

21. Here Was Granada

Henningsen burned Granada from the suburbs towards the Plaza. He assigned a sector to each company of soldiers: Captains Dolan, McChesney, Ewbanks, Johnson, and O'Regan, took their men to the last limits of the city and set on fire the thatched cottages, adobe houses, and churches on both sides of the streets as they advanced towards the center. Fearing an Allied attack on November 23d, Henningsen built two lines of barricades within the burning perimeter.

In the process of burning, the filibusters plundered, and breaking into large stores of wines and brandies, they were soon all drunk. Walker simply called the ensuing scenes, "a wild Bacchanalian revel." Nicaraguan eyewitnesses described the details:

"The wildest orgies conceived in a drunken delirium, took place along the streets of the burned city. Some natives who tried to save a few belongings from their burning homes, were cruelly murdered in the streets; they died among merciless shouts of: 'Damn you! we have come here for money, and we'll have it!' People trembled in terror as they fled from the ruins of their dwellings; the cries of maidens raped inside bedrooms, were answered with obscene laughter by the drunks outside; the plaza, filled with women and children begging God's protection; others, cursing the plunderers; still others, in silent stupor of desperation. A strange procession then came out the main door of La Parroquia church, while its roof caught in flames: the image of our Saviour, carried on their shoulders by four drunken disciples of the 'Great Apostle,' with a disorderly mob behind it; some wearing cassocks, others attired in rich liturgical garments, dancing, jumping and turning in fantastic shapes. The outrageous procession marched with burlesque solemnity to the tavern known as the 'Walker House,' and there, amidst the shouts and screams of jeering laughter, they celebrated what, in appalling mockery, they styled 'Our Lord's Last Supper'."

The last natives fled from Granada that day, as the news spread to the world: "Granada no longer exists! Walker burned it and reduced it to ashes on the 22d when he was forced to abandon it. The poor Nicaraguan families, terrorized, destitute, and homeless, wander almost naked about the countryside, seeking shelter and protection."

Don Dámaso Sousa and don Chico Bravo went to Masaya. Don Chico was accidentally killed on the road, but Sousa gave Belloso a detailed report of the situation and the Allied commander decided to attack Henningsen immediately. On the 24th, at dawn, the Allied armies marched out of Masaya and Diriomo, towards Granada.

On Monday, November 24th, Henningsen drew in his lines protecting the Plaza as he burned the surrounding blocks, and detailed men to re-fire those houses in the distance which were only partially consumed. On inspecting his barricades, he found the ones at the Guadalupe church, on the road to the Lake, very inefficient, and the soldiers, from Captains Hesse and Green on down, all drunk.

Both steamers waited at the wharf, not yet fully loaded. Two big guns taken from the plaza were still on the beach. But all the church plate which Kissane had stolen from the seven Granada churches was already safely stored aboard the steamer *Virgin*, and Walker's Honorable Confiscador General merrily officiated at another spectacle on the Plaza that day. As told by Infantry Captain Horace Bell, who was then at *Virgin Bay*, with Walker:

"About 9 o'clock in the morning a procession was formed, headed by the Minister aforesaid [Kissane] and followed by about fifty officers dressed in the priestly vestments taken from the churches. A coffin was elaborately ornamented and labeled 'Granada,' and the procession moved with the image of the Savior carried at the head, followed by the coffin and the bogus priests. They marched around the grand plaza in impious procession, finally deposited the coffin in a grave prepared for it in the centre of the plaza, and erected over it an immense headboard, bearing the same inscription left on the ruins of Carthage by the Roman destroyer: 'Aquí fue Granada!' When the unholy procession filed away from the grave of Granada, they were met with a volley of musketry. Martínez was upon them!"

Martínez and Paredes' Allied forces suddenly appeared about half-past two p.m., simultaneously in two points: above the Jalteva Church and back of the San Francisco Convent. Henningsen's Rifles hurriedly checked them in both fronts, but immediately afterwards a third Allied column attacked and captured the barricades at Guadalupe, and swiftly cut off Henningsen's access to the steamers.

Martínez had advanced outside the northern edge of the city toward the lake; Paredes, along the southern edge; both armies then converged parallel to the lakeshore and occupied Granada's eastern suburb, from Esquipulas to the wharf. The steamers instantly pulled away a mile and a half from the beach, beyond the range of Allied guns, leaving the filibuster garrison at the foot of the pier completely isolated.

On Tuesday, the 25th, Henningsen erected additional defenses on the east side of the Plaza and down the street to the Esquipulas church, while the Allies occupied San Francisco after fierce house-to-house fighting. At 11 a.m., the *Virgin* left for *Virgin Bay* with the passengers and freight it had loaded before the Allied attack. At sunrise next morning, it was back in front of Granada, with Walker on board.

On Wednesday, the 26th, from the steamer, Walker saw the red-star flag flying on the parochial church, and the smoke of the burning houses constantly rising in new directions. He got in touch with the defenders at the pier. They were in good spirits, confident of holding the position. Thus reassured, at 2 p.m. Walker sailed back to Virgin Bay.

Throughout the day, pressed on by the Allies, Henningsen pulled in his defenses. He evacuated and burned all the houses on the plaza except the guardhouse, the Walker House tavern, La Parroquia church, and El Nicaraguense's printing office. He then began to move towards the lake: after three attacks, he captured the ruins of the Church of Esquipulas. But when he stormed the Guadalupe church, the Allies held on, inflicting heavy losses.

Paredes carried and occupied the fort at the pier that night. He launched a successful raid under the cover of darkness, aided by information gained from two deserters. Six alternating cannon shots from the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan camps served as signals to coordinate the raid. Upon the sixth shot, two hundred Guatemalan soldiers opened fire in front while an iron launch filled with men assaulted from the rear. After a short, sharp fight, the defense crumbled: over half of the twenty-seven man garrison were killed; a few survivors leapt into the water, and the others surrendered.

On Thursday, the 27th, before daybreak, Henningsen evacuated the sick and wounded to a house near Esquipulas and burned the remaining buildings on the plaza. He placed two hundred pounds of powder in the northern church tower and set fire to the nave and then to the houses on both sides of the street as he moved on towards the lake. Within minutes, the Allies entered the Plaza and occupied the barricades between the burning guardhouse and the church; the tower blew up and collapsed on them.

Shortly after noon, Henningsen stormed Guadalupe again. The Allies abandoned it without a fight. Thinking that Henningsen ignored the fall of the fort at the pier, they left his way open to the lake; they expected to catch him in the beach between two fires and to annihilate him as he rushed to board the steamers. The strategy failed: one of the survivors from the wharf, hiding in the bush, reached Henningsen's camp and reported to him the loss of the fort.

Henningsen stopped at Guadalupe, but ordered Major Henry to advance and occupy the two last huts on the road, in the low ground between the church and the lake. In the afternoon and evening, the Allies attacked Henry's post and were repelled several times, one of the charges led by a Nicaraguan priest who was shot down. On his body and some twenty more Allied dead in the plantain patch, the filibusters heaped the earth which formed the first barricade of the entrenched camp which they called "Fort Henry."

Henningsen recorded the macabre scene in his report to Walker:

“Meanwhile, after entering and closing up in the Guadalupe Church, we found twenty unburied bodies of the Sappers and Green’s Company, one charred and with the hands tied, supposed to be Capt. Hesse, ten or twelve unburied bodies of the enemy, and some thirty graves of their men, covered only a few inches with earth, and all killed in the preceding day’s attack. Several of our own sick and wounded died. Our trenching tools, consisting of four picks and twelve spades, were occupied in burying the latter and in entrenching at Fort Henry, so that some sixty bodies, putrefying about us, occasioned a most offensive and dangerous stench. We had several days’ rations of flour and plenty of coffee, which I immediately saw the necessity of eking out by slaughtering our mules and horses. On this day (Saturday) we distributed our first rations of horse-meat.”

On Friday, the 28th, about 3 o’clock p.m., the Allies sent a flag of truce with a letter signed by Paredes, Belloso, Martínez, and Zavala. They told Henningsen that Walker had been routed at Rivas and Virgin Bay and reminded him that the Allied troops covering the beach sealed him off from the steamer. They asked his surrender, offering him and his men full guarantees for their lives as prisoners of war; that they would be well treated and set free, with passports to return home. A crowd of filibuster deserters in the Allied camp accompanied the bearer, a deserter named Price. Holding them off at a distance by threatening to fire if they advanced any further, Henningsen penned the following answer, amidst the shouting of the hostile crowd outside:

“To Zavala, Belloso, and the other rebels and pirate leaders whose names I cannot waste time to decipher:

“Sirs—I have no parley to hold with men who I know lie. I regret for the good of the cause to be obliged to offer you, that if you lay down your arms in two hours your lives will be spared; if not within six months, I will, in the name of the Government I represent, hang you all as high as Haman. Price, as a traitor, I intend to detain and shoot, but I return one of your prisoners, captured yesterday.

“C. F. Henningsen.

“Acting in the name of the Commander-in-Chief and President of the Republic of Nicaragua.”

As reported by Henningsen to his chief, he read aloud his answer by the sound of the bugle to his men, and “wasted two rounds of valuable ammunition to emphasize my reply, backed by three times three cheers for Gen. William Walker, which the soldiers translated into Uncle Billy.” The Allies attacked twice in the afternoon and evening, but on both occasions were driven back with loss. The steamer San Carlos then left Granada for Virgin Bay, and at 1 a.m. on the 29th, apprized Walker of Henningsen’s advance

towards the coast.

Walker instantly boarded the *Virgin*, and at 7 a.m. was back in Granada, watching the operations from the steamer. He could see distinctly Henningsen's camp some three or four hundred yards from the beach. He watched as the Allies attacked again on the 30th, in the rear and in full force, but only to be repulsed, "with no doubt severe loss, as our troops came to the barricade and waved their flag in token of the enemy's defeat."

On Dec. 1st, at 1 p.m., Walker was back in Virgin Bay, checking barricades and bracing for an Allied attack. He had 150 able men to defend the place; the other half of the garrison were in hospital with wounds and fever; provisions were scarce; but Cañas and Jerez remained entrenched in Rivas.

The Ometepe Indians attacked Moyogalpa that night. Over one hundred natives, led by the parish priest, Fr. Francisco Tijerino ("more soldier than clergyman") and armed with a boatload of weapons sent by Cañas from Rivas, raided the village in the darkness. Women and children fled in all directions; the hospital patients overfilled the church. When daylight arrived, the filibuster garrison counterattacked, killing about thirty Islanders and driving the balance off, with the loss of only two Americans killed.

On the morning of Dec. 2d, Walker was aboard the *Virgin*, on his way to Granada, when he met a launch full of men, women, and children, drifting in the lake. After towing them back to Moyogalpa, and ascertaining the defeat of the natives, Walker arrived in front of Granada at sundown. He remained off the coast next day, watching Henningsen complete the lines of his entrenched Fort Henry camp in the two huts, close to a creek, midway between Guadalupe and the lake.

An epidemic had broken out in the church: thirty cases of cholera, of whom twenty died. Henningsen had removed his heavy guns and his sick and wounded to where they could get good air and water. But the cholera had spread to the Allied camp, killing Gen. Paredes that day. Guatemalan corpses, thrown down the creek, increased the pestilence. The atmosphere was fearfully contaminated; the stench of dead bodies reached Walker's steamboat. Walker left Granada on Dec. 3d at 8 p.m. Stopping for a couple of hours to check the situation at Moyogalpa, he landed at Virgin Bay at 6 a.m. on the 4th. The *Orizaba* had arrived at San Juan del Sur, and the passengers from California had crossed the Transit road the day before.

Upon arrival in New York, one of the passengers described Walker's soldiers at Virgin Bay as "the most wretched, emaciated, sickly looking body of men I have ever seen assembled." As for their chief, a filibuster Army surgeon remarked that "Walker appears to be in good spirits, or rather, you cannot tell anything about him, for he is always as cold as ice, not feeling the loss of his dearest friends."

Walker's spirits brightened just then on account of seventy recruits brought by the Orizaba from San Francisco, thirty by the Texas from New York, and 250 by the Tennessee from New Orleans: 350 healthy soldiers, besides large quantities of weapons, ammunition, and provisions. On Dec. 4th and 5th he moved his headquarters to San Jorge: most of his men walked the distance; the Virgin brought the stores and the sick and wounded from Virgin Bay and Moyogalpa.

On Dec. 7th, at 6 a.m., the San Carlos arrived at San Jorge with the recruits from New Orleans; at 6 p.m., the Virgin left San Jorge with Gen. Sanders and troops, bound for Granada. Stopping for wood at Ometepe, the Virgin arrived in front of Henningsen's camp at 10 p.m. on Dec. 8th.



Church of Guadalupe
Harper's Weekly, May 16, 1857

Henningsen had dug a deep trench connecting Guadalupe with Fort Henry, and both sides had thrown up innumerable barricades and breastworks. In daily skirmishing, inching their way towards the shore, the filibusters had thrown up a ditch and breastwork, supported by a small redoubt forty yards from the Lake, within two hundred yards south of the wharf. On Dec. 8th, Zavala sent another flag of truce, inviting Henningsen to parley. Henningsen's answer: "that I would hold no parley except at the cannon's mouth."

Early in the morning on Dec. 9th, Sanders appraised the situation from the steamer; he was unable to communicate with the lake shore, and at 10 a.m. departed to report to Walker at San Jorge. At 8 o'clock a.m. on Dec. 11th, the Virgin was back in Granada, with Walker and troops on board. Henningsen was then touching the shore, with two lines of Allied barricades hemming him in. That

day he slaughtered and distributed his own horse as well as one of the last dogs in the camp. That only left the mule of Major Henry, the horse of Major Caycee, and Walker's horse.

During the day, Walker observed from the steamer the Allied defenses and strength, while keeping his men carefully concealed in the lower part of the vessel. In the evening, the Virgin, quietly and with all her lights covered, moved about three miles up the lake, to the point where Walker had landed when he captured Granada a year earlier. Between

nine and ten o'clock p.m., 170 men—elite Rangers and fresh troops from New Orleans—under Lieut. Col. John P. Waters, went ashore under fire from an Allied picket, and before midnight they were marching toward Granada.

They met and took an Allied barricade half a mile from the landing place, killing twenty and wounding forty Nicaraguans. They killed a few more in light skirmishes before they reached the “Coal Pits,” three-fourths of a mile from the wharf. There they met Martínez with 500 men, including 200 Hondurans under Gen. Florencio Xatruch, who had arrived in Granada a few hours earlier.

The filibusters routed them: the Allied soldiers looked quite formidable in the moonlight, but the Americans, dressed in black and firing rifles and revolvers, overmatched the Central Americans dressed in white cotton and armed with flintlock muskets; the latter lit up each time they fired, and the former didn't miss a shot.

Pushing on, Waters approached Martínez's headquarters at Las Pilitas, in the northeastern corner of the city. Finding the barricades more formidable than either of the two already passed, he flanked them on the right. But Beloso had withdrawn his Salvadoran forces and was retreating toward Masaya. Martínez had been almost blinded by poison ivy that had brushed his face at the Coal Pits. Unable to control his men overcome with terror, he retreated to Jalteva, leaving the way open for Waters to reach Henningsen and for the latter to reach the steamer. As a last resort, Martínez ordered his men to set the fort and the landing on fire, hoping to hinder the evacuation of the filibusters' heavy artillery.

Shortly after 5 a.m. on December 12th, Waters arrived at Forts Henningsen (Guadalupe) and Henry; the Virgin sent a boat to the shore, and the embarkation commenced. At 5 a.m. on the 13th, all the ordnance, stores, artillery, ammunition, soldiers and civilians had been embarked and the Virgin sailed away from the ruins of Granada. On leaving, Henningsen stuck up on a lance to which he appended a placard with the words “Aquí fue Granada”—“Here was Granada.”

In his report to Walker, Henningsen wrote: “Your orders were to destroy Granada, and to evacuate the place with all the ordnance, stores, artillery, sick soldiers, and American and native families. Your order has been obeyed—Granada has ceased to exist.” The ruthless operations decreed by the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny on the capital of Nicaragua had come to an end, but they left indelible impressions which Kissane recorded, many years later, in a letter to a friend:

“My experience in the siege of Granada for ever keeps rising in my mind, and that fearful stench from our dead put under a few inches of clay within a few steps of our camp, for situated as we were we could do no better. The stench from it in that damp, hot

atmosphere was overpowering. I can't think now how we stood it for those 22 days. It was Hell from end to end, that is all there was to it."

In his report, Waters mentioned 14 killed and 30 wounded out of 170 men in his command. Of the 419 under Henningsen when the Allies attacked Granada on November 24th, 120 died of cholera and typhus, 110 were killed or wounded, nearly 40 deserted, and 2 were made prisoners.

Zavala placed American casualties at "370 dead, from the beginning of the siege; caused both by our bullets and by illness. They evacuated sick and wounded in considerable numbers. I hold a multitude of prisoners, some of them injured, others healthy, and I have ordered that they be treated with the benevolence that their situation merits."

Henningsen reported that the Allied forces numbered about 2,800 men, including reinforcements, but that their strength never surpassed the 1,200 to 1,500 men they had at the start of the attack and on the day of evacuation. He estimated Allied casualties at 200 killed and 600 wounded, besides large losses from cholera, pestilence, and desertion.

Allied Generals Belloso, Zavala, and Martínez, each sent a separate dispatch to the Minister of War on Dec. 13-15, but nobody tallied Allied casualties. Up to December 6, Martínez had counted forty-two killed and sixty-five wounded in the forces under his command; adding other Allied casualties, and subsequent losses, Henningsen's estimate seems about right.

On top of all the losses, the Allied armies suffered a grievous lack of unity which Central American historians have pointed out as the chief cause of their debacle in Granada. Belloso accused Zavala and Martínez of insubordination, and abandoned the fight, in chagrin: on Dec. 12th he withdrew his Salvadoran troops to Masaya; on the 13th he recalled Jerez from Rivas and told Cañas to go back to Costa Rica.

Cañas and Jerez evacuated Rivas early in the morning on the 16th, and together joined Belloso at Masaya. Zavala went to Diriomo. Martínez remained in the ruins of Granada. Walker, Henningsen, and Waters, touching at Moyogalpa, landed at San Jorge at 5 p.m. on the 13th. On learning of Cañas' withdrawal, on the 16th, Walker ordered the army to march upon Rivas. The same day all the companies, with flags flying, were marching out of San Jorge, except for the Second Infantry under Col. Jacques, left to guard the lake port.

22. Spencer

William Robert Clifford Webster was a man of many names who told a different story to each acquaintance. To some he was W. Clifford; to others, W. R. C. Webster; or Simpson; or Waters; or Brown; or any number of aliases. To one, he was a Russian merchant; to another, a businessman in Paris; the owner of salt works in Chester, England; or of copper mines in Mentz; but everywhere he went, under any name, he was also known as a scamp, a chevalier d'industrie, a fraudulent debtor, a swindler and a forger.

In May, 1856, he travelled in the Minnie Schiffer to Nicaragua as a filibuster. In Granada, putting airs of a diplomatist, he offered to supply Walker with immigrants, but the latter didn't trust him and rejected his offer. Webster left Granada in a great hurry, at the point of being arrested for some swindle he practiced on Minister Wheeler. Finally, during his short residence in San Juan del Norte, he left a very unfavorable impression behind him. In August he was in New York, where he put in operation a plan developed in conjunction with a sailor who worked for the Transit Company in Nicaragua: Sylvanus M. Spencer, the mate on the San Juan river's Machuca steamboat.

Spencer was a Yankee sailor, active and shrewd, forty years old, who spoke like a Bostonian, and used very emphatic language, well spiced with good strong adjectives. In 1855 he was first mate on the American clipper ship Sea Witch, on its way from New York to Hong Kong to take a cargo of coolies for Panama. On June 5, the captain of the ship was murdered in the high sea and Spencer was indicted as the murderer. He was tried at the U.S. District Court in New York, but because of inconclusive evidence he was acquitted by the jury on December 22, 1855. He then went to Nicaragua, where he worked as longshoreman in San Juan del Norte before becoming the mate on the Machuca.

Spencer claimed that he owned \$40,000 worth of Transit Company stock, inherited from an uncle, and that Walker had robbed him of all his property when he annulled the charter and confiscated the steamers. His knowledge of the river allowed him to devise a daring plan to get it back and get revenge. He went to New York, proposed it to Vanderbilt, and the latter accepted it. The Commodore promised him that he would pay all expenses, and that their stock would be alright when Walker was exterminated.

On October 2d, 1856, at the Office of the Accessory Transit Company in New York, President Cornelius Vanderbilt and Secretary Isaac C. Lea issued a notarized Power of

Attorney to Capt. S. M. Spencer, "to take possession of all the steamers and other property belonging to this Company on lake Nicaragua, the river San Juan and other rivers tributary thereto, and to retain the same in safe keeping until further instructed by this Company."

Spencer's plan needed the help of Costa Rica, so Vanderbilt put him in contact with Costa Rican envoy Don Luis Molina, in Washington. By then, Webster had joined Spencer and concocted a great plan of his own to cash in on the sailor's undertaking. With his usual skill, Webster secured for himself, from Molina, a very valuable letter of introduction to President Mora.

Webster and Spencer travelled together on a Vanderbilt steamer from New York to Aspinwall, and on a chartered small boat from Panama to Puntarenas. Upon arrival at San José, on November 23, 1856, they requested an interview with President Mora. Mr. Young Anderson, an Englishman, resident in Costa Rica, served as interpreter at the meetings. Anderson then became Webster's secretary and afterwards revealed the details of the negotiations:

"Webster . . . said he was possessed of large pecuniary means in England and America, and mines in Germany; boasted of his acquaintance with Lord Clarendon; hinted at his being a confidential agent, (he had previously asserted to Mr. Perry, British consul at Panama, that he was a secret agent of the British government,) and approached President Mora with a mysterious proposition, in which he said the vital interests, the very existence of Costa Rica were involved. . . He offered to the President a loan of \$800,000 (for a million of Costa Rican bonds at 7 per cent per annum) to drive Walker from Nicaragua. He said he (not Spencer, who, however, had brought him from New York at his own expense, to negotiate) had 'concocted' the plan to capture the steamers, for which he stipulated a reward of \$125,000."

President Mora immediately granted Webster a concession for 75 years of the Nicaragua Transit route. Webster got "all he wanted, on his own terms," except for "one little thing," which President Mora exacted as a *sine qua non* at the time of signing the contract. At his peremptory request, Webster counter assigned to a newly formed Costa Rican "Land Transportation Company" the exclusive privilege of land transit from Lake Nicaragua to the Pacific. The Costa Rican shareholders were thereby "entitled to receive for ten years heavy and highly profitable tolls from the Transit Company to be formed by Webster," and President Mora generously presented Anderson with a share of the assignment.

But the loan to Costa Rica was a mirage, for Webster never had any money of his own. In San José he lived on funds borrowed from various persons, on grandiloquent

assurances and promises. He got \$8,000 from a Costa Rican capitalist through a Vanderbilt letter of credit for \$100,000, which turned out to be a forgery. The Commodore not only refused to pay the bill, but denied ever having met Webster; he maintained that "he did not know him, and did not wish to know any such G—d d—d rascal."

Vanderbilt's agent, Spencer, had brought no money for Costa Rica, either. However, he had brought his skill for capturing the river and lake steamers, which would win the war. President Mora instantly approved Spencer's plan and set it in motion. When he signed at San José the one million dollar loan agreement with Webster, on December 4, 1856, the Vanguard Column to the San Juan River had already left the capital.

Walker's river defenses consisted of sixty-four soldiers in two posts: twenty-four men under Capt. Charles W. Kruger at Fort San Carlos, on the lake, and forty men under Capt. Frank A. Thompson at Hipp's Point, at the Sarapiquí-San Juan river junction.

The Costa Rican Vanguard column consisted of 250 men under Lieut. Col. Don Pedro Barillier and Sergeant Major Don Máximo Blanco. On December 3, at 8 a.m., they marched from San José toward Sarapiquí; but on sealed instructions from President Mora, which Blanco opened along the way, they proceeded to the San Carlos river instead.

Spencer and an interpreter, Don Joaquín Fernández, joined the expedition on December 9 at the head of navigation on the San Carlos. Capt. George F. Cauty (son of Col. Thomas Henry Horatio Cauty, an Englishman resident in Costa Rica) was in charge of building rafts and boats. George was qualified for the job: in 1853, he had built the steamer Flor de los Andes for the Río Grande in the Gulf of Nicoya.

On December 14, Spencer, Fernández, and seven men went on the first boat down river, as lookouts at the San Carlos-San Juan river junction. The others followed later in rafts and on foot, and arrived at the junction on the 20th, except for a few that lagged behind. They advanced down the San Juan river on the 21st, stopping for the night short of Hipp's Point. Next morning, they landed one mile above the filibuster post, marched through the jungle, and attacked from the rear, divided in four columns. They caught the filibusters at lunch, entirely by surprise.

Blanco's men killed nine filibusters on the spot, and captured two wounded, one of them Capt. Thompson. Thirty jumped into the river; six of them eventually reached Greytown; the remainder drowned or were shot on attempting to flee. Costa Rican losses: none killed, two wounded.

Leaving Barillier with thirty men at Hipp's Point, Blanco, Spencer, and the rest sailed for San Juan del Norte at sundown. Their five rafts slid quietly into the bay at 2 o'clock

in the morning on the 23d. Spencer immediately took the two American prisoners to a British warship lying in the harbor and had their wounds attended to; he presented to the captain his power from Vanderbilt, and delivered dispatches from President Mora to the Commodore commanding the British squadron in port.

At dawn, directed by Spencer, the Costa Rican soldiers surprised and took possession of the four Transit Company riverboats in the harbor: the Wheeler, Morgan, Machuca and Bulwer. On the 26th, the Bulwer ascended the San Carlos river to ferry reinforcements expected from Costa Rica, while Spencer took Blanco's troops, on the Morgan, to Castillo. As Walker had no garrison there, the Costa Ricans captured the post and the Scott, at anchor, without meeting any resistance.

The Ogden and Virgin were at Change Bend, a few miles upriver. Spencer made the Company agent, Mr. Hutchinson, under pain of death in case of refusal, write an order to Captain Charles Mahoney, of the Ogden, to bring his boat to Castillo. A Nicaraguan courier carried the order on foot.

When the Ogden docked at Castillo, the Costa Rican soldiers, hiding in a warehouse, threw the doors open and marched on board. Spencer compelled Mahoney and crew to take the steamer back to Change Bend. Captain Thomas Bunker, of the Virgin, on seeing the Ogden approach with Mahoney and his crew, didn't have the least suspicion of anything wrong until Spencer and the Costa Ricans stepped on board his boat and seized it, too.

On the 28th, Spencer returned to Castillo. On the 29th, and again on the 30th, he went on the Scott to the San Carlos river, looking for the Bulwer with the reinforcements, without finding them. Spencer could wait no longer and decided to capture Fort San Carlos with the force at his disposal. His goal was to gain possession of the larger and faster lake steamer, the San Carlos, due in a couple of days from Virgin Bay with the California passengers. Its possession would give the Costa Ricans mastery of the Lake and cut off Walker from the river. Deprived of the San Carlos, the filibusters were doomed in Rivas. In order to surprise and hold the ship, Spencer thought it prudent first to secure the fort.

At sundown on the 30th, he took Blanco's 200 soldiers on the Virgin towards the lake. About 10 p.m., forty men landed just out of sight from the fortress. The steamer went on to moor at the regular spot, exchanging the signals, as usual when approaching in the night, that everything was alright. Captain Kruger, commander at the fort, came on board, and Spencer convinced him to surrender the fortress, for otherwise he and his men would certainly be put to death by the Costa Ricans.

Blanco's soldiers occupied the fort. Spencer held Kruger and his men prisoners on

board the Virgin for one day; he then sent them on a bongo to Castillo as the long-awaited reinforcements began to pour in from Costa Rica.

General José Joaquín Mora had marched from San José at the head of the main Expeditionary Army on December 15. He arrived at the San Carlos river landing on the 22d with 600 soldiers, most of them raw recruits from Alajuela. Altogether, about 3,000 Costa Ricans were then marching on the river. Mora reached Castillo on December 31st. He took 400 men to Fort San Carlos the same evening; on the Virgin he found 147 boxes of arms recently arrived from New York for Walker, which he immediately seized and put to good use.

Mora mounted four new twelve-inch guns at the fort, distributed over 400 Minié rifles to his soldiers, and placed three smaller guns with seventy artillerymen and riflemen on the Virgin. By the New Year, as new waves of filibusters headed for Nicaragua on Transit Company ocean steamers, Spencer had given Costa Rica firm possession of the river, and was ready to receive them.

On January 2d, the Sierra Nevada landed at San Juan del Sur about 400 passengers from San Francisco, of whom 75 or 80 were Walker recruits; also a large supply of provisions, which included 500 sacks of flour for his army. The recruits went to Rivas, while the passengers boarded the San Carlos at Virgin Bay together with a number of sick and wounded filibuster army officers going to the United States on leave; with them travelled the last five Cuban body guards who were then leaving Walker.

Spencer captured the steamer San Carlos with the same consummate dexterity which characterized all his actions. As it approached the river, about 10 o'clock a.m., on the 3d, Walker's flag waved on the fort. They exchanged the usual signals; a couple of filibusters attached to the post went on shore, and the steamer started down the river San Juan.

One mile downstream, Spencer with one hundred Costa Rican soldiers waited in the Ogden, lying close to the bank of the river, partly concealed by the bushes. He sent a message ostensibly to inform the captain of the San Carlos that he was detained by engine trouble, but really to ascertain whether he was likely to meet with formidable resistance. Finding that, with the exception of 30 sick and wounded filibusters, there were only Californians anxious to reach their destination on board, he ran his steamer alongside, and, to the astonishment of the passengers, informed them that he, together with fifty Costa Ricans, would be their escort to Greytown.

The Ogden took the passengers to Castillo, where they boarded the Scott next morning. Spencer took them downriver, and had scarcely landed his passengers at Greytown when he saw the Texas arriving from New Orleans with 250 filibusters. Spencer's boat immediately got up steam and vanished slowly into the river at the head

of the bay, leaving the newcomers stranded, without a way of reaching Walker.

On January 6th, Spencer left the Scott at Hipps' Point and went up the Sarapiquí river in a canoe, to collect his reward from Webster and President Mora at San José. But Webster was no longer there. Upon receipt of the news of the capture of the river steamers, he had given President Mora and his Cabinet an elegant banquet (all expenses paid with money "borrowed" from Costa Ricans). At the happy gathering, he had made a speech, translated to the company by Anderson, assuring the President that nothing would be lacking in the way of money and supplies to enable him to carry on the war successfully against Walker. He then left for the States, to sell his Costa Rican Transit grant to the highest bidder.

Thanks to the steamers captured by Spencer, General José Joaquín Mora at his Fort San Carlos headquarters suddenly became kingpin in the war against Walker, since Costa Rica controlled everything from Hipps' Point to Granada.

On January 16, Mora went to Granada on the San Carlos. The Allied camp was in total disarray: Belloso had retreated to León, leaving General Indalecio Cordero with 125 Salvadoran soldiers in Masaya; Cañas and Jerez were in Jinotepe, hoping to raise an army of 1,000 men; Zavala with 400 Guatemalans stayed in Niquinohomo; Xatruch with 100 Hondurans, in Diriá; Martínez and Fernando Chamorro with 300 Nicaraguans, in the ruins of Granada.

Chamorro, Martínez, Cañas, and Zavala conferred with Mora on board the steamer and arranged a plan of operations for a combined assault on San Jorge and Virgin Bay. They offered Mora the post of Commander-in-Chief, but he declined, and Xatruch assumed it at Nandaime on January 23d, when the Allied army was on the move. Besides setting in motion the final onslaught against Walker, Mora reinforced Cañas with 150 riflemen and would reinforce him again later.

He also sent fifty muskets to the Nicaraguan patriots in Chontales, who had organized to supply his army as soon as they heard that Costa Rica had captured Fort San Carlos. Likewise the patriots in Ometepe, headed by the priest, received the Costa Rican liberators with open arms when they arrived aboard the steamers Virgin and San Carlos. As perceived by Cañas and communicated to Mora: "The government, Jerez, and all influential Nicaraguans are so grateful to Costa Rica, that they will accept anything I may propose in order to please Costa Rica and to tighten bonds with her."

Much fighting yet lay ahead, but everybody knew that, with the capture of the steamers, Costa Rica had won the war.

23. Locked

On December 23, 1856, numerous carts, loaded with boxes and barrels, said to be filled with provisions for Walker, were discharged in a steady stream on the Tennessee, at the foot of Beach street in New York. Many of the boxes, sent by William L. Cazneau, were marked "Bread—To the care of General William Walker." Since the filibusters needed revolvers as well as biscuits, the Herald surmised that the "bread" was likely destined, not only for "human food," but likewise for "human destruction."

The steamer sailed on the 24th, with about 300 recruits for Walker and over \$2,000 worth of provisions on board. But on meeting a gale in the evening it wound up in Norfolk with a broken shaft. The James Adger replaced it, sailing from New York on the 30th and from Norfolk on January 1st, with forty recruits for Walker under Gen. Chatham Roberdeau Wheat, the freight, and the California passengers of the Tennessee. The remainder of the recruits had marched back to New York, dispersed, and disappeared.

Upon arrival at San Juan on January 9, Wheat's contingent joined the 250 men brought by the Texas from New Orleans a few days earlier. At the Transit Company terminal across the bay from San Juan del Norte, Captain Joseph N. Scott was then hurriedly repairing the hull of a wrecked steamboat, the Clayton, and the boiler and machinery of another wreck, the J. L. White. Putting the pieces together, he patched up a vessel which the filibusters called Rescue. On January 23d, they sailed on it up the San Juan river under Col. Lockridge and set camp at the clearing around the ranch of a poor Indian named Petako, six miles below Hipps' Point.

The steamship Texas sailed from New Orleans on January 28, with reinforcements for Walker under the command of Col. Henry T. Titus. The fully organized military contingent numbered at least 250 armed men (some sources say 264 or 420). They carried artillery besides plenty of munitions and provisions. Col. Titus was married to a rich Southern lady, was the owner of slaves, and loved notoriety. He was "a Pro-Slavery man throughout," who had been "a filibuster all his life." He had gone with López to Cuba in 1851, and had gained recognition as the leading "Border-Ruffian filibuster" in Kansas in 1856.

The Texas arrived at San Juan on February 4th. As soon as it anchored, the Rescue came alongside, took Col. Titus's command on board, and sailed up the river to reinforce Lockridge at Petako's ranch. On the 6th, the filibusters attacked the Costa Ricans at

Hipps' Point. The 420-man Costa Rican garrison, counting with heavy artillery, would have seemed adequate to hold the post, had it not been decimated by disease and desertions. In his February 9th report to General Mora, Sergeant Major Máximo Blanco vividly painted the sorry plight of the defenders:

"... It is impossible to stop desertion; all the men flee, leaving only the sick at the post. I send a squad on a scouting mission, and nobody returns: they all disappear into the jungle... these soldiers are terribly frightened, and since they are men who have never held a rifle, they know even less about duty. At the report of the enemy artillery, they fall face down on the mud. I don't know what to do to keep at least enough men to take care of the sick... The situation at this post is extremely sad; all I see is long faces, afraid of bullets. I am ashamed and pained, General, on seeing the type of men I must lead into battle. Of the officers, no more than five are good... My situation is sad indeed."

Blanco evacuated Hipps' Point during the night of the 13th, retreating with the remnants of his force along the Sarapiquí, all the way to San José. Before leaving the post, he threw his heavy cannons into the river. At sunrise next morning, the filibusters took possession of Hipps' Point and threw into the river thirteen Costa Rican dead, left unburied by Blanco.

Hearing that the Costa Ricans had but a trifling force at Castillo, Titus moved on immediately to take it. On the 15th, he took three companies, amounting to about 160 men, up the river. He landed his troops next morning a mile and a half below the rapids, and marched overland to the rear of the fortress. He divided his men into two columns, to attack from different directions.

Captain Faustino Montes de Oca's garrison at Castillo numbered about twenty-five to thirty men. Captain George F. Cauty, commander of the steamers, was in the fort, with the Machuca and Scott moored below the rapids. Cauty had taken the precaution of besmearing the boats with tar, ready to be set on fire at a moment's notice.

As soon as the Costa Ricans received reports of the filibusters' approach, on February 16, they set fire to the boats and to the buildings on the strip of land under the fort. The Machuca was a total loss, but Titus managed to save the Scott. The land assault on Castillo failed, with the Costa Ricans inflicting heavy casualties on the filibusters while suffering two dead and two wounded.

Titus laid siege, and on the 18th sent a flag of truce which led to an interview with Cauty, demanding the surrender of the fort. The Englishman asked for an armistice of twenty-four hours in order to communicate with Gen. Mora at Fort San Carlos. Titus granted it, while Montes de Oca wrote an urgent message, calling for reinforcements: his garrison was reduced to twenty men, including the sick, and they were running out of

munitions and provisions.

On the 19th, fifty Costa Rican riflemen sent by Mora from Fort San Carlos, landed above Castillo, surprised the filibusters from the rear, and routed them. The Americans retreated to the San Carlos river junction. Having lost the confidence and respect of his men, Titus left, via Panama, to join Walker in Rivas. Lockridge waited at San Juan del Norte for additional recruits from the States, specifically from New Orleans, since he could expect nothing from New York.

In New York, on January 26, the James Adger had brought the news of the capture of the steamers and the closing of the Nicaragua route by Costa Rica. On the 28th, the U.S. District Attorney ordered the arrest of the filibuster agents in town, for violation of the neutrality laws. Despite the arrests, the Tennessee sailed on the 29th with sixty recruits for Walker.

On its next trip, the Tennessee sailed from New York on February 25 and arrived at San Juan on March 7, without recruits. Following the detention of the agents, the "Nicaragua agency" had ceased shipping "emigrants." At the wharf, many persons presented themselves as passengers with tickets procured elsewhere rather from the owners of the ship, and they were refused a passage.

Morgan & Garrison then stopped running the Nicaragua line. Since Costa Rica had closed the transit in December, the Nicaragua steamers from New York had taken their California passengers to Aspinwall after landing the Walker recruits at San Juan. On its last trip, the Tennessee sailed from New York on March 23d, touched at San Juan on April 2d, and delivered its California passengers at Aspinwall on the 4th.

In New Orleans, nobody interfered with the filibusters. On March 11, the Texas left port with 145 recruits for Walker, headed by General C. C. Hornsby. They arrived at San Juan on the 18th. On the 21st, the Scott and Rescue took the recruits up the river and landed them at Machuca Rapids, twelve miles below Castillo. On the 23d and subsequent days, the steamers took the troops which had been stationed at the mouth of the Sarapiquí river (Hipp's Point) and at the mouth of the river San Carlos (called Fort Slatter by the filibusters), together with their provisions and ammunition, and landed them also at Machuca. Lockridge's entire force of 400 men, had about 300 fit for duty. Among them were oldtimers like Capt. Julius DeBrissot, Capt. L. Norvell Walker, and Lieut. Col. Charles W. Doubleday.

"Commodore" DeBrissot could not get the Scott over the Machuca rapids, while the Rescue had to be lightened of all weight to cross. The men, provisions, ammunition, and artillery went over on bungoes. On the 28th, all 300 able bodied filibusters were finally aboard the Rescue, cruising above Machuca, on their way to attack Castillo. They

landed upon the right bank of the river, about one mile below the fort.

The filibusters advanced to within fifty yards of the Costa Rican positions. They found the Costa Ricans had fortified Nelson's hill, 250 yards in the rear of the castle, with strong breastworks, ditches, several large guns, and 500 men.

Early on the morning of the 30th, Lockridge held a council of war with his officers, presided by Gen. Wheat. Lockridge told them that he had received a letter from the head of Nicaragua affairs in New Orleans, stating that he should expect no more steamers, emigrants, or provisions, from New York or New Orleans. Lockridge estimated that it would cost about 100 men to capture the Castle; but since the Scott could not cross above the Machuca rapids, nor the Rescue over the Castillo rapids, even if they took the Fort they would not be any better off than they then were. Without a steamer above Castillo, they could never reach Walker in Rivas.

The filibuster council of war unanimously decided to go to Walker via Panama. They retreated without making an attack on Castillo, abandoning all hope of opening the river. On April 2d, they were back on the Scott and the Rescue, cruising downstream toward San Juan.

About a mile above Hipps' Point an explosion burst the boiler of the Scott, carrying away all the upper deck, the larboard wheelhouse, and a portion of the bow of the boat. Many filibusters on the second deck were blown into the river, and one or two were blown on to the shore. Altogether, sixty were killed and twenty-five injured.

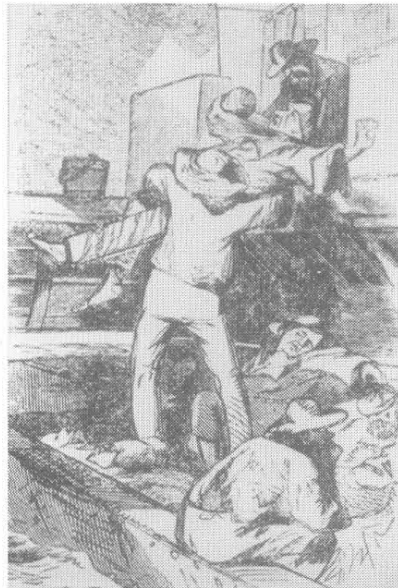
The cause of the explosion was unexplained, but several eyewitnesses believed that it was caused by some miscreant, who threw a flask of powder into the furnace. There were at least two tons of powder on board the Scott, but not a bit of it was disturbed by the explosion. The side of the boiler must have been first blown in, and the steam did the rest of the damage.

A story soon spread in the Costa Rican camp that Captain George F. Cauty, commander of the Costa Rican lake-and-river navy, had filled the wood in the steamers' woodshed with powder; that the boat with the filibusters had wooded up there; that when they used the wood it blew up the boiler. Be that as it may, the explosion disrupted Lockridge's plans to join Walker via Panama, for most of the scalded men were the very ones who had agreed to go with him. The Rescue took the survivors to San Juan, where the injured were treated by the surgeons on the English warships in the harbor.

On April 7th, the whole force under Col. Lockridge had arrived at San Juan and were disbanded. Thereupon, they entered into an agreement with the British commander, to give up their arms in exchange for their passage to the United States. On the 10th, they delivered the steamer Rescue, together with the provisions, arms and ammunition, to

Mr. Thomas Martin, the Mayor of Greytown.

On the 12th, Cauty arrived in San Juan with eighty Costa Rican soldiers on the steamboat Morgan. They immediately took possession of the Rescue which was lying anchored in the river. On the 14th the British warships Cossack and Tartar took 374 filibusters to Aspinwall, where they arrived on the 17th and remained until the 20th, not being permitted to go on shore. On that day 68 were taken on board the Illinois for New York and over 100 on board the Granada for New Orleans. The remaining 200 waited on the Tartar for a passage home.



Landing hospital patients
Harper's Weekly, March 28, 1857

24. Last Stand

On January 1st, 1857, Walker's army in Rivas was said to number about one thousand men, rank and file, healthy and in good spirits. On January 2d, the Sierra Nevada brought eighty fully equipped recruits and a large supply of provisions from San Francisco. At San Juan del Sur they were met by forty Rangers, well mounted and well armed, all dressed in blue shirts on the breast of which were the initials "M.R." (Mounted Rangers). They all appeared cheerful, and, speaking of Walker, they expressed the confident belief that he would not only be able to retain possession of Rivas, but that León would also fall into his hands.

The lake steamers were due on Virgin Bay on the 5th or 6th. As the hours and days passed by, and no steamer arrived, the excitement became intense. The anxiety to hear something became so palpable that on the 12th, a small boat, procured from the Sierra Nevada, at San Juan del Sur, took eight filibusters from Virgin Bay on a voyage of discovery across the lake. The Costa Ricans captured them at Fort San Carlos on the 15th.

In Rivas, that day, there was a wedding at Gen. Walker's quarters: Gen. E. J. Sanders was married to Miss Elizabeth Swingle. The ceremony was performed by Gen. Walker in the most impressive manner, in the Episcopal service. After which the usual dancing and feasting took place, and a casual observer never would have imagined that anything but peace reigned where there was so many happy and smiling faces.

The smiling faces faded the next morning, when it was reported that one of the steamers had been seen in the lake. Many filibusters went to the beach, with binoculars, to look at it, lying at anchor off the Island of Ometepe. Walker then realized that the steamers had fallen in the hands of the enemy, who must be in possession of the entire river, and that his communication with the Atlantic States was entirely cut off.

On the 18th, the Sierra Nevada went to Panama to look for its California-bound passengers from the East. It returned to San Juan del Sur on the 24th, bringing to Walker the details of the Costa Rican operations on the river. Walker's only vessel on the lake, a twenty-ton schooner, decayed and rotten, at Virgin Bay, was then considered and promptly discarded as a means of conveyance to regain the river and the steamers. His only hope was for Lockridge to do it from the other end.

On January 25th the Allied Army, commanded by Honduran General Florencio

Xatruch, consisted of 2,445 men at Nandaime—200 Hondurans under Xatruch, 1,300 Guatemalans under Zavala, 500 Costa Ricans and Leonese under Cañas and Jerez, and 445 Legitimists under Fernando Chamorro. On the 26th they advanced to Obraje, a village eight miles from Rivas. Walker promptly sent Col. O'Neal with the First Rifles, followed by Gen. Henningsen with the First Infantry—440 men altogether—who attacked repeatedly but unsuccessfully on the 27th and retreated back to Rivas at midnight.

Henningsen reported three Americans killed and nine wounded at Obraje, and he put enemy losses at twenty. Cañas reported one killed and seven wounded on the Allied side, against thirty American casualties. American reporters claimed that eighty Central Americans had been slain, but only five or six filibusters.

Bracing for an Allied attack on Rivas, Walker concentrated all his forces there. On the 28th, he called into town the men he had stationed at Virgin Bay to watch the movements of the lake steamers and to guard the transit road. He also burned the schooner (which he had been endeavoring to repair), fearing it would fall into enemy hands.

Instead of attacking Walker, on the 28th, at nightfall, the Allies marched into San Jorge, two and a half miles from Rivas, and immediately threw up strong barricades around the Plaza in front of the church. Henningsen attacked them with the whole filibuster force on the following morning, while Walker remained at headquarters with the so-called "citizens" and the sick. The filibusters launched successive assaults with considerable strength, but were repulsed, time and again, until they retreated back to Rivas at dawn on the 30th.

In his official report, Cañas listed six Allied killed and twenty-eight wounded, and estimated that the filibusters had suffered at least one hundred casualties. Henningsen reported seventy-nine American casualties, including fifteen killed on the field and several mortally wounded. He estimated Allied losses at above 200 killed and wounded (between 60 and 70 killed), besides large numbers of desertions. Filibuster correspondents improved on Henningsen and reported only forty-nine American casualties (sixteen killed, mostly officers, and thirty-three wounded), while placing Allied losses at a staggering 200 killed and 400 wounded.

On the evening of the 30th, Walker started with 300 men for San Juan del Sur, to meet the Orizaba, due from San Francisco. Expecting large supplies and reinforcements from California, he carried several carts and 200 spare muskets. The Orizaba arrived on February 1st, but it brought only a small lot of provisions and fifty recruits, twenty of whom were found stowed away, hoping to escape to New York. Walker finally managed

to press forty-three men into his force and on February 2d took up his line of march for Rivas.

That morning, the Allies entered Virgin Bay and the steamer Virgin docked at the wharf, but on learning of Walker's presence on the Transit road, they merely posted up notices offering free passages to deserters, to the States, and returned to San Jorge. Walker entered Virgin at sunset, and next day, February 3d, returned to Rivas.

Before daybreak on the 4th, Walker advanced with 200 men, without artillery, for he intended to take San Jorge by surprise, and penetrated into the suburbs of the village. He would have succeeded, but his plans were frustrated by the mutinous conduct of the men. He caught the Allies entirely off guard. The streets were empty, the garrison in the plaza asleep; but when they came within shot of the barricades, Walker's men refused to advance further. Neither curses nor threats had any effect upon them.

When a few finally volunteered and advanced with Walker to storm the barricades, it was too late. The garrison had been aroused and under a heavy fire of musketry and cannon, Walker was obliged to retreat, suffering the loss of at least four killed and eleven wounded, although some accounts place his losses much higher. Filibuster sources counted at least twenty Allied dead and mentioned Gen. Jerez among the wounded. Back in Rivas, Walker harangued his troops in the plaza.

But on this occasion he seemed to have no eloquence for them. Mortified and indignant at their conduct before San Jorge, he had no cordial words of approbation, and no tone of hopefulness for the future. His men were deserting as many as ten at a time. No less than 150 had deserted in the last three months. All deserters were fired upon by any scouting party that fell in with them, or, if brought in alive, their capture was reported to Walker, who ordered them to immediate execution. "Take them to the plaza and shoot them," was the order given in his slow, quiet way, without any emotion, and hardly looking up from whatever he was doing.

Walker attacked again on the 7th. He went down with Henningsen's artillery to cannonade San Jorge, fired 100 rounds from 600 yards distance, without any material effect, and returned to headquarters in Rivas. In his official report, Zavala said that Walker's 110 cannon shots killed one man, two women and a child, and wounded two officers and nine soldiers. Most of them were hit by a single ball, inside the church. On the Plaza, six horses and four oxen were killed.

Cañas sent Walker a note of thanks, saying that his cannonade had killed three bees, thereby saving his butcher the trouble of slaughtering them; and that his men had picked up about fifty of his round shot, which were found to fit their cannon exactly, and which he should have the pleasure of returning to him some time.

Walker made no further attacks on San Jorge in February. During the rest of the month, there were only skirmishes between the Rangers and small parties of the Allies. A few riflemen, too, would go out at night and alarm the camp of the Allies by firing on their pickets, and the enemy would, in the same manner, scatter small parties among the plantain patches and fire up the streets of Rivas.

On February 16th, Walker's Secretary of Hacienda and right-hand man, William Kissane Rogers, showed up in Rivas. Stranded at San Juan del Norte in December, Kissane took a British steamer to Aspinwall, crossed on the railroad, and bought a five-ton schooner in Panama. He set sail for San Juan del Sur on January 11, was blown out into the broad Pacific by a storm, and was picked up by the schooner Granada, on February 15, when heaving round in rough waters outside the San Juan harbor. Upon his arrival in Rivas, Walker issued a remarkable decree:

The President of the Republic of Nicaragua, by virtue of authority in him vested,

DECREES:

Art. 1. All duties, both of import and export, are hereby abolished.

Art. 2. The Secretary of Hacienda is hereby charged with the fulfillment and publication of this decree.

Given at Rivas this 18th day of February, 1857.

William Walker, President.

As there was no printing press in Walkerdome, Secretary of Hacienda Kissane sent the decree by way of Panama to be published in New York; and since there was no trade, the abolition of duties was senseless, to say the least. By then, Walker's situation was desperate, as filibuster desertions increased and the Allies prepared to close in for the kill.

Of the 126 filibuster deserters held in Costa Rica, in February, seventy were Mounted Rangers, "picked men and the flower of Walker's army." Twenty Rangers had deserted in one body Feb. 4th and eleven Feb. 7th, taking with them their horses, carbines, knives, and revolvers.

Walker's situation worsened on March 5th, when the Allies at San Jorge finally went on the offensive against the remnants of his "Nicaraguan Army" in Rivas.

On the night of the 4th of March, Col. Caycee went with forty-five Rangers to San Juan del Sur, as an escort to the widow of Major Dusenbury, who was on her way to the United States. At dawn on the 5th, General Fernando Chamorro left San Jorge with 500 men to ambush the filibusters on their return from San Juan. They waited at the farm of Jocote, less than a mile from the Transit road's Half-way House, on the road to Rivas. When Caycee approached, early in the morning, they forced him to retire to San Juan,

with a loss of two killed, two wounded, and three taken prisoner by Chamorro, who suffered only one wounded.

Upon learning in Rivas that an Allied column had marched out of San Jorge towards the Transit road, Walker instantly sent Gen. Sanders with 160 Rifles and Rangers to attack them. The filibusters approached the Jocote ranch, which is ten miles from Rivas, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. A pitched battle ensued on the prairie, about a league before the ranch, ending with a bayonet charge in which Chamorro routed Sanders. The American rifles had no bayonets, and the filibusters panicked and fled.

Chamorro reported that Sanders left twenty-eight dead on the field while he had three dead and nineteen wounded. Walker wrote in *The War* that Sanders lost twenty killed and eight wounded.

When news of the battle at Jocote reached San Jorge, General Xatruch sent a strong force towards Rivas in order to keep Walker from reinforcing Sanders. The Allied column attacked the Rivas barricades about 10 p.m. and retired before midnight, once Chamorro had returned to San Jorge, victorious. As told by Walker, in *The War*, the Allied night attack was "short and rambling," and only one filibuster was wounded. In his official report, Xatruch claimed that several filibusters were wounded and admitted six Allied casualties.

On the 7th, the Sierra Nevada arrived at San Juan del Sur with seventy-five recruits from California. They went on to Rivas accompanied by Col. Caycee and his men. It was the first (and last) company of a new battalion, which Walker styled the "Red Star Guard" after the lone Red Star in his flag. He ordered a Parade of the troops at 5 p.m. that day, and made another speech.

At early dawn on the 16th, Walker led his entire disposable force—400 men—with Henningsen and artillery, on another attack, which would be his last, on San Jorge. He again took up a position about 600 yards from the church and opened fire with four mortars, two sixes, and a twelve-pound howitzer, sending into the Plaza 400 rounds of six-pound shot and eighty shells. Simultaneously, his riflemen launched a fierce assault on the Allied barricades.

The Allies not only held on, but, in the midst of the battle, General Jerez took 500 men by a circuitous route and occupied the Cuatro Esquinas farmhouse, on the road, half a mile from Rivas. At 11 a.m., Jerez attacked Walker from the rear while another column under Lieut. Col. Joaquín Cabrera sallied on a flanking movement and attacked him from the other side. The filibusters held their ground and continued cannonading the Plaza until they ran out of shot and shell.

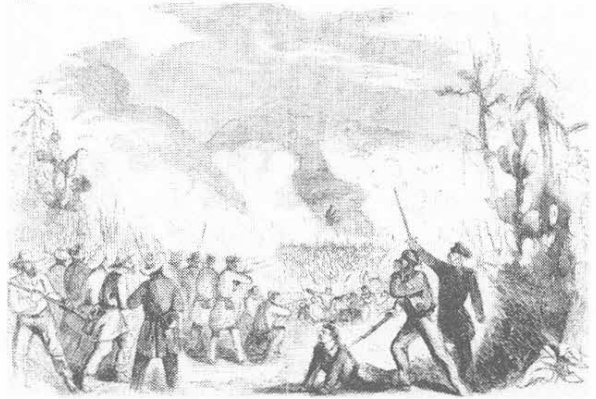
Walker retreated at 3 p.m.. He fought his way back to Rivas through Allied forces

scattered all around in the plantain and cacao fields along the way, protected by impenetrable growths of cactus on each side of the road. A pitched battle occurred as the Americans passed by the Cuatro Esquinas farmhouse, which Jerez had fortified and from which they were unable to dislodge him.

There was great slaughter on both sides. The filibuster army trekked back into Rivas, in disjointed units and through roundabout routes, under the cover of darkness.

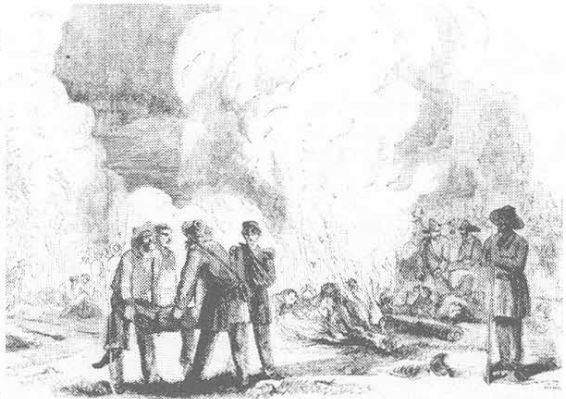
Allied official figures listed 132 Allied casualties—thirty-six killed and ninety-six wounded, and claimed “a multitude of filibusters slain.” Walker placed his loss that day at fourteen killed and fifty wounded, most of the latter slightly. He estimated Allied casualties at above 500.

On March 18th, General José Joaquín Mora landed with 560 Costa Rican soldiers at San Jorge and next day took over as the new Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies. He named his brother-in-law, Gen. José María Cañas, second in command, and under him he placed Guatemalan General Victor Zavala, Honduran General Florencio Xatruch, and Nicaraguan General Fernando Chamorro.



Walker's battle at Cuatro Esquinas (left) fought by Gen. Waters and Gen. Herrington between St. George and Rivas, Nicaragua

March 16, 1857 battle between St. George and Rivas
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, April 18, 1857



Walker's soldiers burning the dead bodies of the Costa Rican army after the battle of Rivas

Burning the dead bodies after the battle
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, April 18, 1857

On the 19th, the Orizaba arrived in San Juan del Sur, from San Francisco. Walker sent Col. Waters with sixty Rangers to meet the large contingent of reinforcements, munitions and supplies expected. The steamer brought 500 cannon balls sent by Crittenden, but only nineteen recruits. Walker assigned the new arrivals to Company B,

First Infantry, and renamed the battalion the "St. George Fusiliers," as a reward for its "gallantry in the actions of the 29th January and 16th March at St. George." But the time for offensive operations had passed for Walker.

On March 22d, Mora began to cannonade Rivas with a twenty-four pounder from an eminence near Allied headquarters at Cuatro Esquinas, while a column under Chamorro occupied the Hacienda of San Esteban on the Obraje road, setting up barricades on the brow of a hill about 200 yards from the filibuster pickets. The siege of Rivas had begun.

Mora launched a general assault at dawn on the 23d. Chamorro's forces attacked the Maliaño farmhouse (which the filibusters used as hospital) at the northwest corner of the city, while Cañas with five columns moved towards the Plaza from the front, right flank, and rear of the filibuster stronghold. After seven hours of fierce house-to-house fighting, during which Henningsen's artillery wiped out entire units of Allied soldiers, the Allies suffered a catastrophic defeat and withdrew.

From the number of dead and wounded left behind, Walker judged an Allied loss of between 300 and 400 men, while he had only four killed and four wounded. Official individual lists of Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan, and Costa Rican losses add up to fifty-eight dead and sixty-three wounded, for a total of 121 casualties. At dawn on the 24th, Chamorro launched another assault at the northwest sector of Rivas, against the Santa Ursula farmhouse next to Maliaño's. His men set the roof on fire and forced the filibusters to temporarily abandon it; but he was finally repelled after suffering five dead and eight wounded.

At dawn on the 26th, Xatruch, with 450 men, occupied a hill on the San Juan road in the southern section of Rivas called La Puebla. American counterattacks were unsuccessful, and soon thereafter a twenty-four pounder began to cannonade the filibuster camp from Xatruch's post, teaming up with the one at Cuatro Esquinas. When Costa Rican Major Juan Estrada with 100 men took up a position (the Zamora farmhouse) in the southeastern Apataco sector, on the 27th, Mora had completed the encirclement of the city by occupying four strategic points around it on the roads to Obraje, San Jorge, Virgin Bay, and San Juan.

On April 5, the Allies in Rivas received the news that Lockridge had abandoned all attempts to capture Castillo. In the evening, General Zavala celebrated: he took the Liberia brass band to the barricades near the Plaza and serenaded the filibusters with martial music. The besieged wasted no bullets on musicians and allowed them to play a full repertoire.

Meanwhile, the Allies received reinforcements. On April 3d, Martínez arrived from

Granada with 300 men; 300 more came from León on the 6th, and then 200 from Managua and Masaya. Over 500 Guatemalans arrived on the 9th. Mora then decided to strike the final blow.

He chose an auspicious H-hour: *Sábado de Gloria* (Saturday of Glory, or Holy Saturday), April 11, 1857, the first anniversary of the Second Battle of Rivas. At the staff meeting on Good Friday, the other Allied generals opposed him, judging unnecessary the shedding of more blood, opting instead for starving Walker into surrender. Mora silenced them: "I am not asking you whether we should assault or not; I only wish to arrange the details of how we will do it."

The fourth battle of Rivas began before daylight, just like the third three weeks earlier, and likewise it ended in an Allied rout. It lasted only four hours, and it was a vivid replica of the March 23 catastrophe.

In *The War*, Walker set his losses at three killed and six wounded, the same as on March 23d, and Allied losses at 700 or 800—over 200 killed—surpassing those of the previous attack. He added that the Americans buried 110 Allied dead, that he sent the wounded prisoners to the Allied camp under a flag of truce, and that he retained upward of 70 unhurt prisoners.

General Mora gave no casualty figures in his official report, allowing only that the Allies suffered considerable losses. Pérez wrote that Walker's loss was insignificant and Allied losses very great: over sixty Costa Rican, ninety Guatemalan, and 170 Nicaraguan casualties, for a total surpassing 320.

The April 11 Allied debacle, however, set the stage for Walker's surrender under acceptable conditions for him and his cause.