leave, Walker warned Castellón that he and his comrades would not serve in the army under the Nicaraguan general. He demanded an independent and separate command. Moreover, he wished to lead an expedition against the town of Rivas, with a view of occupying the Meridional Department. Walker's object in making the transit route the theater of his operations was twofold: he would be away from Muñoz and close to reinforcements from California.

Castellón wholeheartedly agreed with Walker, but he had to go through the formality of securing his Cabinet's approval. The next day Walker returned to Chinandega, where his men were quartered, to await the Provisional Government's decision. It came on the 20th of June: Walker received a commission as Colonel in the Democratic army, and the Secretary of War informed him that commissions would be issued to other officers among any Americans he might suggest. The mercenary corps was named *La Falange Americana*—The American Phalanx.

By the Constitution of 1838, a simple declaration of intention made any native-born citizen of an American Republic a naturalized citizen of Nicaragua. Under this clause, Walker and most of the Falange then and there became Nicaraguans. Colonel Walker named Doubleday his aide-de-camp. He promoted Achilles Kewen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Timothy Crocker to the rank of Major, and subsequently organized his corps into two companies. He then marched to Realejo, and on the 23rd of June, the Falange Americana was aboard the *Vesta*, ready to sail for Rivas.

8. Assassination

Castellón's Minister of War had directed Col. Félix Ramírez to report to Walker with two hundred native infantry for the expedition to Rivas. Ramírez was loyal to Muñoz. When the Vesta was ready for sea, only one hundred and ten natives mustered on her decks, as auxiliaries to the Falange's fifty-five Americans. On the evening of June 27, they landed at El Gigante, a secluded bay about six leagues to the north of San Juan del Sur. About midnight with the Americans in front, Ramírez and his command in the rear, and a few native soldiers detailed to carry the ammunition covered with ox-hides in the center, the column took up its march for the interior. The men carried nothing but their arms and blankets with two days' provisions in their haversacks, for Walker planned to cover some fifteen miles over desolate trails, through thick forests, in time to surprise the enemy at Rivas the next evening. But this was not to be.

Even before Walker sailed from Realejo, British vice-consul Thomas Manning had sent a courier from León to Managua, telling General Corral about Walker's expedition to Rivas. The courier (a German national) crossed the Leonese lines with a passport from General Muñoz. Manning had been arranging peace talks between Muñoz and Corral, and opposed Walker's presence in Nicaragua, believing that it placed the country's autonomy in jeopardy.

Muñoz had given in to Castellón's wishes, allowing Walker's descent on the Meridional Department, confident that Walker would be certainly cut to pieces in Rivas. Moreover, by diverting Corral's attention in the southern sector, Muñoz improved his chances for defeating the Legitimists elsewhere. As a result, he expected Walker's debacle in Rivas to strengthen his own position in León, while weakening Castellón's, which would facilitate peace talks with Corral and would save Nicaragua from losing her autonomy.

Corral, in Managua, lost no time in preparing a hot reception for Walker at Rivas. He immediately sent Col. Manuel del Bosque with sixty *cívicos* (civilians pressed into service) from Granada. They sailed to San Jorge and arrived in Rivas at noon on June 27, just before Walker landed at El Gigante. Bosque took charge of the defense of the city, where he found only twenty *cívicos*. The Meridional Department was not a war zone: all the regular army troops in the region, eighty in number, were at San Juan del Sur.

Bosque pressed into service fifty raw recruits, (for a total of 130 men under arms), readied strongholds and built barricades as the town prepared to receive the invaders.

At 6 o'clock p.m. on the 28th, Bosque was informed that a vessel had been seen near the coast at El Gigante. He promptly dispatched 25 men to scour the country towards the seacoast. Torrential rains retarded the scouts' and the filibusters' progress. Bosque's men arrived at the village of Tola, some nine miles from Rivas, where they stopped to let the rain pass.

When Walker's column entered Tola that night, over a trail filled with water in the midst of the storm, they found Bosque's scouts sitting in the corridor of one of the principal houses of the town, without a sentry, playing at cards. The filibuster vanguard scattered the startled natives, as the sharp crack of the American rifles mixed with the claps of loud thunder. Several Nicaraguans were wounded, but the rest escaped, carrying the news of the approach of the Americans to Rivas. Bosque immediately sent orders to San Juan del Sur for the eighty-man garrison to rush to the defense of Rivas.

The heavy rain of the night gave way to a glorious sunshine in the morning. After a breakfast of eggs, chicken, and beef, the filibuster column resumed the march, pressing forward briskly, arriving at the outskirts of Rivas near noon. After the Tola skirmish, there was no need for secrecy. Walker approached Rivas along the Granada road, from the northwest. He ordered the Falange to form two abreast, with the natives in the rear. He then instructed Ramírez that once the Americans entered the town, he should distribute his men at those outlets of the San Juan and other roads by which the enemy might attempt to escape.

Although Walker estimated that the defenders outnumbered the Falange by almost ten to one and was aware that they were prepared to repel the Americans, he never doubted that he would capture the plaza single-handed. When he told Doubleday to transmit the order to Ramírez, the astounded aide suggested to Walker that it would be better not to send the native troops too far—that they should see first whether they would be needed to support the attack. Walker cut him short, and with his rare smile replied that Doubleday had not yet seen what fifty-six such men as he had, and so armed, could do.

Walker was partially right: the Nicaraguans' flint lock muskets were no match for American Mississippi rifles and Colt revolvers. With inferior weapons, in the hands of raw recruits, the natives' marksmanship left much to be desired. Yet, from their barricades on the streets and from loopholes in the walls, the one hundred-odd defenders stopped Walker cold long before he could approach the main plaza. And when in the midst of the battle, the San Juan del Sur garrison under Lieut. Col. Manuel Argüello entered Rivas, the Americans were forced to rush for shelter into two adobe houses in the outskirts of the town.

Sensing victory, the Nicaraguans assaulted the Americans' shelters. One of the houses

was taken, but the larger building held. Frontal attack not only ended in failure, but also in carnage: While Kewen, Walker, and Doubleday actually beat them back, turning aside their bayonets and thrusting at them with their swords, the others came up, and firing over their shoulders, soon checked the advance and heaped the doorway with the bodies of the Nicaraguans.

A fifty pesos reward was then offered to the volunteer who would set fire to the roof of the filibusters' stronghold. Two young men came forward: Emmanuel Mongalo and an unnamed companion. Torch in hand, they set the roof on fire. Mongalo declined the reward and gained immortality instead; his companion accepted twenty-five pesos and his name disappeared into oblivion.

Mongalo's deed won the battle: as the rafters over their heads burned through, and hot tiles fell upon them, the filibusters stampeded out of the house towards a ravine bordering a dense forest a short distance in the rear, and thence to the fields beyond. Forty-five filibusters escaped, but seven of them were wounded. Five other wounded were left behind. Unable to run, they were quickly slain by the triumphant natives, frenzied with hatred for the American pirates allied with the Leonese.

The bells in the churches at Rivas rang out a peal of victory. Colonel Bosque counted twenty-five dead and twenty-eight wounded among his troops; fourteen American dead and twelve Leonese bodies were left strewn on the battlefield; many rifles and revolvers were captured, but not a single prisoner. Since Bosque's men were too tired to chase the fleeing filibusters or dig graves for the dead, a pyre of American corpses, the next morning provided the finishing touch to the Battle of Rivas (June 29, 1855).

On narrating the battle in his book, Walker counted eleven American dead and seven wounded, at least seventy Legitimists killed and as many wounded, but he forgot to mention a single Leonese casualty. This was perhaps intentional, since Ramírez and most of his men had fled towards San Juan del Sur and the Costa Rican border, once Walker had told them that the Americans would whip the enemy single-handed.

After retreating through cacao plantations, over muddy trails, and along the transit road, the defeated filibusters arrived at San Juan del Sur on June 30th, a few minutes after sunset. At San Juan they met no opposition, for the entire Legitimist garrison had gone to Rivas the day before. Walker took possession of all the boats in the bay, and the Falange went aboard the Costa Rican schooner San José, for their return trip to Realejo. When ready to sail, the army barracks in town were set on fire by a Kentuckian named Oliver Dewey and a sailor named Sam. The men hated certain Legitimists about the transit, and hence took advantage of the filibusters' presence to burn the barracks. Walker had met Dewey that morning on the transit road, and the Kentuckian had

befriended the Falange. Sam was the owner of a launch which had followed the Vesta from El Realejo to El Gigante.

Upon ascertaining the facts of the arson, Walker applied summary justice, California (Vigilante) style. Upon "due process" (perfunctory consulting with two subalterns, Hornsby and Markham), Walker condemned the arsonists to death. Sam managed to escape, but Dewey didn't: his body, riveted with bullets, was sewed up in canvas and buried at sea. As explained by Walker in *The War*, the future character of the Americans in Nicaragua depended, to a great extent, on their ability to punish Dewey's crime. As seen by Nicaraguans, Dewey's corpse marked the future character of Walker's Anglo-Saxon empire.

Cruising past El Gigante, the San José met the Vesta heading north; the Falange changed vessels, and the brig and schooner arrived at Realejo the following morning. Several of the principal Democrats from Chinandega visited Walker aboard the Vesta shortly after it dropped anchor, and Walker sent with one of them his written report to Castellón concerning occurrences in the south.

In his report, Walker stated his impression that Muñoz had acted in bad faith, that the conduct of Ramírez was due to the inspiration, if not the orders, of the commander-in-chief; and that unless Muñoz's actions and intentions were clarified, the Americans would be compelled to leave the service of the Provisional Government and abandon Nicaragua.

The next day Dr. Livingston brought Castellón's reply to Walker aboard the Vesta. The Director complimented the Americans on their conduct at Rivas, thanked them for their services, and urged Walker not to think of leaving Nicaragua. But he evaded saying anything about Muñoz. Dr. Livingston agreed, arguing that given the critical position they were in, with Corral marshalling a large army at Managua to march on León, the Director could not afford to scrutinize the conduct of the commander-in-chief. But Walker was obstinate, having decided to remain some days on the brig while his men recovered from their fatigues and wounds, and with a view of making the Castellón party manifest as clearly as possible the necessity of the Falange to their cause.

Daily letters from Castellón failed to move Walker. The Director finally went personally to Realejo, accompanied by his brother-in-law, Mariano Salazar, a rich merchant and the most energetic man in the democratic faction. They promised Walker all the supplies and transportation he required, and Salazar thereafter paid for the Falange's war supplies out of his own pocket. Having achieved his purpose, Walker relented, moved his men to Chinandega, where he left the wounded, secured horses and ox-carts, and marched to León, accompanied by Byron Cole, who had just arrived from Honduras.

In León, Walker, Castellón and Muñoz held talks at the Director's house. At Castellón's request, they avoided any allusion to the past. The talks were civil, and of course without result. Walker broached to Castellón his real reason for going to León. He desired to get an efficient native force of two hundred men, commanded by a man in whom he had confidence, in order to make another effort against the enemy in the Meridional Department. Muñoz, on the other hand, proposed to divide the Americans by tens, distributing them among the several bodies of the native troops, and then marching from several directions into Granada. Neither rival yielded an inch. Even though Walker sought the aid of Jerez, who was angry at being superseded in the command of the army by Muñoz, the Director could not openly take his side against the general, so he made only vague promises.

Walker then returned to Chinandega, determined to carry on his plan with or without Castellón's overt support. As a first step, he asked Byron Cole to secure certain modifications in the contract by which the Americans had entered the service of the Provisional Government. He easily obtained what he sought. The colonization grant was given up, and Walker was authorized to enlist three hundred men for the military service of the Republic. The State promised them one hundred dollars a month and five hundred acres of land at the close of the campaign. Castellón also gave Walker authority to settle all differences and outstanding accounts between the Government and the Transit Company.

Meanwhile, cholera swept through Managua, destroying Corral's army, and thus eliminating the threat to León from that sector. On the other hand, exiled Honduran General Santos Guardiola, the dreaded "Butcher of Central America", had arrived in Granada and had then left with a small armed force that moved towards Condega, due north from León. After gathering additional recruits in the villages of Matagalpa and Segovia, he would be in a position to strike against León or against Castellón's ally, Honduran president Cabañas, in Comayagua. To meet that threat, Muñoz marched north with six hundred men, the best organized and best equipped in the Provisional service.

Walker meanwhile purchased all the rifles he could find in León and Chinandega, and continued to replenish his stores of ammunition, almost exhausted by the Rivas expedition. He then waited, having found the native officer he needed to carry out his plan: the sub-prefect of Chinandega, José María, Chelón, Valle. In The War, Walker maintained it was necessary to wait on events and choose the most opportune moment for carrying out the designs he had in view.

The event that made it possible for Walker to carry out his designs was the murder of

Muñoz, on August 18, 1855. Muñoz, that day, had defeated Guardiola in battle at El Sauce, but he was then killed by an assassin. José María Herrera, a young Honduran artilleryman who had served at Granada with Valle under Jerez and had enrolled in the democratic division that fought at El Sauce, was the instrument entrusted for carrying out the assassination of the general. Chelón Valle had an intense dislike for Muñoz, and just as intensely wished to wipe out “the stain of Ramírez’s treason” from the people of Nicaragua. As soon as he met him, Walker saw that “Valle had great influence over the soldiers about León and Chinandega”; Valle was, however, “one of those wavering men easily influenced by persons around them, and it became necessary to fix his determination by leading him to take some active steps in the enterprise.”

These “active steps” included the murder of Muñoz by his soldier-friend Herrera, under the skillful direction of Walker, and can be read between the lines in *The War in Nicaragua*, especially in the eulogy of Herrera by Walker. Except for the murder of Muñoz, Herrera played an insignificant role in the war and deserted from Walker’s army; Walker doesn’t mention the murder, but he covered up the desertion because he had to thank Herrera, disguised in posthumous fame:

“When the Rifles reached Nagarote [in June, 1856] they, with the Rangers and the new infantry battalion, took up the line of march for Masaya. At Managua they found the commandant of the post, José Herrera, firm in his faith to the Americans, and he remained true until death, in spite of a brother’s efforts to seduce him from the path of military duty, being executed by the allies, under the sentence of a court-martial some time afterward, for his adhesion to the Americans.”

In fact, when José Herrera deserted from Walker’s army, surrendered to the Central American Allies, and was shot, his brother Miguel (who was an Allied officer) confided to the Guatemalan commander-in-chief that, while awaiting execution, José had told him that he should not strive to save his life, because he must die in order to carry into the grave a crime he had committed: the murder of Muñoz. According to Walker in *The War*, had Muñoz been able to take the Americans unawares, he would, in all probability, have disarmed them and sent them out of the country. Upon receipt of the news from El Sauce at León, Supreme Director Castellón wrote to Walker, assuring him that with Muñoz out of the way, all would be well.

On August 23, 1855, Walker sailed from Realejo aboard the *Vesta*, with the Falange and Valle’s native auxiliaries recruited in Chinandega, to occupy the Meridional Department, and henceforth, all Nicaragua.