

## Part Three:

### POSSESSED

*Grave fathers, he's possest; againe, I say,  
Possest: nay, if there be possession,  
And obsession, he has both.*

Ben Jonson. *Volpone*.

*I am not mad: I would to heaven I were,  
For then, 'its like I should forget myself!  
O, If I could, what grief should I forget!*

Shakespeare. *King John*.

## 9. Nicaragua in his Breeches Pocket

Upon leaving New York, on July 1st, 1857, Walker went to Nashville by way of Charleston, Augusta, and Atlanta. The press reported that during his "flying visit" to Augusta, on the 4th, a number of the citizens induced him to address them. As usual, in his speech he challenged those who denounced him as a plunderer, "to point out a single act of his, in his whole career in Nicaragua, which was unjust in itself, or in contraversion of any Nicaraguan, United States or international law."

He dwelt at length upon the course pursued by the Northern press towards him, which, as he expressed it, "reeked with all the foul calumnies against himself and his followers which inventive brains could create," and attributed its hostility to the fact that he had legalized African slavery in Nicaragua. In conversation with reporters, he expressed "his firm determination to persevere in the cause in which he is embarked, and has confident hopes that he will be enabled to return to Nicaragua within the next two months, with the good will of the administration at Washington, and with men and money sufficient triumphantly to succeed in re-establishing his authority."<sup>1</sup>

Walker arrived in Nashville on the Chattanooga train, Monday, July 6, in the evening. It was his first visit home since 1850. It was the hero's homecoming, and he received a

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<sup>1</sup>"Gen. Walker in the South," *New York Herald*, 7/11/1857, p.8, c.2.

hero's welcome:

... a large number of his friends and admirers thronged to the depot to welcome him to the home of his boyhood, after so long and eventful an absence. He was cordially received, and stepping into a carriage, proceeded in company with his father and other friends, directly to the City Hotel, where a large crowd followed him, and called loudly for his appearance.

He spoke hopefully of the cause of Americanism in Central America . . .<sup>2</sup>

At the formal request of 195 of Nashville's leading citizens, Walker appeared at the Capitol on Wednesday evening. The "Shelby Guards" militia unit and a large crowd escorted his carriage from the City Hotel to the Capitol. Walker addressed an enthusiastic audience at the Hall of the House of Representatives, filled to overflowing. Militia and crowd escorted the hero back to the hotel, and the press published the full speech. His remarks were the usual, as were Horace Greeley's comments in the *Tribune*:

William Walker, although a notorious offender against the laws of the United States, is permitted unmolested to perambulate the country, making lying speeches, the only possible object of which must be to provoke renewed crimes and to lead the credulous into fresh misfortunes. At the latest accounts, this malefactor was heading for New-Orleans, with an eye, it is said, to the resumption of his bandit business.

At Nashville he made a speech containing the usual number of falsehoods and the usual quantity of inconsistent nonsense. Of course, with the gratitude commonly

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<sup>2</sup>"Arrival of Gen. William Walker," *Republican Banner and Nashville Whig*, 7/7/1857, p.3, c.1.

exhibited by such worthies, he abused the benefactor who saved him from hemp and the hangman; lauded his own military skill, to which he seemed to think that foreign nations and future ages would do justice; and belabored the poor devils who, in running from his ranks, escaped from tyranny, starvation, disease and final death. But there is small need of analysis. Walker's speeches are all alike, and he who has read one has read all this hero ever has made or ever will make. They all begin with the exploded falsehood that he went to Nicaragua because he was sent for, and they all end with the hint of his intention of going back again, whether sent for or not.<sup>3</sup>

From Nashville, Walker went to New Orleans via Montgomery and Mobile. A few days later he was back on the road, making speeches and raising resources in the South for his return to Nicaragua. For six weeks he travelled from New Orleans to Mobile, Montgomery, Columbus (Georgia), Macon, Augusta, Savannah, Charleston, and then back to Augusta, Nashville, and finally New Orleans on September 1st. At each stop he spoke to large numbers of enthusiastic "influential citizens," who gave him abundant pledges of "material aid."

Wherever he went, Walker carried with him "Nicaragua, and the sovereignty of Nicaragua, buttoned up in his breeches pocket."<sup>4</sup> His printed handbills offered 250 acres and \$25 a month to "colonists," who would supposedly collect it after he regained his "presidency." He peddled "Nicaragua bonds," selling them at a discount. He gave to all "subscribers" Nicaragua land warrants, "guaranteeing to them productive acres for 25 cents each, to be claimed when

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<sup>3</sup>"William Walker," *New York Tribune*, 7/16/1857, p.4, c.4.

<sup>4</sup>"Perhaps we went," *New York Tribune*, 6/19/1857, p.4, c.4.

he owns Nicaragua, which will be by January next."<sup>5</sup>

Captain Fayssoux accompanied Walker as he travelled from New York to New Orleans, and Colonel Slatter assisted him during his Southern tour. General Henningsen joined them at Savannah and Charleston, and then returned to New York to carry out his part of the "secret plans" of a newly formed "Central American League" which contemplated the raising of a large army for Walker. The "League" was said to have branches in "New York, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans and all the other leading cities of the Union."<sup>6</sup>

Colonel Kewen was in St. Louis; Colonels Lockridge and Waters recruited openly in Texas; Colonel W. J. Choice did likewise in Georgia; and so on in Baltimore, Mobile, and other places. Filibuster propaganda spoke of ten thousand men enrolled and several hundred thousand dollars collected for Walker. In Georgia alone, they were supposed to have raised \$150,000. Reality was very different.

Walker's fortunes had changed so much, that his friends couldn't even get the moral support of the Southern Commercial Convention then meeting at Knoxville, Tennessee. Resolutions praising his Nicaragua cause as "highly meritorious" and recommending his enterprise "to the serious and earnest consideration of the Southern States," introduced at the Convention on August 13 by "Mr. P.D. Page, of Alabama" and by "Mr. McCrea, of Mississippi," were soundly defeated, 60 to 25, when delegates from Tennessee, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and

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<sup>5</sup>"Our Savannah Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 8/17/1857, p.3, c.3. In his account book, Mason Pilcher registered the sale of bonds at half price (Item #79, Fayssoux Collection, Latin American Library, Tulane).

<sup>6</sup>"Another Walker Expedition," *New York Herald*, 8/22/1857, p.8, c.1.

Maryland, voted against them.<sup>7</sup>

Southern leaders like Jefferson Davis knew that Walker was finished. Davis publicly expressed "that if General Walker should be able to maintain himself in Nicaragua, and so Americanize that country that stable government, representative liberty, institutions like those of the United States would be ordained and established in it, he should rejoice in the result."<sup>8</sup> But he had obviously given up on Walker when in a speech at Jackson, Mississippi, he remarked that he "knew the Commander of the *St. Mary's* well, and a more chivalrous gentleman never trod an American battle-deck. He knew that the story must be false that he (Com. Davis) took Walker and his men prisoners. No: he rescued them from Costa Rican vengeance, threw over them the aegis of our flag, and bore them to their friends."<sup>9</sup>

Bad as things were, they got worse for Walker when the steamship *Tennessee* arrived in New York on August 18 with the last remnants of his late "Nicaraguan Army." The *Herald* commented:

The steamship *Tennessee*, which arrived yesterday from Greytown, brought the last instalment of filibusters, sent home by the Costa Rican government. A miserable set of fellows they were, too. Falstaff's ragged charge of foot, with but a shirt and a half to the whole company, were princes in purple and fine linen compared to these two hundred regenerators of Central America, who were indebted to private charity for their dinners on yesterday. They went away fine stout

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<sup>7</sup>"Southern Commercial Convention," *NO PICAYUNE*, 8/23/1857, p.3, c.3.

<sup>8</sup>"Jefferson Davis on National Politics," *New York Herald*, 10/27/1857, p.2, c.3.

<sup>9</sup>"Jefferson Davis' Opinion of Commander Davis," *New York Herald*, 6/23/1857, p.5, c.1.

fellows, with high hopes and good outfits; they came back weary, heart sick, broken down, with hardly rags enough to cover their nakedness. Some were carried to the hospital, others paraded the streets, depending upon chance donations for bread and shelter. Their condition is a sad commentary upon the proceedings of Generals Walker and Henningsen, who are to-day at Savannah, where they are endeavoring to raise money and men for another filibustering expedition in Nicaragua. The confidence of these gentlemen in the gullibility of human nature must be very strong, and they have undoubtedly adopted the maxim that there is a new fool born every day. Very likely they are right, but we advise any young man fond of glory to remember the price these ragged filibusters paid for it.<sup>10</sup>

Many attributed Walker's failure to his own mistakes. In particular, it was commonly (and erroneously) believed that his slavery decree had been the crucial factor that had turned the Nicaraguan people against him. Seeking to improve his image, Walker wrote and made public a letter to Mr. Charles J. Jenkins (the opposition candidate for the Governorship of Georgia), justifying the decree and portraying himself as a wise statesman.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, he trampled on the truth, as Horace Greeley promptly pointed out in the *Tribune*:

Walker is out in a new manifesto, purporting to prove that he did not purpose the establishment of Slavery in Nicaragua until observation and study convinced him that "the peculiar institution" was needed

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<sup>10</sup>"Filibusters North and South," *New York Herald*, 8/19/1857, p.4, c.5.

<sup>11</sup>See letter in Appendix E.

to develop the resources of that country. Unlucky for him, however, all the arguments he adduces in favor of Slavery in Nicaragua are based on alleged facts in the history of Hayti, Jamaica, &c., which were just as well known to him and as conclusive five years since as they are now. But Walker wants money from the South and dupes from the North, and will probably secure both.<sup>12</sup>

And Walker's effort backfired when Mr. Jenkins reacted angrily at having published the letter without his knowledge or consent, as it implied that he endorsed its contents. Jenkins concluded his reply with the following pithy words, declaring unequivocally:

First, that I wholly disapprove Gen. Wm. Walker's contemplated invasion and conquest of Nicaragua. Secondly, that the proposed revival of the African slave trade is abhorrent to me.<sup>13</sup>

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At that juncture, Walker definitely lost the support of the Buchanan administration. Sympathizing as he did with Walker and his cause, Secretary of State Lewis Cass finally moved against him after it had become abundantly clear that he could not possibly succeed.<sup>14</sup> On September 18th, Cass issued a circular to the U.S. Marshals and U.S. District Attorneys,

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<sup>12</sup>"Gen. William Walker," *New York Tribune*, 9/18/1857, p.4, c.5.

<sup>13</sup>"Hon. Chas. J. Jenkins' Reply to Gen. Walker," *New York Herald*, 9/24/1857, p.4, c.3.

<sup>14</sup>On May 21, 1856, Cass had declared: "I am free to confess that the heroic effort of our countrymen in Nicaragua excites my admiration, while it engages all my solicitude. I am not to be deterred from the expression of these feelings by smears, or reproaches, or hard words. He who doesn't sympathize with such an enterprise has little in common with me. The difficulties which General Walker has encountered and overcome will place his name high on the roll of the distinguished men of his age." "Letter of General Cass," *New York Herald*, 5/24/1856, p.1, c.1.



urging them "to use all due diligence" and to avail themselves "of all legitimate means" to stop the filibusters from sailing.<sup>15</sup>

Senator Gwin's slavery propagandists, who had abandoned Walker at Ensenada in 1854, actively opposed him in 1857. On October 12th, "Senator Gwin had a long interview with Secretary Cass and urged the necessity of promptly suppressing filibusterism. He thought our national character was at stake, and hoped the orders issued would be strictly enforced. Secretary Cass replied that such was the determination of the government."<sup>16</sup>

Walker wrote to Cass on September 29th, protesting that he had not violated and did not intend to violate the neutrality laws of the United States. Pulling Nicaragua out of his breech pocket, he addressed the Secretary of State "In behalf of the republic of which I claim to be the rightful and lawful executive," and after denouncing Guatemalan and Costa Rican "pretensions," he concluded:

So far as any violation on my part is concerned, I deny the charge with scorn and indignation. Having been received in the United States, when forced for a time to leave Nicaragua, I have, in all respects, been obedient to its laws. And permit me to assure you that I shall not so far forget my duty as an officer of Nicaragua, as to violate the laws of the United States while enjoying the rites of hospitality within its limits.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, Walker's argument didn't convince the Secretary of State, who went on to recognize the Martínez

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<sup>15</sup>"Official Filibuster Circular," *N Y Tribune*, 10/9/1857, p.5, c.6.

<sup>16</sup>"Miscellaneous," *Alta*, 11/18/1857, p.1, c.3.

<sup>17</sup>"General Walker's Letter to Secretary Cass," *New York Herald*, 11/9/1857, p.8, c.2.

government and to sign a treaty with Irisarri in November. And it goes without saying that Walker went on with his expedition even though there was no hope of success. The meager resources at his disposal may be gleaned from the following entries in Mason Pilcher's account book:

1857

|         |   |         |
|---------|---|---------|
| Oct. 12 | To cash to Genl. Walker room rent to date | \$27.00 |
| 17      | To cash to Genl. Walker                   | 30.00   |
| 19      | To cash to Genl. Walker                   | 10.00   |
| 22      | To cash sent to Genl. Walker              | 5.00    |
| 30      | To cash paid Genl. Walker                 | 10.00   |

When Pilcher closed the "Nicaragua" account book, on November 3, 1857, his New Orleans agency had spent a grand total of \$37,659.22 since its opening on May 6, 1856. Expenses related to Walker's second expedition amounted to less than seven thousand dollars, which included room and board for Colonels Rogers, Henry, and fellow filibusters in the city.<sup>18</sup>

Walker needed and received substantial help from Alabama for his expedition. Henry G. Humphries (a wealthy Mobile merchant) and other Alabama friends formed a "Mobile and Nicaragua Steamship Company," which advertised that it would provide regular packet service between Mobile and San Juan del Norte. The *Mobile Register* told its readers that the company was "composed of realible, substantial, prudent, business men, among them some of our most worthy citizens. They will soon apply to the Legislature of Alabama for an act of incorporation, and when once fairly established we have no

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<sup>18</sup> Item #79, Fayssoux Collection, Latin American Library, Tulane. An entry worthy of note: January 26, 1857--By cash received of P. Soulé portion proceeds of silver shipped to him by Col. Lockridge [proceeds of silver stolen by Kissane from the churches at Granada], \$2,000.00. Interesting trivia: June 3, 1857--To cash paid erecting stand in Canal street [for May 30 Walker rally], \$112.00.

doubt this enterprise will afford a very handsome paying investment to its stockholders, and largely increase the commerce of Mobile."<sup>19</sup>

Humphries bought the United States Navy transport steamship *Fashion*, 419 tons burthen, with boiler, engine, machinery, furniture and apparel, "for a nominal sum," at a Government auction sale in New Orleans on November 5th. The steamer remained at the wharf, at the foot of Jackson street, and a rumor spread that Walker would sail on it for Nicaragua on the 11th, at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Complying with Secretary of State Cass' orders, New Orleans Deputy Marshal Emile Mary arrested Walker at his residence on Customhouse street at a late hour in the night of November 10.

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<sup>19</sup>"The Walker Movement in the South," *New York Herald*, 11/23/1857, p.8, c.4.

## 10. Death Blow to Filibusterism

Walker did not spend time in jail in New Orleans. Immediately after his arrest, at 11 p.m. on November 10th, 1857, U.S. District Judge Theo. H. McCaleb took his recognizance at the St. Charles Hotel and posted his bail at two thousand dollars. Pierre Soulé acted as Walker's counsel and S. F. Slatter as his bondsman. At the United States Circuit Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, the next morning, Judge McCaleb arraigned him on the charges of having "begun and set on foot a military expedition and enterprise . . . against the territory and dominions of the States of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and of the people thereof."<sup>1</sup> Thereupon, the Judge ordered him to appear for examination on the 17th.

Simultaneous with Walker's arrest, shortly before midnight on the 10th, a marshal's force seized the steamer *Fashion* at the levee. While Walker was in court, on the 11th, the collector of the port made "a very strict and thorough examination" of the vessel, but released it when "nothing suspicious could be detected."<sup>2</sup> The *Fashion*, however, left for Mobile in the evening, with a large quantity of arms, munitions and provisions on board.

Walker proceeded with his expedition as soon as he left

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<sup>1</sup>"The Courts," *New Orleans Picayune*, 11/11/1857 eve, 4,2.

<sup>2</sup>United States District Attorney Franklin H. Clack to Secretary of State Lewis Cass (New Orleans, November 23, 1857), *Nicaragua--Seizure of General Walker*, Ex. Doc. #24, 35th Congress, 1st Session, p. 26.

the courtroom. That same afternoon he sailed for Mobile aboard the mail boat *California*, accompanied by his staff and most of the 150 men he had gathered at his rendezvous in New Orleans. Walker went to the wharf, to board the vessel, "by a circuitous route," and the others in small groups, "by various routes, in order to attract no attention."<sup>3</sup> The artillery brigade, the medical staff and some of the privates sailed for Mobile on the *Fashion* that night.

The tug-boat *Dick Keys* met them inside the Mobile harbor with fifty more men and additional weapons. After the tug-boat transferred the *California* contingent to the *Fashion*, the latter sailed for Greytown on the 14th, allegedly carrying a couple of hundred emigrants ("coffee planters") and "general merchandise" to Nicaragua. Ship captain J. K. Caughlin filed the following freight list at the Mobile Customhouse:

50 pickaxes, 48 axes, 6 gross knives and forks, 100 ax helves, 50 spades, 60 tin kettles, 400 tin cups, 100 tea spoons, 34 dozen plates, 34 doz. spoons, 50 hatchets, 300 lbs. nails, 67 yards oil cloth, silk thread, needles and pins, 8 boxes 1 keg medicines, 60 bbls. pork, 44 do. beef, 364 do. assorted groceries, 4 tierces rice, 9 sacks coffee, 3 bbls. sugar, 5 sacks salt, 28 boxes collars, 2 bales blankets.<sup>4</sup>

As reported by the press, the *Fashion* in fact carried on board 186 filibusters, a dozen "outsiders" and speculators, a thousand stand of arms, and enough provisions to feed four hundred men for three months. The ship was so heavily laden, "that an ordinary sized man might dip water from her

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<sup>3</sup>U.S. Marshal Joseph M. Kennedy to Attorney General J. S. Black (New Orleans, November 25, 1857), *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>"Mobile Items," *New Orleans Picayune*, 11/17/1857, p.8, c.1.

slide in a bucket."<sup>5</sup>

Walker's rank and file had enlisted for one year on the promise of \$25 a month and 250 acres of land. More than thirty passengers were Nicaragua veterans--die-hard filibusters like Kissane, Tabor and Fayssoux,--among them eight of the original fifty-eight *Vesta* Immortals: Gen. Walker, Brig. Gen. Hornsby, Col. Anderson, Major Hooff, Capt. Kennedy, Charles Brogan and Jacob Colmus. A ninth Immortal, Commodore DeBrissot, would join them at Greytown.

Morgan & Garrison's agent, Charles J. Macdonald, was also on board, aiming to take possession of the Transit Company steamers in Nicaragua and allegedly appointed Minister of Hacienda by Walker.

As soon as the *Fashion* was fairly out to sea, Walker organized his force into four companies, forming a battalion under the command of Col. Thomas Henry. Henry posted sentinels at various points on the steamer, distributed belts, cartridge and cap boxes, and had the units mustered and the roll called by the orderly sergeant twice a day. He set details to work moulding bullets and making cartridges under the direction of Lieut. Col. Alfred Swingle. When rifles were issued on the 18th, the *Fashion* presented the appearance of a floating garrison.

Cruising slowly at top speeds below seven knots, the old, overloaded, low pressure steamship finally hugged the Nicaragua coast on the 24th. About noon, a thick mist hid the land, and Captain Caughlin slowed his boat to a tortoise's pace, when Walker wished him to put on steam. Suddenly the smoke lifted, and the Greytown harbor was in full view, with the U.S. sloop-of-war *Saratoga* lying at her anchors inside.

Walker directed Caughlin to sail past the harbor, to the Colorado river mouth, which they reached shortly after 3 p.m.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Without anchoring, they lowered three boats, into which Walker ordered forty-five men under the command of Col. Frank Anderson. The *Fashion* towed the boats in as near the bar as it was safe for the steamer to run. Anderson was instructed to ascend the Colorado and take up position at the San Juan river junction, there to intercept all river traffic to the port. The *Fashion* then beat down the shore until daylight on the 25th, when it steered for the harbor of Greytown.

Walker's steamer entered the harbor about 7 o'clock in the morning, passed by the sloop-of-war with a full head of steam, and headed toward the old hulk which agent Joseph N. Scott used as Transit Company wharf at Punta Arenas, across the bay from the town. Seeing not more than fifteen or twenty men on the newcomer's deck, and thinking it was a party sent by the Company to open the transit route, Captain Frederick Chatard, of the *Saratoga*, allowed Walker's men to land unmolested. By the time he realized his mistake, the filibusters "had all landed, armed to the teeth with revolvers, rifles and bowie knives, 150 in number."<sup>6</sup>

The Costa Rican picket at Punta Arenas, under the command of Lieut. Col. José Baldizón, withdrew without making any resistance, and on the 29th retreated all the way to San José by way of Moín. And once the filibusters landed, Chatard felt he could do nothing:

What could I do? particularly when I saw that the papers of the vessel were correct. Could I have taken the responsibility of firing amongst them (destroying all Scott's buildings) to make them go aboard again? I did not feel authorized and could not take the responsibil-

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<sup>6</sup>Commander Chatard to Flag Officer Hiram Paulding (San Juan del Norte, December 1st, 1857), Microfilm M-89, Reel 97.

ity.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, during the next two days the *Fashion* landed on shore and Walker's supplies and munitions were unloaded at leisure, as the filibusters hoisted their Nicaraguan flag and took possession of Punta Arenas, scattered over territory a mile and a half in extent, above and below the Transit Company terminal. Col. Henry posted sentinels along at short intervals and maintained rigid discipline in the camp.

On the evening of the 26th, a small party from Anderson's command up the river, came into the camp after provisions. They reported that, at the mouth of the Colorado, Anderson had taken five native prisoners, and used them as pilots in going up. He had been twenty-three hours in rowing twenty-four miles upriver, the rain falling in torrents most of the time. He had taken possession of Leefe's Island at the bifurcation, which gave him entire control of the San Juan river traffic.

The party went back to Leefe's Island on the 27th, taking with them five additional men and supplies for the command for twelve days. They also carried orders from Walker, for Anderson to advance to Castillo in order to capture a steamer, if possible, and take possession of the fort.

Anderson's command left Leefe's Island on November 29th, rowed up the San Juan in three four-oared yawl boats, and landed one mile below Castillo at 8 p.m. on December 3d. Cutting their way through the chaparral, they climbed atop Nelson's Hill at one o'clock in the morning on the 4th and took possession of Castillo in the afternoon. The Costa Rican defenders under Col. Francisco Alvarado abandoned the fort as soon as they were attacked.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



Without suffering a single casualty, the fifty filibusters under Anderson captured over thirty Costa Rican soldiers, six pieces of artillery, 150 stand of arms, and three river steamers: the *Morgan*, *Ogden*, and *Bulwer*. On the 5th, they captured the lake steamer *Virgin* at Change Bend, nine miles above Castillo.

News of Anderson's exploits reached San Juan on the night of the 5th, brought downriver by a courier in a flying bongo. But the joy it produced in the filibuster camp rapidly abated when the U.S. steam frigate *Wabash* arrived off San Juan early the next morning, followed by the English war vessels *Leopard* and *Brunswick* in a few hours.<sup>8</sup> The U.S. war steamer *Fulton* entered the harbor on the 7th, and the steam frigate *Susquehanna* came in several days later.

On the 7th, Commodore Paulding addressed a note to Walker, clear and to the point, peremptorily demanding his surrender:

Sir: . . . In occupying Point Arenas, and assuming it to be the headquarters of the army of Nicaragua, and you its commander-in-chief, you and your associates being lawless adventurers, you deceive no one by the absurdity. . . .

Now, sir, you and your followers are here in violation of the laws of the United States, and greatly to its dishonor; making war upon a people with whom we are at peace; and for the sake of humanity, public and private justice, as well as what is due to the honor and

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<sup>8</sup> The English mail steamer *Dee* had arrived at San Juan del Norte from Aspinwall on November 29th, and had left on December 1st with dispatches from Commander Chatard to Flag Officer Hiram Paulding, commanding the Home Squadron aboard the steam frigate *Wabash*, then at Aspinwall. The *Fashion* had also gone to Aspinwall, for coal, having been unable to procure enough at San Juan for its return to the States. Upon learning of Walker's landing, Paulding hurried on the *Wabash* to San Juan.

integrity of the government of the United States, I command you, and the people associated here with you, to surrender your arms without delay, and embark in such vessels as I may provide for that purpose.<sup>9</sup>

Walker surrendered on the 8th, after six boatloads of marines from the *Saratoga*, with twelve and twenty-four pounder howitzers on board, approached the shore in front of his camp while 385 marines and sailors from the *Fulton* landed on the beach three hundred yards below and took up position in the rear.

Kissane, DeBrissot and a few others escaped to the river while Paulding arrested 150 filibusters at Punta Arenas and sent them on the *Saratoga* to Norfolk. Commander Henry and many of his men came on board drunk. Henry slapped one of the *Saratoga* navy officers on the face, and had to be put in irons until he sobered up. Walker opted to travel apart, on faster vessels: on the *Wabash* to Aspinwall and from there to New York, at his own expense, on the *Northern Light*. Paulding let him to go on parole, taking his word of honor that he would present himself to U.S. Marshal Isalah Rynders upon arrival.

On the day he disarmed the filibusters, Paulding liberated forty prisoners, men, women and children--Costa Rican soldiers and camp followers--sent downriver by Anderson aboard the *Morgan*. He then placed the steamboat in the hands of B. Squire Cotrell, U.S. Commercial Agent at San Juan del Norte.

Displaying his usual energy and daring, Kissane rowed upriver in a canoe and apprised Anderson, at Castillo, of

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<sup>9</sup> Hiram Paulding, Flag Officer Commanding U.S. Home Squadron, to Gen. Wm. Walker, Punta Arenas (United States Flag-Ship *Wabash*, Off San Juan del Norte, December 7, 1857), *Nicaragua--Seizure of General Walker*, Ex. Doc. #24, 35th Congress, 1st Session, p. 65.

Walker's surrender. True to form, the old arsonist *Confiscador* then set to work helping Anderson evacuate Castillo, burning all the houses in the vicinity, spiking the cannons, blowing up a portion of the fort, and disabling the lake steamer *Virgin*, at Change Bend, by throwing a portion of the engine overboard into deep water and mud.

Collecting all the cattle, and securing every valuable thing they could lay hands on, the filibusters embarked all on board the steamer *Ogden* and started down the river. Docking the steamer a few miles above San Juan, Kissane and DeBrissot travelled by canoe between the *Ogden* and the town, making great efforts to sell the cattle, dry goods, and other loot brought from Castillo.

On December 24th, Captain Joshua R. Sands, of the *Susquehanna*, embarked a force on board the steamer *Morgan*, proceeded up the river, and captured Anderson and party without any resistance. He sent them to Aspinwall on the *Fulton*, for the *Wabash* to take them to Key West.

Natives and foreigners throughout the region rejoiced at the removal of the filibusters. The universal dread of Walker was eloquently recorded by an American resident at San Juan del Norte, in a letter to Commodore Paulding:

. . . the 25th day of November--a day memorable to the United States, when the British evacuated the city of New York; when all hearts rejoiced, and gave true thanks to Almighty God. What a difference there is here, on the same day of the month, in the poverty stricken inhabitants on the arrival of Walker, who are calling upon God to save and deliver them from the bloody hands and footsteps of Walker and his confederates.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Samuel S. Wood to Commodore Paulding (San Juan del Norte, November 30, 1857), *Nicaragua--Seizure of General Walker*, Ex. Doc. #24, 35th Congress, 1st Session, p. 61.

The widespread approval of the expulsion of Walker was evinced on Christmas night when the American residents of Aspinwall gave a "magnificent ball" to Commodore Paulding and his officers, at which the officers of the British warship *Brunswick* were invited, as well as most of the American residents and principal native families of Panama. Don Bartolomé Calvo, the Governor of Panama, on being presented to the Commodore, gave words to the prevailing sentiment as he shook Paulding's hand warmly, exclaiming: "I am happy to press the hand that struck the death blow to fillbusterism."<sup>11</sup>

And when the *Wabash* visited Havana after dropping its cargo of fillbusters at Key West, the Spanish authorities received the American vessel "with the most enthusiastic demonstrations of regard":

... a dinner at the Palace--free boxes at the opera--a deputation. Gen. Manzana, of supreme authority, visited the ship, and was received with vice-royal salutes. "See the conquering hero comes," "Hail Columbia," "Rule Britannia," "Rienza's Hymn," "Yankee Doodle," &c., were played by the band. A second triumphal entry was made by Commodore Paulding, having largely on his side Spanish, British and French sympathy.<sup>12</sup>

Spain had kept a close watch on the fillbusters in Nicaragua from the beginning: José Gutiérrez de la Concha, Captain General of Cuba, had sent John Shean, an Irishman, as undercover agent to San Juan del Norte in December, 1855,

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<sup>11</sup>"Later from the Isthmus," *New Orleans Picayune*, 1/13/1858, p.1, c.5.

<sup>12</sup>"News from Havana," *New York Herald*, 2/16/1858, p.1, c.6.

"for the purpose of collecting information as to the reported designs of the filibusters on Cuba. Mr. Crawford [the British Consul in Havana] had recommended Mr. Shean for this service, he being an Irishman who had come to Cuba in order to be out of the way of prosecution for enlisting men in Texas for the British Foreign Legion, and he knew Kinney and Walker well."<sup>13</sup>

Commodore Paulding's death blow to filibusterism in Nicaragua was indeed joyful news for the Spanish authorities in Cuba and likewise received the applause of the civilized world.

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<sup>13</sup>British Consul James Green to the Earl of Clarendon (Greytown, April 3, 1856), Mosquito Correspondence, F.O. 53, Public Record Office, London. Shean's detailed reports from San Juan del Norte, signed "P.W." and directed to "Mr. John Albert OBrian, Merchant, Havana," are kept in the Legajo No. 49, Signatura 26, Asuntos Políticos at the Archivo Nacional, Havana, Cuba. John Shean died at San Juan del Norte on March 31st, 1857, where he was buried in the English naval cemetery near the town ("Nicaragua," *New York Tribune*, 4/14/1857, p.6, c.5).

## 11. Dead Cock in the Pit

When Commodore Paulding dealt the death blow to filibusterism at San Juan del Norte, President Buchanan had already checkmated Walker in Washington. As soon as the news of the filibusters departure from Mobile reached the capital, on November 14, 1857, Buchanan instantly decided to recognize the Nicaraguan government, to receive its Minister, Don Antonio de Yrisarri, and to sign the treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation which the latter had been arranging with Secretary Cass under the auspices of Joe White. Buchanan's decision was so sudden that lack of preparation led to confusion, and he signed the treaty with a Minister he had not yet received:

Washington, Monday, Nov. 16, 1857.

Gen. Walker was checkmated to-day. A treaty has been made by the Administration with Nicaragua. The treaty was signed by the President at one o'clock to-day, and Yrisarri was received at the White House about two o'clock. . . .

It was ascertained, after arranging all the preliminaries, that Yrisarri, instead of being Charge d'affaires, is Minister Plenipotentiary from Nicaragua. Therefore he will be formally presented to-morrow at two o'clock, when the Cabinet are all present.

The treaty was signed to-day.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 11/17/1857, p.4, c.5.

On the following afternoon (November 17th), Secretary Cass introduced Yrisarri to the President, who received from him his credentials as Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary from Nicaragua. It then became obvious to attentive observers that the reception of Yrisarri and the treaty with Nicaragua put American relations "on such a footing that the Government must exert its power to prevent an invasion by Fillibuster Walker, or aid in his expulsion if he succeeds in landing. This policy commits the Government directly against Fillibusterism."<sup>2</sup>

President Buchanan himself clearly defined his novel anti-filibuster stand in his December 8, 1857 Annual Message to Congress:

It is one of the first and highest duties of any independent State, in its relations with the members of the great family of nations, to restrain its people from acts of hostile aggression against their citizens or subjects. The most eminent writers on public law do not hesitate to denounce such hostile acts as robbery and murder.

Weak and feeble States, like those of Central America, may not feel themselves able to assert and vindicate their rights. The case would be far different if expeditions were set on foot within our own territories to make private war against a powerful nation. If such expeditions were fitted out from abroad against any portion of our own country, to burn down our cities, murder and plunder our people, and usurp our government, we should call any Power on earth to the strictest account for not preventing such enormities. . . .

When it was first rendered probable that an attempt

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<sup>2</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Tribune*, 11/18/1857, p.4, c.5.

would be made to get up another unlawful expedition against Nicaragua, the Secretary of State issued instructions . . .

The leader of the recent expedition was arrested at New Orleans, but was discharged on giving bail for his appearance in the insufficient sum of two thousand dollars.

I commend the whole subject to the serious attention of Congress, believing that our duty and our interest, as well as our national character, require that we should adopt such measures as will be effectual in restraining our citizens from committing such outrages.<sup>3</sup>

Elated at Buchanan's transformation, even Horace Greeley applauded the President's Message and commented: "Its condemnation of Fillibusterism is so frank and hearty that we do not care to remember that it emanates from the author of the Ostend Manifesto, who was ardently supported by all the Fillibusters in the country."<sup>4</sup>

At that juncture, Commodore Paulding captured Walker at San Juan del Norte, and sent him to New York.

On the passage from Aspinwall, aboard the *Northern Light*, Walker excited very little attention. Upon arrival at New York in the night of December 27, 1857, a fellow passenger disclosed that, during the trip, the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny "was about the vessel and played cards with other people, just as though the eyes of two Continents were not upon him. He plays a very good game of euchre."<sup>5</sup>

Another passenger stated: "We had a rough voyage from

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<sup>3</sup>"The President's Message," *New York Herald*, 12/9/1857, p.1, c.1.

<sup>4</sup>"While the President's Message," *New York Tribune*, 12/9/1857, p.4, c.3.

<sup>5</sup>"Capt. Paulding Squelches the Man of Destiny," *New York Tribune*, 12/28/1857, p.5, c.3.



Aspinwall, and I had an opportunity of noticing Gen. Walker's demeanor. I was much struck with his manner, and think him a remarkable man. He seemed cheerful during the voyage and was quite confident that he would soon return to Nicaragua."<sup>6</sup>

As soon as the *Northern Light* docked, Walker took a carriage, and accompanied by Charles J. Macdonald, proceeded to the house of General Henningsen. The General was in Washington, but his wife, who was about to retire for the night, hospitably received Walker. Rushing in to interview him, a *New York Herald* reporter found him "in excellent health and spirits . . . hale and hearty, and has a ruddy appearance which quite contrasts with his comparative paleness when last in this city."<sup>7</sup>

On publishing Walker's own detailed account of his recent expedition and arrest, the reporter remarked: "Those who imagine that General Walker does not intend returning to Nicaragua are greatly mistaken. He is not in the least depressed by the turn of his fortunes, but is on the contrary as hopeful and as sanguine as ever."<sup>8</sup>

But the reporters knew that Walker was daydreaming, and that "most of his late friends have deserted him. The very boys who huzzahed for him when he was brought back before now say he ought to be shot."<sup>9</sup> They all considered his prospects hopeless:

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<sup>6</sup>"Statement of Hudson G. Wall," *New York Herald*, 12/28/1857, p.8, c.4.

<sup>7</sup>"Arrival of Gen. Walker in New York," *New York Herald*, 12/28/1857, p.8, c.3.

<sup>8</sup>"Interview With General Walker," *New York Herald*, 12/29/1857, p.1, c.2.

<sup>9</sup>"Capt. Paulding Squelches the Man of Destiny," *New York Tribune*, 12/28/1857, p.5, c.3.

... his most sanguine friends do not expect he can be successful. The President looks upon him as a cold-hearted, selfish adventurer, calculated to do much mischief, and not having the power or nature to do any good in the distracted countries of Central America. The President, it is understood, is not opposed to the Americanization of the Isthmus routes, provided it be done in a proper manner, but he is opposed to Walker and his movement.<sup>10</sup>

In accordance with his promise to Commodore Paulding, the next morning Walker presented himself at the office of Captain Isaiah Rynders, the United States Marshal. As he handed Rynders the letter from Paulding, "no one ignorant of the facts would have supposed that the modest looking little man in the light brown overcoat was the same individual who had caused such a commotion . . . While the Marshal was reading the letter, he sat there more like an indifferent spectator than the most interested person present."<sup>11</sup>

Rynders took his prisoner to Washington on the 29th, and after registering at Brown's Hotel, called on Secretary Cass at the State Department:

The Secretary invited them in, and took them both cordially by the hand, and told them he was glad to see them. After some little conversation about the weather,

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<sup>10</sup>"Affairs in Washington," *New York Herald*, 12/28/1857, p.2, c.5. Horace Greeley wrote: "Gen. William Walker arrived in this city last evening, as a prisoner, in charge of United States officers. . . . With this event Walker's career as a fillibuster leader is probably ended; though we must say that such an end by no means does justice to the cruel, sanguinary and ruffianly character which he has exhibited throughout. His opportunities have been limited, but it would be difficult to find in history a more heartless and inhuman villain." *New York Tribune*, 12/28/1857, p.4, c.2.

<sup>11</sup>"General Walker in New York," *New York Herald*, 12/29/1857, p.1, c.1.

&c., Capt. Rynders informed the Secretary that he had brought Gen. Walker in compliance with a letter from Commodore Paulding informing him (the Captain) that he had arrested Gen. Walker for violating the neutrality laws while in this country. He did not know what else to do with him, and had accordingly brought him to Washington.

Gen. Cass said to him:—"The Executive Department of the government does not recognise Gen. Walker as a prisoner. It has no directions to give concerning him. It is only through the action of the Judiciary that he can be lawfully held in custody to answer any charges that may be made against him. This (said the Secretary) is all that I have to say upon the subject."

"All I have to say," said the Captain, "is that I am pleased with your decision."

After passing a few compliments of "How well you look, General; I never saw you look better," &c., the Captain and General Walker took leave of the Secretary, highly pleased with their interview.<sup>12</sup>

Back at Brown's Hotel, a free man, during several days Walker held "a perpetual levee in his apartments," during which a *Tribune* reporter recorded another valuable true-to-life portrait of the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny:

... I did myself the honor to call upon him this morning. Notwithstanding the frequent descriptions of his person in the newspapers, I must confess to have been not a little surprised at the contrast between his appearance and his history. He is short and slender, with an ordinary-looking head, a large nose, light brown hair (worn short), high, narrow forehead and closely-shaven cheeks and chin. The famous light gray eyes are

<sup>12</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 12/30/1857, p.4, c.6.

his most noticeable feature. He is civil and unassuming in manner; talks in a very quiet and subdued way, with a mild and patient composure much more befitting the role of a religious martyr than that of a buccaneer. There is nothing military in his air; and had I casually met him, without knowing his name, I should have taken him probably for an unusually modest newspaper reporter, or for a compositor in a newspaper office.

Still, though Walker looks just now as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, there is a lurking devil in his eye which gave me the impression of insanity, though it may be only the insane lust of power or of notoriety. He affects an air of sincerity, and professed to be quite hurt at the suggestion that he had violated the laws of this or any other country. He declared that he was incapable of knowingly acting in an illegal manner. He went to Nicaragua because it was his duty to go, and he should return thither as soon as possible for the same reason.<sup>13</sup>

On January 2d, a number of Southern members of Congress and other politicians serenaded Walker at his hotel quarters. On being called for, he received the party in the public parlors, where he gave each one a cordial shake of the hand.

On the 4th, he wrote a letter to President Buchanan (transcribed in Appendix E) which instantly backfired. Horace Greeley called it "a high-flown document, which, considering the antecedents of its author, must be regarded as comical rather than otherwise."<sup>14</sup> James Gordon Bennett pointed out that "Its tone, its spirit and its logic are not the evidences

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<sup>13</sup>"From Washington," *New York Tribune*, 1/4/1858, p.5, c.2.

<sup>14</sup>"We publish on another page," *New York Tribune*, 1/7/1858, p.4, c.1.

of a leading mind."<sup>15</sup> The father of one of his filibusters promptly published incontrovertible facts which demolished Walker's pretensions to good faith, justice and mercy.<sup>16</sup> And in his January 7 special message to Congress, President Buchanan gave Walker his own answer in the form of yet another knockout blow:

. . . "Disguise it as we may," says the President, referring to the late adventure of Walker, "such a military expedition is an invitation to reckless and lawless men to enlist under the banner of any adventurer, to rob, plunder and murder the unoffending citizens of neighboring States, who have never done them harm. It is a usurpation of the war-making power which belongs alone to Congress;" and the conclusion inevitably follows, that the "government itself, in the estimation of the world, becomes an accomplice in the commission of this crime unless it adopts all the means necessary to prevent and punish it."

Here we have a practical interpretation of the annual message of December last, and of the recognition of the Martinez government of Nicaragua, (upon receipt of the news of the escape of the Walker expedition from our shores), which no man can misunderstand. The wretched policy of the late Pierce administration, which juggled with the Walker filibusters on Monday, recognized their authority on Tuesday, and repudiated them on Wednesday, is thus completely swept away, and the old proverbial international good faith, honor and truth of our country and its government are fully restored. . . .

With the proclamation of the exact and specific views of the President, as set forth in this special message,

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<sup>15</sup>"The President's Message on the Seizure of Walker," *New York Herald*, 1/8/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>16</sup>See Appendix F; also Vol. 4, pp. 117, 140.

the business of filibustering in this country is extinguished. We must say, therefore, to all hands concerned in it, that the best thing which they can now do is to turn their talent and their energies to more honest and useful pursuits. The President will enforce his policy, and the country will sustain him.<sup>17</sup>

Walker left Washington for Richmond on January 11, on his way to New Orleans. He carried Nicaragua in his breech pocket, as always, but, as aptly expressed by Bennett in the *Herald*, "[Walker's] Nicaragua is a dead cock in the pit."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>"The President's Special Message on the Nicaragua Filibusters," *New York Herald*, 1/9/1858, p.4, c.3.

<sup>18</sup>"The News from Mexico," *New York Herald*, 1/19/1858, p.4, c.4.

## 12. Buried at Capitol Hill

At the end of 1857, the Thirty-Fifth Congress debated in Washington the admission of Kansas to the Union in an atmosphere of intensified animosity about slavery. Southern extremists were making a desperate effort to force their "peculiar institution" on the new State, against the wishes of at least five-sixths of its population. A sham convention, meeting at Lecompton, had adopted a pro-slavery constitution, subsequently ratified in a bogus referendum. Bowing to the Southern Democrats, despite the travesty of the fraudulent elections, President Buchanan insisted on pushing the Lecompton constitution through Congress.

Following a ten-day Christmas recess, Congress reassembled on January 4, 1858. The Filibuster Question immediately added fuel to the fire of the Kansas debates, and both houses adopted resolutions calling upon the President for information respecting the capture of Gen. Walker, including the entire range of subjects and circumstances bearing upon United States relations with Nicaragua.

In the House, on the 6th, New York Democrats Daniel E. Sickles and John B. Haskin made speeches in favor of the President and severely denouncing Walker. Haskin spoke highly of Commodore Paulding, and then went on to advocate a National filibustering operation of Cuba. A.H. Stephens, of Georgia, replied, condemning Walker's arrest as a great outrage. Congressman John A. Gilmer, of North Carolina, deprecated the criticisms passed upon Commodore Paulding, and wished to see the documents before condemning him.

Long, rambling speeches followed on the 7th, mostly against Walker. Eli Thayer, of Massachusetts, was all for the Americanization of Nicaragua, though not by swords and rifles, but by subsoil plows and the implements of peaceful immigration. Garnet B. Adrian, of New Jersey, was for amending the neutrality laws in order to prevent filibuster expeditions in the future. The House then adjourned to the 11th of January, taking time off to celebrate the 42d anniversary of the January 8, 1815 Battle of New Orleans.

On January 7, the Senate received President Buchanan's reply to the call for information. In his Message transmitting the pertinent documents, the President observed that Commodore Paulding had committed an error, but that his motives were patriotic. Nicaragua alone had the right to complain, but since she received a substantial benefit there was no probability of her doing so.

A debate followed, in which Republican Senators Wm. H. Seward, of New York, and James R. Doolittle, of Wisconsin, and Maryland Democrat James A. Pearce, sustained the President's views--while Democrats Jefferson Davis and Albert G. Brown, of Mississippi, Robert Toombs, of Georgia, George E. Pugh, of Ohio and Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, and Know-Nothing John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky, took the opposite ground. The Message was referred to the Foreign Relations Committee.

Back from recess, on the 11th, the House went into Committee of the Whole on the Message. After a long speech from Democrat W.S. Groesbeck, of Ohio, in favor of the President's position, interrupted several times by remarks from A.H. Stephens of Georgia and J.A. Quitman, of Mississippi, the Committee rose, and the House adjourned.

Next day, the House, in Committee of the Whole, listened until the hour of adjournment to speeches about Commodore Paulding, Gen. Walker, the Neutrality laws, and related subjects. Most of the speakers sided with the Administration. Finally, the documents relative to the capture of Walker, were



reviewed: referred, the part concerning Commodore Paulding to the Naval Committee, and the other portion to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

In the Senate, Mr. Doolittle introduced a joint resolution, providing for the presentation of a medal to Commodore Paulding, and Mr. Brown gave notice of an amendment thereto, to the effect that Congress disavowed and condemned his conduct at Punta Arenas. Debates continued, day after day, on the Paulding medal and Central American affairs.

On January 25th, Sen. James Murray Mason, of Virginia, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, presented a report in which he expressed his approbation of the Neutrality laws, but recommended the passage of a bill containing further provisions for bringing offenders to justice. The report contended that the seizure of William Walker, although technically illegal, called for no further censure than such as might prevent it from being thereafter drawn as precedent. Sen. Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois dissented from the report, and Sen. Solomon Foot of Vermont from so much of it as imputed blame to Commodore Paulding.

In the House, on January 14th, A.H. Stephens of Georgia made another speech in favor of modifying the Neutrality laws and making full restitution to Gen. Walker, whom he styled the legitimate President of Nicaragua. He was followed by F.P. Blair of Missouri, who gave notice of his intention to offer a resolution for the appointment of a Committee to inquire into the propriety of purchasing territory in Central, or South America, to be colonized with free blacks.

The Naval Committee reported on February 3d upon the action of Commodore Paulding in capturing the filibusters. The majority report regarded his conduct as a grave error, which called for the disapproval of Congress. The minority report stated that the Commodore acted within the spirit of his instructions, and that he deserved the approbation of the country. The subject was referred to the Committee of the

Whole.

Thereafter, Congress paid only occasional attention to Paulding and Walker:

On March 16, in the House, Stephen C. Foster, of Maine, introduced a joint resolution "tendering the thanks of Congress to Capt. Hiram Paulding, for his zeal, fidelity, and patriotism displayed in the arrest of William Walker and his followers and returning them to the United States."<sup>1</sup>

On April 8, in the Senate, John Slidell, of Louisiana, made the medal for Paulding "a pretext for reading a carefully prepared speech, having a disguised, yet palpable bearing on the future of Central America and Cuba. Its general scope was against private and in favor of national filibustering."<sup>2</sup>

On May 4, "Mr. [Thomas L.] Clingman made a report on that part of the President's message relative to Com. Paulding's seizure of Gen. Walker, in effect condemning the act, but declaring that no proceedings were necessary on the part of Congress. Mr. [David] Ritchie, (opp.) of Pa., gave notice of a substitute returning thanks to Com. Paulding, his officers and men. Mr. [William] Barksdale, (adm.) of Miss., intended to introduce a resolution that Gen. Walker's capture was without authority, and merits the condemnation of this House."<sup>3</sup>

On May 10, in the Senate, the resolution for the presentation of a medal to Commodore Paulding came up in order, but was postponed.

On May 19, Sen. Doolittle offered a resolution that the President communicate all the correspondence concerning the arrest of Walker, and of the seizure of property belonging to persons under his command by Commodore Paulding. In

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<sup>1</sup>"Congressional," *New Orleans Picayune*, 3/24/1858, p.2, c.1.

<sup>2</sup>"Thirty-Fifth Congress," *New York Herald*, 4/9/1858, p.5, c.1.

<sup>3</sup>"Thirty-Fifth Congress," *New York Herald*, 5/5/1858, p.4, c.5.

addition, the resolution called for information ascertaining why certain correspondence on the subject was withdrawn from the files of the Navy Department.

On May 28, the Vice President laid before the Senate a message from the President, covering the correspondence respecting the arrest of William Walker, which was then ordered to be printed.

In conclusion, Walker's partisans on Capitol Hill knew all along that his cause was a dead cock in the pit, but fought the skirmish, anyway, without any prospect of practical gain. As its First Session drew to a close, the Thirty-Fifth Congress had failed to pass a single resolution helpful to Walker and thereby had buried the corpse that he carried in his breech pocket.

Greeley's *Tribune*, aware of this fact, used the occasion to poke fun at Walker once more: "The zealous and impulsive propagandists who espoused Walker's cause heedlessly, are getting sick of the experiment, and whatever else they may do, will take good care to keep out of the range of his new Nicaraguan bonds, which are considered as deadly as the rifle whisky that is said to kill at a hundred yards."<sup>4</sup>

Bennett, in the *Herald*, agreed, and joined in the laughter. Under "The Southern Fire-Eaters and Our National Policy," he concluded: "Walker is of about as much account in their consideration as is Dan Rice, who rides the rhinoceros at a horse opera on Broadway; though unlike Dan Rice, the rhinoceros he attempted to mount has completely thrown him."<sup>5</sup>

Walker went South, to friendlier environs.

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<sup>4</sup>"From Washington," *New York Tribune*, 1/23/1858, p.5, c.2.

<sup>5</sup>*New York Herald*, 2/4/1858, p.4, c.4.

## 13. Back on the Stump

Walker arrived at Richmond, from Washington, on Monday afternoon, January 11, 1858. On Tuesday he paid a visit to the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates, where resolutions condemning Commodore Paulding had been offered and tabled. A banquet followed on Thursday evening, which the press reported as "a splendid affair, and his [Walker's] speech created a strong Impression."<sup>1</sup> The following are excerpts from the published address:

General Walker rose and said: . . . The sentiment I feel is that of a pupil when he receives the approbation of his teacher; for 'tis from Virginia and her sons that I have learned all I know of political ethics . . .

. . . There are those I know who assert that there is a different way to Americanize Central America--a peaceful mode, and without the aid of those heretofore most active in gaining that object. But if you will receive the experience of one who knows the Central American race--has lived among them, believe me when I say that it is utterly impracticable.

You cannot carry civilization there by such means. It is only by the sword that you can hope to establish freedom, right and justice in that unhappy country.

The peaceful colonization of the country by the pure

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<sup>1</sup>"Banquet to Gen. Walker at Richmond," *New York Herald*, 1/16/1858, p.8, c.1.

white race has been frequently attempted. You must go with something more than this; and it is for this belief that we have been maligned and persecuted. It is because we discard the theories of pharisaical philanthropists. It is because we say to the white race--You must go accompanied by the negro slave. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

It is this that has caused us so much opposition. But they cannot impede us--they may pile difficulties mountain high--pile Ossion upon Pelion--nothing can deter us from pursuing the path we have marked. In the language of a distinguished man of France, "They may heap sarcasm upon sarcasm, calumny upon calumny, but they cannot reach the height of my disdain for them."

In conclusion, let me give: "Virginia--the past is the best guarantee for what we may expect in the future."

The applause which greeted the speaker, on his conclusion, was furious, and lasted several minutes.

. . . the company adjourned Friday morning, at half-past one o'clock.<sup>2</sup>

Friday morning Walker left for Petersburg, Virginia, where his friends had previously held an "Indignation meeting" at City Hall, arousing popular support for his cause.<sup>3</sup>

On Monday, January 18th, he arrived at Montgomery, Alabama, where "an immense concourse of citizens crowded into the House of Representatives" to give him an "appropriate reception."<sup>4</sup> Befitting speeches and resolutions

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<sup>2</sup>"The Walker Banquet at Richmond," *New York Herald*, 1/18/1858, p.5, c.3.

<sup>3</sup>"Walker Indignation Meeting at Petersburg, Va.," *New York Herald*, 1/8/1858, p.5, c.3.

<sup>4</sup>"General Walker at Montgomery, Ala.," *New York Herald*, 1/26/1858, p.8, c.2.

were made, but, as usual, they were only talk, leaving no tangible benefits for the Nicaragua that Walker carried in his breech pocket.

Stopping at Selma on the stump, he pulled on the heartstrings of Southerners when he told his audience that "the secret of the opposition to his cause and the reason of the high handed outrages committed against him and his men, were that Americans in Nicaragua favored the establishment of slavery."<sup>5</sup>

He continued his journey down the Alabama River, arriving at Mobile on Friday, January 22d. According to the *Mobile Register*, when it was rumored that the steamboat *King* had reached the wharf, "with this distinguished personage [William Walker] on board,"

... an immense concourse assembled to welcome him to the hospitalities of our city.

The demonstrations of sympathy for him and his cause were of the most unmistakable character. The cannons of the Continentals thundered a salute of ten guns. On his appearance there was a long, loud shout, a hearty "all hail" to the hero and statesman whose arm had won and wisdom guided, during a perilous period, the fortunes of the republic of Nicaragua.

Judge Meek, in a brief and appropriate address, tendered to him the cordial greetings of our citizens, to which General Walker responded, expressing his warm appreciation of this evidence of continued confidence and sympathy.

From the boat to the Battle House his progress was a triumphal march. On his arrival there vast numbers crowded the reception room to see and welcome him. Scarcely fifteen minutes had elapsed before there was

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<sup>5</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 1/27/1858, p.4, c.6.

assembled on Royal street, in front of the hotel even a larger crowd than met him on the wharf, calling loudly for "Walker! Walker!"

In obedience to this summons Gen. Walker appeared upon the verandah, and spoke substantially as follows:

"If I had been guilty of the offences charged against me I would not have the effrontery to appear before you to-day . . ." <sup>6</sup>

The next morning Walker was arrested in Mobile, by an order from New Orleans, but was promptly discharged on a writ of habeas corpus. A colleague of Judge Meek subsequently quashed the proceedings.

On Monday evening, January 25th, "In pursuance of a call made through the morning papers," Walker delivered another speech at a "Nicaragua meeting" in Mobile. In it, he disclosed a second secret reason for the opposition to his schemes: that he had rejected overtures from the government to go to Mexico and incite rebellion there, with a view of Mexico falling into the hands of the United States. <sup>7</sup>

Secretary of War John Floyd, the administration newspaper, the *Washington Union*, and other friends of President Buchanan, publicly denied Walker's accusations against the government; among them, James Gordon Bennett, of the *New York Herald*:

. . . at Selma . . . from Mobile . . .

Now, we dare say that Walker entertains the idea that he may make as many silly accusations against the government as he pleases, because of the contempt with which they will be regarded by the administration.

For the information of such of his Southern fire-

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<sup>6</sup> "General Walker in Mobile," *New York Herald*, 1/30/1858, p.2, c.5.

<sup>7</sup> See speech in Appendix G.

eating sympathizers, however, as may be credulous enough to believe him, we undertake to say that in neither of the foregoing specifications is there a shadow of truth. Of this we are entirely satisfied.

First, we are sure that in regard to the hostility of the administration to the late filibustering enterprise of Walker, the subject of slavery in Nicaragua had nothing more to do with it than the King of Dahomey or the man in the moon.

Secondly, the charge that the administration had made a proposition to Walker "that he should go to Mexico and incite war there," with a view to the acquisition of that country, and that it was because he had refused to accept this flattering offer that the Cabinet turned against him, must have excited the laughter even of his most devoted Mobile sympathizers. . . .

The simple fact is that Walker, as the great filibustering champion of "manifest destiny," . . . has played his part, and has failed. . . . as a filibuster he is played out, and his silly speeches against the administration are "love's labor lost."<sup>8</sup>

Under "William Walker's Silly Speech," several days later, Bennett closed his comments, lampooning his victim, by saying: "We now advise him [Walker] to hide his rushlight under a pint pot somewhere, and now dismiss General Walker."<sup>9</sup>

From Mobile, Walker went to New Orleans, where he appeared before the United States District Court on Monday, February 1st. But the Grand Jury had failed to indict him, and Judge McCaleb informed him that there was nothing against him. Nevertheless, Walker then asked to be put on

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<sup>8</sup>"Walker the Filibuster and His Silly Charges Against the Administration," *New York Herald*, 1/28/1858, p.4, c.3.

<sup>9</sup>*New York Herald*, 2/2/1858, p.4, c.4.



trial for violation of the neutrality laws, "which the Judge refused, as the District Attorney said there was nothing against him unless new instructions were received from Washington."<sup>10</sup>

Just then, Col. Frank Anderson and fellow filibusters were brought prisoners from Key West to New Orleans. The Grand Jury met again on February 3d, and this time "found true bills against William Walker, Frank Anderson, Dudley McMichael, Jno. S. West and Flavel Belcher."<sup>11</sup> Judge McCaleb set the fourth Monday in April for the trial.

Walker's reception in New Orleans left much to be desired. No cannons had thundered a salute, and no crowds demanded a speech from the hero as in Mobile. His supporters had failed to arouse a suitable "indignation meeting" for an "appropriate reception." In fact, they had even failed to fill the barroom of the Arcade Hotel after loudly announcing their "Nicaragua Meeting" in the papers.<sup>12</sup>

More alarming for Walker was the fact that the first step toward presenting a testimonial to Commodore Paulding had originated, of all places, in New Orleans: "A subscription had been opened in that city for the purpose of presenting to Com. Paulding a sword of honor, and to the officers and crew of the frigate *Wabash* a flag, as an evidence of the approval of their acts."<sup>13</sup>

The truth of the matter was that Walker's Nicaragua scheme was dead everywhere, throughout the East, West,

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<sup>10</sup>"General Walker in New Orleans," *New York Herald*, 2/3/1858, p.5, c.3.

<sup>11</sup>"The Indictment of General Walker in New Orleans," *New York Herald*, 2/12/1858, p.3, c.3.

<sup>12</sup>"The Nicaragua Meeting at New Orleans," *New York Herald*, 1/9/1858, p.2, c.2.

<sup>13</sup>"Personal Intelligence," *New York Herald*, 1/16/1858, p.5, c.1.

North and South. But to finance his venture Walker had "flooded the South with bonds of one hundred dollars each, issued in his (Walker's) name, running twenty years, payable in Nicaragua lands." Large quantities of those bonds were held by residents of Mobile, Montgomery, and other places, who wished to recoup their losses, "which accounts for the indignation manifested in those cities."<sup>14</sup>

The *New York Herald's* New Orleans correspondent described the situation as follows:

New Orleans, Jan. 9, 1858.

There is not a "terrible excitement" here nor anywhere in this part of the South, as I can learn, about the capture and return of Walker and his men by Commodore Paulding, nor scarcely any excitement on the subject. The "indignation meeting" was a failure, both as to number and character.

There is a class in the South which affects to manufacture public opinion and to direct and control events. Many of this class are filibusters, and they have been very busy and very noisy about this Paulding-Walker business. The mass of the people, the intelligent, those who have either property or character at stake, care very little about Walker one way or the other. Quite as many rejoice at his arrest as condemn Paulding.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of sympathy for the filibusters was likewise evident in other Southern cities. On January 21, 1858, the Wilmington (North Carolina) *Commercial* explained:

SENTIMENT OF THE SOUTH. It is a very great mistake to

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<sup>14</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 1/18/1858, p.4, c.5.

<sup>15</sup>"Our New Orleans Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 1/22/1858, p.1, c.6.

suppose that there is anything like a general sympathy and favor for Walker's schemes or any other filibustering movement. A few persons only hold such things in admiration about these regions. Both the *Savannah Republican* and the *New Orleans Bulletin* deny the existence of the pretended sympathy for Walker and his filibustering schemes in those cities and the South. They say the people cannot be misled in this manner by politicians. The *Mobile Register* sustains the President's course in relation to the filibusters, and thinks that if the Southern people have patience they will see the expansion of this country southward by peaceable means much more certainly than by violence and outrage. We are of the same opinion. The southern portion of this continent must become Americanized, if they ever become anything worth naming. But this should be brought about by honorable and peaceable means, to accomplish which all filibustering must be repudiated and crushed.<sup>16</sup>

Repudiated and crushed, Walker went to Nashville, arriving there on February 7th. He stayed at home with his father, visited with John Berrien Lindsley and other old friends, and on Saturday evening, February 20th, at the request of 122 prominent citizens, delivered his customary speech before an "immense audience" assembled in Odd Fellow's Hall.

His address occupied nearly two hours. After reviewing his efforts in Nicaragua,

... He said he found himself treading in the footsteps of Aaron Burr and General Jackson on the subject of Americanizing Spanish America. He attributed his compulsory return to the United States to Yrisarri,

<sup>16</sup> Reproduced by the *New York Herald*, 1/27/1858, p.3, c.3.

Molina, Jo White, and a certain British naval officer who advised with Com. Paulding at Greytown; but finally finds out the true secret of the opposition of our government to his schemes in the hostility of the North to the South, and the extension of her social institutions.

The Attorney General of Tennessee and a member of the Legislature of that State also made speeches on the occasion, endorsing the cause and views of Gen. Walker.<sup>17</sup>

The Nashville *Banner* said that "Much enthusiasm pervaded the audience, which was frequently given bent to in the loudest applause." It then saw fit to explain that "Gen. Wm. Walker, at his old home, and among his early friends and associates, is most highly esteemed. His motives are believed to be patriotic and philanthropic, and he has the sympathies of the people in his noble and heroic struggles to carry forward his cause to a glorious consummation."<sup>18</sup>

The *New York Herald*, naturally, saw it in a different light:

. . . General William Walker, the "little grey eyed man" of Nicaragua . . . was at the last accounts speechifying at Nashville. When he shall have finished his campaign on the stump he will probably disappear like Kossuth, or "turn up," like Micawber, in Australia; or, per-adventure, take another plunge for his military empire, as the head of some one of the revolutionary and filibustering factions in Mexico.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>"Speech of Gen. William Walker in Tennessee," *Alta*, 4/1/1858, p.1, c.3.

<sup>18</sup>"The Walker Meeting," *Nashville Republican Banner*, 2/23/1858, p.3, c.2.

<sup>19</sup>"General John Calhoun and the Two Walkers," *New York Herald*, 3/1/1858, p.4, c.5.

But, of course, Walker didn't disappear like Kossuth, or "turn up," like Micawber, in Australia, or even go to Mexico. On Monday, February 22d, he left Nashville, and on March 2d arrived in New Orleans on the steamer *Belfast*, from Memphis. He registered that day at the City Hotel, accompanied by Henningsen. The next morning he was at his old quarters and visited Judge McCaleb's court where he "voluntarily" gave bail in the sum of \$4,000 to appear for trial on the 4th Monday in April.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>"Movements of Gen. Walker," *New York Herald*, 3/4/1858, p.5, c.3. Walker had apparently left New Orleans for Nashville before the indictment; hence the delay in posting bond.

## 14. Little Gray-Eyed Man

In his January 7, 1858 message to the U.S. Senate, President Buchanan reiterated in no uncertain terms his firm belief in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny: "It is beyond question," he said, "the destiny of our race to spread themselves over the continent of North America, and this at no distant day, should events be permitted to take their own natural course."<sup>1</sup> To help turn that dream into reality,

Throughout his term in office, Buchanan doggedly pursued the extension of American influence in Mexico. He promoted the schemes of American entrepreneurs to develop a transit across Mexico, tried to acquire Mexican territory, and advocated the establishment of an American protectorate over northern Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

On July 17, 1857, Secretary of State Cass had ordered John Forsyth, American Minister at Mexico City, to start negotiations with the Mexican government for the purchase by the United States of "Lower California, together with nearly all of Sonora, and that portion of Chihuahua which is

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<sup>1</sup>"Message from the President on Nicaraguan Affairs," *New York Herald*, 1/8/1858, p.1, c.2.

<sup>2</sup>Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), p. 155.

north of the parallel of thirty degrees."<sup>3</sup> Cass directed the Minister to offer twelve million dollars, and authorized him to increase the sum if necessary. But Mexican President Ignacio Comonfort foiled Buchanan's plan when he declared that no Mexican territory would be alienated, preventing Forsyth from even presenting the offer.

The revolution broke out once more in Mexico in December, 1857. Comonfort went into exile on January 21, 1858, and General Félix Zuloaga took over as *de facto* President in the capital. Supreme Justice Benito Juárez became constitutional President of Mexico elsewhere.

As news of the fighting crossed the Rio Grande, manifest-destiny enthusiasts saw visions of Mexico disintegrating and thought the time had come for the American eagle to snatch the remains of her southern neighbor. Their upbeat mood in Washington was captured in January, 1858, by a New Orleans *Picayune* correspondent:

The exciting topics before Congress, and before the country are, as all the world knows, "Filibusterism in Central America: and Niggerism in Kansas." The president is between the two fires. He favors the pro-slavery constitution in Kansas; and the whole North becomes a hornet's nest about his ears. He rather sustains Paulding in the arrest of Walker; and the entire South that "honey-fuggled" him yesterday turns tail and stings him to-day.

Between the two, Mr. Buchanan is not sleeping on a bed of roses. But while he is determined to *quash* the movement of private filibusterism, or as Haskin of New

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis Cass, Secretary of State of the United States, to John Forsyth, United States Minister to Mexico (Washington, July 17, 1857), William R. Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, Volume IX--Mexico, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1937), p. 234.

York boldly said in the House the other day, while he goes against the "petty larceny" attempts of Walker, he is preparing to "astonish the natives" and consolidate the people by an act of "national grand larceny" in accordance with the spirit of the Ostend manifesto, and the devil's doctrine of "our manifest destiny."

Mexico, Cuba and Central America are down in the programmed. The hungry, aggressive spirit of the Democracy must be appeased. The "malignant philanthropy" of Anglo-Saxonism must have an outlet. The great army of the unemployed *sans-culottes* are "spoiling" for a fight. The American eagle is longing to lay an egg in the Cordilleras mountains; and Comonfort is "tipping her the wing."<sup>4</sup>

With Nicaragua "a dead cock in the pit," Bennett in the *Herald* advised the filibusters to look at Mexico, where "events are ripening to their hand."<sup>5</sup> In Texas, "professional filibusters" were "gathering in large numbers on the Rio Grande, preparatory to engaging in the Mexican revolution," and it was expected that Walker would "turn his attention that way."<sup>6</sup>

When former Mexican President Ignacio Comonfort arrived in New Orleans on February 10, and resided in exile in Louisiana, rumors spread that he had joined forces with Walker for a descent on Mexico: "Comonfort will furnish the necessary funds to raise an army, and Gen. Walker is to take the command."<sup>7</sup> Both Walker and Comonfort denied having any connection with each other, the latter in a vehement protest

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<sup>4</sup>"Letter from Washington," *New Orleans Picayune*, 1/19/1858, p.1, c.6.

<sup>5</sup>"The News from Mexico," *New York Herald*, 1/19/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>6</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 1/15/1858, p.4, c.6.

<sup>7</sup>"Our New Orleans Correspondence," *N.Y. Herald*, 3/30/1858, p.3, c.5.



to the Editor of the New York *Herald*:

New Orleans, April 9, 1858.

. . . I must, therefore, declare to you, in most positive terms . . . that I know neither Mr. Walker nor any of the persons mentioned; that I am entirely ignorant of their intentions, and that no one has made me the offence of speaking to me of projects and arrangements in which no man of my principles can take part. . . . I. Comonfort.<sup>8</sup>

The *Herald's* New Orleans correspondent insisted that the rumors had a basis of truth; that Comonfort had approached Walker and the latter had turned him down:

I notice that Gen. Comonfort has addressed you a letter, denying any complicity with Walker in a projected expedition to Mexico. I am able, through information which I have gathered in Mexico and here, to set Gen. Comonfort and Gen. Walker right before the public in this matter. About Walker's ideas and wishes there has been much error; but about those of Gen. Comonfort the *HERALD* was not so far wrong as he would have the public to suppose from the tenor of his card. If there was any error in the statement of complicity between Comonfort and Walker, it was the acts of the former that gave rise to it.

After his arrival here Gen. Comonfort went to see Walker, and had one or two conferences with him. The latter did not seek Gen. Comonfort. What the result of these conferences was, is not known; but Walker says that he is now under obligations to Comonfort for relieving him, through his published card, of any suspicion of complicity with the ex-President to facilitate

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<sup>8</sup>"Letter from General Comonfort," *New York Herald*, 4/19/1858, p.4, c.2.

his return to Mexico.

As for General Walker, he still adheres to his determination to return to Nicaragua.<sup>9</sup>

In a pamphlet published in New Orleans in April, 1858, Walker defended his determination to return to Nicaragua instead of going to Mexico:

. . . It seems to be admitted by all, that Mexico and Central America are to become integral parts of the Union. . . .

But Mexico and Central America contain nearly, if not quite, ten millions of people . . . a mixture in various degrees of white, Indian and negro. . . .

It is hardly necessary to say that the American race will never consent to live in terms of political equality with the Indian, negro and mixed races of this continent. . . . And if we assume, as we must, that the natural relation between the American race and the present inhabitants of Mexico and Central America is one of inequality, we must conclude that such a relation can only be established by force. . . . To Americanize any portion of territory inhabited by a mongrel people, you must conquer them. . . .

. . . and it is to the interest of the whole Union that the Americanization of the tropical portions of the continent should be effected for the benefit and under the direction of the slave-holding States.

. . . the safety and permanency of the confederacy depend on the political equality of the South. . . . it is clearly the duty of the patriot to seek some means of assuring the South that she is not to become a feudatory of the Northern States. Such assurances can be furnished only by favoring the policy which will permit

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<sup>9</sup>"The Filibusters at the South," *New York Herald*, 5/5/1858, p.8, c.1.

the inter-tropical regions of the continent to be Americanized under the influence of Southern ideas and Southern habits. . . . unless some such means be adopted, the dignity and honor of the South will require her to secede from the confederacy.

. . . if the white and negro races in the relation of master and slave, were placed in the midst of the Indian population which constitutes the bulk of the people in Mexico and Central America, the Indian would, in a few generations, be absorbed by the negro race and disappear. . . . that portion of the mixed race ambitious of political equality would emigrate.

. . . Considered merely in a commercial point of view, and as a means of communication between the Atlantic and Pacific States of the Union the Isthmus of Nicaragua is far more valuable than either Panama or Tehuantepec.

. . . independent of commercial reasons, there are political causes for choosing Nicaragua before all the States of Mexico and Central America for the initial point in the Americanization of those regions.

It is a rule of military prudence to attack the enemy at the point which offers the least means of resistance; and . . . no where has the ruling class so weak a hold on power as in Nicaragua. . . .

. . . it is best for all parties interested—for the people of the South, for the Union, and for Mexico and Central America—that the Americanization of these tropical countries should be accomplished in conjunction with the spread of negro slavery. It becomes, therefore, a most important point to ascertain the region most naturally adapted for, and, therefore most ready to receive this institution. Nobody familiar with the climate, the soil, and the productions of the territories between the Rio Grande and the Escudo de Veragua, could fail to select Nicaragua for this purpose. It is, in fact, better adapted than even Cuba for this sort of labor, and its facility of approach from the sea would be an advantage for the supply of negroes. . . .

He who wisely sees in the facts of history the Omniscient Providence, cannot fail to acknowledge . . . that a Wisdom above and beyond that of man has wrought out . . . the emigration of the passengers by the *Vesta* from San Francisco to Nicaragua, in the month of May, 1855. Invisible to man, but clear to the eye of Omniscience, there were then put in operation causes which contained the solution of the political problem of this generation--the Americanization of Mexico and Central America. The way has been pointed out; are there not wisdom and spirit enough in the country to follow the path which lies before the youth and manhood of this age?<sup>10</sup>

But Walker's argument failed to convince Southern leaders or to move public opinion, and he gained no followers. By then, the country had gained enough wisdom to steer the youth and manhood away from the path marked by the *little gray-eyed man of destiny*, as Bennett dubbed him. Even Henningsen paid no attention to his "President" and went to Monterrey to tender his services to rebel General Santiago Vidaurri, hoping to form a Sierra Madre Republic in northern Mexico. A New York *Herald* correspondent reported:

New Orleans, May 8, 1858.

The filibuster elements here have been for some time in a state of effervescence and decay, and at the present time there seems to be no acknowledged head or leader. Walker still clings to his Nicaraguan hopes; but, with the exception of a small circle, out of which the New Orleans Junta or Directory is constituted, he has few adherents. Henningsen has gone off to Mexico in search of a chance to help save that unfortunate republic, and

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<sup>10</sup>[William Walker], *Mexico and Central America: The Problem and its Solution*, (n.p. [New Orleans], April, 1858).

Lockridge has carried his faded laurels to some safer obscurity.<sup>11</sup>

Among Walker's "few adherents," the correspondent mentioned:

- "Pierre Soulé, ex-Senator, ex-Minister, and ex-anything else that he formerly was."

- "Colonel Slatter . . . a person of some means, with more heart than judgment. Furnishes the money for his more scheming but less wealthy compeers."

- "J.C. Macdonald, an intelligent, active man, formerly a clerk in C.K. Garrison's office in San Francisco . . . is now in New York, as the secret agent of Walker, with plenipotentiary powers."

- "George Ward, lessee of the Louisiana State Prison."

- "McClure, who formerly was part proprietor of the New Orleans *Crescent* with Walker."<sup>12</sup>

On May 5, 1858, Walker left New Orleans in the company of his old friends J.E. M'Clure and J.D.B. De Bow, to attend the Southern Commercial Convention at Montgomery, Alabama. Upon arrival, he was invited to sit in the convention. During five days of sessions, much time was occupied in debating the practicability of reopening the African slave trade. On the fifth day, J.D.B. DeBow and U.S. Senators John A. Quitman and Wm. L. Yancey presented pro-Walker resolutions which were all adopted by a vote of 77 to 0. On publishing the news, the New Orleans *Picayune* commented:

. . . But it must be acknowledged that these annual

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<sup>11</sup>"Our New Orleans Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 5/17/1858, p.2, c.3.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

gatherings of those who would be considered Representative men of the South, are likely to effect little further good, and possibly may be cause of much harm, when, neglecting the specific object of their mission, they degenerate into merely sectional political assemblies.<sup>13</sup>

Others agreed. The Milledgeville, Georgia *Federal Union* observed:

We had little hope that the Southern Commercial Convention would do anything practical or useful. We attended it two days and saw who, and what men, were at the head of it. That satisfied us. They were men who are always at the extreme of every question they take hold of. They can never be other than blind guides, and will ruin the country if they are to lead.<sup>14</sup>

Walker had become so irrelevant in the South, that "Nicaragua resolutions" condemnatory of his arrest by Commodore Paulding, presented by his supporters before the Louisiana Legislature at Baton Rouge and the Texas Legislature at Austin, lay on the Senate table in each place for weeks on end, "without any probability of their passage."<sup>15</sup> In Alabama, they passed the Senate only to be defeated in the House by a vote of sixty-four to thirteen.<sup>16</sup>

His trial in New Orleans was postponed several times. When he appeared in Court on the fourth Monday in April, U.S.

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<sup>13</sup>"Southern Commercial Convention," *New Orleans Picayune*, 5/20/1858, p.1, c.5.

<sup>14</sup>Reproduced by the *New Orleans Picayune*, 5/25/1858 p.1, c.7.

<sup>15</sup>"Louisiana Legislature," *New Orleans Picayune*, 2/19/1858, p.1, c.6; "Later from Texas," *Ibid.*, eve., p.1, c.5.

<sup>16</sup>"The Paulding Resolutions Defeated in Alabama," *New York Herald*, 2/9/1858, p.8, c.2.

District Judge McCaleb told him to come back on the fourth Monday in May. According to the *New York Herald* correspondent, the "pretext" for the postponement was the absence of Judge Campbell, of the Supreme bench; "but this is only a pretext, the truth being that the government is not ready to go on, and probably never will be sufficiently ready to go on to a conviction."<sup>17</sup>

Judging from previous cases, observers knew from the start that the Walker trial would be a farce. For instance, Bennett wrote: "We are to have another of those humbugs called filibuster trials in New Orleans, where General Walker, Colonel Anderson and several others have been indicted by the Grand Jury for infringing the Neutrality laws. It requires no skill to foresee how this farce will end."<sup>18</sup>

When Walker appeared in court on the fourth Monday in May, the trial was again postponed on account of the absence of Judge Campbell. On his next appearance, it was postponed again, and attachments were issued for absent witnesses. Finally, with Judges Campbell and McCaleb presiding, and the Circuit Court room crowded with citizens, the trial started and the Jury was empaneled on May 31st. On June 2d,

. . . the District Attorney, for the United States, commenced in the morning, his argument before the Court. He was followed by A. Schmidt, Gen. Walker, himself, and Mr. Soulé, whose speeches were not closed until near three o'clock. Judge Campbell delivered a long and able charge to the jury, bringing before them the law bearing upon the case, and lucidly summing up the evidence.

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<sup>17</sup>"The Filibusters at the South," *New York Herald*, 5/5/1858, p.8, c.1.

<sup>18</sup>"The Indictment of General Walker," *New York Herald*, 2/6/1858, p.4, c.3.

The jury, after being out some time, announced the impossibility of agreeing, when they were discharged.<sup>19</sup>

Ten of the jury were for acquittal and two for conviction. The *Picayune* commented: "This case has terminated much as might have been expected. The evidence was placed before the community by the press when the alleged offence was committed. Every man who read the daily papers had long ago made up his mind, and the case has consequently comparatively little interest at the present time."<sup>20</sup>

Soulé moved for a new venire, in order to secure a speedy retrial of the case. The Judge promised to consider the suggestion. Next day, the District Attorney entered a *nolle prosequi*. Ultimately, on June 12th, 1858,

. . . This long-pending case of Gen. Walker and Col. Anderson, was this morning disposed of. Judge Campbell having required Gen. Walker to furnish bonds in the sum of \$3000, and Col. Anderson in the sum of \$1500, as a surety that they will not, within a reasonable space of time, engage in any filibustering expedition against the State of Nicaragua, &c. Finally, it was decided that the parties furnish their own recognizances for the amounts in question, which was done, and they went their way.<sup>21</sup>

The farce was over, and the "little gray-eyed man of destiny" went his way, with his phantom of Nicaragua in his breech pocket, to immediately engage in another filibustering expedition.

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<sup>19</sup>"The Courts," New Orleans *Picayune*, 6/3/1858, p.8, c.1.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>"The Courts," New Orleans *Picayune*, 6/12/1858 eve., p.4, c.1.



## 15. The Little Black-Eyed Man

Walker's second expedition against Nicaragua produced an unintended beneficial effect. The report of his invasion of the river brought about an immediate cessation of hostilities between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, formalized at a "Peace Agreement" signed in Rivas on December 8, 1857. In essence, Costa Rica then suddenly accepted what Juárez and Cañas had agreed upon in July, defining the border between both countries as it remains today.

Upon Anderson's evacuation of Castillo, General Máximo Jerez occupied the fort with one hundred Nicaraguan soldiers. He left 400 men at Fort San Carlos and kept additional forces on the steamers. Proceeding to San Juan del Norte, Jerez went on board the *Wabash* and in the name of President Martínez thanked Commodore Paulding for the service rendered to his country by removing Walker and his filibusters from its soil.

Nicaragua officially relieved Paulding "from all blame or responsibility in landing at Punta Arenas for the arrest of William Walker and his lawless followers." In a letter dated at Managua, March 31, 1858, President Martínez told the Commodore that the government had commissioned Jerez to express to him "the most profound gratitude for an act so illustrious. Humanity and civilization have already approved the judgment most honorable to you, and posterity will repeat this judgment more eloquently and more admiringly. It is history alone that judges of the actions of men with a full

appreciation of their value."<sup>1</sup>

The Congress [National Assembly] of Nicaragua tendered Paulding a public vote of thanks, a sword of honor, and twenty caballerías (roughly, 2,000 acres) of the national lands to be settled at his option. The sword's hilt and scabbard are solid gold chased in the most elaborate style, studded with over a dozen large amethysts, with the Nicaragua coat of arms embossed thereon, and the inscription: "LA REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA AL COMODORO H. PAULDING." On the blade: "POR SU NOBLE COMPORTAMIENTO EN PUNTA DE CASTILLA EL 8 DICIEMBRE DE 1857."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the U.S. Government promptly removed Paulding from his command in disapproval of his resolute act. During the remainder of the Buchanan administration, the Commodore who dealt the death blow to filibusterism went into retirement and was officially ignored. Moreover, he was left to face alone "annoying lawsuits by those whose plans he had foiled."<sup>3</sup>

Central Americans saw in the treatment of Paulding the ugly face of the Colossus of the North. When Paulding's marines had flagrantly violated international law by invading deep into the San Juan river to attack the Roman Rivas Nicaraguan patriots, thwarting them "In the act of defending their country," in December, 1855 (Book 4, p. 193), not a single government officer, Senator, or Congressman noticed it in Washington; "but when it is all the contrary--when they

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<sup>1</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 12/29/1858, p.4, c.5.

<sup>2</sup>Rebecca Paulding Meade, *Life of Hiram Paulding*, (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1910), p. 285. The U.S. Congress authorized Paulding the acceptance of the sword in 1862, though declining to allow him to receive the grant of land (*Ibid.*, p. 278).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 200. In one of those suits against Paulding, at the Court of Common Pleas, in New York, Walker's crony Charles J. Macdonald claimed damages to the amount of \$50,000--\$30,000 for the seizure of the steamboat *Charles Morgan*, and \$20,000 for his own arrest and detention ("Suit Against Commodore Paulding for Damages for the Seizure of General Walker and his Men," *New York Herald*, 7/31/1858, p.5, c.2).

chase away a parcel of pirates who have invaded the territory of a friendly nation, without regard to the laws of God or man, then they talk."<sup>4</sup>

The horizon darkened for President Martínez when the new American Minister to Nicaragua, Gen. Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, arrived in Managua on February 2d, 1858, introduced by the following advance notice:

Gen. Mirabeau B. Lamar of Texas has been chosen Minister to Central America by Mr. Buchanan. The choice fixes the meaning of the windy denunciations of Fillibusterism embodied in the President's Message. If there be one man more intensely Fillibuster than any other of our countrymen, Gen. Lamar is that man. Originally a Georgia politician of the Nullifying school, he was early involved in the intrigues which had for their object the theft of Texas from Mexico and its conversion into a Slave State. His efforts to dismember Mexico did not cease with the success of that conspiracy, but have continued ever since. Lamar is the intimate crony of Soulé, T.J. Green, Cazneau and their clan, who have made Fillibustering their trade for the last dozen years, and is hand and glove with Fillibuster Walker in all things. He goes to Central America with one absorbing idea--to help Walker by every means in his power.<sup>5</sup>

And on his way from Washington to Managua, via Aspinwall

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<sup>4</sup>"News from Central America," *New York Herald*, 2/28/1858, p.1, c.3.

<sup>5</sup>"Gen. Mirabeau B. Lamar," *New York Tribune*, 12/19/1857, p.4, c.5. Lamar had whirled to fame in Texas in 1836: Within ten days after he arrived and joined the army as a private, he had been raised to the rank of colonel and next day became a hero leading the cavalry at the battle of San Jacinto. Before another ten days had passed, he became Secretary of War, and commander-in-chief of the armies within two months; vice-president within four months, and then "president of the new state he had helped to carve out of a Mexican province." Sister M. Baptista Roach, "The Last 'Crusade' of Mirabeau B. Lamar," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* Vol. 45 (1941), p. 147.

and Greytown, Lamar made a special trip to Panama City to see his old friend, Col. Henry L. Kinney, who was then reactivating his old Mosquito scheme.<sup>6</sup> Naturally, President Martínez and many other Nicaraguans saw in the new envoy an evil *Ministro filibustero*, worse yet than Wheeler had been.

Lamar's mission--to secure the ratification of the Cass-Yrisarri treaty by the Nicaraguan government--was doomed to fail at the start, as reported by an American correspondent on the scene: "Any treaty which may be made with the United States will always be considered by the immense majority of this people, and especially by the deputies and the members of the government who belong to the reigning party, only as a mere *ruse* of the United States to entrap them, to cheat them, to filibuster them, and finally to swallow them up."<sup>7</sup>

The Cass-Yrisarri treaty seemed designed to do just that:

- It granted to American citizens "full liberty freely and securely to come with their ships and cargoes to all places, ports and rivers" of Nicaragua, "and to remain and reside in any part thereof."

- It ordained that, on the Nicaraguan Atlantic and Pacific transit ports, "no tonnage or other duties shall be imposed or levied . . . on the vessels of the United States, or on any effects or merchandise belonging to citizens or subjects of

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<sup>6</sup>"Our Aspinwall Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 1/28/1858, p.5, c.4. A few weeks later, Kinney at the head of a dozen men took possession of Greytown. They captured the Mayor, lowered the Mosquito and raised the Nicaraguan flag. Kinney pretended he did it for Nicaragua in virtue of the Cass-Yrisarri treaty, and that he acted by authority of Commodore C. H. Kennedy of the U.S. frigate *Jamestown*, in the harbor. When the Greytowners resisted and turned the tables on the marauders two days later, Commodore Kennedy came on shore and arranged the filibusters' surrender, tendering them asylum on board his ship. One of Kinney's men, George R. Gliddon, was said to be Lamar's secretary at the Legation in Managua. "Col. Kinney at Greytown," *New Orleans Picayune*, 5/30/1858, p.1, c.6; U.S. Commercial Agent B. Squire Cotrell to Minister Lamar (San Juan del Norte, April 30, 1858), Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

<sup>7</sup>"Nicaragua," *New York Herald*, 3/27/1858, p.1, c.4.

the United States."

- It insured that "The United States shall also be at liberty to carry troops and munitions of war . . . without obstruction by the authorities of Nicaragua, and without any charges or tolls whatever."

- it gave the United States unrestricted permission "to employ military force for the security and protection of persons and property passing over" Nicaraguan territory.<sup>8</sup>

Martínez sent the treaty to the National Assembly, recommending its rejection. Lamar demanded its approval, sternly warning Nicaragua of "the fatal consequences which would inevitably flow from the indulgence of unfounded prejudices against my government and the rejection of its proffered friendship."<sup>9</sup> The Assembly obliged: on March 26th, the Leonese Democrats appeared to carry the day for Lamar when the Assembly approved the unmodified treaty by the margin of only one vote. But, to become valid, the document needed the President's signature, and all assemblymen knew that Martínez had vowed he would never sign what he considered to be *the deed of sale of his country*.<sup>10</sup>

Martínez kept silent. When government courier Louis Schlessinger (of Santa Rosa fame) left Managua on March 29th with a thick bundle of papers for Washington, publicly proclaiming that the President had employed him as bearer of

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<sup>8</sup>"The Cass-Yrisarri Treaty," *New York Herald*, 4/28/1858, p.3, c.3.

<sup>9</sup>Mirabeau B. Lamar to Lewis Cass (Managua, March 27, 1858), Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives, Washington, D.C. Yrisarri, too, advised Nicaragua to ratify the treaty. As told by Lamar to Cass, in his correspondence with the Nicaraguan government Yrisarri "endeavored to enforce the idea that Nicaragua has nothing to expect but aggression, either from the Government of the United States or from the Filibusters. He says there is no remedy; and recommends the adoption of the treaty as the least of two evils, preferring that this country should be filibustered by our government than by private marauders." Lamar to Cass (Managua, February 26, 1858), Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Jerónimo Pérez, *Obras Históricas Completas*, p. 601.

the treaty, Lamar erroneously thought that the document had received the President's exequatur. Elated, he accompanied Schlessinger to the lake steamer at Granada, and gave him a letter for Captain Sands, of the *Susquehanna*, at San Juan del Norte, urging the U.S. Navy to facilitate the bearer's journey to Washington.

A few days afterwards, Lamar learned that he had been deceived and that the treaty was still in the hands of President Martínez, unsigned by him. Proceeding at once to the seat of the government, Lamar vented his chagrin with anger against President Martínez and all Nicaraguans. American newspapers divulged the caustic wit of their diplomat's undiplomatic outburst: "Our Minister's rage at the deception that had been used towards him knew no bounds. So indignant was he that he upbraided the President personally for his bad faith. Lamar, it is said, quotes from the Psalms of David: "Lo! I have said in mine haste, all men are liars," but he adds: "If David had lived in Nicaragua, he might have said it at his leisure."<sup>11</sup>

President Martínez reacted "boiling over with patriotism," and on April 10 issued a proclamation to the Nicaraguan people "and to all the people of Central America," exhorting the union of the five republics in order "to resist and defeat the common enemy." Without mentioning its name, he left no doubt that the Colossus of the North was the enemy:

Our race and our name are about to encounter the greatest of dangers. Vandalism, which even now maintains its threatening attitude, has invaded us in the midst of our confidence, as you have seen, has insulted our hearths, has burned our towns, and outraged our independence. Inasmuch as these things have occurred,

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<sup>11</sup>"Important from Central America," *New Orleans Picayune*, 6/1/1858, p.1, c.5.

and new outrages are being prepared, it appears to me to be a crime for us to sleep so profoundly, remaining divided when we should increase our strength and unite those elements of resistance to cause our rights to be respected, or to die without seeing the last days of our country.<sup>12</sup>

Lamar's rejoinder came on the 17th: he called upon Dr. Rosalío Cortés, Nicaraguan Minister of Foreign Relations, "to know the meaning and the object" of the proclamation, which Lamar considered "a violent document, vindictive in its character, and equivalent to a declaration of war" against the United States. Minister Cortés "tried to apologize for it; but his apologies were not satisfactory" to the American envoy.<sup>13</sup>

Around that time, renewed rumors (from Mobile and New Orleans) of a forthcoming Walker raid circulated through Nicaragua; articles in American newspapers denounced President Buchanan's connivance with Walker (See excerpt in Appendix H); Walker and his followers spoke clearly about the Buchanan administration's involvement in their filibustering schemes.<sup>14</sup> And then a little black-eyed Frenchman, Monsieur Felix Belly, showed up in Costa Rica, proffering Europe's support to Central America in the war against the "Vandals of Anglo-Saxon origin" from the North.

Belly was a writer in the office of the *Pays* newspaper, in Paris. His interest on Nicaragua stemmed from frequent

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<sup>12</sup>Enclosure to despatch No. 9, dated May 26, 1858 from Legation at Managua, Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

<sup>13</sup>Lamar to Cass (Managua, April 28, 1858), Microfilm M-219-11.

<sup>14</sup>A letter from filibuster Captain James M. Little, dated at Mobile, March 4, 1858, stated: "The Walker trial will take place on April 1st. He will be acquitted, and the complicity and duplicity of old Buchanan will be proven. Soulé, Henningsen and others will testify under oath about the decisive talks they had with him and other members of his cabinet. The cause is not dead; only asleep, and will awaken with renewed vigor." *Gaceta de Nicaragua*, [Managua] 5/1/1858, p.6, c.2.

conversations with its former Minister at Washington, Don José de Marcoleta, then in France. Belly's views had come through loud and clear in an article he published in 1856 in the Paris *Revue Contemporaine*, in which he undertook to explain to the people of France "the unjust, deceitful, and outrageous conduct pursued by the United States in their relations with the several States of Central America."<sup>15</sup>

Allegedly directed by Marcoleta, who was in turn supposedly supported "from the Emperor's private purse," Belly was sent to Costa Rica and Nicaragua by the Parisian banking firm Millaud & Co., to secure a contract for building the transoceanic canal.<sup>16</sup> In March, 1858, he crossed the Atlantic and travelled to San José. Upon arrival, on March 29th, he "ostentatiously and on all occasions" denied any relation with Napoleon, but the more he denied it, the better he "succeeded in convincing the Central American officials that he really is the confidential agent of the Emperor."<sup>17</sup>

Costa Rica welcomed him accordingly: "His advent was the occasion of the most servile adulation from every quarter. Balls were given him, at which Costa Rican beauty and chivalry seemed to vie with each other in homage and felicitations to their guest, in whom one would think, they discover a deliverer from all their evils." Mora's government newspaper put Belly's presence in the perspective of Central America's confrontation with the United States: "The New

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<sup>15</sup>"Mr. Felix Belly and his Antecedents," *New York Herald*, 6/1/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>16</sup>"Our Paris Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 7/20/1858, p.2, c.3. Napoleon III's interest in the Nicaragua canal dated from 1844, when Nicaraguan envoy Don Francisco Castellón (afterwards "Provisional Supreme Director") visited him in prison at Ham. Upon his release, Napoleon wrote a 79-page treatise on the subject, including data on Central American trade, distances, etc.: Prince Napoleon Louis Bonaparte, *Canal of Nicaragua* (London: Printed by Mills & Son, 1846).

<sup>17</sup>"Our London Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 7/20/1858, p.2, c.2.



World resounds with the applauses that are given to the chivalric Frenchman, and the oppressor trembles in seeing before himself a new and unlooked for foe."<sup>18</sup>

Presidents Mora and Martínez promptly arranged for a meeting in Rivas with the Frenchman. At Puntarenas, on his way to San Juan del Sur, Belly received the Costa Rican President on board a French frigate lying in the bay, "giving him a salute of 150 guns, and honoring him with a very splendid banquet--to which end he had the vessel decorated in the most magnificent way, uniting the banners of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and extending over them the protection of the French colors--those colors which everywhere carries the honor and glory of the nation charged with the civilizing of the world."<sup>19</sup>

Presidents Martínez and Mora met in Rivas on April 23d, ostensibly to exchange ratifications of the treaty of limits between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, which they did on the 26th. During several days, both presidents and their advisors (Máximo Jerez, Nazario Toledo, Gregorio Juárez, and others) carried on secret negotiations with Belly. They produced two documents, respectively titled "Declaration" and "International Convention," which pointedly were: "Done at Rivas, in triplicate, on the first of May, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-eight, the anniversary of the capitulation of Walker. Signed and sealed with the seal of the two Governments in the house which has been the headquarters of the National Army."<sup>20</sup>

By the International Convention, Nicaragua and Costa Rica

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<sup>18</sup>"Our Panama Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 5/31/1858, p.1, c.2.

<sup>19</sup>"Senor Don Felix Belly in Central America," [From *El Centro Americano*, Granada, May 11], *New York Herald*, 6/29/1858, p.5, c.1.

<sup>20</sup>"Declaration" and "International Convention," Enclosures to dispatch No. 18, dated July 26, 1858, from Legation at Nicaragua, Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

granted to Messrs. Felix Belly and P. M. Millaud & Co., of Paris, an interoceanic canal grant for the duration of ninety-nine years.

The Declaration is based on the premise that since a new invasion of American filibusters again threatened the Independence of Nicaragua and Costa Rica; that said invasion was being prepared under the patronage of the U.S. Government as a means of taking possession of Central America if the latter refused to surrender herself to the United States; that all the official agents of the United States in Nicaragua had been the accomplices and auxiliaries of the Invaders; that Minister Lamar had boasted in public of imperiously laying down the ultimatum, either taking legal possession of Nicaragua by the ratification of the Cass-Yrisarri treaty or a new invasion of filibusters organized at Mobile under the American banner, etc., etc.--considering all this--Presidents Martínez and Mora solemnly declared that they placed the canal grant under the patronage of civilized Europe, and placed the independence and nationality of Nicaragua and Costa Rica under the guarantee of France, England, and Sardinia, the three Powers that had recently guaranteed the independence and the nationality of the Ottoman empire and had defeated Russia in the Crimean War.

Mission accomplished, Belly visited the ruins of Granada, "this imperishable monument of the barbarism of the modern Vandals."<sup>21</sup> Minister Lamar, in Managua, had no idea of what had transpired in Rivas. He imagined that Belly had been "in secret negotiation for a right or charter to construct a railroad from San Juan del Norte to some point of the Pacific."<sup>22</sup> He first heard of the Declaration and Convention in

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<sup>21</sup>"Senor Don Felix Belly in Central America," [From *El Centro Americano*, Granada, May 11], *New York Herald*, 6/29/1858, p.5, c.1.

<sup>22</sup>Lamar to Cass (Managua, May 28, 1858), M-219-11.

July, when he read both documents in the *New York Herald*, copied from the London *Times*.

The *Herald* called the Declaration "impudent," a gratuitous insult to the United States, "the most solemn and gratuitous insult ever given to a nation."<sup>23</sup> In Washington, the administration was "indignant at the treachery, double dealing and ingratitude of these miserable little republics."<sup>24</sup> In Nicaragua, Lamar wrote to Cass:

I have no comment to offer upon this document. It speaks for itself. It is an additional evidence of what I have previously written to your Department respecting the deep malignity and lying propensities of this miserable people.

. . . my indignation and disgust towards this perfidious and profligate people, is so great that I feel constrained to express the sincere desire and hope that some prompt, energetic and decisive measures may be taken to convince them that they are responsible for their conduct, and that if they are determined to be enemies, they will be treated as enemies.<sup>25</sup>

And the news from the Old World promptly dashed the Central American dreams of European assistance or protection. Monsieur Belly had been "thrown overboard": dispatches from the French government to its ambassador in Washington, directed him to assure the Buchanan administration "in the most unqualified terms that neither publicly nor privately has Mons. Belly any authority whatever from the French government, and that it does not sympathise

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<sup>23</sup>"The Belly Intrigues in Central America--Impudent Declaration of Presidents Mora and Martinez," *New York Herald*, 6/18/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>24</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 6/19/1858, p.4, c.5.

<sup>25</sup>Lamar to Cass (León, July 26, 1858), M-219-11.

In his plans, either politically or commercially."<sup>26</sup>

Fearing the wrath of the Colossus, President Martínez then returned to the Legislature the Cass-Yrisarri treaty, recommending its approval, although with substantial modifications. On June 28th, the Legislature approved the treaty with the changes desired by Martínez, the most important being:

- that on the Atlantic and Pacific transit ports, the government of Nicaragua shall impose and levy those tonnage and harbor dues which may be agreed upon between the two governments.

- that the United States, *after previous notice to the government of Nicaragua*, shall be at liberty to carry troops and munitions of war, *always provided that they be destined for a place within the territory of the United States, but not if they be destined to nations friendly to the republic of Nicaragua, or to the Spanish American republics.*

- that the United States may employ military force for the security and protection of persons and property passing over Nicaraguan territory only at the request of the government of Nicaragua, that this force shall come with that exclusive object, and it shall be withdrawn as soon as, in the judgment of the government of Nicaragua, it becomes unnecessary.

- that the government of the United States shall prevent the formation in said States of expeditions or armaments against Nicaragua, even under pretext of aiding any of the parties which may exist in the country.

Immediately signed by President Martínez, the modified Cass-Yrisarri treaty was placed in the hands of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary Máximo Jerez, to convey to Washington.

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<sup>26</sup> "The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 6/25/1858, p.5, c.1.

## 16. Transit Rogues' Gallery

On his diplomatic mission to Washington, Jerez also had to arrange Transit matters in New York. Both the Costa Rican Webster-Harris grant to Morgan & Garrison and the Nicaraguan Yrisarri-Stebbins grant to White had lapsed for lack of compliance. For months on end, the "New York operators in the transit business--Commodore Vanderbilt, Commodore Morgan, Commodore Garrison, Commodore Webster, Commodore Harris, Commodore White, Commodore Allen, and all the other commodores," had been "intriguing and squabbling among themselves."<sup>1</sup>

The wrangling "commodores" had brought into action the "most wanted" rascals in the Transit rogues' gallery, such as the notorious confidence men Parker H. French and W. R. C. Webster. Two leading factions had emerged. On top, the one led by Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, "the 'vulture' of the Accessory Transit Company, as he is kindly designated."<sup>2</sup> The other, apparent loser, led by Joseph L. White, "Jack Falstaff White, the Jolly Silenus of the Transit, astride of the dead ass of the Canal Charter."<sup>3</sup>

The Webster-Harris grant had lapsed in September, 1857

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<sup>1</sup>"The Mission of Monsieur Belly--A Canal Across the Isthmus," *New York Herald*, 7/7/1858, p.4, c.3.

<sup>2</sup>"The Central American Conspiracy," *New York Tribune*, 12/19/1857, p.6, c.1.

<sup>3</sup>"Nicaraguan Affairs," *New York Tribune*, 7/8/1858, p.5, c.1.

when Morgan & Garrison neglected to pay President Mora the \$250,000 they had promised. Thereupon, "a scheme was concocted" by which Morgan & Garrison joined forces with White to take possession of the Transit through the Yrisarri-Stebbins grant.<sup>4</sup> White's Canal Company purchased several ocean steamers from Garrison & Morgan, to be "paid for in time bonds."<sup>5</sup> In November, Garrison advertised the speedy opening of the new Nicaragua line, and Wall Street stockjobbers offered for sale at large profits a quantity of White's Canal Company shares acquired for pennies but whose par value they proclaimed should be \$10,400 each.

Acting as Garrison & Morgan's agent, Capt. George F. Cauty then sought from President Mora a temporary lease of the lake and river steamers, promising that they would pay what they owed under the Webster-Harris contract after the current money market crisis was over. Another Garrison & Morgan agent, Charles J. Macdonald, went with Walker on the *Fashion* and actually took possession of the steamers captured by Anderson, but lost possession immediately when Commodore Paulding captured the filibusters.

In November, 1857, it was known in Costa Rica that "in case Walker succeeded, . . . Garrison and Morgan would meet him with their steamship at San Juan del Norte," and that it was "absolutely certain that they were plotting with the filibusters."<sup>6</sup> The Transit magnates had given ex-Filibuster Minister Parker H. French the contract for furnishing the steamers with wood, and French "was giving champagne

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<sup>4</sup>"The Nicaragua Transit Negotiations," *New York Herald*, 11/5/1857, p.4, c.5.

<sup>5</sup>"The Central American Conspiracy," *New York Tribune*, 12/19/1857, p.6, c.1.

<sup>6</sup>"Central America," *New York Tribune*, 12/29/1857, p.6, c.1.

suppers in New York on the strength of it."<sup>7</sup> Allegedly, separate from Walker's, "a new scheme of fillibusterism" had been organized by French, and "set on foot under the auspices of Garrison and Morgan":

To cover this scheme more effectually, French had received a contract from the latter for supplying the Lake and River steamers with wood, a business which requires the employment of a large number of men; these men were to take possession of the Isthmus; and, as it would be impossible of the United States to prevent the contractors from shipping wood-cutters from New-Orleans, it was believed that men enough could be got down in this way to make Messrs. Garrison and Morgan de facto sovereigns of Nicaragua and Costa Rica--these gentlemen preferring this mode of spending their money to the regular and legitimate ways of making loans and paying transit dues.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, President Mora refused to lease the river and lake steamers to Cauty, and the Canal Company couldn't open the route by January 26, 1858, as the Yrisarri-Stebbins contract demanded. The Company blamed its failure on the unforeseen incursion of Walker's filibusters into the river, and through the good offices of Yrisarri secured from Nicaragua an extension of its charter to June 15. But when on that date the Company had no steamers on the lake or river, and had shown no signs of preparing to start operations, the Nicaraguan government denied an additional extension to the Stebbins grant and declared it void.

By then, White's fearful rival, Commodore Vanderbilt, was

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<sup>7</sup>"Later from Costa Rica," *New Orleans Picayune*, 11/28/1857 eve., p.1, c.5.

<sup>8</sup>"Central America," *New York Tribune*, 12/29/1857, p.6, c.1.

In the field. The forfeiture of the Webster-Harris grant had left W.R.C. Webster out in the cold, and he had promptly offered his services to the Commodore. On November 5, 1857, Webster left New York aboard the *Northern Light* for Aspinwall, accompanied by Vanderbilt's son-in-law, Daniel B. Allen. They were on their way to Costa Rica and Nicaragua; the press chronicled their departure, and their arrival at San José and at Managua:

San José, Dec. 1, 1857.

The most important incident to report . . . is the arrival in this city of Mr. W.R.C. Webster, accompanied by Commodore Vanderbilt's son-in-law, Mr. D.B. Allen.

Webster . . . received a most hearty and friendly reception from our excellent President, and has been closeted with him daily for hours. . . .

I have ascertained from reliable official authority that Webster has accomplished his object so far as Costa Rica is concerned, . . . Rumor says Webster and Allen leave for Nicaragua immediately.<sup>9</sup>

Granada, Nicaragua, Jan. 2, 1858.

The several Richmonds of the Transit route negotiations have congregated at Managua. The fight there is waxing hot and strong. Messrs. D.B. Allen and W.R.C. Webster have been hard at work on behalf of Commodore Vanderbilt for the last three weeks.

The stumbling block in their way has been the grant given to H.G. Stebbins; but as the Vanderbilt party has the entire country in their favor, from President Martínez downwards, it is more than probable that the Commodore will still be the winning horse.

We all know here that Messrs. Stebbins and White represent no wealth; and as Master Joe is thoroughly

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<sup>9</sup> "Costa Rica," *New York Herald*, 12/29/1857, p.1, c.6.



well hated in Nicaragua, I am inclined to believe Webster and Allen will yet upset Stebbins' and White's apple cart.<sup>10</sup>

The Stebbins grant stipulated that Nicaragua could not contract with any other person or company while it remained in force. Martínez rejected Vanderbilt's proposal; Allen returned to New York empty-handed; Webster went back to San José. On February 12th, he bought the lake and river steamers from Costa Rica for Vanderbilt and his son-in-law Horace F. Clark, on credit, offering to pay \$90,000 of which Costa Rica would give him back \$30,000 for himself "in attention to the services that Mr. Webster rendered to the Central American cause against the filibusters."<sup>11</sup>

Rushing back to Granada, on February 24th Webster took possession of the lake steamer *San Carlos* "in the name of the Commodore who claims 'to know no defeat.'"<sup>12</sup> On the 25th, Webster apprized the Government of Nicaragua, for the contract stipulated that Nicaragua's consent was needed to finalize the sale. Martínez asked for time to decide on the matter. On the stormy night of the 27th, the *San Carlos* was blown on shore by a norther at a place called Las Lajas, near

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<sup>10</sup>"Our Granada Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 1/28/1858, p.5, c.1. In the letter of instructions, dated Nov. 3, 1857, Vanderbilt and his son-in-law Horace F. Clark told Webster to "solicit and procure for us" an exclusive right of transit from Nicaragua and Costa Rica for at least fifty years, but preferably "in perpetuity." Among other conditions, Vanderbilt demanded that disputes should be settled by arbitration in New York, where his Company would keep the books. Moreover, that "No tax or impost must be laid upon us or our property. . . . Portions of land must be ceded for us . . . We must have the free use of the old Accessory Transit route, and the piers and wharves of San Juan del Sur." *New York Tribune*, 7/8/1858, p.5, c.2.

<sup>11</sup>Guerra 4566, Archivo Nacional, San José, Costa Rica.

<sup>12</sup>"Nicaragua," *New York Herald*, 3/27/1858, p.1, c.4.

Virgin Bay, and was "totally lost."<sup>13</sup>

The steamer was not a "total loss" for Webster. Ever resourceful, on March 2d he entered his "most solemn protest" before Minister Lamar because of Nicaragua's failure to consent to the sale contract, and claimed "a complete and legal exemption . . . from compliance with any and all obligations of whatever nature or kind contained in said contract."<sup>14</sup>

On March 8, Webster obtained from Nicaragua a contingent Transit contract for Vanderbilt & Clark, to be used in case the Stebbins-White Canal Company should not go on and put the route in operation. Thereupon, he reopened negotiations with Col. George F. Cauty, representing Costa Rica. On March 31st, he and Cauty signed an amendment to the steamers sale in which Costa Rica allowed a deduction of \$22,500 on account of the *San Carlos* damages.

Next, he went to San Juan del Norte, where with five men he tried to take possession of the river steamers held under the care of Joseph N. Scott, but the old Transit Company agent wouldn't give up any Transit property unless somebody paid him first what the Company owed him for his services.<sup>15</sup>

President Mora approved the Cauty-Webster amendment to the steamers sale on April 30th, at Rivas, and Webster then signed four drafts totalling \$32,100 due on July 15th, in favor

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<sup>13</sup> "Late and Interesting from Nicaragua," *New Orleans Picayune*, 4/1/1858 eve., p.1, c.6. The San Juan del Norte correspondent commented: "Some say it was the gale that did the job, while others, and with more truth I believe, aver that she was run on shore purposely by some parties interested to keep the transit closed. The *San Carlos* was a fine iron boat, of from 500 to 600 tons, and cost \$60,000."

<sup>14</sup> Enclosure to dispatch No. 6, dated March 27, 1858, from Legation at Nicaragua, Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Alejandro Bolaños Geyer, *El Testimonio de Scott* (Managua: Colección Cultural Banco de América, 1975), p. 294.

of Costa Rica, to be paid by Vanderbilt.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, through an agent in New York, Dr. James D. Whelpley, Webster sold to Joseph L. White the river and lake steamers that he was buying from Costa Rica for Vanderbilt. It was a "paper sale" only, which Webster arranged in order to dispose the property at a profit, "in case Mr. Vanderbilt did not wish to purchase (which at that time that gentleman had good reasons of his own for not doing)."<sup>17</sup>

Vanderbilt's reasons for not wishing to purchase at that time are obvious: he had sent a "special agent" to Nicaragua, William L. Miller, to take possession of the steamers and all other Transit Company property. On March 17, just ahead of Webster, Miller arrived at San Juan del Norte, from New York, with an authorization from Vanderbilt, dated March 5. He got hold of the steamboats *Ogden* and *Morgan* before Scott expelled him on the 18th. He went to Aspinwall and returned on the British mail steamer on the 27th; he seized the boats again on April 1st, with the help of two armed companions; Scott expelled him again, with the help of his friends.<sup>18</sup>

On May 6, 1858, Webster secured an "Act of Incorporation" at Managua for Vanderbilt and his son-in-law Horace Clark.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>"1858--Abril--Visita del Excmo. Sor. Dn. Juan Mora Pdte. de Costa Rica, á la República de Nicaragua," Ms., Archivo Nacional, San José, Costa Rica.

<sup>17</sup>"Dr. Whelpley's Reply to the Canal Company," *New York Tribune*, 7/5/1858, p.4, c.6.

<sup>18</sup>Dispatches from B. Squire Cotrell, U.S. Commercial Agent at San Juan del Norte, to Secretary of State Lewis Cass. Microfilm Publication T-348-3, The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>19</sup>The "Act of Incorporation" reads: "By these presents the Republic of Nicaragua forms, establishes and constitutes in a legal and collective body in perpetuity, under name to be hereinafter designated, Messrs. C. Vanderbilt and Horace F. Clark, and their associates, whoever they may be now or hereafter, in order to give complete effect to the object and design of the concession and contract, made and conceded by the said Republic on the said 8th day of March of this year, to the parties therein

Contingent Contract and Act of Incorporation in hand, he then hurried on muleback to Granada, in the *Virgin* across the lake, in a bongo to San Juan del Norte, in the British mail steamer to Aspinwall, and in the United States Mail steamship *Moses Taylor* to New York, where he landed on May 29th.

In the wake of Miller's failure, Vanderbilt was delighted to see Webster and his documents. On June 1st, Webster accompanied the Commodore to Washington, "to make some arrangements with the government." Webster told the press that he had purchased the Transit steamers for Vanderbilt and therefore wanted the U.S. government "to protect him in his rights."<sup>20</sup>

Webster immediately rescinded his contract with Joe White, who was in Washington, too, "urging upon General Cass another grand naval bombardment of San Juan del Norte, but the Secretary is not ready to listen to him." Great efforts were then made to induce Vanderbilt to join the Canal Company, but the foxy Commodore wouldn't think of it, for "he wants to know who will have to stand the brunt of the two million contingent stock that has been issued."<sup>21</sup>

Vanderbilt sent Webster and Allen back to Nicaragua. Since there was no steamer to San Juan, on June 17 they sailed on the United States Mail steamship *Philadelphia* from New York to Havana. They had some heavy boxes with them, said to contain "one hundred thousand dollars in specie for the President of Nicaragua. As soon as they were off, a friend at New Orleans, stimulated by a telegraphic message from

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mentioned . . . made by the Nicaraguan Government in favor of Cornelius Vanderbilt and his son-in-law, Horace F. Clark, acquiesced on their behalf by their agent, William Robert Clifford Webster, at Managua, on May 6, 1858." "The New Nicaraguan Charter," *New York Tribune*, 6/29/1858, p.4, c.5.

<sup>20</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 6/3/1858, p.4, c.5.

<sup>21</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 6/6/1858, p.4, c.6.

Vanderbilt, started a special steamer, the *Granada*, to meet the son-in-law and Webster at Havana, and convey them to San Juan."<sup>22</sup>

The Vanderbilt camp then provided to the press their own version of the Charter that Webster had secured from Nicaragua for the Commodore:

Vanderbilt . . . has succeeded in obtaining privileges of an extraordinary character. The conditions of his *Charter* give him entire possession of all the boats in the river, all the wharves, piers, buildings, roads, and all other property on the line of Transit for only \$32,000. He also has assigned to him the 185,000 acres of land in fee simple, which were before included in the charter of the Canal Company, together with all other rights and privileges given to that company, and others still more important. All this goes to Vanderbilt for the term of fifty years, with a chance of perpetuity, and all that he pays for this immense property, worth, in working order, an annual income of \$1,500,000, is \$32,000 out and out, a capitation tax of \$1.50 on passengers, and a loan to Nicaragua of \$100,000, already sent down, on which he receives 7 per cent, and which is paid back to him in annual installments of 7 per cent, as a sinking fund. This loan, too, is secured to him--interest and sinking fund--by a mortgage on the aforesaid capitation tax; so that he actually pays himself his own interest and sinking fund. The petty passenger-tax of \$1.50 a head is, in fact, the only serious liability.<sup>23</sup>

That was propaganda. \$32,000 was precisely the fee that

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<sup>22</sup>"The Atlantic and Pacific Transit Routes," *New York Herald*, 8/24/1858, p.2, c.3.

<sup>23</sup>"The New Nicaraguan Charter," *New York Tribune*, 6/29/1858, p.4, c.5.

Vanderbilt owed Costa Rica, due on July 15, as down payment for the steamers. The \$100,000 loan offer was a transparent bribe for Martínez to grant whatever Vanderbilt desired. Minister Yrisarri instantly denied that Nicaragua had issued any such charter or grant. Up to the last dispatch he had received from Managua, dated May 30, he had not been informed "that any contract has been made with Mr. Vanderbilt or any other person whatever."<sup>24</sup>

The *Granada* arrived at San Juan del Norte on June 28th with only three passengers: Allen, Webster, and Transit mule contractor Henry Gottel, serving as interpreter. Besides the \$100,000 in American gold they were said to carry in three heavy bags, they had "a costly saddle, valued at \$100, as a present to Martínez, and a number of fancy dressing cases to be distributed to the Cabinet Ministers, worth \$50 apiece, as a bribe."<sup>25</sup>

On June 30th, the three passengers and baggage sailed up the river on the *Morgan*; several days later, they arrived at Granada on the *Virgin*. They proceeded to Managua, and informed President Martínez that Vanderbilt had altered the Conditional Contract signed by Webster in March. They showed the President the new contract drawn up by the Commodore. Allen privately offered Martínez a \$50,000 bribe for his signature, but under the condition that the contract "must be accepted without alteration, as Mr. Vanderbilt would not be a party to it in any other form."<sup>26</sup>

Martínez did not grant what Vanderbilt wished. Neither the costly saddle, nor the fancy dressing cases, nor the

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<sup>24</sup>"The Nicaragua Transit Route," *New York Tribune*, 6/30/1858, p.5, c.1.

<sup>25</sup>"Affairs in Central America," *New York Herald*, 8/13/1858, p.1, c.4.

<sup>26</sup>"Nicaragua," *New York Tribune*, 8/2/1858, p.3, c.1.

\$50,000 or \$100,000 could move him. Vanderbilt's agents returned to the river with their American gold, accompanied by Generals Martínez and Jerez and a company of soldiers.

On July 12, at Castillo, Martínez and Allen signed a contract by which Nicaragua "kept the use and possession of the river and lake steamers that Webster had contracted as Vanderbilt's agent," and Nicaragua would retain possession "as long as there are threats of a filibuster aggression." Vanderbilt wouldn't pay the drafts he owed Costa Rica until after Nicaragua gave him possession of the steamers. Should Nicaragua and Vanderbilt reach a future agreement on the Transit, Vanderbilt would buy the steamers; but if no Transit agreement was reached, the steamers contract that Webster had signed in his name "would be rescinded."<sup>27</sup>

Martínez remained at Castillo, fortifying the river against the anticipated visit of the filibusters; Allen, Webster, Gottel, Jerez, his secretary Jerónimo Pérez (Nicaraguan chronicler of the Walker War), the Nicaraguan bard of the war, Juan Iribarren, and James Thomas, bearer of dispatches to Washington from Minister Lamar, continued on the *Morgan* to San Juan, where they embarked for New York on board the *Granada*.

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<sup>27</sup>"Contrato," *Gaceta de Nicaragua* [Managua], 8/7/1858, p.3, c.1.





**wreck of the San Carlos**  
*"blown on shore by a norther at a place called Las Lajas"*  
(p. 157)



## 17. Weathering the Storm

When the *Granada* arrived in New York from San Juan del Norte, on July 29, 1858, passenger Máximo Jerez made the front pages in the papers. Some journals stated that the new Nicaraguan envoy would not be received, because of President Martínez's declaration appended to the Belly contract and of his trifling with the Cass-Yrisarri treaty.

In response to Presidents Mora and Martínez's Rivas Declaration, on July 25th Secretary of State Lewis Cass had sent a "comprehensive and categorical despatch" to Minister Lamar: "the broadest and boldest announcement of an American policy for the American continent that has ever been enunciated."

The "four great and comprehensive principles" which were intended to "stand as firmly as the rock of ages" were:

1. that the routes of transit across the American Isthmus must be open and free to the commerce of the whole world.
2. that no European protectorates shall be established in the anarchical nations of this continent.
3. that the lives and interests of American citizens abroad must and shall be protected.
4. that the executive decrees of ephemeral Presidents in the Spanish-American States will not be recognized as law when they conflict with the legally acquired rights of American citizens.

Coupled with "these great principles" was "the significant announcement" by General Cass that the U.S. government was

"determined to put a stop to the abuse of weakness which has so long characterized the course of the ever changing rulers in the Spanish American republics; and that if those countries cannot maintain governments that will recognise and abide by their obligations under the law of nations, the American people and the American government will take the doing of justice to their citizens into their own hands."<sup>1</sup>

To show that this was no idle threat, Cass instructed Minister Lamar to immediately press claims against Nicaragua and Costa Rica for the "outrages" committed on American citizens during the Walker war; the Secretary of the Navy ordered war vessels to Nicaraguan ports in support of Lamar, to bring the Nicaraguan government to terms; and Cass sent the following warning to President Martínez, telling him what he thought would happen if the Buchanan administration did not oppose the filibusters:

The most careless observer of passing events, must be convinced that if military expeditions met no opposition in the United States from the public authorities, the spirit of adventure, originally called into action by Nicaragua itself and fostered by subsequent occurrences, would send to that country without delay bands of enterprising men, who would soon obtain control of its affairs and change the whole course of its policy--probably of its destiny.<sup>2</sup>

Lamar set to work without delay, diligently taking

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<sup>1</sup>"The American Policy for the American Continent Developed," *New York Herald*, 10/1/1858, p.4, c.2.

<sup>2</sup>Lamar omitted the warning about filibusters in his communication to the Nicaraguan government, because that warning "would be misconstrued by this Government, and made a pretext for renewing its clamors about the absorbing power of the Anglo-American race--the great, everlasting theme of our enemies." Lamar to Cass, Managua, August 26, 1858, Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

depositions and presenting numerous claims for indemnification before the authorities at Managua and San José. Claims against Nicaragua ranged from \$110,000 for the murder and robbery of John Lawless and others at Granada on October 12, 1856, to \$44.35 for the unpaid salary of J.J. Clotey, a Texan hired by W.R.C. Webster in April, 1858 to watch over the wreck of the steamer *San Carlos* in the Lake.<sup>3</sup>

Eight American warships converged on Nicaragua "with the object of coercing the Nicaraguan government into the ratification of the Cass-Yrisarri treaty."<sup>4</sup> The steam frigate *Saranac* (6 guns), the sloop-of-war *Decatur* (16 guns), and the screw steamer *Merrimack* (40 guns) made their presence felt at San Juan del Sur and Realejo, in the Pacific; the sloops-of-war *Saratoga* (20 guns), *Jamestown* (22 guns), and *Savannah* (24 guns); the screw steamer *Roanoke* (40 guns), and the storeship *Release* did likewise at San Juan del Norte, in the Caribbean.

In July, Minister Lamar had asked Secretary of State Cass for a war vessel to visit San Juan del Sur or Realejo: "without this, it is idle to think of bringing this government to any terms"; and he had urged his own government "to take possession at once of the strong holds along the line of the Transit route as a measure of protection to whatever company that may open the same, and also for the security of the lives and property of the Americans now in the country." He wanted U.S. forces to occupy forts Castillo and San Carlos,

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<sup>3</sup> Among many others: a proposed claim against Nicaragua for the destruction of former Minister John H. Wheeler's personal effects, "in value of more than \$2,000," lost in November, 1856 during Henningsen's burning of Granada; another proposed claim against Nicaragua, amount to be determined, for "the boy Chesterfield the reputed slave of Miss Eleanor E.P. Callahan," who had been liberated and had joined the Nicaraguan Army. Enclosures to dispatches No. 27 and No. 31 from Legation at Nicaragua, Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

<sup>4</sup> "News from the West Indies," *New York Herald*, 11/9/1858, p.1, c.1.

for he considered the possession of those points "almost indispensable."<sup>5</sup>

Although Lamar got eight gunboats instead of one, U.S. forces did not occupy the Transit strongholds as he wished. The Marines did threaten to land at San Juan del Sur, in August, when Mitchell Green and Caleb S. Thurlow, two American butchers in town who did business with the U.S. Navy, were arrested by the local authorities for violation of some municipal rules. Captain Kelly, of the *Saranac*, in the harbor, promptly ordered several boatloads of Marines to go ashore, but at the last moment the Nicaraguan authorities opted to release the prisoners rather than see the foreign troops impose "justice" with their guns.

At Realejo, the *Decatur* commander actively drilled the crew in the use of small arms, boat exercises, and target shooting, "to the great edification of the Nicaraguenses."<sup>6</sup> In the words of a *Decatur* sailor: "Our vessel is expected to await here her orders relative to what part she is to perform in the negotiations now pending between our government and Nicaragua."<sup>7</sup>

With fresh memories of what the *Cyane* had done at Greytown, and what Walker and Henningsen had done at Granada, Nicaraguans became highly alarmed:

#### Symptoms of Alarm in Nicaragua.

[From *El Centro Americano*, of Granada, Oct. 9.]

The news from the United States is of a very alarming character. According to it the American government is disposed to open the Transit line not only without the consent of Nicaragua, but even without its

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<sup>5</sup>Lamar to Cass, León, July 26, 1858, M-219-11.

<sup>6</sup>"The News," *New York Herald*, 11/30/1858, p.4, c.1.

<sup>7</sup>"Affairs in Nicaragua," *New York Herald*, 11/30/1858, p.1, c.1.

being notified of it. Instructions given to General Lamar are spoken of, which are to be presented to the government of Nicaragua, in order to inspire it with such a fear that it will be impossible for it to refuse anything whatever to the American government and speculators.

The system of frightening Nicaragua, for the purpose of wresting from her a concession or a prorogation, have been, from the time the first negotiations concerning the Transit were opened, followed with the greatest consistency, and not without success; and even now that filibusterism is dead, no more to rise again, she is threatened with a new invasion of Walker, doubtless in order that General Martínez shall hasten to adopt the charitable counsel given to him by the Know-Nothing newspapers of the American Union, "to resign his power and to make place for a new President and a more liberal policy, capable of overcoming the pending difficulties between the two governments." . . .<sup>8</sup>

Lamar's gunboat diplomacy had begun to bear fruit in September, when Presidents Mora and Martínez meekly made amende for the "insulting declarations" in their Rivas Manifesto, disavowing it and disowning all belief in the allegations it contained against the honor and conduct of the United States. But, of course, in their letters of apology to Lamar, they didn't record how the startling claims backed by menacing gunboats had "convinced" them of the "truth":

San José, Sept. 16, 1858.

Distinguished Sir--Governments, like individuals, are liable to err in their deliberations; . . . Being now convinced of the groundlessness of those sentiments [uttered in the declaration of the 1st of May last], I hold myself to be put under the duty of freely and spon-

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<sup>8</sup> *New York Herald*, 11/30/1858, p.1, c.2.

taneously renouncing them, and of expressing the full confidence which I entertain in the good faith and upright intentions of the President of the United States.

...

JUAN R. MORA.

Managua, Sept. 25, 1858.

My Dear Sir--From my private correspondence with Don Juan Rafael Mora, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and from the conviction of that gentleman of the error into which we have fallen in the declaration of the 1st of May, ultimo, in regard to the worthy President of the United States, and of his respectable Minister to the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, I am authorized to declare frankly to your Excellency that that act, although not an official one, was drawn up under the influence of weighty, although ill-grounded, suspicions.

Being now convinced of the truth, I deem it to be the duty of Justice freely and spontaneously to disavow those sentiments, and to express the full confidence which I have of the good faith and right intentions of the President of the United States. . . .

TOMAS MARTINEZ.<sup>9</sup>

Lamar then hoped to achieve the main goal of his mission. On October 10, he wrote to Flag Officer James Mc.Mc.Intosh, on the *Roanoke* at San Juan del Norte: "I do not yet despair of accomplishing an amicable and satisfactory solution of the present difficulties with these Republics, and have no doubt that your presence in the vicinity with the force under your command, will materially facilitate this desirable end."<sup>10</sup> Lamar's "satisfactory solution" necessarily meant that

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<sup>9</sup>Enclosures to dispatches No. 25 and No. 31 from Legation at Nicaragua, Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

<sup>10</sup>Enclosure to dispatch No. 27 from Legation at Nicaragua, Microfilm Publication M-219-11, The National Archives.

Nicaragua was to yield and accept the original Cass-Yrisarri treaty. And the State Department expected envoy plenipotentiary Máximo Jerez to arrange its acceptance.

As soon as he landed in New York, Jerez had started his mission by establishing rapport with President Buchanan in informal conversations at the resort of Bedford Springs, where the President was vacationing. He then went to Washington, and on August 16th, he called at the State Department, but did not get to see Secretary Cass. He had to wait several weeks before the Secretary finally received him on October 2d. The press chronicled that, at two meetings with Cass, Jerez "disavowed, in the fullest manner, the intention of his government to insult or give offence to the United States in the Belly negotiations, or in language used with respect to the government or people of this republic."<sup>11</sup>

Thereupon, on October 5th, President Buchanan formally received Jerez as especial envoy from Nicaragua. According to reports, it was understood that he had "full powers to arrange the difficulties with this country, and to arrange for the acceptance of the Cass-Yrisarri treaty, with or without certain unimportant modifications."<sup>12</sup>

But when Jerez called on the State Department, on October 13, and presented his instructions from his government, "of which a translation was immediately made," it was discovered that he was empowered only to act, "In order that the amendments made by the Assembly of Nicaragua to the treaty may be substantially carried into effect." The Buchanan administration rejected those amendments as unacceptable. Following another long interview with Secretary Cass, on the 14th, Jerez's mission was "generally considered at an end."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>"Our Special Washington Despatch," *NY Herald*, 10/5/1858, p.4, c.5.

<sup>12</sup>"Our Special Washington Despatch," *NY Herald*, 10/6/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>13</sup>"The General Newspaper Despatch," *NY Herald*, 10/15/1858, p.4, c.6.

On the 16th, Secretary Cass "emphatically informed" Jerez that it would be useless to hold further communication with him, and that "whatever may be done by France or any other foreign Power," the U.S. government "will protect the Transit route to the fullest extent and at all hazards."<sup>14</sup> This, in fact, protracted instead of closing the Jerez-Cass controversy, since the U.S. government decided to protect the Stebbins-White Transit grant, disregarding the Nicaraguan government decision that it was void for lack of compliance.

Since his arrival in New York, in July, Jerez had repeatedly informed the holders of the Stebbins-White Transit grant that it had lapsed. Jerez then tried to negotiate a new agreement with Vanderbilt, but the Commodore evinced no interest in the terms Nicaragua offered. It was widely reported that the Pacific Steamship Company continued paying him an stipend, which had been increased to \$56,000 a month, to keep the Nicaragua line closed. It was alleged that Vanderbilt had sought to gain possession of the lake and river steamers through Webster and Miller only to keep everybody else from opening the line.<sup>15</sup>

Jerez subsequently (on October 27) signed a Transit contract with a Philadelphia company represented by Messrs. J.C. Van Dyke and Francis B. Wallace (called the Vandyke or Wallace-Vandyke grant), and sent it to Managua recommending its approval by the Legislature.

The American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company (Joseph L. White, family & friends), holder of the Stebbins-White grant given by Yrisarri, finally showed signs of

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<sup>14</sup> "The General Newspaper Despatch," *NY Herald*, 10/19/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>15</sup> And when Martínez rejected the \$100,000 Allen offer, the *New York Herald's* Aspinwall correspondent commented: "The greasers are not so stupid as Vanderbilt took them to be; they have no intention to suffer him to shut up the road at present." "Additional from New Granada, *New York Herald*, 8/13/1858, p.1, c.3.



preparing to open the Transit when on August 23d an old steamship, the *Hermann*, sailed from New York for San Francisco, via Cape Horn, allegedly to run on the Pacific leg of the route. In September, the Company sent three steamboats from New York to San Juan del Norte, for service on the San Juan river and Lake Nicaragua: the old *American Eagle*, freshly overhauled and renamed *Cass-Yrisarri*; the *Catherine Maria*, named by the Company in honor of the wife of its Vice President; and the *Liberty*, formerly plying between New York and Astoria, renamed *Laura Frances* in honor of the wife of Joseph L. White.

Prior to the sailing of the steamboats *Cass-Yrisarri* and *Laura Frances*, the Company invited the press and selected guests for excursions down the bay, during which "The good things of the table were provided in profusion, including a most copious supply of drinkables." Joseph L. White drank "to the health of the Nicaraguan Minister, General Yrisarri," who in turn concluded his speech "by giving the health of the President of the United States, and success to the American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company."<sup>16</sup>

Yrisarri was a Canal Company stockholder, by virtue of a generous gift of shares from Joseph L. White in recompense for having signed the Stebbins-White Transit grant and the Cass-Yrisarri treaty. It was alleged at the time that Yrisarri signed those documents simply because "he spied the occasion propitious for acquiring several thousand gold eagles."<sup>17</sup> His siding with White in the Transit controversy led him to break with the Martínez administration, and in December Jerez replaced him as Nicaragua's Minister resident in the United States.

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<sup>16</sup>"Opening of the Nicaragua Transit Route," *New York Herald*, 9/6/1858, p.2, c.4.

<sup>17</sup>"Hicimos en nuestros últimos números . . . ," *Crónica de Costa Rica*, 12/2/1857, p.3, c.2.

On October 8, 1858, while special envoy Jerez waited to present his papers at the State Department, White and Yrisarri arrived in Washington, "to consult with the government concerning the affairs of the Transit route."<sup>18</sup> As a result,

... while the administration will not support any claim that is not based on justice, it regards, with the lights before it, the Canal Company as being entitled to its support, especially as that company has evinced the determination and ability to open again that most important route. The position of the government is, that the route shall be opened, and that it believes this company has the right and is in a situation to do it. Here is the matter in a nut shell. Vessels of war have been sent out to each side of the Isthmus to see these views carried out, three on this side and two on the other. It is understood they are subject to the orders of General Lamar, our minister at Nicaragua, to execute the principles laid down in General Cass's despatch, as heretofore published in the *Herald*.<sup>19</sup>

On October 23d, White's Canal Company announced the opening of the line of travel to California via Nicaragua. The steamship *Washington*, formerly of the Bremen line, was ready to leave New York for San Juan del Norte on the 6th of November. The steamboats *Cass-Yrisarri*, *Catherine Maria*, and *Laura Frances* would convey the passengers along the river and lake, and the *Hermann* would be waiting at San Juan del Sur to take them to San Francisco.

By the end of October, Joseph L. White and his Canal

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<sup>18</sup>"Our Special Washington Despatch," *New York Herald*, 10/10/1858, p.4, c.6.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

Company friends were in high spirits, boasting of the U.S. Government protection in the matter of operating their line, and stating that 700 passengers had been engaged for the steamer *Washington's* initial voyage. But the news from San Juan del Norte, reaching New York early in November, revealed that the Canal Company lake and river steamers were not ready to carry passengers across Nicaragua:

UNITED STATES SHIP SAVANNAH,  
SAN JUAN DE NICARAGUA, Oct. 15, 1858.

The *Cass-Yrisarri* is aground on one of the rapids in the San Juan river, awaiting a rise to reach the lake. The *Catherine Maria* is still here, but apparently totally unfit for the purpose she is intended, as she draws too much water to navigate the river, and can carry but few passengers. Col. Childs, the Transit Company's engineer, is here, and evidently frightened at the prospect of a steamship load of passengers being dropped upon him from New York; and he without the means of transporting them to the Pacific coast. He is well aware that if any number of passengers are landed in Nicaragua, where every citizen of the United States is looked upon as a filibuster by the masses, there will be great tribulation.<sup>20</sup>

Jerez instantly issued a "Manifesto," deeming it "an act of justice to the citizens of the United States, who might be misled into purchasing tickets, to caution all such" not to take passage on the *Washington*, because the route across Nicaragua was "not yet in a condition for the conveyance of passengers and freight."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>"Affairs in Nicaragua," *New York Herald*, 11/4/1858, p.5, c.1.

<sup>21</sup>"Manifesto of Senor Jerez, the Special Envoy from Nicaragua," *New York Herald*, 11/3/1858, p.5, c.1.

The U.S. government "severely condemned" the Jerez Manifesto. The State Department sent Jerez an official note "pointing out the impropriety of his course, and expressing the dissatisfaction with which the Department regards his publication warning the public against purchasing tickets for Nicaragua by the steamer Washington."<sup>22</sup> Secretary of State Lewis Cass personally reiterated his displeasure in a Nov. 9 letter to Joseph L. White.

The *Washington* sailed from New York on November 7, and arrived at San Juan del Norte on the 18th. Its 323 passengers remained on board in the harbor for over a week, unable to proceed, there being no means to take them either across the country or to California had they reached San Juan del Sur. The *Catherine Maria* could not navigate up the shallow waters of the lower San Juan, and the *Hermann* had rounded Cape Horn, touched at Panama, and gone direct to San Francisco.

On November 26th, the *Washington* went on to Aspinwall. 230 passengers crossed the Isthmus on the Panama railroad; 93 returned to New York, unable to pay the additional fare required for travel to California by way of Panama.

Although Secretary Cass didn't acknowledge in public that the Jerez Manifesto had been correct, the State Department thereafter carried on normal relations with the Nicaraguan envoy. The storm blown up by the Martínez-Mora Manifesto had suddenly subsided.

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<sup>22</sup>"The General Newspaper Despatch," *NY Herald*, 11/11/1858, p.4, c.5.

## 18. Generalissimo Joseph L. White

On June 18, 1858, the *Mobile Register* reported that, "fresh from the late trial in New Orleans," Walker was in Mobile, where his presence "was the occasion of a spontaneous and extemporaneous demonstration of our citizens in compliment to and sympathy with himself, his cause and his trials." His friends kindled bonfires in the street in front of his hotel, and spent a few dollars in fireworks and a band of music, which "together with the plaudits of an immense concourse of the people, expressed the public enthusiasm in behalf of the illustrious hero of Nicaragua." Walker availed himself of the occasion to deliver a speech "in his usual earnest, eloquent and felicitous manner, in the course of which he commented with scathing force upon the conduct of Justice Campbell in his late prosecution."<sup>1</sup>

Walker then began a grueling three-week stumping journey through eastern Mississippi and western Alabama, addressing the people on "Nicaraguan affairs," pulling out at each stop the Phantom he carried in his breech pocket. From Mobile he went to Macon, thence to Columbus and to Aberdeen; to Carrollton, Eutaw, Greensboro and Marion; to Selma, and through Wilcox county, back to Mobile. In a letter to Fayssoux from Columbus, he confided: "Travelling and

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<sup>1</sup>"Generals Walker and Henningsen in Mobile," *New York Herald*, 6/28/1858, p.1, c.5.

speaking in this hot weather is more exhausting than on campaign in Nicaragua."<sup>2</sup>

On Saturday, July 10, he was the guest of honor at a public barbecue near Montgomery, Ala., at which U.S. Senator William Lowndes Yancey teamed up with him in delivering appropriate "Nicaraguan speeches."<sup>3</sup> In the evening, at Bethel Church, in Montgomery, Walker and Yancey spoke again, before "five or six hundred persons," and "stirred the southern sentiment of the assemblage to an unusual degree." They and other "extremists" seized upon the occasion for the formation of a "Southern League," obtained a number of signatures and adopted a Constitution as the basis of the organization. They called themselves "The Leaguers of the South," whose motto shall be, "A Southern Republic is our only safety."<sup>4</sup>

During his journey, Walker wrote several letters to Fayssoux, at New Orleans, apprising him that, everywhere, "we have met with friends and encouragement." The trip was "gratifying--at least, as far as feeling is concerned"; but in regard to the essential *material aid*, results had been meager:

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<sup>2</sup>Item 66, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>3</sup>"Fillibusterism," *New York Tribune*, 7/17/1858, p.5, c.1.

<sup>4</sup>"Fillibusterism in Alabama," *New York Tribune*, 7/24/1858, p.5, c.5. Bennett commented in the *Herald* (7/21/1858, p.4, c.4): "Now, in the name of the prophet's dromedary, what does all this mean? We think the happy conjunction of General William Walker and Hon. William L. Yancey, at this Bethel meeting, will afford a [paper torn] the explanation of the whole thing. Walker is the prince of filibusters, whose declared ultimatum, when he was in the zenith of his short-lived dictatorship in Nicaragua, was: 'A great Southern confederacy, based on military principles: a confederacy which was to include all of Central America and Mexico, all the 'cotton States' of this Union, and the island of Cuba. Hon. Wm. L. Yancey is a prince among the secessionists, sharing largely in the manifest destiny ideas of 'the little gray-eyed man.' Thus, the filibusters and the fire-eaters are all of the same kidney, of the same principles, and all moved by the same magnificent delusions of Southern secession, and an independent Southern confederacy, with an unlimited field for Southern filibustering and annexation."

"It is rather up-hill work to collect funds at the present time. In this respect the planters have not done as well as I expected. Our only duty, however, is to persevere until we get means for our work."<sup>5</sup>

Back in Mobile, on July 19th, Walker wrote a letter to the *Register* (transcribed here in Appendix I), in which he furnished "the facts of the case" *proving* that President Buchanan had proposed that Walker go to Mexico instead of Nicaragua. Secretary of War John B. Floyd promptly denied having said anything to Henningsen about Mexico to justify the assertions of Walker in his letter. Floyd's friends suggested that "Henningsen, being a foreigner, might not have understood properly the Secretary, or his imagination might have helped him to such conclusions."<sup>6</sup>

A new avenue for getting means opened for Walker toward the end of July. A friend of Fayssoux, George H. Bowly, had approached the President and Vice President of the Stebbins-White Canal Company, in New York, and they had offered to put Walker "on a footing" in Nicaragua "that will insure success." In return, they wanted from him a Transit concession for "ninety-nine years." The *Hermann* on the Pacific and the *Washington* on the Atlantic, running under the Stebbins-White Transit Company charter, would effectively serve "to hide their ulterior designs."<sup>7</sup>

Bowly was anxious to have the contract closed, but Walker

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<sup>5</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (Columbus, July 1; Montgomery, July 11; Mobile, July 18, 1858), Item 66, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>6</sup> "The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 7/29/1858, p.4, c.6. Early in 1861, President Buchanan requested Secretary Floyd's resignation because of financial irregularities in his department. Charges were made later that he used his office to furnish arms to the South in anticipation of war. At the outbreak of hostilities, he was commissioned a brigadier general in the Confederate service.

<sup>7</sup> George H. Bowly to William Walker (New York, August 6, 1858), Item 9, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

thought that to give the Transit for ninety-nine years was "a pretty hard bargain." Moreover, in his correspondence from New York, old Transit hand Charles J. Macdonald did not appear to have much confidence in Bowly's negotiations. Consequently, although Walker was "not as sanguine" about the deal with the Company as Bowly appeared to be, on August 9 he went to New York himself, to negotiate in person; Major Humphreys accompanied him, "to see the people at Washington."<sup>8</sup>

They went as quietly as possible, telling everybody that they were going to Georgia, for Walker did not care for it to be known that he was on his way to New York. A couple of misleading stories helped to divert attention from the trip. One, a chronicle in the *New York Herald* of a grand meeting at Atlanta, complete with speeches by Walker and Henningsen (while Henningsen was actually in New York); the other, a patent canard from St. Louis about Walker with eight hundred filibusters at El Paso, en route to Sonora, "all mounted, and armed with minnie rifles and Colt's revolvers. They had also eighteen field pieces."<sup>9</sup>

Walker and Humphreys arrived in New York on August 16, and two days later the *Herald* announced their presence in the city. Although their special mission to the metropolis was not made public, the paper surmised that it indicated some movement towards Nicaragua.

When several days later Pierre Soulé arrived in Washington, he was "besieged by the 'manifest-destiny' men, who are confident that his journey in this direction is with a view to conferring with Walker for a forcible opening of the Nicara-

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<sup>8</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (Mobile, July 25; August 5; 9, 1858), Item 66, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>9</sup> "Our Georgia Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 8/20/1858, p.2, c.6; "Are they Filibusters?" *New York Herald*, 8/11/1858, p.4, c.6.



gua Transit Route."<sup>10</sup>

Negotiations went on slowly, because "Bowly's Company" was "not as far advanced as he imagined." After the sailing of the *Hermann* and the *Cass-Yrisarri*, Walker, on September 9, confided to Fayssoux: "Matters are working well. . . . Tell all the Nicaraguans to be of good cheer: the day of our triumph begins to dawn." And after the *Catherine Maria* and the *Laura Frances* had gone to sea, Walker (September 13) rejoiced:

Dear Captain:

I have remained here longer than I expected in order to have the work here well done. Very advantageous arrangements have been made by me since my arrival.

Tell all the Nicaraguans to be ready for moving by the 1st of November. I shall be in Mobile by the 1st of October, and will be able to impart details at that time.

What would you think if I were to go to San Juan del Norte with a passport from Señor Yrisarri?<sup>11</sup>

Having made such "very advantageous" arrangements with the Stebbins-White Company which even included genuine or counterfeit Yrisarri passports for his and his men's entrance into Nicaragua, Walker went back to Mobile, via Cincinnati, Louisville and Nashville. Before boarding the train at New York, he procured the insertion of a false dispatch sent by the telegraphic operator over the wires, "In order to put somebody on a false scent, and to divert attention from his

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<sup>10</sup>From Washington, *New York Tribune*, 8/27/1858, p.4, c.6.

<sup>11</sup>Walker to Fayssoux (New York, August 26; September 9; 13, 1858), Item 66, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

real purposes."<sup>12</sup>

The dispatch stated that Walker, accompanied by Col. Bruno Von Natzmer, had sailed on the *Star of the West* for Aspinwall, on their way to Nicaragua. A rumor soon spread that a large number of filibusters had already sailed on the *Hermann*, via Cape Horn; that Walker would join them at Panama, and would land on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua somewhere between Realejo and San Juan del Sur, thus eluding the American war vessels at those ports. Moreover,

According to statements of filibusters here, the small steamers of the Canal Company which sailed a few days since, have taken out some cannon, rifles and ammunition to San Juan del Norte. If there should happen to be no men of war there when they arrive, they will discharge their cargoes and proceed up the river. Should they meet with interruption, however, they will take the route pursued by Col. Anderson up the Colorado river.<sup>13</sup>

In New York, "as the whole city was thrown into excitement" by the rumors, Bennett, in the *Herald*, dismissed the Walker-going-to-Panama story as "ridiculous and absurd. Walker is a played out man, and his only chance for public notice is the getting up of an occasional rumor that he intends to do something shortly." And when "hundreds of inquirers" besieged the Canal Company office, "Generalissimo White set himself vigorously at work to convince the ardent expectants that he was not a generalissimo."<sup>14</sup>

Back in Mobile, by October 10th Walker had circulars printed "In a neat form, on note paper," and had them sent

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<sup>12</sup>"Personal," *New York Tribune*, 9/25/1858, p.5, c.3.

<sup>13</sup>"New Filibuster Movement," *New York Herald*, 9/21/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>14</sup>"Where Has General Walker Gone?" *N.Y. Herald*, 9/22/1858, p.4, c.4.

to his "special friends all over the country":

Mobile, Oct. 10, 1858.

Sir--You are advised that on the 10th day of November next a vessel will leave this port for San Juan del Norte. She will take any passengers and *freight that may offer for Nicaragua*. If you or any persons in your neighborhood desire to emigrate to Central America, please advise me of it as soon as possible, in order that passage may be secured for you and your companions. It will be well for you to arrive here three or four days previous to the departure. Your obedient servant,

WM. WALKER.<sup>15</sup>

The news reaching Washington soon spoke of bodies of emigrants getting ready in many places in the South, to depart in November from several Southern ports in sailing vessels for San Juan del Norte. It was said that Soulé was the principal planner of the movement, and that societies had been formed to support each its band of emigrants. The scheme was so laid, that there would be little probability of the government being able to interfere with them. In short: Walker will soon return to Nicaragua and "Central America will be Americanized, it is declared, by spontaneous settlement."<sup>16</sup>

On October 27, Minister Yrisarri issued in New York a Manifesto Against Filibusters, warning those endeavoring to invade Nicaragua under the disguise of colonists, that nobody could enter the country without a passport. President Buchanan followed suit in Washington on October 30 with his own Proclamation Against the Filibusters, enjoining upon all officers of the government to be vigilant, active, and faithful

<sup>15</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 10/24/1858, p.4, c.5.

<sup>16</sup>"Our Special Washington Despatch," *New York Herald*, 10/22/1858, p.4, c.6.

in suppressing such illegal enterprises, and exhorting all good citizens to aid the efforts of the public authorities in the discharge of their duties.

Taken aback by the Presidential Proclamation, Walker rushed from Mobile to Washington, where he arrived by the Southern boat at night on November 6, just as the steamer *Washington* was leaving New York for San Juan del Norte and just as the first boatload of filibusters was about to leave Mobile, disguised as colonists. Walker's return to the North at the time it was supposed he would be on his way to Nicaragua took everyone by surprise, and the press naturally paid close attention to his movements in the capital, eager to determine what was going on.

It was then reported that Walker had "a large amount of business to arrange with Joe White. They were closeted together a good deal in close consultation." It became apparent that "the pressing necessities of their cases have made them friends, and a perfectly good understanding has sprung up between them." It was surmised that Walker, anxious to return to Nicaragua, promised White to respect the Stebbins-White contract. White, in turn, "uneasy in consequence of the continued hostility manifested towards his contract by the Martinez and Jerez dynasty," thought that "any change in the Nicaraguan government would be an improvement for him, and consequently he would very gladly see Walker restored."<sup>17</sup>

Walker did not claim that he would go back to Nicaragua

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<sup>17</sup>"Our Washington Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 11/12/1858, p.5, c.1. A couple of years later, Generalissimo Joseph L. White's career ended at Corinto, Nicaragua. On January 5, 1861, in the course of a quarrel with a fellow American named Jonathan Garret, the latter said: "By G--d, I intend to be king, or nothing," and White replied: "You won't be king, I will be king." Thereupon, Garret drew his pistol and shot him. The wound proved fatal and Generalissimo White was buried in Corinto on January 12. Alexander Dimitry to Jeremiah Black (Managua, 1/13/1861), Microfilm Publication M-219-12, The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

as the President of the republic, for his term had expired; but he wished to go back as a private citizen of Nicaragua. He tried in vain to produce the impression that his emigration scheme was a peaceful expedition, and that he had no intention of either violating or evading the neutrality laws. His doings belied his words. Besides his meetings with White, and consultations with fellow filibusters Wheeler, Cazneau and Henningsen; in Washington he consorted with men "hostile to the administration and of the ultra fire-eating secession stamp, such as Soulé, Yancey, De Bow and Heiss."<sup>18</sup>

On November 10th, 1858, Walker went back to Mobile.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

MOBILE, OCTOBER <sup>10th</sup> 1858.

SIR:—

You are advised that on the 10th day of November next, a Vessel will leave this Port for SAN JUAN DEL NORTE. She will take any Passengers and Freight that may offer for NICARAGUA.

If you, or any persons in your neighborhood, desire to EMIGRATE to CENTRAL AMERICA, please advise me of it as soon as possible, in order that passages may be secured for you and your companions.

It will be well for you to arrive here three or four days previous to the day of departure.

Your Obedient Servant,

*Wm Walker*

**Southern Emigration Society**  
"Walker had circulars printed . . ." (p. 182)

## 19. Providential Shipwreck

The Walker movement in the South, then known by such names as "Southern Emigrant Aid Society," or "Southern Emigration Society," had managed to gather only about two hundred men at Mobile by November 10, the time fixed for their departure for Nicaragua. Their sailing was postponed until the 14th, and then to the 23d, for more "emigrants" expected from Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and other neighboring States. They were to travel to San Juan del Norte on the *Alice Tainter*, a ship rated A No.1, of 667 tons burthen, built in New York in 1856, of oak and locust.

The secretary and treasurer of the Emigrant Society, Major Julius Hesse, of the office J. Hesse & Co.--in whose name the steamer *Fashion* had been cleared from Mobile in November, 1857--filed the routine request for the *Alice Tainter's* clearance at the Mobile Custom House. The collector of the port, Thaddeus Sanford, who had been "deceived" by the *Fashion's* false papers a year earlier, delayed his decision pending instructions which he requested from Washington. Upon deliberation at Cabinet level, Secretary of the Treasury Howell Cobb ordered Sanford to deny the clearance.

When the news spread in Mobile, on November 19, that the government had ruled against granting a clearance to the *Alice Tainter*, the fillbusters assembled at the office of J. Hesse & Co. and demanded immediate transportation to San Juan del Norte or that their passage money be refunded. Sixty-eight men newly arrived from Texas and thirty from

New Orleans had swelled their ranks to over three hundred, and, as they filled the entire levee in front of the agents' office, their appearance was rather formidable. The crowd finally dispersed when Deputy Collector Walter Smith assured them that he had advised Hesse to return the passage money to the parties who had paid for their tickets and that a committee had been appointed to arrange a settlement.

Walker had kept out of sight after returning to Mobile from Washington, and had announced "that if his presence with a peaceful expedition was to mar it he would not go with it."<sup>1</sup> He left Mobile for parts unknown on Saturday, November 20th, the same day United States Supreme Court Judge John A. Campbell arrived in town to have the leading "Nicaraguans" examined by the Grand Jury of the United States Circuit Court of the Mobile Judicial Circuit, for the purpose of inquiring into their intentions.

Everybody knew that Walker would be "within calling distance" when and if the "emigrants" arrived at San Juan del Norte; and on Tuesday, November 23d, the prospects of that happening suddenly brightened when filibuster Colonel Edmund H. McDonald brought to Mobile news from Washington that "wonderfully facilitated the movements of the emigrants." It was then reported "that the first lot of emigrants will get off to-morrow, that the vessel will be regularly cleared by the Custom House here, and that each passenger will hold a passport signed by Yrisarri."<sup>2</sup>

But Yrisarri had already handed the State Department the names of all the parties to whom he had furnished passports for Nicaragua. They were all to have sailed from New York on the steamer *Washington*. He had given no passports to anyone sailing from Southern ports. He had furnished the Secretary

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<sup>1</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 11/20/1858, p.4, c.6.

<sup>2</sup>"The Walker Expedition," *New York Herald*, 11/30/1858, p.1, c.2.



of State with the numbers and private marks of all the passports he had issued, and thus the government had it "in its power to prevent the clearance of any vessel for Nicaragua having the suspicion of a filibuster about her."<sup>3</sup>

The authorities immediately declared spurious the passports in the hands of the Mobile travellers, (passports which Walker had obviously obtained as part of his "very advantageous arrangements" with White's Canal Company in New York). A press report from Washington stated that the parties who forged, or otherwise fraudulently obtained those Mobile passports, were suspected, but the proofs were not yet complete enough to warrant publishing their names.

The passports scheme fizzled: the Custom House didn't clear the *Alice Tainter*. Thereupon, on November 28th, Julius Hesse & Co. began refunding their money to the holders of tickets on the vessel, and about two hundred embryonic filibusters, dejected, retraced their steps back home.

Walker reappeared in Mobile on November 30th, as mysteriously as he had disappeared ten days earlier. Summoned before the Grand Jury then in session, he testified for six hours, in two days, answering questions as to his course of life in California, Sonora and Nicaragua. True to form, he bore severely upon the "misstatement of facts" in the proclamation of the President. He was followed on the stand by Col. Bruno Von Natzmer, head of the Commissary Department of the "Walker Nicaraguan Army," who was likewise required to "declare his intentions."<sup>4</sup>

Having also examined Collector Sanford, Deputy Collector Smith, shipping agent Hesse, and other witnesses, the Grand Jury found no bill and dismissed the case on December 3d. Judge Campbell left for Washington the same day. A secret

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<sup>3</sup>"The News," *New York Herald*, 11/23/1858, p.4, c.1.

<sup>4</sup>"The Latest News," *New York Herald*, 12/10/1858, p.4, c.6.

agent named Wilson, of Ohio, who had been spying for the government, left for Washington too, in a great hurry, when a gang of filibusters were about to tar and feather him.

Next evening--Saturday, December 4th--roughly one hundred "emigrants" remaining in town boarded the schooner *Susan* at the lower wharf in Mobile. The *Susan*, 146 tons burthen, commanded by Capt. Harry Maury, was owned by Henry G. Humphries' "Mobile & Nicaragua Steamship Company." According to rumor, the vessel was on a coasting voyage to Key West, where its passengers would transfer to the steamship *Washington*, and proceed to San Juan del Norte.

Shortly after midnight, a towboat tugged the schooner into the bay amid the hearty cheers and well wishes of many friends who had gathered at the wharf to bid the voyagers farewell. The tugboat left them at Dog River Bar, ten miles below Mobile, though still inside the bay.

Sunday morning the *Susan* lay almost becalmed, with only an occasional puff of wind. Captain Maury welcomed the lull as he set to work improvising sailors out of landmen, for all but two of his crew had deserted the vessel when they saw the filibusters come aboard. The story was told that to turn his passengers into sailors, Maury resorted to a novel and ingenious expedient: he tied a playing card to each of the ropes of the vessel. "The orders then ran somewhat in this fashion: 'Haul on the ace of hearts!' 'Let go the king of diamonds!' 'Belay on the deuce of spades!' &c. By this means the extemporized sailors soon got the hang of the ropes, and affairs went on pretty smoothly."<sup>5</sup>

Though not more than twenty-eight years old, Captain Maury was a veteran skipper, having commanded vessels since the age of nineteen. He was well known and popular in

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<sup>5</sup>"Good Jokes Connected with the *Susan's* Passage," *New York Tribune*, 1/11/1859, p.6, c.6.

Mobile, especially since he had recently wounded in a duel a notorious Count Henri de Riviere, previous to the Count's elopement with a fair Mobillian. Maury understood "the ropes," knew the sea, and was "about as wide awake to the duties of a sailor as any man that walks a quarter deck."<sup>6</sup>

On counting heads, 112 men travelled on board the *Susan*: Captain Maury, two sailors, a *New York Herald* correspondent, Charles Allen, self-appointed to act as historiographer, and 108 filibusters. The latter were organized into three companies with a grand total of seventy privates, fifteen corporals and sergeants, and twenty-three veteran officers headed by Colonel Bruno Von Natzmer, Colonel A. Francis Rudler, Colonel Charles W. Doubleday, Lieutenant Colonel and Aide Edmund H. MacDonald (of San Jacinto notoriety), and Colonel Commanding Frank P. Anderson (of Fort Castillo fame).

The *Susan* lay at anchor in the bay until midnight Sunday, when a good breeze came up and it started on its course. On Monday, at noon, when within four miles of the fleet station and the open sea, the revenue cutter *Robert Mc Lelland*, under Captain J.J. Morrison, stood in its way, demanding to see the schooner's papers. Maury replied that he had not cleared for any port yet, and pointed out that he was bound for the fleet station with his signal flying for a water boat, to get ready for sea.

Captain Morrison then came on board the *Susan*, claimed it as a prize to the United States, and ordered it to return immediately to Mobile. Maury refused to give up his vessel, alleging that any attempt to capture him where he then was would be contrary to maritime law, and he would certainly resist it. A heated argument followed, which almost came to blows when Captain Morrison told Colonel Anderson that he knew him well and also his band of pirates.

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<sup>6</sup>"The Filibusters," *New York Herald*, 1/13/1859, p.1, c.1.

Some of the filibusters, incensed at this, made suggestions in the hearing of Captain Morrison to the effect that he should not be allowed to return to his cutter. The Captain immediately ordered his lieutenant in the boat alongside, to go on board of the cutter and fire a twelve-pounder into the *Susan*, regardless of his life. Maury calmed things down, telling Morrison to keep cool, that no attempt would be made to prevent him from returning to his ship, and that the first shot must come from the cutter before any action would be taken by himself and his passengers.

But the deadlock continued, with Captain Morrison steadfast in his decision to take the *Susan* back to Mobile as a government prize, and Maury as firm in his determination not to be taken as a prize, inasmuch as he had violated no law. Captain Morrison finally returned to the cutter, leaving Lieutenant George F. White, U.S.N. on board the filibuster ship, to watch over it and keep it from escaping. Maury accepted the Lieutenant as his guest, he said, until he got the *Susan* ready for sea and received his custom house papers from Mobile.

The *Susan* filled its water casks on Monday afternoon, and thereafter tacked across and down the bay, constantly chased by the fast cutter with a crew of nineteen men that could run circles around the schooner. Frequently coming within talking distance, Maury enjoyed good humored chats with the revenue commander. At one time he proposed to Morrison that the *Susan* would protect the cutter while among the pirates in Mobile bay, if the cutter in return would accompany the schooner to Greytown and protect it from the British fleet.

Having anchored for the night, on Monday, Morrison invited Maury on board the cutter, and both commanders spent two hours in friendly conversation. Morrison agreed that he would offer the *Susan* no violence unless Maury attempted to leave Mobile bay, in which case he would open his guns upon the schooner and sink it.

On Tuesday, December 7, the *Susan* continued tacking up and down the bay all day long, keeping the cutter wide awake and continually moving, until its officers and crew were well nigh worn out with fatigue. At nine p.m., Maury again visited Morrison on board of the cutter, and remained about an hour. After his return to the *Susan*, he hailed the cutter and told them he would now come to an anchor, to which they responded "all right." Maury then ordered an old bridge anchor to be attached to a rope and thrown over the side, while four or five men rattled the chains, thus giving the cutter to suppose he was fast anchored for the night. The cutter immediately came to anchor.

In about an hour, in the midst of a heavy fog, Maury noiselessly slipped away, having the *Susan's* binnacle lights shaded with a blanket. By three o'clock Wednesday morning, December 8th, the filibuster ship was tossed by the blue waters of the Mexican Gulf. They saw no more of the cutter. Lieut. White was still on board, being entertained during the evening in the after cabin by Colonels Anderson and Von Natzmer.

At 3 p.m. on Thursday, two hundred and fifty miles out of Mobile, Lieut. White was transferred to the ship *Oregon*, bound to New Orleans. Upon arrival, on the 13th, he reported the filibusters had told him that they were on their way to Greytown. On Friday they met the schooner *Fanny*, also bound to New Orleans, and requested it to report them as "the schooner *Susan*, from Mobile for Greytown, with emigrants--all well."<sup>7</sup>

That was deliberate disinformation, designed to facilitate their landing at Puerto Cortés, Honduras, where Walker had sent them. Walker, at Mobile, was then laboring to get off another vessel and join them "in as short a time as pos-

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<sup>7</sup>"The Filibusters," *New York Herald*, 1/13/1859, p.1, c.1.

sible."<sup>8</sup> On December 11, he sent Col. Theodore O'Hara, a Kentuckian, to Columbus and Aberdeen, Mississippi on a recruiting mission, and was anxiously trying to charter a ship for 250 or 300 passengers. But there were few vessels at Mobile harbor, and scarcely any adequate for his purposes. On the 17th, he had three schooners under consideration, but by the 23d had rejected all three as too small.

He then signed a "contingent arrangement" for a ship due to arrive in a few days. He expected Col. O'Hara back from Columbus on December 29th, and hoped to depart from Mobile on the 5th of January. And, once more, he used disinformation: he told Fayssoux "to keep active the idea of a movement from New Orleans. In this you can co-operate. It will aid us here to keep attention fixed in New Orleans."<sup>9</sup>

But by then it had all came to naught on a coral reef in the Caribbean Sea, off Belize, British Honduras. On December 15th, as the *Susan* cruised down, "hugging the Yucatan shore, and looking out for any war vessels that might be in search of such outlaws as slavers, pirates and filibusters," Charles Allen, the *Herald* correspondent on board, jotted down in his diary:

We are approaching Honduras, and as we hope to land in two days more, all is activity on board. It is rumored that minnie rifles, cartridges, cartridge boxes, cap boxes, &c., have been brought on deck, and are undergoing an examination preparatory to being used on shore. Lead is being run into balls, and taking all things

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<sup>8</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (Mobile, December 11, 1858), Item 66, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>9</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (Mobile, December 25; 29, 1858), Ibid. Illness kept Fayssoux from engaging in the expedition, and Walker gave him the following medical advice: "I hope the paralysis you speak of is only the nervous debility apt to follow erysipelas; it will wear off in a few days." Walker to Fayssoux (Mobile, December 16, 1858), Ibid.

into consideration, we "smell the battle" not "afar off."

I understand the programme is to land at Puerto Cortez, the port of Omoa, Honduras, and from that place, after obtaining mules, horses, arms and provisions, take up the line of march via the mule road through Comayagua to Leon, Nicaragua. The distance is said to be nearly three hundred miles, and the route not a pleasant one to travel. At Leon it is arranged to meet men and arms, and the first point to attack will probably be Fort San Carlos or Fort Castillo.<sup>10</sup>

Such a plan was utterly foolish, and when it became public, the *Herald* accurately pointed out that the filibusters would have no support in Honduras or in Nicaragua, even if they had succeeded in landing, and that "this Walker's last expedition eclipses in its Quixotic character that to Sonora and the others."<sup>11</sup>

But a providential shipwreck saved Walker and his men from a worse disaster. On December 15th, Captain Maury had been forced close to the coast by adverse winds, the *Susan* "not proving at all weatherly in the heavy head sea then running." At 3 a.m. on the 16th, Maury suddenly discovered breakers on the lee bow, and immediately ordered the helm to be put "down." The improvised sailor at the helm, in his fright and confusion, put the wheel hard "up," which brought the schooner before the wind, "and before there was time to remedy the error, the *Susan* went stem on to a sunken coral reef, with eight knots headway."<sup>12</sup>

In a few moments the *Susan* bilged and broke in two. The foremast, the mainmast, and the mizzenmast were cut away. It

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<sup>10</sup>"The Filibusters," *New York Herald*, 1/13/1859, p.1, c.1.

<sup>11</sup>"Interesting from Washington," *New York Herald*, 1/7/1859, p.1, c.1.

<sup>12</sup>"Report of Captain Maury," *New York Herald*, 1/11/1859, p.2, c.1.

was a total loss, at the northeast point of Glover's Reef. Assisted by a family of turtle fishers in a nearby Key, all the men, during the next five days, were transported safely to the Middle Key on the reef in the fishermen's schooner *Wasp*. Anderson and Maury then went on the *Wasp* to Belize, sixty miles away, aiming to charter a vessel to convey the entire party to Puerto Cortés.

On the 24th, they made arrangements at Belize with the owner of the brig *Kate*, but when the captain of the vessel, recently arrived from New Orleans, saw them, he adamantly refused to take them, telling everyone that they were Walker's filibusters and making it impossible for them "to procure any vessel for love or money."<sup>13</sup> Under those circumstances, on December 26th, Maury and Anderson happily accepted an offer from British Governor Frederick Seymour, of free passage to the United States with all their men on board her Majesty's steam sloop *Basillisk*, then in port.

On the first day of the new year, the 112 shipwrecked filibusters arrived in Mobile on board the *Basillisk*. On landing, "a procession was formed, and the Nicaragua flag hoisted. Capt. Maury was called out, and made a speech to the crowd."<sup>14</sup> And in New York, upon receipt of the news of "the emigrants' inglorious return," Horace Greeley merrily shouted in the *Tribune* what was by then a universal wish: "A happy New-Year to Nicaragua! May this event be an omen for her."<sup>15</sup>

But that wish was not yet to be fulfilled, for no sooner had the *Susan* expedition failed than Walker was already laboring steadily and silently to set on foot another one.

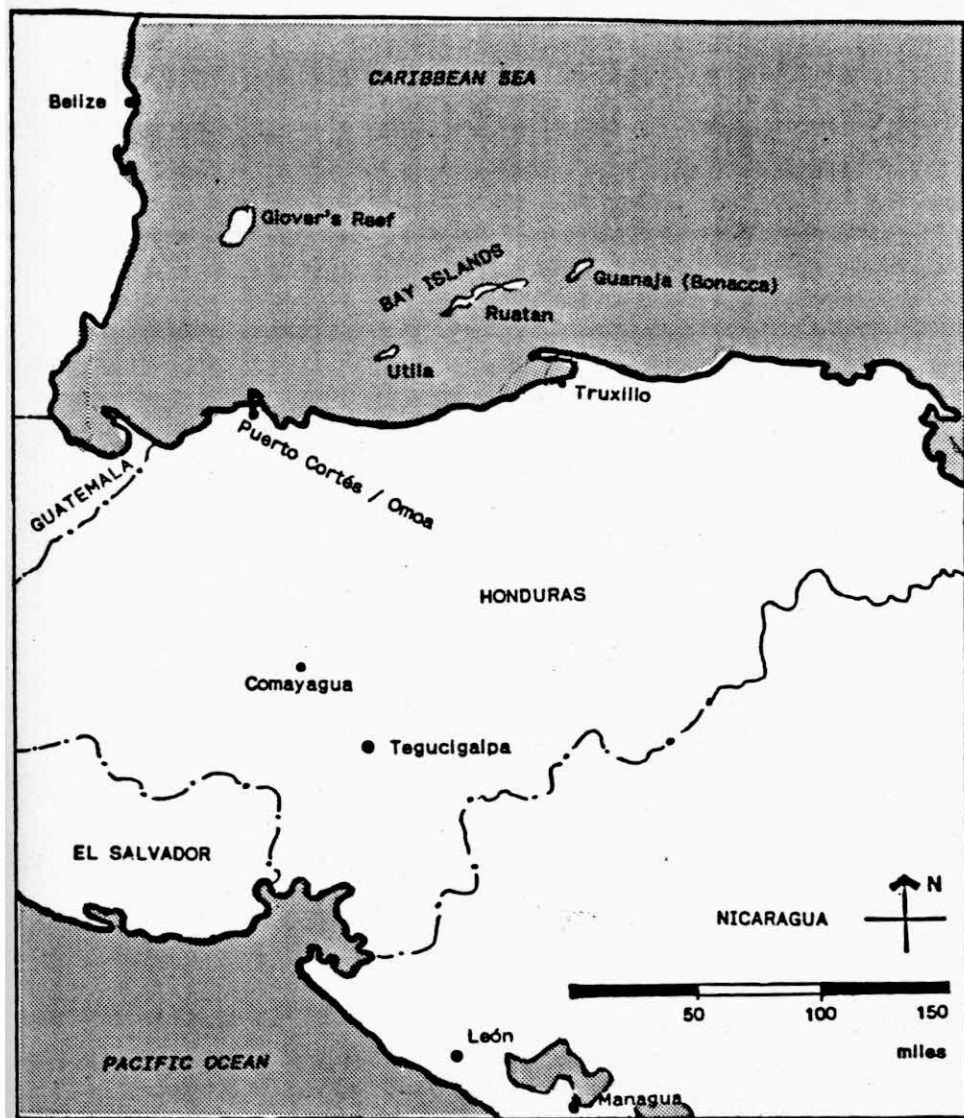
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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

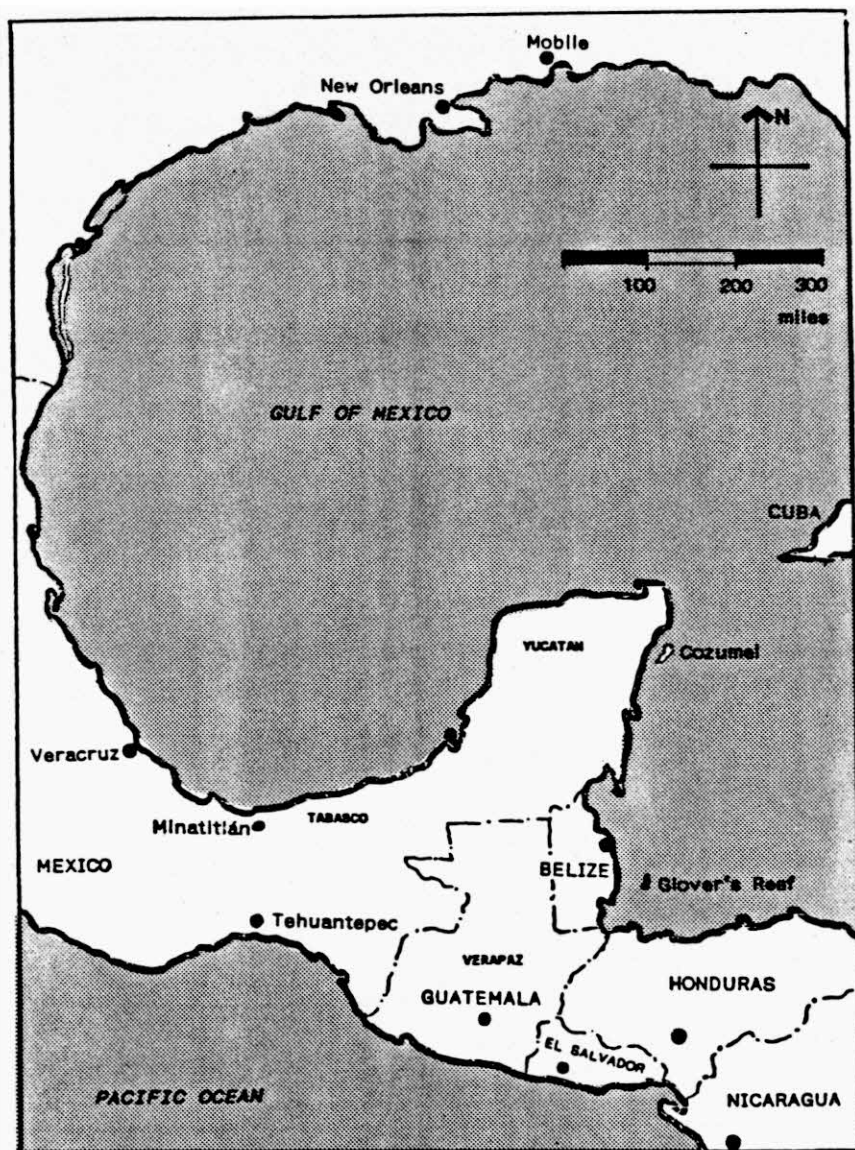
<sup>14</sup> "The Susan 'Emigrants'," *New York Tribune*, 1/3/1859, p.5, c.3.

<sup>15</sup> "Four weeks ago," *New York Tribune*, 1/3/1859, p.4, c.2.





## Honduras



Gulf of Mexico

## 20. Wedded to Nicaragua

In his correspondence with Fayssoux, Walker recorded his reaction to the wreck of the *Susan*. On January 13, 1859, he wrote from Mobile that although the failure of the expedition had "somewhat deranged" his plans, these had already begun "again to resume form and substance." Two days later, he confided that his prospects were "not as gloomy as most imagine. With a little luck I hope to be in Nicaragua before the next 11th of April."<sup>1</sup>

The form and substance of his plans called for funds and recruits which he was already seeking with the help of Mason Pilcher, Julius Hesse, Captains Fayssoux and Maury, Colonels Anderson, McDonald, Waters, Natzmer, Humphries, Slatter, Acklen, Walworth, and others. By January 29th, he was making inquiries about vessels and considering New Orleans as the starting point of the expedition. Simultaneously, he prepared himself for his arrival in Nicaragua.

The Constituent Assembly of Nicaragua had ratified a new constitution on August 19, 1858, and in October the American press had published its points "worthy of notice." Chief among them, the sixth article, by which "the religion of the republic is declared to be the Roman Catholic Apostolic," and the ninth, in which "the citizens are declared ineligible to

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<sup>1</sup>Walker to Fayssoux (Mobile, January 13; 15, 1859), Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

public office if they do not profess the religion of the republic."<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, on January 31, 1859, William Walker became a Catholic. The official record reads:

In the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred & fifty nine & on the 31st of January, I the undersigned Vic. Gen. of the Rt. Rev. Bishop of Mobile, certify that I have received from William Walker, an adult aged about thirty five years, his profession of faith, having abjured protestantism, and that I have solemnly admitted him to the participation of the Sacrament of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. In faith whereof I have signed.

G. Chalon V.G.<sup>3</sup>

Stashing away his treasured baptismal certificate, Walker travelled to New Orleans next morning. He carried Nicaragua bonds in hand, which he delivered to Col. J.S. Acklen at the St. Charles Hotel. But, try as he might, he could not raise enough funds in the South for another expedition and soon directed his steps to California, groping for aid.

On March 5 he sailed from New Orleans on the steamship *Philadelphia*, bound for New York via Havana; at Havana, on the 9th, he transferred to the steamer *Granada* for Aspinwall. At Panama, on the 16th, he continued as a second cabin

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<sup>2</sup>"The New Constitution of Nicaragua," *New York Herald*, 10/11/1858, p.4, c.4.

<sup>3</sup>"Baptismal Register for White People of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Mobile, Alabama, 1856-1860," No. 456 William Walker, Jan. the 31st 1859. Walker's "conversion" was widely reported by the press. The *New York Tribune* (2/12/1859, p.6, c.3) gave the following short notice: "Gen. Walker, 'the hero of many fields, the statesman and lawgiver' (we quote the language of *The Mobile Mercury*), has joined the Catholic Church. The initiation took place in the Mobile Cathedral on the 1st of February. William, the hero, was reared after the straightest sect a Presbyterian, and, we have heard, prepared himself for the service of the pulpit in that denomination."



passenger on board the *Golden Age* for San Francisco. He travelled incognito, using the alias *James Wilson*; but he went accompanied by Col. Bruno Von Natzmer. The New Orleans *Delta* reported his departure for California, and newsmen spotted him on each steamer and at every place he landed.

At Havana he told a journalist friend, for publication, that he was on his way "to Aspinwall to take the English steamer for Southampton, intending to try what I can do in Europe."<sup>4</sup> In Panama the press reported that Walker was on his way to San Francisco and would soon return to Central America on board of the steamer *Hermann*, with an army of one thousand filibusters. But the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny, "under the assumed name of Mr. Wilson," kept "very quiet" in Panama, and "did not show himself at all to the public. Those who saw him, say that he looked very shabby and dejected."<sup>5</sup>

Upon arrival at San Francisco, on March 31st, no sooner had Bruno Natzmer and "James Wilson" registered at the Metropolitan Hotel, the news spread that Walker had arrived in town. He kept himself very secluded, and was never seen in the streets; Natzmer did just the opposite, showing often his Prussian soldier physique on Montgomery street, and talking to reporters. He said Walker had no designs on Sonora, but many didn't believe him.

There were then two widely-publicized filibuster schemes aimed at Sonora: General Henningsen's "Arizona, Mexican and

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<sup>4</sup>Walker to Fayssoux (Havana, March 9, 1859), Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane. And he added: "Goicouria was in the *Philadelphia* with us. He evinced a disposition to be friendly, he and Don Bruno conversing a good deal about past matters; of course he and I did not speak. He regretted to Col. N. that he had published my letters to him; such regrets are sure to come to such persons sooner or later. I think both of us (you and I) will live long enough to see all the traitors to our cause regret their treason."

<sup>5</sup>"The Isthmus," *New York Tribune*, 3/30/1859, p.7, c.1.

Central American Colonization Company," based in New York, and Colonel Lockridge's "Western Land Emigration Society," from New Orleans. Some people thought that Walker was part of one of them, or perhaps of both. But Walker only thought of Nicaragua, as he told Fayssoux: "People here think I have the idea of going to Sonora. Little do they know of me or of the other Nicaraguans. Time will, I trust, do us justice."<sup>6</sup>

Bennett, of the *New York Herald*, knew Walker sufficiently well to surmise correctly that the little gray-eyed man of destiny had no intention of going to Sonora or any other part of Mexico, because "He himself is wedded to Nicaragua."<sup>7</sup>

In San Francisco, assisted by friends like Randolph, Crittenden, Kissane and Macdonald, Walker went to work to procure the means for his return to the land he had wedded. At first he saw a prospect of making some very good arrangements; but none materialized, and on May 4th, he wrote to Fayssoux: "To-morrow I shall leave for New York. The aspect of affairs in Nicaragua is rather encouraging. Perhaps I may be able to do something in New York at present. At any rate nothing can be done here without money, and money cannot be had in California for our purposes."<sup>8</sup>

Walker had planned to travel by the overland mail route to St. Louis, still using the name James Wilson, because he wished to get to New York "without attracting attention." He changed his mind at the last minute, and on May 5th he sailed

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<sup>6</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (San Francisco, 4/19/1859), Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane. Walker added: "Gen. H., I see, keeps the papers full of Arizona. Well, it is work against words; ours be the silent steady labor; his the empty, vaporizing letters and despatches. Surely work will tell in the end."

<sup>7</sup> "The Filibusters Again Under Weigh," *New York Herald*, 5/24/1859, p.4, c.3.

<sup>8</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (San Francisco, 5/4/1859), Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

from San Francisco on the steamship *Orizaba*, crowded with passengers for Acapulco and Panama. Col. Frank Anderson and Major Thomas Dolan accompanied him. Col. Natzmer had left San Francisco two weeks earlier, on a mission to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and was at Minatitlán on May 5th.

Several other Walker filibusters were in the region, working for the Tehuantepec Transit Company, and Walker had urged Fayssoux to "encourage as many as possible to go down there: for it is a part of my future plans to make use of Tehuantepec." Natzmer was to proceed "from Minatitlan through Tabasco to Yucatan, his business being important and very nearly connected with Nicaragua."<sup>9</sup>

It remains obscure who invented the story, but when the *Orizaba* arrived at Acapulco, all nineteen passengers who crossed through Tehuantepec reported that Walker had landed at Acapulco with a force of three hundred men, and was about to join his fortunes with the liberal party of Mexico. Upon hearing the story at Minatitlán, Natzmer remarked "that it was nothing more than he expected, adding these significant words: 'My business is now settled--I know exactly what to do.'"<sup>10</sup>

Natzmer travelled with a passport from the Prussian Consul and was fluent in Spanish, both quite helpful for the mysterious trip he then started, allegedly through Yucatán (Mexico) and Verapaz (Guatemala). He went on horseback, and with no guides. His only companion was Charles Allen, the filibuster who had acted as historiographer on board the *Susan*.

Walker, Anderson, and Dolan continued on the *Orizaba* to

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<sup>9</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (San Francisco, 4/19/1859), Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>10</sup> "Our Minatitlan Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 5/31/1859, p.1, c.6.

Panama, crossed the Isthmus unnoticed, and went on to New York on the *Northern Light*. Upon arrival on Saturday, May 28, nobody detected their presence among the 728 passengers from San Francisco. A telegraphic announcement from New Orleans had previously told New Yorkers that Walker had landed with three hundred men at Acapulco, and the press simply headlined: "No Further Tidings of Gen. Walker."<sup>11</sup>

James Wilson had succeeded in getting into New York without attracting attention.

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<sup>11</sup>"Arrival of the Northern Light," *New York Herald*, 5/29/1859, p.1, c.3.





*Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception*  
Dauphin at Claiborne, Mobile, Alabama

Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Cullen  
Rector  
Phone 432-4684

400 Government St.  
P. O. Box 1966  
Mobile, AL 36601

Baptismal Register for White People  
of the  
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Mobile, Alabama  
1856-1860

|   |  |
|---|--|
| No. 456<br>William<br>Walker<br>Jan. the 31st<br>1859 | In the year of our Lord one thousand eight<br>hundred & fifty nine & on the 31st of Jan-<br>uary, I the undersigned Vic. Gen. of the<br>Rt. Rev. Bishop of Mobile, certify that<br>I have received from William Walker, an adult<br>aged about thirty five years, his profession<br>of faith, having abjured protestantism, and<br>that I have solemnly admitted him to the<br>participation of the Sacrament of the Holy<br>Roman Catholic Church. In faith whereof<br>I have signed. |
|---|--|

G. Chalon V.G.

*I Witnessed this copy to-day March 29, 1974*  
*Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Cullen.*

**Walker's baptismal certificate**  
"on January 31, 1859, William Walker became a Catholic" (p. 200)

## 21. Begging the Pittance

Walker's seclusion was short-lived in New York. On the day of his arrival, Col. Henry T. Titus also happened to come into town, staying at the St. Nicholas Hotel. Anderson and Titus held a grudge against each other, arising from their contrasting behavior at Castillo. On learning of his antagonist's whereabouts, on Monday, May 30th, Anderson repaired to the St. Nicholas barroom to beat him up. In the drunken brawl that followed, Anderson wound up in jail and Walker's presence in the city became known to the press. The *Herald* remarked that "the little chieftain, . . . prince of filibusters and standing terror of all the population of Central America," had indeed landed, but "the three hundred men" at Acapulco "had come down to three" in New York.<sup>1</sup>

Beset by want, frustrated by lack of resources in the South and in California, Walker was still sanguine of success and transmitted airy hopes to Fayssoux in his first letter from New York, on June 4th, 1859:

I arrived here several days ago and have been engaged in efforts to effect some arrangement for our return to Nicaragua ever since I arrived. My efforts promise success; in fact I am determined to do something for our cause before I leave this city.

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<sup>1</sup>"Arrival of General Walker in New York," *New York Herald*, 5/31/1859, p.1, c.6.

The present moment is propitious. You may safely speak encouragingly to all our friends in New Orleans and elsewhere. Our day of triumph approaches. In a few days I will write more. Address me as before under envelope to Macdonald.<sup>2</sup>

The propitious moment stemmed from the ongoing Transit war of the Commodores, which Walker tried to capitalize upon with the help of Charles J. Macdonald, who had arrived from California ahead of him, "for the purpose of seeing certain parties in New York." In December, 1858, Walker had sided with Macdonald in a suit for wages against Garrison & Morgan, testifying in court in his behalf.<sup>3</sup> Thereupon, Macdonald collaborated with Walker in his dealings with Joseph L. White and other Transit magnates, as he had done in the past.

A new phase in the war of the Transit Commodores had started on April 7, 1859 when the Post Office Department issued a letter inviting proposals for transporting the mails of the United States between New York (and New Orleans) and San Francisco, beginning on October 1st, when the current contract with the Panama line would expire. Upon the receipt of bids from Vanderbilt and others, to do it via Panama, on May 10 the Postmaster General awarded the contract for carrying the mails to Mr. Daniel H. Johnson, of New York, who represented the Nicaragua Isthmus route interest.

Johnson in fact represented Joseph L. White, who saw the mail service as a means for securing the lucrative freight and passenger traffic through Nicaragua. The Transit

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<sup>2</sup>Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>3</sup>Walker's testimony, rendered before a Commissioner at Mobile on December 27-31, 1858, gave detailed answers to twenty-six questions and cross-interrogatories on Nicaraguan matters, and filled six columns when it was published in the *New York Herald* on 2/19/1859, p.5.

question had continued unresolved, and it was widely believed that the contract to carry the mail, via Nicaragua, would guarantee the contractors the right to carry passengers and freight across the Isthmus, and the protection of the government at Washington. But White was so odious to the people of Nicaragua, that he wisely concealed his presence behind Johnson, a figurehead.

On April 26, Jerez officially notified White's Canal Company that on the 23d of March the Senate and Chamber of Deputies at Managua had declared void and null the Stebbins contract on the ground that the Company had failed to fulfil its obligations. White immediately resigned from the Canal Company, which cleared the way for further negotiations. On June 6, Jerez signed a Transit contract with the new Canal Company management, and personally took it to Managua to lobby for its approval by the Congress, which had previously rejected the Vandyke contract he had signed in October, 1858.

Johnson (that is to say, White) and the Vandyke Company joined forces in May, forming a "United States and Central American Transit Company" to transport the mails, passengers and freight through Nicaragua, alleging that the Vandyke contract was valid by the simple signature of Jerez, and that its rejection by the Nicaraguan Congress had been illegal.

The Vandyke Company was reputed to have "unbounded political influence."<sup>4</sup> James Vandyke, the United States Attorney General at Philadelphia, was a prominent democrat and very close friend of President Buchanan.<sup>5</sup> White naturally

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<sup>4</sup>"Will the Nicaragua Transit be Opened?" *New York Herald*, 8/11/1859, p.3, c.1.

<sup>5</sup>It appears that Buchanan himself may have played a role in initiating the Jerez-Vandyke contract, for Attorney General Vandyke, from Philadelphia, sat at the President's table at Bedford Springs when Jerez and his secretary Jerónimo Pérez visited him early in August, 1858. "The

expected that gunboat diplomacy would protect the "rights" of his company, and that seemed to be the case when Minister Lamar promptly presented an ultimatum to Nicaragua, demanding, among other things, "the reinstatement of the White Transit Company in the Transit."<sup>6</sup>

That was the situation when Walker approached White in New York, seeking the means to return to Nicaragua. The progress of their negotiations was recorded by Walker in his letters to Fayssoux. On June 10, he wrote: "I have concluded nothing definite up to this time. The parties with whom I have been communicating here are waiting, I think, the arrival of the next California steamer. The mail contract across Nicaragua has been given to White's agent, and White is now trying to make arrangements for steamers."<sup>7</sup>

On June 21st, "The prospect of doing something here still remains good, and it might be injured by precipitation. I therefore labor patiently and in several directions trusting that all our labor and patience will not be vain."

On June 23d, "I am very confident of making an arrangement for the return to Nicaragua under favorable circumstances. It is not prudent for me to enter into details. Suffice it to say that the arrangement will be of such a character as to destroy much of the opposition offered to us from this city."

The first sign of progress came on July 8: "In the course of a few days I expect to complete my arrangements. They are more satisfactory than any I have ever been able to make." And having reached an understanding with White on July 12, on the 13th Walker communicated the good news to Fayssoux:

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President and the Politicians at Bedford," *New York Tribune*, 8/13/1858, p.5, c.1; Jerónimo Pérez, *Obras Históricas Completas*, p. 801.

<sup>6</sup>"From Central America," *New York Tribune*, 6/28/1859, p.6, c.5.

<sup>7</sup>Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

"I have at last made arrangements for our return to Nicaragua. They are of such a character that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the U.S. authorities or any one else to defeat them. Never before have I been able to do as much before leaving as I have now done in New York. In a few days I shall be in New Orleans and shall be able to give you the details verbally."<sup>8</sup>

Not only would it be impossible for the U.S. authorities to defeat Walker's plans, but through the unbounded political influence of his new partners, the U.S. Navy was actually collaborating in his filibustering scheme. Walker confided to Fayssoux the startling facts on July 16th: "I expect to leave on Monday as I have already written. I have been detained here several days in order to secure the property brought away by Paulding from Punta Arenas and now at the Brooklyn and Gosport Navy Yards. Dr. Kellum, who is Surgeon on the U.S. Surveying Steamer 'R.J. Walker', goes to Norfolk this afternoon in order to receive the property there."<sup>9</sup>

With plenty of weapons in hand and plenty of funds in the offing, promised by White, Walker instantly urged Fayssoux at New Orleans and Maury at Mobile, to write to McMichael at Columbus Miss., to Rudler at Montgomery Ala., to West, Rawle, Waters, and all other recruiting officers, to enlist as many men as possible in the South, and have them ready at New Orleans to sail for Nicaragua by the 20th of August.

He immediately ordered Natzmer to cut short his mission in southern Mexico and to proceed to San Francisco, where Rogers and Randolph would give him the instructions and the means to go on to Nicaragua. On July 18th, he sent Anderson to New Orleans to assist in recruiting, and on the 20th he

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<sup>8</sup> Items 67 and 69, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>9</sup> Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

sent Swingle to San Juan del Norte to assess and arrange matters at their point of destination.

Walker was exuberant, totally certain of success, and freely impressed his mood in his letters to Fayssoux: "You may depend on it that my arrangements are of such a nature as to make it almost impossible for us to fail in getting off at the appointed time. They are of such a character, too, as admit of being kept secret until the moment of departure. You may be sure I would not write thus confidently unless I felt certain about the matter."<sup>10</sup>

But in that letter to Fayssoux, there was an ominous detail which Walker failed to detect: "I have seen very little of Gen. Henningsen since I have been here, although at first he seemed desirous of being friendly. He labors under the delusion that he is absolutely necessary to us, and expects that the control of matters should be given up pretty much to him."

Walker's rift with Henningsen rapidly ruined all his plans. By August 5th, the rosy prospects had vanished when he again wrote to Fayssoux:

Since I last wrote you--some days ago--I have been expecting to leave here almost every hour. The parties with whom I made arrangements have been promising for the last twenty days to give me the money agreed on since the 12th of July; but they have delayed so long that I begin to fear they will not in any respect keep their engagements. In this state of uncertainty it will be well to advise our friends out of New Orleans not to repair thither until further advised.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Walker to Fayssoux (New York, 7/13/1859), Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>11</sup> Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

A *New York Tribune* reporter learned from a friend of Generalissimo Joseph L. White what had transpired behind the scenes, and on August 13th published the story in the paper:

What are the speculators about in attempting to act under the Wallace-Vandyke grant?

They have had a number of interviews with the "blue-gray-eyed man," and were willing to carry him back to that country and let him reenact all the horrors of his former campaign. But Mr. J. L. White said that "Walker wanted a master." "You, Sir, are well enough, provided you have a master; you must obey orders if we put you there again." This did not suit the blue-gray-eyed man of destiny. So they shook him off, and now Henningsen, who is their present mediator with "Live-Oak George," has, at their solicitation, been trying his hand. Henningsen is the man they have now chosen to revolutionize Central America.<sup>12</sup>

Walker didn't give up, and rather humiliated himself begging from White the means for his return to Nicaragua. In his October 1, 1859 manifesto "To the American People," he freely confessed that he had "not hesitated to beg almost as alms the pittance which might restore us to our rights and give to you and your children the wealth of the Indies."<sup>13</sup> What concessions he made he did not say; he merely told Fayssoux, on August 13th, "to go on as before," because he had made arrangements "of the most satisfactory character."

But his relations with White were never satisfactory, and on August 20th he was still in New York: "I am still kept here

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<sup>12</sup>"The Great Romance of the Age," *New York Tribune*, 8/17/1859, p.5, c.1.

<sup>13</sup>See Full text in Appendix J.



by the unreasonable delays of parties who evince every disposition to keep the engagements they have entered into and who yet fail to do what their interests absolutely require." Finally, on the 25th, he announced to Fayssoux that after much delay and some unnecessary waiting "I have succeeded in closing our affairs here satisfactorily. I leave here to-day for New Orleans by the way of Cincinnati and Louisville. At the latter place I shall stop for a day or two and will telegraph to you from that point. I expect to see you by the end of next week."<sup>14</sup>

Walker left New York as planned, was in Louisville on the 30th, travelled by steamboat down the Mississippi river, and arrived in New Orleans on September 6th. The weapons left New York in the hold of the United States Mail Steamship Company steamer *Philadelphia* on September 19, bound for New Orleans via Havana and Key West. Upon arrival at New Orleans, on the 30th, they remained in the hold after the passengers landed and the regular cargo was discharged. The vessel was scheduled to sail for Aspinwall on October 6.

It was later reported that the *Philadelphia* "actually had on board about *one thousand* stand of arms, viz.: 600 flint muskets and 400 Minie rifles, and percussion muskets, together with 90,000 rounds of ball cartridges and 20,000 percussion caps." Part of the weapons had been purchased in New York, but some came from the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where a filibuster officer had claimed them for their owner, William Walker, and obtained them on orders from Washington. The steamer also carried "from eight to ten boats, designed to carry the fillibusters up the Colorado branch of the San Juan River."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Item 67, Fayssoux Collection, Tulane.

<sup>15</sup>"Fillibuster Movements," *New York Tribune*, 10/19/1859, p.7, c.5.

"About three hundred strong, athletic young men, mostly of the better class of society, from Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama," had congregated at Mobile, and, on October 2d, Captain Harry Maury took them on the mail boat to New Orleans, thereat to continue on the *Philadelphia* to Aspinwall. The Mobile *Tribune* announced that they were "emigrants, destined for the new land of gold and bright prospects, Chiriqui." On publishing the item, the New Orleans *Picayune* explained to its readers, that "Chiriqui," as commonly interpreted, meant "Nicaragua."<sup>16</sup>

In New York, The United States and Central American Transit Company announced the opening of its "Merchant and Miners Line via Nicaragua" with the sailing of its "splendid United States mail steamship *St. Louis*, 2,000 tons, Capt. H. Churchill, from New York, for San Juan del Norte, at 3 P.M. Wednesday, Oct. 5, connecting via Isthmus of Nicaragua with the United States mail steamship *Pacific*."<sup>17</sup>

In New Orleans, Walker wrote his Manifesto "To the American People," as he prepared to depart on the *Philadelphia* for his "adopted country."<sup>18</sup>

In Washington, President Buchanan sent formal instructions to the U.S. Marshal at New Orleans to seize and to hold the steamship *Philadelphia*, should there be grounds for belief that it was engaged in filibustering, and also "to arrest any and all filibusters on the point of embarkation, and with that object to order out an artillery company from Baton Rouge, in case of necessity."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>"Bound to Chiriqui," *New Orleans Picayune*, 10/4/1859, p.2, c.3.

<sup>17</sup>"Merchant and Miners Line," *New York Herald*, 10/3/1859, p.7, c.2.

<sup>18</sup>See Appendix J.

<sup>19</sup>"The Nicaragua Filibusters," *New Orleans Picayune*, 10/7/1859, p.4, c.3.

The *Philadelphia* asked for a clearance in ballast for Aspinwall. The emigrants to Chiriquí, down to one hundred and fifty in number, had landed at the Southwest Pass telegraph station, waiting there for the steamer, pretending to be on a fishing expedition. Acting on instructions from Washington, the Collector of the Port refused the clearance to the *Philadelphia*; and on October 7 the Marshal with a company of U.S. soldiers on the steamer *Kimball*, the propeller *Enoch Train*, and the revenue cutter *Lewis Cass*, peaceably arrested the entire "fishing party" encamped at Southwest Pass.

In New York, the Collector of the Port also refused a clearance to the *St. Louis* on orders from Secretary of the Treasury Howell Cobb, who had learned that "Henningsen and two hundred men" were to go on it to San Juan.<sup>20</sup>

Thereupon, mail contractor Daniel H. Johnson told the Post Office Department that "owing to the filibuster news, and the failure of some of his arrangements, he (Johnson) could not fulfil his contract with the government." The Postmaster General then forfeited Johnson's contract and awarded the California mail service to Vanderbilt's Atlantic and Pacific Steamship Company, via Panama. "The highwayman of the sea, as the worthy Commodore V. is sometimes affectionally termed," had "quietly stepped in and carried off the spoils at the last moment."<sup>21</sup>

Walker, in New Orleans, promptly wrote (though apparently didn't publish) a strong protest which he labeled "Startling Facts," recounting in detail the Marshal's and the Collector's actions (but not his own's, nor White's, nor Henningsen's)

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<sup>20</sup> Cobb to Buchanan (Washington, 10/7/1859), James Buchanan Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, microfilm edition, reel 38.

<sup>21</sup> "The California Mail Squabble," *New York Herald*, 10/6/1859, p.1, c.1.

which allegedly showed "in all their nakedness the present depravity and corruption of the Federal Government." He concluded:

... And when we reflect that all these arbitrary acts we have detailed are done for the purpose of preventing the extension of slavery to Central America--that this prostitution of the powers of the Federal Government and this degradation of the intellect of Southern men to the uses of an imbecile and yet vindictive President are with a view of limiting the growth of Southern institutions--we are tempted to exclaim "Oh! that another Lexington would prepare the way for another Declaration of Independence."<sup>22</sup>

The equivalent of another Lexington was then at hand to prepare the way for the Declaration of Independence of the South, but Walker would play no part in it because in the pursuit of his mission to spread Southern institutions into Central America, he was possessed by Nicaragua.

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<sup>22</sup>Item 125, Payssoux Collection, Tulane.