

THE NICARAGUAN BLACK LEGEND:
VIOLENCE AND NICARAGUANS IN COSTA RICA, 1821-1956

BY

Carlos Enrique Alemán

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a transnational history that examines the perception of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica through their social, political and labor practices from independence to the mid-twentieth century. My dissertation examines the interplay between violence and nation-state formation and its impact on national identities. By analyzing the role of foreign relations, interregional politics and immigration in the construction of national identity, I argue that the deployment of violence by various actors influenced the perception of Nicaraguan immigrants as inherently violent at the turn of the twentieth century, a characterization that affects migration into the contemporary period.

Importantly, I argue that Nicaraguans played a critical role in the formation of the modern Costa Rican state in the 1930s and 1940s through their involvement with the Costa Rican Communist Party and the civil war of 1948. I argue that violence, its symbolic and physical manifestations, were not absent in Costa Rica. Costa Rican violence manifested itself in different ways, through repression of labor struggles and opposition groups, the deportation of immigrants and exiles, and war making. Costa Rican violence expressed itself rhetorically against opponents it deemed threats, primarily communists and Nicaraguans, casting them as outsiders of the Costa Rican nation. Costa Ricans have historically defined themselves largely in contrast to Nicaraguans who they stereotyped as violent troublemakers. Finally, the “Nicaraguan” as a category of person was defined as hyper-violent *other* used to measure Costa

Rica's peaceful character, despite Costa Rica's acts of violence. The construction of the violent Nicaraguan, thus, reified a peaceful Costa Rica and created a Nicaraguan Black Legend.

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To my daughter,
Amelia Mercedes Alemán

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
SUSPICIOUS NEIGHBORS:	
TERRITORIAL DISPUTES AND THE NATIONAL WAR IN CENTRAL AMERICA	23
CHAPTER TWO	
"TO WORK, THERE IS NOTHING HERE":	
NICARAGUAN MIGRATION TO COSTA RICA, 1893-1930	39
CHAPTER THREE	
UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS:	
NICARAGUAN LABORERS IN COSTA RICA AND THE STRIKE OF 1934	76
CHAPTER FOUR	
A VIOLENT DICTATORSHIP:	
SOMOZA AND THE NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION IN EXILE, 1936-1947	146
CHAPTER FIVE	
STRANGE ALIGNMENTS:	
NICARAGUANS IN THE COSTA RICAN CIVIL WAR OF 1948	221
CONCLUSION	285
EPILOGUE	292
APPENDIX A	
MAPS	297
APPENDIX B	
NICARAGUAN IMMIGRANTS IN COSTA RICA, 1963	300
APPENDIX C	
LIST OF ANASTASIO SOMOZA GARCÍA'S ENEMIES (CARIBBEAN LEGION)	303
BIBLIOGRAPHY	308

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Jamaican and Nicaraguan Migration to Costa Rica by Province, 1864-1892	61
Table 2. Nicaraguans and West Indians in Costa Rica, 1864-1950	90
Table 3. Nicaraguan Migration to Costa Rica by Gender and Province, 1950	272
Table 4. Nicaraguans in Costa Rica by Age, 1963	301
Table 5. Nicaraguans in Costa Rica by Years of Residence, 1963	301
Table 6. Nicaraguans in Costa Rica by Gender and Province, 1963	302

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. <i>Mariachis</i> , as depicted by the <i>Diario de Costa Rica</i>	234
Figure 2. Map of Nicaragua	298
Figure 3. Map of Costa Rica	299

INTRODUCTION

On August 17, 1935, two gunmen entered the office of Costa Rican businessman Alberto González Lahmann intending to rob him for 20,000 *colones*. González Lahmann refused and struggled with one of the men. His assailants shot him, killing him instantly. The gunmen attempted to flee, but police officers cornered the assailants in the office building, setting off a gunfight. Unable to escape, the policemen killed the would-be robbers, two brothers named Rodolfo and Rodrigo Sequeira. Beyond the monetary incentive, the Costa Rican media speculated about alternative motivations for the killing and soon rumors that the brothers were communists¹ and Nicaraguans spread. Costa Rican newspapers and radio echoed these assumptions despite the lack of evidence that the murderers were either.² This incident serves as a fascinating introduction to this dissertation that explores how violence shaped and defined

¹ Costa Rican Communist leader Manuel Mora was also accused of being responsible for the murder. An alleged accomplice named Sandoval Barahona accused Mora of being the mastermind. See USNADF, 818.00-1492 (1935-08-19), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica; USNADF, 818.00B-86 (1935-08-23), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica; USNADF, 818.00-1498 (1935-09-24), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica; “Accuse Costa Rican Reds,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1935; Alfonso González Ortega and Manuel Solís Avendaño, *Entre el desarraigo y el despojo: Costa Rica en el fin de siglo* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001), 254; Iván Molina Jiménez, “Prensa, propaganda electoral, y comunismo en Costa Rica durante las décadas de 1930 y 1940,” *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* 11 (2005): 407-423.

² The press described the robbery turned murder as an attempt on the part of Nicaraguan assailants to introduce “North American gangster” methods in Costa Rica. See “3 Slain in Costa Rica in First Gang Hold-Up,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1935. The Costa Rican media also theorized that President Jiménez’s decision to curtail the importation of Nicaraguan livestock and goods served as possible motivation for the attack. Jiménez pledged to deport any Nicaraguans involved and, according to these reports, several Nicaraguan families arranged to leave Costa Rica. “El asalto de dos bandidos costarricenses a un millonario tico da ocasión a que se trasmitan noticias desfavorables contra los nicaragüenses,” *La Prensa*, August 18, 1935. There is no follow-up in the documents as to whether any Nicaraguans left Costa Rica either willingly or forcefully because of the Gonzalez Lahmann murder.

Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica in relation to a long history of regional politics, tense international relations and evolving notions of national identity.

The Nicaraguan colony in Costa Rica quickly repudiated and dismissed reports that Nicaraguan immigrants had murdered Lahmann through its radio station *La Voz de los Nicaragüenses* (The Nicaraguan Voice) in San José. The Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa* affirmed reports from another Nicaraguan radio station, *Alma Nica*, that Lahmann's assassins were indeed Costa Ricans.¹ A group of prominent Nicaraguan intellectuals and professionals exiled in San José, via the Nicaraguan Fraternity Association (*Asociación de Fraternidad Nicaragüense*),² published a pamphlet announcing their intention to combat the "Nicaraguan black legend." The pamphlet states, "We understand that the Nicaraguan has his defects, but this cannot justify, any time a crime occurs, the propagation of the rumor that because the crime was committed by a dark person (*moreno*) he must automatically be a *Nica*."³

The reference to the Nicaraguan black legend borrows from the original Spanish black legend in which mostly northern European and Protestant writers and propagandists emphasized

¹ "El asalto de dos bandidos costarricenses a un millonario tico da ocasión a que se trasmitan noticias desfavorables contra los nicaragüenses," *La Prensa*, August 18, 1935; "Viva protesta en *La Prensa* de Managua por haber sido atribuido a nicaragüenses el crimen del sábado en esta capital. Fueron costarricenses netos los malhechores, dice un diario," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 20, 1935.

² The Nicaraguan Fraternity Association was founded on October 17, 1934 and two Nicaraguan artists, José López Guerra and Octavio Torrealba, served as President and Secretary respectively. See: Enrique Tovar, "Efemérides 17 de octubre 2009," *Costa Rica Hoy*, October 17, 2009.

³ "La colonia nicaragüense lanzará una hoja suelta de protesta," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 20, 1935; "A pesar de las explicaciones la colonia nicaragüense se siente profundamente herida porque elementos irresponsables propalaran que nicaragüenses eran autores del crimen del señor González," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 22, 1935 in Ronald Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'" (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 440-1. The Nicaraguan Fraternity Association intended to make a presentation delineating the economic contributions of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica.

Spanish cruelty toward the indigenous populations of Latin America during conquest and subsequent colonization. Similarly, Costa Ricans have emphasized Nicaraguan violence (any by extension, cruelty) on the part of both Nicaraguan immigrants and the Nicaraguan government to exclude and marginalize Nicaraguans present in Costa Rica. The use of the term Black Legend in reference to Nicaraguan immigrants first appeared as the title of an article Otilio Ulate, future Costa Rican president, wrote in defense of Nicaraguan immigrants following the Lahmann affair. Ulate castigated learned Costa Ricans for allowing the spread of the black legend, which “blamed Nicaraguans for the wrongs they committed as well as those that they did not think of committing.”⁴ However, the term does not appear to have been commonly used during the 1930s. Nevertheless, it encapsulates the perception of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica during the period and speaks to the endurance of these perceptions into the present.

Historiography

Different studies have analyzed the emigration of Nicaraguans. The majority of these studies have focused on contemporary immigration that began as a result of the Sandinista Revolution and civil war of the 1980s and the economic collapse of the 1990s. North American studies have focused primarily on the migration of Nicaraguans to the United States, with an emphasis on assimilation and integration into U.S. society.⁵ Important exceptions are the works

⁴ Otilio Ulate, “La leyenda negra,” in Francisco Mayorga Ibarra, *La tragedia del nicaragüense en Costa Rica* (San José: Imprenta Borrásé, 1948), in Iván Molina Jiménez, “Dos crónicas nicaragüenses sobre la Costa Rica de la década de 1940,” *Istmo* 4 (July-December 2002).

⁵ Ana Margarita Cervantes Rodríguez, “Nicaraguans in Miami-Dade County: Immigration, Incorporation, and Transnational Entrepreneurship,” *Latino Studies* 4 (2006): 232-257; Patricia Fernández Kelly and Sara Curran, “Nicaraguans: Voices Lost, Voices Found, in *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*, edited by Rubén G. Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 127-155; Edward Funkhouser, “Migration from Nicaragua: Some Recent Evidence,” *World Development* 20 (1992): 1209-1218; Lisa N. Konczal, “Assimilating into Hispanic America: The Case of Nicaraguan Immigrant Adolescents,” Working Paper no. 4 (Miami: Immigration and Ethnicity Institute,

by anthropologists Philippe Bourgois and Marc Edelman that examine the integration of Nicaraguans into the Costa Rican labor force in the early twentieth century.⁶

Costa Rican scholars have been at the forefront of analyzing Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica.⁷ However, they too are primarily concerned with the question of integration and most of these studies only briefly examine the historical roots of Nicaraguan migration at the turn of the twentieth century. A notable exception is Ronald Soto Quiros' study of West Indian, Chinese, Jewish and Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica in the early twentieth century.⁸ The study of immigration to Costa Rica at the turn of the twentieth century has focused on the West Indian migration to the Atlantic region, where they worked on the banana plantations of the United Fruit Company.⁹ These studies have provided excellent insights into the formation of

Florida International University, 1999); Jennifer H. Lundquist and Douglas S. Massey, "Politics or Economics? International Migration during the Nicaraguan Contra War," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2005): 29-53; Margarita Rodríguez, "Different Paths, Same Destination: U.S. Bound Nicaraguan and Cuban Migration in a Comparative Perspective" (PhD diss., University of Miami, 1999).

⁶ Phillippe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989); Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁷ Luis Samandú and Ricardo Pereira, *Los nicaragüenses en Costa Rica: enfoque de una problemática* (San José: Consejería en Proyectos para Refugiados Latinoamericanos, 1996); Abelardo Morales and Carlos Castro, *Inmigración laboral nicaragüense en Costa Rica* (San José: FLACSO, 1999).

⁸ Ronald Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'" (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998).

⁹ Jeffrey Casey Gaspar, *Limón: 1880-1940, un estudio de la industria bananera en Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1979); Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1996); Lara Putnam, *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Trevor W. Purcell, *Banana Fallout: Class, Color, and Culture among West Indians in Costa Rica* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies Publications, University of California, Los Angeles, 1993);

black enclaves, race relations, gender dynamics, and labor conditions in Costa Rica and, most importantly, have disrupted the notion of Costa Rican “whiteness.” They have moved the focus of Costa Rican historiography away from the center of the nation and onto the margins to offer a more complex view of Costa Rican national development. In many of these studies, the authors contrast West Indians with their Spanish-speaking counterparts (Costa Ricans, Nicaraguans, and other Central Americans), problematically lumped together as “Hispanics.” This dissertation demonstrates that Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans did collaborate at times but to analyze them under the broad rubric of Hispanics diminishes or obfuscates their relationships.

There remain other unanswered questions about the migration of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. What role did Nicaraguans play in the formation of Costa Rican national identity? Why did Nicaraguans participate in Costa Rican social movements? What role did violence play in the relationship between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans? How did this influence the politics of

Elisavinda Echeverri-Gent, “Forgotten Workers: British West Indians and the Early Days of the Banana Industry in Costa Rica and Honduras,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 no. 2 (1992): 275-308; Charles W. Koch, “Jamaican Blacks and the Descendants in Costa Rica,” *Social and Economic Studies* 26, no. 3 (1977): 339-361; Asia Leeds, “Representations of Race, Entanglement of Power: Whiteness, Garveyism and Redemptive Geographies in Costa Rica, 1921-1950” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2010); Ronald Harpelle, *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race, Class, and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001); Phillipe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989).

the region? How have the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica contributed to the formation of negative stereotypes? Did this earlier migration affect how contemporary Costa Rican society receives and perceives the more recent wave of Nicaraguan immigrants? This dissertation answers these questions by examining the historically interlaced relationships between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans, and their governments, from independence to the mid-twentieth century.

Traditional Costa Rican historiography argues that a sense of Costa Rican nationalism, a “proto-nationalism,” existed even before independence in 1821.¹⁰ This notion of early nationalism holds that Costa Rica was a resource poor region (without minerals, a substantial Indian labor force, or an export crop). Therefore, Spanish colonial officials did not bother to develop the area and provided little oversight. As a result, Costa Rica was a nation of small landholders whose homogenous, mostly European-descended, population formed an egalitarian and individualistic society as a “rural democracy.”¹¹ Ronald Soto Quiros points out that these studies focused primarily on the formation of the Costa Rican nation-state, and did not in fact delineate the construction of a nation, how people “imagined” themselves as belonging to a nation with particular characteristics.¹² Furthermore, Lowell Gudmonson has challenged the

¹⁰ José Luis Vega Carballo, *Orden y progreso: la formación del Estado Nacional en Costa Rica* (San José: ICAP, 1981); Eugenio Rodríguez Vega, “Deber y haber del hombre costarricense,” *Revista de Costa Rica* 7 (1974): 56; Rodolfo Cerdas, *La crisis de la democracia liberal en Costa Rica* (Centroamérica: EDUCA, 1972).

¹¹ James Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001), 77.

¹² Soto Quiros, 7-8.

egalitarian character of early Costa Rican society arguing that there were defined hierarchical structures with clear distinctions of wealth and status.¹³

Steven Palmer argues that Costa Rican nationalism emerged not at the onset of independence but as part of an elite liberal project consolidated towards the end of the nineteenth century. Elites in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica formulated “imagined communities” as part of post-independence liberal nation-building projects.¹⁴ As historian Jeffrey Gould argues, in the case of Nicaragua elites pursued *mestizaje* as a mechanism of “the development of a democratic discourse of equal rights and citizenship that effectively suppressed specific indigenous rights to communal land and political autonomy.” Furthermore, it served to create in Nicaragua a “virile Indo Hispanic national identity in opposition to U.S. imperialism.”¹⁵ In Costa Rica, national elites and intellectuals posited an “imagined origin” that relied in part on Costa Rica’s participation in the Central American National War against William Walker in order to achieve hegemony. Thirty years after the events of the war of 1856, intellectuals rediscovered a populist patriotic hero, Juan Santamaria, who fought, and importantly, sacrificed himself for the nation thus allowing the masses to imagine themselves as integral to the construction and defense of the nation.¹⁶

¹³ Lowell Gudmonson, *Costa Rica before Coffee: Society and Economy on the Eve of Export Boom*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1986.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 2006

¹⁵ Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 134, 285.

¹⁶ Steven Palmer, “Getting to Know the Unknown Soldier: Official Nationalism in Liberal Costa Rica, 1880-1900,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no.1 (1993): 45-72.

Ronald Soto Quiros, however, argues for the need to move beyond elite constructions of the nation's liberal project and analyzes how immigrants and the immigration policies of the nation-state at the turn of the twentieth century informed the construction of Costa Rican national identity. In Costa Rica, the explosion of coffee, as well as the construction of the Atlantic Railroad, and the rise of the United Fruit Company banana plantations (as well as the construction of the Panama Canal) resulted in a desperate need for labor. The immigration of non-whites, West Indians (afrocaribeños), Chinese, Polish Jews, and Nicaraguans at the turn of the twentieth century initiated a wave of discriminatory policies and a xenophobic public discourse centered on the defense of Costa Rican racial purity. As such, Costa Ricans associate undesirable immigrants with illness, prostitution, violence, and crime.¹⁷ Importantly, Soto Quiros delineates how elites utilized different "others" to enhance the Costa Rican national myths of whiteness (West Indians and Chinese), peacefulness (Nicaraguans), and in the 1930s, anti-communism (Polish Jews).¹⁸ These early immigrants of the first half of the twentieth century concentrated on the geographical margins of the nation, on the coasts and the countryside, outside of the central valley, and thus, existed on the margins of Costa Rica both socially and geographically. Soto Quiros convincingly demonstrates that the xenophobic, ethnocentric, and racist discourse that emerged at the turn of the century and surged in the global economic crisis of the 1930s were critical to the formation of Costa Rican national identity.

¹⁷ Ronald Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'" (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998); Iván Molina Jiménez, "Dos crónicas nicaragüenses sobre la Costa Rica de la década de 1940, *Istmo* 4 (July-December 2002).

¹⁸ Ronald Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'" (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998).

Sociologist Carlos Sandoval García argues that the Nicaraguan in Costa Rica is both an internal and external "other."¹⁹ Nicaraguans are a member of a neighboring nation-state whom Costa Ricans view suspiciously because of almost two hundred years of border disputes, alternating threats of and actual invasions, as well as Nicaragua's own domestic political and economic instability. Moreover, Costa Ricans perceive Nicaraguans as an internal threat that makes up an increasingly significant portion of Costa Rican society. As such, this has contributed to a heightened, and sometimes exaggerated, awareness of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica.

This dissertation goes beyond examining Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica because the Nicaraguan Black Legend not only encompasses Costa Rican stereotypes of Nicaraguans immigrants. It also reflects the political and geographic relationship between the two nations. Costa Rica's interactions with Nicaraguans and their government contributed to the often-negative perception of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. Historically, the two governments disputed their borders and navigation rights of the San Juan River, which on a few occasions led to outright military aggression. Furthermore, Costa Rica served as an important haven for Nicaraguan exiles that, more often than not, plotted to overthrow the governments of Nicaragua. This further aggravated relations between the two countries. Thus, the Nicaraguan Black Legend not only pertains to the immigrants themselves but instead is constructed as part of the varied interactions between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans at a variety of levels from government officials to ordinary agricultural laborers.

¹⁹ Carlos Sandoval García, *Threatening Others: Nicaraguans and the Formation of National Identities in Costa Rica* (Athens: Ohio University Research in International Studies, Ohio University Press, 2004).

This dissertation seeks to build upon the work of Soto Quiros and Sandoval García to demonstrate to what extent the Nicaraguan “other” has contributed to the formation of Costa Rican national identity and the Costa Rican nation-state and how this has led to the creation of a Nicaraguan black legend. Whereas Soto Quiros focused on immigration and Sandoval García on the various media representations of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, this dissertation highlights moments of political conflict and violence from independence until the mid-twentieth century between the two nations. Furthermore, I argue that Nicaraguans were critical role in the formation of the modern Costa Rican state. Importantly, this dissertation aims to understand how Costa Rican national identity can claim peace as a critical component of its construction and yet justify acts of violence against Nicaraguans (as well as other Costa Ricans). The construction of the Nicaraguan black legend, thus, reinforces Costa Rica’s own national myth, which asserts its peaceful, democratic and homogenous white character, what Theodore Creedman termed the Costa Rican “White Legend.”²⁰ The terms black legend and white legend highlight the racial component of Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica, as Sandoval García argues, Nicaraguans have undergone a process of racialization in Costa Rica.

Violence has played a critical role in the relationship between Costa Rican and Nicaraguans. An examination of the relationship between the two nations post-independence, specifically the contentious aspects of this relationship, uncovers how violence shaped the Nicaraguan experience in Costa Rica and how it shaped Costa Rican nationalism. I argue that

²⁰ According to Creedman Costa Rica imagined itself as an “idyllic democracy without violence or poverty, a so-called Switzerland of Central America.” See Theodore Creedman, *Historical Dictionary of Costa Rica* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1977), x; Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 26; Mitchell Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 3-13; Jeffrey Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 220-222.

violence, its symbolic and physical manifestations, were not absent in Costa Rica. Similar to Jeffrey Gould's assertion that the *mestizaje* process in Nicaragua combined real and symbolic violence,²¹ Costa Rica's articulation and evolution of its national myth utilized violence to assert its dominance. Edelman argues that elite perception of violent Nicaraguans was critical to the formation of Costa Rican nationalism and, furthermore, that elites utilized the border disputes between Nicaraguan and Costa Rica to flesh out national distinctions that had not previously existed in the popular consciousness.²² Concordantly, Charles Tilly argues that states build up threats, in effect, a "protection racket", to rationalize state building.²³ Costa Rican violence manifested itself in different ways, through repression of labor struggles and opposition groups, the deportation of immigrants and exiles, and war making. Furthermore, it expressed itself rhetorically against opponents it deemed threats, primarily communists and Nicaraguans, casting them as outsiders of the Costa Rican nation.

Finally, in Costa Rica the "Nicaraguan," or more specifically, the "Nica," is a category of person defined by three distinct features that make the Nicaraguans inferior in the minds of Costa Ricans: Language, phenotypical markers, and violent disposition, specifically among the males. Costa Ricans mock Nicaraguan Spanish for not only being different, but also because they think that the migrants speak vulgarly and make pronunciation errors when speaking. Phenotypically, Nicaraguans are generally darker than Costa Ricans, a product of greater integration among

²¹ Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 10.

²² Marc Edelman, "A Central American Genocide: Rubber, Slavery, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Guastusos-Malekus," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 2 (1998): 356-390.

²³ Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-191.

indigenous, black and Spanish populations.²⁴ Finally, Costa Ricans rely on the image of Nicaraguans as hyper-violent *other* used to amplify Costa Rican peace, obfuscating Costa Rican violence.²⁵ The Nicaraguan “Other” is a product of a process in which “sameness” between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans is diminished and “difference” is emphasized.²⁶ Costa Ricans perceived certain Nicaraguan elites positively, generally, Nicaraguans generated increasing alarm. For example, Sandoval García observes that Costa Ricans distinguished quite sharply between the Nicaraguan poor and elite: “Despite a generalized stigma against Nicaraguans, a more careful analysis reveals that both men and women have a clear class inscription.”²⁷ Newspaper reports in Costa Rica contributed to the perception of Nicaraguans as violent and belligerent. Crime reports never failed to mention the nationality of the criminal, especially if Nicaraguan immigrants were involved.²⁸ Increasingly, Nicaraguans became associated with criminality, violence and savagery, as is evidenced by the headlines of the early twentieth century: “Wounded by Nicaraguans,”²⁹ and “A fierce Nicaraguan in Liberia stabs a drunk man in

²⁴ Patricia Alvarenga, “Conflictiva convivencia: Los nicaragüenses en Costa Rica,” *Cuaderno de Sociales* no. 101 (1997): 19-23.

²⁵ Alvarenga, “Conflictiva Convivencia”, 24-38; Carlos Sandoval García, *Threatening Others: Nicaraguans and the Formation of National Identities in Costa Rica* (Athens: Ohio University Research in International Studies, Ohio University Press, 2004).

²⁶ Carlos Sandoval García, *Threatening Others: Nicaraguans and the Formation of National Identities in Costa Rica* (Athens: Ohio University Research in International Studies, Ohio University Press, 2004), 8.

²⁷ Sandoval García, 144.

²⁸ Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 428.

²⁹ “Heridos por nicaragüenses” *El Noticiero*, September 14, 1907 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 428.

the heart.”³⁰ Soto Quiros demonstrates that the press sought to link violence with a Nicaraguan “racial” type, as when in 1917 a runaway prisoner is described as “30 years old, more black than dark, Nicaraguan-ish (*tipo nicaragüense*), tattoo on his chest.”³¹ The political instability of Nicaragua also contributed to these notions, as Ronald Soto Quiros points out that Costa Rican newspapers depicted Nicaragua as a country full of violence and conflict.³²

Carlos Sandoval García suggests that the participation of Nicaraguans in both the 1934 banana strike against the United Fruit Company and the 1948 Civil War solidified the perception of Nicaraguans as communists and as violent agitators.³³ However, this does not explain why Nicaraguans risked their livelihood and their lives to participate in Costa Rican politics. My dissertation seeks to uncover the motivations of Nicaraguans laborers for joining movements outside of their homeland.

The rise of Anastasio Somoza proved central to the articulation of Nicaraguan violence as Nicaraguan exiles entered Costa Rica looking for a base to launch revolutionary plots against the dictator. Nicaraguan exiles moved about the region, including to the United States, Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Honduras in their efforts to join antidictatorial struggles, remove Somoza, and secure power in Nicaragua. The dictatorial crisis contributed to a politically tense regional atmosphere that culminated with the Costa Rican Civil War of 1948.

³⁰ “Un feroz nicaragüense en la ciudad de Liberia traspasa con una daga el corazón de un ebrio,” *La Información*, September 8, 1914 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 429.

³¹ “Otra fuga de Tintorera,” *El Pacífico*, April 24, 1917 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 429.

³² Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 431.

³³ Sandoval García, *Threatening Others*, 95-6.

Historians have focused on the domestic conditions that led to Civil War in Costa Rica.³⁴

Nevertheless, historians David Díaz-Arias, Marcia Olander, Jacobo Schifter, Richard Clinton, and Kyle Longley have all contributed to a greater understanding of the role that regional and international politics, particularly the influence of Somoza, Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz and shifting U.S. policies wielded in the development of the Costa Rican war.³⁵

The interventions of global powers played an important role in the formation of national identities in Costa Rica and Nicaragua as well and provided a source of conflict between the two. In the nineteenth century, interest in a canal through the San Juan River, which defines much of the border between the two isthmian nations generated competition between the United States, Great Britain and France. The victory of the United States in this early conflict set the stage for its dominance over the region. The U.S. government's occupation of Nicaragua in the early twentieth century and its eventual support of Somoza's dictatorial rule of Somoza created a regional crisis in the region. Ultimately, shifting U.S. policies caused confusion and turmoil as both dictatorial and democratic governments looked to the United States for direction, greatly

³⁴ John Patrick Bell, *Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli, *Costa Rica y sus hecho politicos de 1948* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1993).

³⁵ David Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories: Populism, Popular Mobilization, Violence, and Memories of Civil War in Costa Rica, 1940-1948" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2009); Marcia K. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies and the Costa Rican Civil War of 1948: Picado, Somoza, and the Desperate Alliance" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2000); Jacobo Schifter, *La alianzas conflictivas: Las relaciones de Costa Rica y Estados Unidos de la Segunda Guerra Mundial a los inicios de la Guerra Civil*. San José, Costa Rica: Asociación Libro Libre, 1986; Richard E. Clinton, Jr., "The United States and the Caribbean Legion: Democracy, Dictatorship, and the Origins of the Cold War in Latin America, 1945-1950" (PhD diss., Ohio University, 2001); Kyle Longley, "Peaceful Costa Rica, the First Battleground: The United States and the Costa Rican Revolution of 1948." *The Americas* 50, no. 2 (1993): 149-175.

influencing events and relationships in the region. As the Cold War set in after World War II, the U.S. policy of containment caused the influence of communism to come under intense scrutiny. Thus, Costa Rica and Nicaragua were competitors in a regional rivalry to curry the favor of the “colossus of the north,” as well as players in a struggle between global powers.

Violence

Recent scholarship has linked the importance of violence to the development of the nation-state and national identity. I utilize Enrique Desmond Arias and Daniel M. Goldstein’s concept of “violent pluralism.” To discuss the prevalence of violence in Latin American societies, Arias and Goldstein argue, “In this sense Latin American democratic society can be conceptualized as ‘violently plural,’ with states, social elites, and subalterns employing violence in the quest to establish or contest regimes of citizenship, justice, rights, and a democratic social order.” Violence then is not simply seen as a failure of democratic government and institutions but rather as an integral element to the configuration of society. It is a tool, a strategy, used by different actors for different ends. Most of the literature on violence and state formation has focused on the ability of states to exert coercion, and in this way, gain the power necessary for the building of nation-states.

Charles Tilly, in his examination of state development in Western Europe, suggests that violence, and specifically war making, are critical to the formation of nation-states. Tilly succinctly formulates the connection between the two with the dictum, “War made the state, and the state made war.”³⁶ The “bellicist” perspective holds that the state’s ability to exert control over a population derives from its ability to wage war to protect its interests against internal and

³⁶ Charles Tilly, “Reflection on the History of European State-Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 42.

external threats. To wage war it is necessary to extract resources: “men, arms, food, lodging, transportation, supplies, and/or the money to buy them.”³⁷ As Miguel Angel Centeno summarizes, “States are above all fighters of wars...war partly determines all aspects of states, from their authority structures, administrative capacities, and legitimacy to their levels of inclusion.”³⁸ Centeno argues that this pattern, however, does not hold for Latin America.

Centeno argues that Latin America, despite its reputation for violence, is defined largely by a lack of “total” wars and state violence. Instead, Latin American nations have engaged in limited wars (fought by professional armies) that have resulted in limited states. The results of war in Latin America “were generally negative, in that it brought mostly debt, economic breakdown and political chaos.”³⁹ Importantly, Centeno acknowledges that the lack of war(s) does not uniformly prevent the development of states in Latin America. In regards to Costa Rica he writes, “In the twentieth century, the country with the most enviable record of democracy, post-1948 Costa Rica, was also the one that abolished a formal armed service.”⁴⁰

Historian Robert Holden rebukes Centeno’s assertions that in Latin America “political violence has been relatively muted” and moves beyond the state apparatus to focus on the “field of state power.” Holden, focusing on Central America, articulates a conceptual field of state power that includes the state and its agents (police and armed forces), but also its rivals, such as

³⁷ Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” 183.

³⁸ Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 15, 101.

³⁹ Centeno, 21, 266.

⁴⁰ Centeno, 260.

revolutionary groups that seek to overtake the state.⁴¹ The competition for state power results in increasing displays of public violence, such as war within and among states, but also “events typically associated with such disparate categories as ‘political violence,’ ‘collective violence,’ ‘revolutionary violence,’ and acts of violence committed by death squads, vigilantes, and self-declared popular armies of liberation.”⁴² By focusing on the field of state power, and not only the coercive apparatus of the state, Holden is able to provide a much more nuanced presentation of how violence manifests itself in Central America.

Central America (specifically Nicaragua and Costa Rica) varies in other ways. Centeno asserts, “The absence of international conflict in part reflects the irrelevance of immediate neighbors for each country’s political and economic development. Latin American states often directed their attention not to their immediate borders, but to metropolitan center half a globe away.”⁴³ However, the case of these two Central American neighbors demonstrates the importance of not only their relationships to metropolitan centers but also to one another and the other Central American nations for state development and national identity. Cameron Thies argues that interstate rivalries instead of “total” war can also contribute to the development of nation-states in Latin America.⁴⁴ Thies suggests that an external rivalry and the maintenance of high levels of perceived threat can lead to the sufficient extraction of resources that contribute to

⁴¹ Robert Holden, *Armies Without Nations: Public Violence and State Formation in Central America, 1821-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴² Holden, *Armies Without Nations*, 11.

⁴³ Centeno, 26.

⁴⁴ Cameron Thies, “War, Rivalry and State Building in Latin America,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 3 (2005): 451-465.

the building of a state.⁴⁵ As Centeno suggests, “it is not necessarily war itself but the threat of war that often produces the positive state building consequences.”⁴⁶ Utilizing Holden’s concept of public violence, Thies finds that in Central America, similar to other parts of Latin America, interstate rivalries promote state formation and intrastate rivalries have a negative effect on the state’s extractive capabilities.⁴⁷

However, violence is not merely a product of the state and its agents or a factor for state development. Agents and receptors experience violence as both public and private. A personal attack on Nicaraguans, for example, deportations, thus, can be perceived as a public international attack on the Nicaraguan state. Importantly, violence, is not “merely concentrated in the state or in ‘deviant’ groups and individuals,” but as a critical component to the “foundation of Latin American democracies, the maintenance of democratic states, and the political behavior of democratic citizens.”⁴⁸ Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Phillipe Bourgois suggest, “Most violence is not deviant behavior, not disapproved of, but to the contrary is defined as virtuous action in the service of generally applauded conventional social, economic, and political norms.”⁴⁹ It may seem odd to use such a lens to examine Costa Rica, noted for its mostly peaceful and democratic history. However, violence can take on many forms. Phillipe Bourgois suggests that violence

⁴⁵ Thies, 454.

⁴⁶ Centeno, 266.

⁴⁷ Cameron Thies, “Public Violence and State Building in Central America,” *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (2006): 1263-1282.

⁴⁸ Enrique Desmond Arias and Daniel M. Goldstein, “Violent Pluralism: Understanding the New Democracies of Latin America,” in *Violent Democracies in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 4-5.

⁴⁹ Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Phillipe Bourgois, “Introduction: Making Sense of Violence,” in *Violence in War and Peace* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 5.

and operates within a continuum that shifts, intersects, and overlaps with multiple forms of violence: political, structural, symbolic and everyday violence.⁵⁰

Speaking specifically on the different forms of violence present in Latin America, Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt argue that physical or open forms of violence are not the only ones that affect social relations in Latin America. “Socio-economic inequality and deprivation, ethnic discrimination, criminal violence, death squads, kidnapping and so on” can be mentioned alongside the more traditional forms of violence related to Latin American history (coup d’états, foreign intervention, revolution, torture, etc.).⁵¹ Finally, as Lara Putnam articulates, violence is also gendered. Many interpersonal displays of violence depend on gendered scripts, especially where honor and reputations are at stake.⁵² No country, then, is free from violence and its articulations. The expansion of what violence actually is and how various entities utilize it demonstrates how power operates.

It is my contention that Nicaraguans in Costa Rica were both recipients and perpetrators of violence. Violence committed against Nicaraguans, be it by state governments, plantations owners, or personal rivals were attempts to diminish their influence and power within Costa Rican society. Violence perpetrated by Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, was often a strategy, not necessarily acts of deviance, to improve their economic and social position in Costa Rica. I argue that in Costa Rica violence and rhetoric of violence were employed by different actors and resulted in the construction of a Nicaraguan Black Legend as well as the construction of Costa

⁵⁰ Phillipe Bourgois, “The Power of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador,” *Ethnography* 2, no.1 (2001): 5-34; Phillipe Bourgois, “The Violence of Moral Binaries: Response to Leigh Binford,” *Ethnography* 3, no. 2 (2002): 221-231.

⁵¹ Kees Kooning and Dirk Kruijt, *Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 6.

⁵² Lara Putnam, 11.

Rican national identity. From independence and into the first decades of the twentieth century, Nicaraguan political instability, territorial disputes with Nicaragua, and the criminality of certain segments of the Nicaraguan immigrant population contributed to creation of a Nicaraguan Black Legend. In 1934, Costa Rican elites used the rhetoric of violence and its association with Nicaraguans to challenge and repress the strike, placing the onus of violence on Nicaraguans and communists. In 1948, the government and the opposition both utilized the presence of Nicaraguans to undermine each other's claims to Costa Rican authenticity. The government pointed to Figueres' association with the Caribbean Legion and Figueres and his allies pointed to the alliance between the government of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, Rafael Angel Calderon and Anastasio Somoza, and the communist party with Nicaraguan laborers. Figueres and his allies won the war for the government and claims to legitimacy. Ultimately, I argue that the participation of Nicaraguans in Costa Rican politics proved critical to the formation of the modern Costa Rican state.

Chapter Outline

My dissertation proceeds chronologically to demonstrate how the relationship between the governments and peoples of Nicaragua and Costa Rica has evolved by making clear the events and incidents that contributed their identities as diverging and different peoples. Chapter 1 examines the territorial disputes between Nicaragua and Costa Rica in the nineteenth century. The interactions between the two nations defined the border as well as the volatile nature of their relationship. Unlike most studies of national identity in Nicaraguan and Costa Rica my study seeks to understand how both nation states and citizens shaped their populations' self-understanding of their distinctiveness through regional and broader international interactions since their independence. The volatile interactions between the governments of Nicaragua and

Costa Rica laid the groundwork for the rivalry that would define their relationship well into the twenty first century.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the economic transformations that prompted Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica. In the second half of the nineteenth century, both governments transformed their economies and went about creating a labor force to sustain their nascent agro-export industries. In the case of Nicaragua, the government passed a series of vagrancy laws designed to force Nicaraguans to enter wage labor. The labor regime, coupled with the political instability and the threat of conscription, initiated the first wave of Nicaraguan immigrants to Costa Rica. From there, it examines the context of reception that early Nicaraguan immigrants encountered to uncover the initiation of the marginalization and racialization that defined the Nicaraguan experience in Costa Rica and made the Nicaraguan black legend evident.

Chapter 3 examines the participation of Nicaraguans in the 1934 banana strike in Limon and the involvement of Nicaraguans with the Costa Rican Communist Party. I argue that during the 1934 strike, the Costa Rican Communist Party's program resonated with Nicaraguan laborers and the collaboration between Nicaraguan and Costa Rican laborers laid the foundations for a transnational alliance based on class that circumvented, if not completely transcended, nationalism. The United Fruit Company, Costa Rican planters, and the Costa Rican government responded by unleashing a scathing attack on the radical elements of the movement, particularly the Nicaraguans. Nicaraguans and Costa Rican laborers, responding to atrocious working conditions and the refusal of the United Fruit Company to address their concerns by striking in 1934 and turned to violence to force the issue. The rhetorical and structural violence that had previously been unfurled by the UFCO, planters, and government was now augmented with a

more visceral violence that ultimately forced the end of the strike. Furthermore, the Costa Rican government deported many Nicaraguans, including many who had lived in Costa Rica for decades. The 1934 labor strike is a clear example of the implications of the Nicaraguan black legend, where Costa Ricans utilized the presumption of Nicaraguan violence to undermine the labor movement and as justification to deport any undesirable elements.

Chapter 4 explores the rise of Somoza and the initiation of a regional crisis that produced exiles. The exiles fled to Mexico and Costa Rica in an effort to form a movement to dislodge the Nicaraguan dictator from power. They were ultimately successful in creating an alliance with other disaffected exiles from neighboring nations, the so-called Caribbean Legion. The chapter outlines how and why the Caribbean Legion surprisingly chose Costa Rica to launch their attack. It also examines the role of shifting U.S. policy in the region from World War II to the Cold War.

Chapter 5 examines the participation of Nicaraguan immigrants and exiles and Somoza in the Costa Rican Civil War of 1948. By 1948, Nicaraguans were clearly a stigmatized population, so much so, that *both* sides of the conflict attacked each other for bringing in Nicaraguans into a Costa Rican fight. Nicaraguan laborers (as well as a few Nicaraguan exiles) fought on the side of *Vanguardia Popular*, which was allied with the incumbent Costa Rican government. The Nicaraguans exiles associated with the Caribbean Legion fought on the side of opposition leader José Figueres, who took advantage of a rare and highly volatile political atmosphere in Costa Rica. Although the war was short, it demonstrated the willingness of Costa Ricans to wage war on one another. Furthermore, the end of the war further maligned the standing of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. Lastly, the chapter also discusses the personal rivalry between Somoza and José Figueres that threatened to engulf the countries in a military

confrontation as both leaders attempted invasions of each other's countries. Only Anastasio Somoza's assassination in 1956 ended the personal rivalry.

My work benefits greatly and builds upon a formidable secondary literature, especially the work of Patricia Alvarenga, Ronald Soto Quiros, Carlos Sandoval García, Phillipe Bourgois, Marc Edelman, Ronald Harpelle, Aviva Chomsky, Lara Putnam, Marcia Olander, Kyle Longley, Richard Clinton, and David Díaz-Arias. These works, as well as archival sources, memoirs, novels and newspaper accounts have helped me piece together a history of the relationship between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Nevertheless, my dissertation is unique in multiple ways: First, it is only one of a handful of studies that examines the experience of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Critically, it is the first to provide an in-depth analysis of the involvement of Nicaraguans in the 1934 banana strike and the 1948 Civil War. Second, the focus on violence challenges the myth of a peaceful Costa Rica to demonstrate how Costa Ricans used violence to build their nation, delineating the importance of violence as a critical element in the formations of nations and national identity but also in the construction of stereotypes. The dissertation also demonstrates the xenophobic attitudes against Nicaraguans are not only a product of the contemporary immigration but rather as a critical component of Costa Rican identity that is imagined in reference to a Costa Rican "other." Lastly, my work demonstrates that one cannot separate the political from the social. It attempts to bridge a diplomatic history with a social history, albeit imperfectly. However, I believe that this is the only way to truly capture the complete relationship between the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica and its peoples.

CHAPTER ONE

SUSPICIOUS NEIGHBORS: TERRITORIAL DISPUTES AND THE NATIONAL WAR IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Nation-state formation followed a very complex evolutionary path in Central America. The five provinces of the Captaincy General of Guatemala (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua) gained independence from Spain in 1821 and passed briefly under the control of the Mexican Empire (1822-1823). The provinces quickly seceded from Mexico and realigned themselves as the United Provinces of Central America, with its capital in Guatemala City.¹ The new Republic, by declaration of the Constitution of 1824, granted the individual states autonomy in their internal affairs. However, factionalism between the provinces and ideological conflicts conspired to prevent the creation of a strong national Central American identity. Robert S. Smith also suggests that failure to establish a powerful federal government, financial maladministration, and poor economic development further weakened the nascent republic.² Furthermore, geography, ethnicity, administrative history, and lack of common economic ties all contributed to division among the provinces. Known as the Federal Republic of Central America, the vulnerable state maintained its sovereignty until 1838.

From the outset, Costa Ricans cultivated a sense of isolation and regional exceptionalism (centered largely upon strong democratic traditions in the province) that hindered the development of a sense of a shared national identity with their Central American neighbors. The standard local narrative contrasts Costa Rica's history of peace with the violent histories of the other Central American nations, particularly of Nicaragua. As historian Thomas Karnes

¹ In 1834, the capital moved to San Salvador.

² Robert S. Smith, "Financing the Central American Federation, 1821-1838," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 43, no. 4, (1963): 483-510.

remarked of the Central American union: “Costa Rica reinforced its tendencies of localism, neutrality, and a realization that it was better to be separated from the quarrels of the other four.”³ While there is an important kernel of truth in Karnes’ observation, a closer examination reveals how interconnected Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans were from the outset.

This chapter will analyze the border disputes between the two nations during the nineteenth century, the affair with William Walker, and the role of global powers in Central America, to uncover the roots of hostility and violence that serve as the backdrop in which tens of thousands of Nicaraguans eventually migrated to Costa Rica. Disputes over borders and political instability in Nicaragua have been at the root of much of the discord between the neighboring nations. Furthermore, while the Costa Rican government attempted to distance itself from the strife of its Central American neighbors, it did engage in sometimes violent confrontations to defend itself and its neighbors. I argue that mythologies of peace and violence do not differentiate Costa Rica from Central America, generally and Nicaragua, specifically. Rather, like its neighbors, the Costa Rican government engaged in the competition for resources and territory, and this helped create and solidify the emergence of separate states with diverging interests. It was in the competition for resources and territory that Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans began looking at each other with distrust and established their rivalry. Threats of violence, more so than physical violence, became commonplace and hostility came to define the relationship between the two nations.

Borders, Territory, and a River

The annexation of the Partido Nicoya, a territory that was formerly a part of southern Nicaraguan below Rivas and now the Costa Rican province of Guanacaste, in 1824 is a point of

³ Thomas L. Karnes, *The Failure of Union: Central America, 1824-1975* (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1976), 34-35.

agitation that continues to this day. Likewise, disagreement over navigation rights of the San Juan River provoked continued animosity between the two nations to this day. In the mid-nineteenth century, interest in a transisthmian canal placed an international spotlight on the river boundary that separates Costa Rica and Nicaragua as European powers and the United States jockeyed against one another to build a canal.

Upon the formation of the Federal Republic of Central America, the boundaries of its constituent provinces remained somewhat nebulous. Nicaragua and Costa Rica almost immediately began to challenge each other's border claims. This led to a protracted struggle over the Partido Nicoya, a district made up of three distinct municipalities: Nicoya, Santa Cruz, and Guanacaste. For much of the colonial period, the Partido Nicoya was autonomous and independent from *both* Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and the three functioned as separate administrative subunits under Spain. After the creation of the United Provinces of Central America, the Partido Nicoya opted to realign with Nicaragua. The three municipalities received numerous invitations to join Costa Rica, an offer that became especially attractive to Nicoya and Santa Cruz when civil war erupted in 1824 between Liberals headquartered in the Nicaraguan city of León and Conservatives based in Granada.

Nicaragua's political instability stemmed from continuing internal strife between elites in Granada and León. Conservative Granada and Liberal León, the two poles of political power in Nicaragua, vied for political dominance during the country's formative decades.⁴ After independence ideological rivalries emerged in many parts of Latin America between Conservatives, who sought to maintain the colonial order, and Liberals, who sought a

⁴ James Busey demonstrates that this was a byproduct of the creation of a weak executive by the Nicaraguan constitution of 1838 that constrained terms to two years, which resulted in perpetual electoral campaigns, and a revolving door of political leaders. James L. Busey, "Foundations of Political Contrast: Costa Rica and Nicaragua," 632.

transformation of the state through liberal reforms, such as free trade, land privatization, and secularization.⁵ Historian Bradford Burns convincingly demonstrates that in Nicaragua Conservatives and Liberals agreed on the principle of private property and “waged a war more for power than principle.”⁶

The chaos of the civil war drove the citizens of the municipalities of Nicoya and Santa Cruz to hold a referendum on whether to remain a part of Nicaragua or to join the more stable province of Costa Rica in July of 1824. Guanacaste, however, declined Costa Rica’s invitation and opted to remain a part of Nicaragua, mainly due to economic, cultural, and familial ties to the Nicaraguan department of Rivas.⁷ In other words, Guanacaste, the municipality directly to the south of Nicaragua, felt more Nicaraguan; the other two municipalities, Nicoya and Santa Cruz, with greater economic ties to Costa Rica, less so. The actual boundaries of the Central American nation-states remained inexact during this period and elites in Costa Rica moved quickly to expand their territory. National identity was in flux and economic and social ties, more so than political ties, were determining who felt more “Nicaraguan” or “Costa Rican.”

On December 9, 1825, the Congress of the Central American Federation Costa Rica formally annexed the Partido Nicoya, including Guanacaste, to Costa Rica. The government of Nicaragua condemned the decision and complained to the Congress. Members of Congress justified their decision by noting the numerous appeals by the citizens from the municipalities of Nicoya in favor of joining Costa Rica. Furthermore, Congressional leaders observed that these

⁵ Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 25.

⁶ E. Bradford Burns, *Patriarch and Folk: The Emergence of Nicaragua, 1798-1858* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 23.

⁷ Antonio Esgueva, “Límites, negociaciones y conflictos entre Nicaragua y Costa Rica,” *Encuentro* 34, no. 62 (2002): 28-32.

municipalities had already adjoined themselves to Costa Rica during Nicaragua's upheavals. Therefore, they affirmed that their decision would stand pending official demarcation. This was to be a temporary solution per the Congress' ruling; however, the formal integration of Guanacaste into the Costa Rican territory, as well as civil war in Nicaragua, served to strengthen Guanacastecan ties to the Costa Rican state.⁸

Despite its political integration into Costa Rica, the ties between Guanacaste and Nicaragua proved enduring, strengthened by economic ties and ongoing migration from Nicaragua into Guanacaste. The outbreak of a civil war in Nicaragua in 1826 induced the first wave of Nicaraguan exiles seeking refuge principally into Guanacaste. The mayor of Guanacaste welcomed these exiles with open arms, declaring that the Nicaraguan exiles were free to embrace the security and social guarantees that Costa Rica had to offer.⁹ However, a decade of political integration, the increased economic ties, and the stability Costa Rica offered proved to overwhelm the region's ties to Nicaragua. When rumors swirled in 1834 that Nicaragua would try to retake the territory, the three municipalities acted quickly to ratify their union to Costa Rica – and this time, Guanacastecans initiated the call to do so. When violence returned to the streets of the Nicaraguan capital of León in 1837, the Costa Rican government advised Guanacaste's governor to bar Nicaraguan exiles unless they could produce evidence of prior political persecution and spotless personal conduct.¹⁰ Nicaraguans would continue to cross into Costa Rica, however, the open invitation to do so no longer existed.

⁸ Esgueva, 31-2.

⁹ Luis Fernando Sibaja and Chester Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 2nd ed. (San José: EUNED, 1980), 81, in Ronald Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'" (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 411.

¹⁰ José Anselmo Sancho, Communication, 2 August 1837, in José Hilario Villalobos Rodríguez and Lus Alba Chacón de Umaña, *Braulio Carillo en sus fuentes documentales*, Tomo

In 1838, the Central American Federation began to crumble because El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaraguan and Costa Rica all resented Guatemalan hegemony over their territory. Nicaragua was the first to declare independence and Honduras and Costa Rica soon followed Nicaragua's lead out of the federation.¹¹ The demise of the Central American Federation only intensified the border dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

The annexation of Guanacaste was only one of the border disputes that erupted between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The other point of contention centered on the San Juan River, which became a focal point of regional and international interest when transisthmian canal builders targeted it as prime site for the project. Costa Rican authorities challenged Nicaragua's claim to sole possession of the San Juan River. As historian Frances Kinloch Tijerino explains, these tensions increased in the wake of an 1840 report by British engineer John Baily that brought the region to the attention of American, British and French officials who sought to control the development of a canal. This spurred bitter competition between Nicaragua and Costa Rica for the right to reap the benefits from the potential canal's construction and operation.¹² As interest in the canal increased, both Nicaragua and Costa Rica negotiated separate agreements for exclusivity over the construction and navigation rights of a potential canal route. In April 1846, Nicaragua granted exclusive rights to Louis Napoleon Bonaparte to build a canal through the San

I (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1998), 278 in Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942," 411.

¹¹ Ralph Lee Woodward, *Central America: A Nation Divided* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 109.

¹² Frances Kinloch Tijerino, "El Rio Juan: De via interoceanica a ruta de migración transfronteriza," *Revista de Historia* 15-16 (2000): 49.

Juan River and Lake Cocibolca. Costa Rica granted similar rights to the English company Flyer & Carmichael in July of 1849.¹³

The British presence in Central America was of concern to both Nicaraguan and U.S. policymakers. Robert Naylor argues that British interest in Central America was primarily commercial, and not necessarily political or imperialistic, as Britain replaced Spain as the dominant trading power in the region during the years following independence.¹⁴ However, recent scholarship demonstrates that British interest was not solely commercial in nature. Richmond Brown's work details the expansion of British interests in Central America. In the 1840s, Britain re-established a presence in Central American when it recognized the "Reino Mosquito," which stretched along the Atlantic Coast of Honduras and Nicaragua, and designated it as a British protectorate. The residents of the Mosquito Kingdom, descendants of native groups and African slaves, resisted Spanish incursions and felt a greater affinity to the British who had successfully established a presence in the region in the seventeenth century. In 1848, the British, through consul Frederick Chatfield, embarked on a "fantastic imperialist project" that aimed to plant naval bases across Central America. In doing so, they defined the Atlantic coast port of San Juan del Norte as part of the British protectorate, occupied it, and renamed it Greytown.¹⁵ As the likely site of the projected canal's entrance, San Juan del Norte had great strategic importance. Furthermore, it threatened Nicaragua's sovereign claims to the Atlantic Coast.

¹³ Kinloch Tijerino, "El Rio San Juan," 50.

¹⁴ Robert Naylor, "The British Role in Central America prior to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 40, no. 3 (1960): 364.

¹⁵ Richmond F. Brown, "Charles Lennox Wyke and the Clayton-Bulwer Formula in Central America, 1852-1860," *The Americas* 47, no. 4 (1991): 413-4.

In 1848, the end of the Mexican-American war reinvigorated the United States' interest in a transisthmian canal (thanks to territorial acquisitions on the Pacific coast) and the country moved aggressively to limit British influence in the region.¹⁶ The U.S. pledged to support Nicaraguan claims of sovereignty over the Mosquito Coast and signed treaties that, as Brown suggests, in effect made Nicaragua a protectorate of the U.S. to counter the British protectorate of Mosquito. These efforts bore fruit when the United States and Great Britain signed the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty in 1850. The treaty bound the two nations to refrain from exercising control over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, any part of Central America, and, most crucially, a canal route. In the event of a canal's construction, the treaty guaranteed its neutrality.¹⁷ In 1860, Britain contributed further to this spirit of amity by ceding its rights to the Mosquito Coast and signing a treaty that acknowledged Nicaraguan sovereignty over the region.¹⁸

In 1849, Nicaragua authorized an exclusive charter for U.S. shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt's Atlantic and Pacific Canal Company (soon thereafter renamed the Accessory Transit Company) to transport passengers over the transisthmian route. Vanderbilt's access to the transisthmian route yielded heavy profits as it took effect at the peak of the Gold Rush and enabled the company to offer 36-day journeys from New York to San Francisco. At its peak in

¹⁶ James L. Busey, "Foundations of Political Contrast: Costa Rica and Nicaragua," *The Western Political Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1958): 631-2.

¹⁷ Hugo Murrillo Jiménez, "La controversia de límites entre Costa Rica y Nicaragua. El laudo Cleveland y los derechos canaleros, 1821-1903," *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 12, no. 2 (1986): 48.

¹⁸ Woodward, *Central America*, 134.

1854, the Accessory Transit Company transported 23,000 passengers.¹⁹ The success that Vanderbilt enjoyed came to a halt with the outbreak of civil war in Nicaragua and the arrival of the U.S. mercenary William Walker in June 1855. This had deleterious consequences for Vanderbilt's transportation enterprise, and more importantly brought Nicaragua and Costa Rica to the brink of war.

The Central American National War

Hostilities between Nicaraguan Liberals and Conservatives reached a boiling point that culminated in the outbreak of a bloody civil war in 1854. Desperate to defeat the Conservatives, Liberal partisans enlisted the aid of U.S. soldier of fortune William Walker. However, the Liberals soon discovered that this outsider had little interest or intention of allowing them to govern Nicaragua. After defeating the Conservative forces, Walker set out to consolidate his own power over the state. Walker initially enjoyed support from various sectors of Nicaraguan society: certain members of the clergy, rural leaders, and caudillos saw an opportunity to forward their interests through the American's intervention. Michel Gobat argues that elite complicity paved the way to Walker's political ascendancy.²⁰ Gobat cites a sermon given by Catholic Priest Agustín Vigil as emblematic of the reasons for their support. Vigil's defense of the filibusters argued that Walker, being from a "civilized" nation, would be able to end the political and social turmoil that plagued Nicaragua, promote economic development by instilling the entrepreneurial spirit in Nicaraguans, and help to build the canal, thus guaranteeing Nicaragua's entrée to the "civilized world".²¹

¹⁹ José Luis Rocha, "The Rio San Juan: Source of Conflicts and Nationalism," *Revista Envio* 292, (2005).

²⁰ Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, 30.

²¹ Gobat, 31.

This is not to say that elite support was unqualified in its enthusiasm. Indeed, some Conservatives continued to oppose Walker and launched a guerrilla war against the filibusters. However, they were unable to make inroads against the strong base that the U.S. mercenary had established. Walker secured possibly “the best-armed force Central America had ever seen” when he made a deal with U.S. businessmen Cornelius Garrison and Charles Morgan. Morgan and Garrison petitioned Walker to seize the Accessory Transit Company from Cornelius Vanderbilt and assign it to them in exchange for men, arms, and funds.²²

Walker made his intentions clear when he assumed the presidency through a fraudulent election in June 1856. He reinstituted slavery, confiscated elite properties, and set his sights on taking the rest of Central America. Nicaraguan elites finally tired of the interloper’s schemes and united against Walker. The Central American National War against Walker brought together Nicaraguan elites and provided the basis for a military alliance with other Central American elites. These leaders, threatened by the prospect of Walker taking over the region, began their assault immediately after Walker’s stolen election. In July of 1856, a united force of Central American armies, led by Costa Ricans, entered Nicaragua to engage William Walker. The Costa Ricans entered from the southern border. A force of over one thousand Honduran, Salvadoran and Guatemalan troops entered from northwestern Nicaragua. Cholera and desertion weakened Walker’s forces at this point. In an attempt to defend the transit road, which provided access to U.S. arms, supplies and fresh recruits, Walker transitioned his base from Granada to Rivas. He ordered his troops to burn Granada to the ground, consequently they destroyed the city. The Central American Allies would ultimately gain the upper hand when Cornelius Vanderbilt, outraged that Walker had seized his transit company, supplied them with funds and arms.

²² Gobat, 30.

Vanderbilt also successfully petitioned the U.S. government to terminate its support of Walker. With Vanderbilt's aid, the Allies were able to cut off Walker's supply lines. He surrendered in May of 1857.²³

The National War to defeat Walker was successful, and for a moment, Central America stood united. According to Steven Palmer, the name of the war reflects the unified struggle against Walker as well as the hopes of some of its participants for a new Central American Union.²⁴ However, for Nicaragua and Costa Rica the border and canal disputes soon overtook all other considerations, once again engendering a feeling of distrust between the neighbor nations. These tensions dashed any hopes of reestablishing the Central American republic. At the end of the clash with Walker, the Costa Rican army remained in Nicaragua, occupying the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua. Hugo Murrillo Jimenez suggests that Costa Rica adopted this strategy because it remained fearful of another attack by Walker's forces. For Nicaraguans this was an unacceptable turn of events, as it placed the canal route in an unacceptably vulnerable position.²⁵ (The fact that President Juan Rafael Mora's Costa Rican government was negotiating with Britain to grant rights to the San Juan River and territory that was above the recognized border all the way up to Lake Nicaragua lent credence to these suspicions.) Finally, on October 19 1857, Costa Rica declared war on Nicaragua. Newly minted Nicaraguan president Tomás Martínez called it a "traitorous and unjust war."²⁶ Ultimately, only a repeated

²³ Justin Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State: Community & Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Nicaragua* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 37-8; Gobat, 37-40; Brown, "Charles Lennox Wyke," 436.

²⁴ Steven Palmer, "Getting to Know the Unknown Soldier: Official Nationalism in Liberal Costa Rica, 1880-1900," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no.1 (1993): 45-72.

²⁵ Murrillo Jimenez, "La controversia entre limites entre Costa Rica y Nicaragua," 48.

attempt by Walker's forces to enter the region in December of 1857 defused the situation and forced the Central American nations to come together to combat Walker.²⁷

Cañas-Jerez Treaty of 1858

The rapprochement of the two nations resulted in the signing of the Cañas-Jerez Treaty in April of 1858. The treaty defined the border between the two nations and the navigation rights upon the San Juan River. As a sign of gratitude for Costa Rica's role in the war against Walker, Nicaragua officially ceded its claims to Guanacaste. The treaty demarcated a border that began at Punta Castillo (at the mouth of the San Juan River) and ran parallel to the river until it reached Lake Nicaragua, where it was marked two miles south parallel to that body of water. From that point, it continued two miles north of the Sapoá River and ran west through to Salinas Bay. The treaty declared Both San Juan del Norte in the Atlantic and Salinas Bay in the Pacific communal, meaning both nations were allowed to use it. Article 6 of the Cañas-Jerez Treaty is notable for codifying Costa Rica's recognition of Nicaragua's sovereignty over the San Juan River. In return, Nicaragua recognized Costa Rica's perpetual navigation rights to the river. Article 9 obligated Nicaragua to consult Costa Rica in the event of a canal treaty.²⁸

The Cañas-Jerez Treaty supposedly settled the territory disputes between Nicaragua and Costa Rica and for the first decade following its ratification both Costa Rica and Nicaragua

²⁶ Hurbert Howe Bancroft, *History of Central America* vol. 3 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1887), 362-3

²⁷ Luis Fernando Sibaja and Chester Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1980), 118; William O. Scroggs, *Filibusters and Financiers* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 357-8; Bancroft, 363; Esgueva, 40.

²⁸ Esgueva, 41; Murillo Jimenez, 49.

recognized its validity.²⁹ However, in 1869 Nicaragua sold France the right to build a transisthmian canal (via the Ayón-Chevalier Treaty), without consulting Costa Rica. The latter nation protested these proceedings and even Nicaraguan Minister of Foreign Relations Tomás Ayón questioned the validity of the Cañas-Jerez Treaty, which had not been ratified by two successive Nicaraguan Legislatures, as stipulated by the Nicaraguan Constitution of 1838.³⁰ Tensions once again rose between the two nations and caused Costa Rican president Tomás Guardia to break diplomatic and commercial relations with Nicaragua in November of 1876.³¹

Cleveland Arbitration of 1888

Nicaragua continued to look for partners to build a transisthmian canal. In 1884, Nicaragua and United States signed the Freylinghausen-Zevala Treaty, granting the U.S. the right to undertake such a project. The treaty exacerbated tensions between Costa Rica and Nicaragua once again. Costa Rica demanded that Nicaragua explain its decision to launch negotiations without consulting its partner. The U.S. Secretary of State Frederick T. Freylinghausen, as well as his successor Thomas F. Bayard, tried to assuage Costa Rica and explained that it was not the intention of the United States to ignore whatever rights Costa Rica held or to violate that nation's sovereignty. Nicaragua's insistence on ignoring his nation's rights

²⁹ Esgueva, 41; Murillo Jimenez, 49.

³⁰ Pedro Zeledón, *Argument on the question on the validity of the treaty of limits between Costa Rica and Nicaragua and other supplementary points connected with it, submitted to arbitration of the President of the United States of America, filed on behalf of the government of Costa Rica by Pedro Pérez Zeledón, its envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Gibson Bros., Printers and Bookbinders, 1887). 61-2.

³¹ Esgueva, 44. Relations were re-established by decree on November 30, 1878.

frustrated Costa Rican president Bernardo Soto, who signed a decree ordering a warship to patrol the San Juan River, bringing the neighboring nations to the brink of war yet again.³²

Only the timely intercession of the Guatemalan government prevented these nations from going to war. Guatemalan Minister of Foreign Relations Fernando Cruz suggested to U.S. envoy John C. Hall that the United States should offer to arbitrate the validity of the Jerez-Cañas Treaty. Secretary of State Thomas Bayard expressed the hope that this step would bring long sought stability to the region.³³ On December 24, 1886, Ascención Esquivel of Costa Rica and José Antonio Román of Nicaragua signed an agreement in Guatemala allowing U.S. President Grover Cleveland to arbitrate their dispute. Costa Rica argued in favor of upholding the treaty, while Nicaragua wished to void it, asking for sovereign domain over the San Juan River and the return of Guanacaste to Nicaraguan territory. The agreement included a provision stipulating the creation of a commission to delineate a new border if the Cañas Treaty proved valid. The agreement also included a provision stating that the arbitration decision was final.³⁴

On March 22, 1888, President Cleveland presented his ruling and declared the Cañas-Jerez Treaty valid. Cleveland ruled that Nicaragua was sovereign over the San Juan River but that Costa Rica held perpetual rights to navigate the San Juan River for commercial purposes.

³² Murillo Jimenez, 49.

³³ Murillo Jimenez, 50-1. Murillo Jimenez suggests that the willingness on the part of the United States to arbitrate the matter demonstrates its interests in resolving the boundary dispute between Nicaragua and Costa Rica to facilitate the construction of a transisthmian canal.

³⁴ Esgueva, 44-5. For more on the arguments laid out by the two nations see: Horacio Guzmán, *The Case of the Republic of Nicaragua submitted to his Excellency, Hon. Grover Cleveland, President of the United States, Arbitrator under the Treaty of Guatemala of December 24th, 1886* (Washington D.C.: Gibson Bros., 1888); Pedro Pérez Zeledón, *Argument on the Question of the Validity on the Treaty of Limits between Costa Rica and Nicaragua and Other Supplementary Points Connected with it, submitted to the Arbitration of the President of the United States of America, filed on behalf of the Government of Costa Rica* (Washington, D.C.: Gibson Bros., 1887).

However, Cleveland also ruled that Costa Rica did not have rights to navigate the San Juan River with warships. Finally, Cleveland upheld the provision requiring Nicaragua to consult Costa Rica in the event of a contract to build a transisthmian canal.

The Cleveland Arbitration ruling, accepted by both Costa Rica and Nicaragua, definitively demarcated the boundary between the two nations; a task completed in 1900.³⁵ The history of the boundary disputes between Nicaragua and Costa Rica in the nineteenth century serves to provide a context from which to understand the hostility that has come to define the relationship between these neighbors. The tension that these disputes fueled affected the reception of Nicaraguan migrants to Costa Rica.

Conclusion

This long history of border disputes put a terrible strain upon the political relationship between the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, but it also affected the perception of Nicaraguans who migrated to Costa Rica. The border disputes, as well as the internal strife of Nicaraguan politics, generated a sense that Nicaraguans were arriving from a belligerent state and brought their violent ways with them. The rivalry and violence of the emerging nation-states influenced the Costa Rican government's policies toward its northern neighbor and the attitudes of its citizens towards Nicaraguans more generally. This made it easy for Costa Rica to portray Nicaraguans as violent, too aggressive, and anti-democratic.

The following chapter will discuss the development of the coffee-export economy in Nicaragua and Costa Rica and its transformation of the labor markets for both nations. Nicaraguan and Costa Rican elites pursued classical liberal policies that sought to modernize the two Central American nations and shifted their economies to an agro-export model. The shift

³⁵ Murillo Jimenez, 55; Esgueva, 45.

necessitated the creation of a land and labor system that would require Nicaraguans to work as laborers on coffee plantations; and the coercive labor laws designed to transform Nicaraguan peasants into day laborers compelled some Nicaraguans to seek improved working conditions in Costa Rica. I will then discuss the dynamics of early Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica, with a special emphasis upon the perceptions aroused by these transnational movements in the destination country.

CHAPTER TWO

“TO WORK, THERE IS NOTHING HERE”: NICARAGUAN MIGRATION TO COSTA RICA, 1893-1930

“Many young Nicaraguans depart to the exterior in search of work...these youngsters do not go to nourish their minds to learn a profession...they go forth to a strange country, to compete with strong men, to fight them for their bread in arduous labor...they take with them no resources, they may succumb to their struggle. The desire to better themselves guides them and drives them to work hard to earn their passage...asked ‘Why do you go?’ ...‘To work, there is nothing here,’ they respond.

-Joséfa Toleda Aguerri, 1920¹

Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica occurred within the context of liberal reforms that both nations undertook during the latter half of the nineteenth century. These transformations led to the displacement of many rural peasants who migrated to Costa Rica. Nicaragua’s political instability hampered its ability to attract European immigrants and expand its export sector. Costa Rica achieved greater success by offering immigrants access to land grants similar to those granted to settlers in the United States. This chapter explores the transformations wrought by the liberal reforms in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica to provide a context for the movement of Nicaraguans, paying special attention to Costa Rican depictions of Nicaraguan migrants. Costa Ricans tended to stereotype Nicaraguans as poor, violent, uneducated, and racially distinct from themselves. Costa Rican authorities and most citizens welcomed Europeans warmly as contributing to Costa Rica’s development and modernization, which most associated with “whiteness.” In contrast, Costa Rican authorities cast Nicaraguan immigrants as dark skinned mestizos whose ignorance, proclivity to settle disputes with violence, and susceptibility to subversive labor ideologies made them undesirable. This chapter examines violence and its

¹ “Reflexiones,” In Joséfa Toledo de Aguerri, *Al correr de la pluma* (Managua: Tipografía y Encuadernación Nacional, 1924), 9-10 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 427.

cultural representation to explore the ways in which Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans deployed it to achieve social and political ends and to define their nations as clearly distinct from one another. It also continues to examine the diplomatic relations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, as it is impossible to separate the political situation in Nicaragua from the migration of Nicaraguans.

Coffee and Modernity in Nicaragua

Both nations sought to keep pace with the rise of “modernity” and instituted drastic measures to achieve the goal. Influenced by the ideals of European liberalism, political leaders in most of Latin America pursued policies of economic modernization, clearing the way for a free-market system by dismantling indigenous communities and Church-controlled properties and establishing laws to protect private property.² The cultivation and export of coffee and bananas became critical to the enterprise of modernization in many Latin American nations. Once in power, Liberals set about remaking their societies to fit the needs of the new export economy, building new wealth. This prosperity was not evenly distributed, however, benefitting the wealthy and influential while the less privileged majority faced diminished prospects and wages.³

After the end of the National War in 1857, elite unity in Nicaragua became an obsession and Nicaraguan Conservatives and Liberals turned to a modernization project that would put an end to Nicaraguan “anarchy.”⁴ “Both Nicaraguan Liberals and Conservatives argued that

² Elizabeth Dore, *Myths of Modernity: Peonage and Patriarchy in Nicaragua* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 69-71.

³ Jeffrey Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 14.

⁴ Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 42, 49. In addition, Elizabeth Dore suggests that the political crises between the elites of Granada and Leon had impeded the consolidation of a central government, and thus, the ability to effectively implement and enforce labor laws over its

overcoming their bloody history required building the country anew as a nation-state: strong, unified, activist, sovereign, and inclusive. This vision of the nation-state entailed profound transformations in the underpinnings of society.”⁵ Liberals and Conservatives jointly ratified a Constitution in 1858 agreeing to share power by establishing a bipartisan government and moved the capital to the more neutral urban center of Managua.⁶ During the subsequent “Thirty Year Peace,” Nicaraguan governments pursued policies that were almost exclusively liberal in nature.⁷ The establishment of private property became the cornerstone of the project. Ultimately, the policies of the latter half of the nineteenth century would concentrate landholding in the hands of a few powerful magnates. This contrasted sharply with developments in Costa Rica, where a pattern of smallholder agriculture, in many ways unique to Central America, took shape. Privatization gave way to large coffee estates and cattle ranches, and their promotion, especially the coffee sector, became the priority of the Nicaraguan government.⁸

peasantry. Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 43-4, 46. Justin Wolfe, in his study of the intersection of nation-state formation and everyday life in nineteenth-century Nicaragua, makes clear that it was the possibility of losing their sovereignty that finally allowed Liberals and Conservatives to set aside their differences and unite to fight against Walker. Furthermore, Wolfe argues that Nicaraguan political unity, borne out of the defense of national sovereignty and rejection of foreign intervention, in conjunction with the social and economic dislocation caused by the war, produced the most favorable conditions for nation-state construction in the history of post-independence Nicaragua. Justin Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State: Community & Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Nicaragua* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 86-7.

⁵ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 3.

⁶ Liberals, discredited by their involvement with Walker, ceded the presidency to Conservatives. This culminated in an unprecedented run of Conservative presidents from 1858 to 1893. However, Liberals maintained great influence in government as Conservatives consistently named Liberals to key government ministries and were often leaders of Congress.

⁷ Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 98.

⁸ In her study of debt peonage in Diriomo, Elizabeth Dore examines the coffee industry’s transformative role throughout Latin America. She argues that it “contributed to export growth, expansion in the size and reach of the nation-state, regularization of a rural labor force,

Wolfe posits that after the National War, Nicaraguans turned inward and looked to the opportunities provided by agricultural development, particularly coffee, sugar, indigo and cotton.⁹ An emphasis on agriculture transformed the Nicaraguan economy and the lives of Nicaraguans. For landlords and merchants, the only agriculture worth pursuing emphasized export-oriented production. This narrow definition of agriculture neglected the interests of rural peasant communities who, through subsistence farming and the production of small surpluses for local market, thought of themselves as important contributors to the nation's agricultural development. The elite definition of agriculture, and its corresponding vision of improving society, would require a restructuring of Nicaragua's land tenure system to encourage export market-oriented production.¹⁰

Conservatives and Liberals came to embrace the privatization of land to promote export agriculture.¹¹ The Constitution of 1858 codified the inviolability of private property. The story

construction of ports, railroads, and telegraphs, and the rise of financial institutions. To many Latin politicians and landowners these changes represented the march of progress." Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 5, 69-71.

⁹ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 87.

¹⁰ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 80.

¹¹ As Julie Charlip notes, in her study of coffee farmers in Carazo, Nicaragua, the differences between the policies of Conservatives and Liberals are greatly exaggerated. Both parties carried out similar policies and elites would switch parties whenever convenient. Julie Charlip, *Cultivating Coffee: The Farmers of Carazo, Nicaragua* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 30-1. E. Bradford Burns, in his study of early Nicaragua, succinctly states, "Since the Conservatives honored the concept of private property, that goal affirmed a similarity, not a difference between the two parties...[The two parties] waged a war more for power than principle." E. Bradford Burns, *Patriarch and Folk: The Emergence of Nicaragua, 1798-1858* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 23. Recent scholarship has forcefully challenged the notion, advanced by authors Pablo Lévy, Jaime Biderman, and Jaime Wheelock, that there were stark differences in the economic policies pursued by Nicaraguan elites. According to the central assumptions of these works, Conservatives hampered Nicaraguan agricultural production because they did not promote coffee production and instead relied on cattle. It would not be until the Liberal government of José Santos Zelaya that coffee growth would receive governmental

of the latter half of the nineteenth century would be the rapid establishment of this form of land tenure.¹² Additionally, the 1858 Constitution did not contain any provisions for the protection of communal lands. For example, Wolfe demonstrates that in the prefecture of Granada, ejidos represented 65 percent of land transactions between 1868 and 1877. In the period between 1888 and 1897, they only made up 12 percent.¹³ The Constitution provided a framework for the modern nation that Nicaraguan elites envisioned. The emergence of coffee cultivation in the 1860s brought about a clash between peasant subsistence farming and the demands of plantation labor. Peasants remained on the margins of this vision and elites viewed them as a hindrance to progress.

Vagrancy laws in Nicaragua

As elites sought to realize their vision of a modern Nicaragua, they used their control of the government to support the interests of large planters. Elites characterized peasants as lazy and shiftless, preferring leisure to hard work. Dore undercuts this stereotype by demonstrating that in Diriomo, located in the Pacific department of Granada, subsistence peasants showed a willingness to work for wages on *fincas* (while seeking to maintain a degree of autonomy). Those with access to their own land preferred to work on plantations part time to augment their incomes and certainly did refuse to work if wages were too low or conditions too exploitative.

support. Pablo Lévy, *Notas geográficas y económicas de la república de Nicaragua* (Paris: Librería Española de E. Denné Schmitz, 1873); Jaime Wheelock, *Imperialismo y dictadura: Crisis de una formación social* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1979); Jaime Biderman, "Class Structure, the State, and Capitalist Development in Nicaraguan Agriculture" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1982).

¹² Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 71.

¹³ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 91, 105. Charlip notes that the omission of ejidos from the Constitution did not mean that the national government abandoned the concept of ejidos and, in fact, continued to provide ejidos for communities that lacked them. Charlip, *Cultivating Coffee*, 42. Nevertheless, ejidos were in serious decline.

Planters, conversely, wanted a reliable pool of readily available cheap labor undistracted by other endeavors. Overseeing a labor-intensive business that required a large workforce, coffee industrialists and their surrogates used the state apparatus to create a rural proletariat by abolishing indigenous patterns of communal land holding and forcing these communities to award deeds of private property to their members. Dore insightfully argues that this was by no means the free labor of liberalism but rather, unequivocally, forced labor. Planters deployed a range of strategies to extract labor from poor rural residents with various levels of access to their own land, including vagrancy laws, labor drafts, and debt peonage. Labor laws overwhelmingly favored the large landholders – the only statutory checks on planters penalized those who refused to pay or underpaid workers or knowingly hired laborers already under contract.¹⁴

The 1862 *Ley de Agricultura* was the first in the series of far-reaching labor laws to force peasants to work in plantation agriculture.¹⁵ The law required peasants without employment or

¹⁴ Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 5, 110-1, 114-5.

¹⁵ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 65. Earlier legislation strove to achieve similar results, however, enforcement was a problem due to the limits of institutional capability. Previous efforts at labor laws included a law as early as 1835 designed to combat workers reneging on their commitments to work on plantations. The law stated that workers must complete their commitment, that they had no excuse not to do so, and that the state would give preference to farmers against workers who failed to fulfill their contracts. Workers could not receive advances from two different farmers, and if they did so, were to return to the first person that gave them an advance and would be punished with 8 days of labor in public works. Expansion of this law in 1841 and 1847 defined the workday as from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M., with a break for lunch, and stated that laborers who attempted to leave their contract early could be brought back forcibly. An 1845 law criminalized “not laboring”, the first to outlaw vagrancy. An 1859 law provided for an eight hour workday and stipulated that a worker must be paid within three days, though proof of completion of labor rested on the farmer’s account book in Charlip, *Cultivating Coffee*, 147-9. Use of violence is evident in an 1858 law that ordered police to destroy peasants’ properties that existed far outside of the center of town if their holdings were insufficient for their needs in Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation State*, 65.

a means of subsistence to work for commercial planters.¹⁶ Wolfe suggests that in the context of post-National War Nicaragua, the 1862 *Ley de Agricultura* created a significant shift in the role of laborers within the Nicaraguan nation. Wolfe argues that the 1862 law placed laborers on the opposite end of the political spectrum from landholders. Whereas the government recognized landholders as citizens, laborers became “non-citizens,” “socially immature and unable to exercise the rights of the national citizen.”¹⁷

Labor drafts were but one mechanism to force peasants into wage labor. Dore explains that in Diriomo debt peonage, more often than labor drafts, was the mechanism that planters relied upon to compel peasants to work. Coffee planters would give peasants cash advances and peasants were then required to pay off the debt with their labor. “Peonage rested on two legal principles: peasants were required to work on the fincas, and peasant indebtedness gave planters

¹⁶ To ensure that the plantations would have sufficient labor, the law criminalized peasants who left *fincas* before the harvest ended or attempted to avoid plantation labor. Punishment was two-fold. Under the law, both municipal officials and plantation owners could punish offenders. Municipal officials in Diriomo could require hard labor for first-time offenders and could sentence third-time offenders to 18 months of army service. After the completion of said punishment, laborers returned to their *patrón*, at which point the *patrón* held the right to inflict further punishment, as he deemed necessary. In these disputes, peasants were presumed guilty unless there was “manifest evidence to the contrary.” *Ley de Agricultura*, Decreto de 18 de febrero, AGN in Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 114.

¹⁷ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 140. To enforce the 1862 law, property owners elected a rural magistrate charged with patrolling the area and coercing peasants to work. The position of rural magistrate was created in 1859 by the Nicaraguan legislature for the promotion of agriculture and the enforcement of labor laws. In 1867, the legislature created a special police force to assist the rural magistrate in the enforcement of labor laws. Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 126. The law required peasants to register with rural magistrates and carry a work card verifying their employment. The rural magistrate’s role also included finding drunken contract laborers and forcing them to fulfill their contracts. Even without a contract, the government authorized a rural magistrate to force persons found “idling” to work. If magistrates continually found a peasant not working, laborers were required to appear in front of the *alcalde municipal* to explain how they supported themselves. If the peasants did not have work or a means of subsistence, the magistrate held the power to assign them work and make them obey. Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: The Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford University Press, 1992), 108.

control over peons' labor. These legal features underpinned the coercive character of peonage."¹⁸

By 1880, the government required workers to carry a work card certifying that they held employment. If they did not have work, the government considered them vagrants. In 1881, the government granted police the right to pursue workers who ran away beyond their jurisdiction, culminating in an 1883 law that required farmers to provide lists of runaway laborers to local authorities that would be forwarded to governors, police, mayors and judges. Laws in 1883 and 1886 made it the government's responsibility to capture and prosecute runaway workers. In an attempt to keep better tabs on laborers, an 1892 law decreed that workers who failed to register with a rural magistrate would face jail time or forced to labor on public works. This law increased planters' hold over their employees, as laborers who deserted a hacienda without permission of the planter faced legal sanctions.¹⁹ Labor coercion did not end at forcing peasants to work but extended to the repression of Indian *comunidades*.

The labor laws did not specifically mention ethnicity or race and framed forced labor as a class issue. The liberal project was not only about making good workers but also about creating good Nicaraguans. However, in 1883 Nicaragua's *mestizaje* project was far from complete. The census of that year counted 259, 894 Nicaraguans (not including the population of the Mosquito

¹⁸ Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 118-120. Rural magistrates could force peons to pay off debts with labor, or peasants could face jail time for not doing so. In 1869, a series of reforms required planters to provide laborers with receipts for work completed and repayment of debts to show to his next employer. Workers faced three to fifteen days of labor on public works (in 1881 this was raised to five to fifteen days) and faced jail time if they tried to escape their contract twice. In 1875, president Pedro Joaquin Chamorro proposed an end to the *matricula* system, which required laborers to register with rural magistrates. Congress initially rejected the proposal, but the following year did dismantle the *matricula* system. This did not prevent planters from undermining the repeal.

¹⁹ Charlip, *Cultivating Coffee*, 149-150.

Coast). 32 percent of the population was considered Indian, 18 percent mestizo, 30 percent mulatto, 7 percent black, 6 percent zambo and 7 percent white.²⁰ In his examination of the formation of Nicaraguan *mestizaje*, Jeffrey Gould highlights the ethnic dimension of elites' modernization project.²¹ Elite ladino discourse about Nicaraguan Indians emphasized Indian ignorance and the poor management of their lands to justify the expropriation of Indian land and their forced labor. Gould states that elites found it difficult to envision a "degraded race" as a free labor force on their plantations. Furthermore, Indian resistance was a validation of elite stereotypes of Indian irresponsibility and deviousness, further demonstrating the need to educate Indians and abolish *Comunidades*. Elites believed that the abolition of indigenous communal lands, coupled with education, would convert the Indians into civilized *ladinos*.²²

Gould explains that elites utilized the familiar binary of civilization and barbarism to rationalize their repression of Indians. Land reforms contributed to indigenous discontent. Nicaraguan elites viewed the defeat of the Matagalpa Indians in 1881, the last major Indian revolt in Western Nicaragua,²³ as a success and framed the battle with the Indians as "a struggle of civilization against barbarism, of darkness against light, of idleness against labor."²⁴ It was not enough that elites sought to transform Indian peasants into laborers and Indian lands into

²⁰ Nicaragua, Censo de 1883, Ministerio de Gobernación, *Memoria* (1885) in Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 156.

²¹ Jeffrey Gould, *To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

²² Gould, *To Die This Way*, 13, 37-8, 48, 50.

²³ For a discussion of the Matagalpa rebellion, see Gould, *To Die in This Way*, 27-37.

²⁴ *La Gaceta*, September 20, 1881 in Gould, *To Die in This Way*, 37-8.

plantations, they also “needed to justify coerced labor in ethnic terms.”²⁵ Elizabeth Dore links the efforts to abolish *comunidades indigenas* with the state’s efforts to coerce labor, stating that much of the language used to denounce potential laborers as idle, backward, criminals and vagrants were code words for Indian.²⁶ Furthermore, as Wolfe asserts, even when Indians held land, Ladinos refused to recognize the status of Indians as anything other than laborers, rebuffing Indian assertions of citizenship, along the lines espoused by elites, as landowners who worked their own land.²⁷ Elite formulations of the nation-state required subsuming Indian claims to nationhood. As Gould argues, Indian assertions of citizenship and communal lands could undermine the modern project of elites and would “delegitimize and destabilize local ladino identities and power.”²⁸

Labor coercion increased when José Santos Zelaya successfully ended thirty years of Conservative rule with a coup that overthrew Roberto Sacasa’s regime in 1893. To be clear, Zelaya’s Liberal government did not institute labor reforms that broke with the previous period of Conservative rule, but rather built upon the already established labor and property laws in Nicaragua.²⁹ Zelaya did broadly expand the concept of vagrancy as evidenced by the 1899 law that defined a vagrant as someone who:

²⁵ Gould, *To Die in This Way*, 50.

²⁶ Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 134-5.

²⁷ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 140, 145-6.

²⁸ Gould, *To Die in This Way*, 86.

²⁹ Conservatives did promote coffee and set the groundwork for Zelaya in 1893. In 1894, President Zelaya passed a law to defend growers from *operarios* establishing agricultural agencies and spelled out the obligations of workers, growers, and rural magistrates. The law defined workers as those over fourteen years of age working for a salary. Furthermore, the law required growers, entrepreneurs, and laborers to register and employers to provide a list of workers and fugitives (runaways). The law prohibited growers from hiring laborers already

1. does not have a profession, income from property, salary, trade, or legal means of subsistence, 2. having a profession, trade, or employment, is not regularly engaged in performing those activities, 3. has an income, but not enough for subsistence; is not engaged in a legal trade, and who regularly frequents balls and pool halls.³⁰

The critical feature of the Zelaya regime's effort to expand liberal economic policies was the centralization of the repressive apparatus to compel peasants to work. Before Zelaya, the enforcement of labor laws had been the responsibility of disparate municipalities. However, by 1898, the Zelaya administration consolidated the job of capturing runaway peasants under the auspices of a national agency with branches in the coffee districts to coordinate centralized enforcement.³¹ In 1904, the creation of a national rural police force (often made up of rural laborers) further augmented the role of the state in labor affairs.³² None of these dramatic changes went unchallenged by peasants, who were active in their resistance to the growing labor regime.

Nicaraguan Peasant Resistance

Resistance to labor repression in Nicaragua took many forms, including sabotage, violence, and running away (often to another job). Dore asserts that peasants utilized

under contract and fined growers who were late in paying laborers. However, if a grower was unsatisfied with the work provided by a laborer, the law required the laborer to pay the *hacendado* ten to fifty pesos. Charlip, 30-1, 151-2.

³⁰ Ley de Vagos, Art. I, *El Comercio* (Managua), 4 Jan. 1899 in Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 117-8. Dore points out that the redefinition of vagrancy was so broad that it could encompass the majority of the Nicaraguan population, exempting only professionals and men of substantial property from the labor regime. In 1901, another law further widened the net by decreeing that persons older than sixteen, men or women, with property valued at less than 500 pesos would be required to work and obtain a work card (*libreta de trabajadores*). Under this law, due to the stipulations, only the wealthy were exempt from forced labor.

³¹ Dore points out that because funding for these operations was scarce it was still primarily up to a network of planters, local officials and civilian patrols made up of peasant volunteers to comply with labor laws.

³² Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 118; Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 56.

accommodation and resistance to combat the oppression of forced labor. Peasants sought accommodation to forced labor by seeking relationships with growers who abided by labor laws. Dore argues that the means available to peasants rested on their class position. Some peasants who had the economic wherewithal to do so challenged planter abuse in court.³³ Those who could not afford to take this route often resorted to sabotage: “In Diriomo, individual acts of sabotage and resistance were common. Frequently peons destroyed estate property; very infrequently they murdered planters, mayordomos, or peasants who served in the rural police.”³⁴ Individual acts of sabotage and collective rebellion alarmed the elites. Resistance by Indians and peasants forced elites to reevaluate the best method to pursue their modernizing project, and created divisions among Liberal elites.

By the turn of the twentieth century, planter elites disagreed on how best to organize rural labor. The Zelaya regime forced many peasants to work, reflecting the belief of many planters that there was not a scarcity of workers but rather an “abundance of laziness.”³⁵ However, a growing contingent of planters came to believe that the repressive labor laws were doing more harm than good and argued in favor of a free labor system. These advocates of labor reform advocated the repeal of repressive labor laws because they resulted in servitude. Servitude, they argued, was against the nation’s republican institutions. Furthermore, and more pragmatically,

³³ Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 112, 132.

³⁴ Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 127. Despite the apparent rigidity of the labor system, Gould does find examples of the regime’s flexibility in managing resistance. For example, Matagalpino Indian protests succeeded against the repressive abuses committed by *jefe político* General William Reuling and the government removed him in 1898. In 1903, to appease Chontales Indians involved in a Conservative uprising against Liberals, the government abolished forced labor in that area. In 1904, the government halted evictions of Indians in Boaco and Jinotega in Central and Northern Nicaragua that were formerly indigenous lands. Gould, *To Die in This Way*, 41-2.

³⁵ *El Comercio*, 25 Sept. 1902 in Dore, 119.

they argued that the coercive labor laws compelled peasants to run away from plantation labor and to take refuge outside of the country's borders.³⁶

The Zelaya regime implemented many labor laws and reforms to combat the most effective option peasants held to combat oppressive forced labor: running away. However, as Alberto Lanuza observes, "It seems contradictory that these laws, taken with the aim of keeping the workforce from fleeing, had the opposite effect."³⁷ While there exists some disagreement among scholars as to the underlying causes of the coercive labor system, what is clear is that the process of modernizing the nation adversely affected Nicaragua's peasants, Indians and ladinos, and this resulted in instances of protest and resistance.³⁸ An equally important outcome of these modernizing efforts was the displacement of peasants that resulted in national and international migration.

Peasants chose a variety of means to resist the elites' implementation of a coercive labor system, but none of them was more effective than running away. Dore states that flight was a

³⁶ *El Comercio*, 19 Jan. 1908 in Dore, 119. Zelaya, towards the end of his tenure as President, before Conservatives forcefully removed him from office in 1909 with U.S. assistance, inaugurated some reforms. In 1904, even as the government strengthened vagrancy laws, it also banned the system of forced labor known as *mandamiento* (labor drafts). In 1905, the Constitution prohibited imprisonment for debt and forced labor. These attempts, and others after the fall of the Zelaya, aimed at dismantling the forced labor system. However, as Dore notes, unfree labor remained a feature of the plantation system well into the 1960s. Furthermore, reform did not protect indigenous lands, exemplified by a 1906 decree that formally abolished Comunidades Indígenas. Although it did not destroy comunidades indígenas altogether, the Liberal regime did weaken its economic base and divide indigenous society. The attack on indigenous communities did not go unanswered and ultimately resulted in an anti-Liberal alliance between indigenous communities and Conservatives that culminated in the ouster of Zelaya in 1909. Charlip, *Cultivating Coffee*, 152-3; Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 120.

³⁷ Alberto Lanuza Matamoros, *Estructuras socioeconómicas, poder y estado en Nicaragua, de 1821 a 1875* (San José: Programa Centroamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1976), 37.

³⁸ Gould argues the centrality of Indian repression whereas Dore focuses on competition between peasant subsistence and coffee.

common occurrence in Diriomo as 25 percent of peons ran away from fincas every year, many of them to cultivate their own subsistence plots.³⁹ As Charlip notes, workers could and did escape to other farms, in search of better conditions or wages. Charlip discusses the often-successful efforts by authorities to capture and sentence runaway laborers; however, she argues that laborers were frequently successful in making good their disappearances. Charlip cites examples of many frustrated rural magistrates who were unable to locate escaped laborers, including one reported instance in Costa Rica.⁴⁰ Peasants became adept at avoiding capture – evidenced by Wolfe’s claim that 80 percent of fugitive workers managed to do so between 1897 and 1900. Wolfe suggests that the centralization of labor during the Zelaya administration, which increased the severity of labor laws and reduced the power of local communities, forced an increasing number of laborers to flee across departmental borders.⁴¹

Many of these fugitives ended up across the border in neighboring Costa Rica. The economic transition and the accompanying violence of the Zelaya regime resulted in the emigration of 20,000 Nicaraguans to Costa Rica between 1893 and 1909.⁴² The municipal

³⁹ Dore, *Myths of Modernity*, 112, 126-129. Dore estimates that 65 percent of Diriomo’s runaway peons did so for subsistence as the coffee harvest overlapped with peasant’s second harvest of beans and corns.

⁴⁰ Charlip, *Cultivating Coffee*, 155.

⁴¹ Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State*, 129, 139. Even after the fall of the Zelaya regime in 1909, the continued attacks on Indian communities and the repression of peasants resulted in their displacement. Gould estimates that perhaps 25% of the Matagalpino Indian population fled between 1910-1950, many of them toward the Atlantic Coast. Gould reminds us that migration, as well as retreat into relatively closed communities, were the most common indigenous responses to elite aggression against their land and labor. The effects of migration, forced or voluntary, resulted in the destruction of many indigenous communities and cultures. Gould, *To Die in This Way*, 55, 92, 232, 288.

⁴² “Ricardo Jiménez y José Santos Zelaya,” *El Correo del Pacifico*, 25 July, 1909 in Ronald Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los ‘otros’ reafirman el ‘nosotros’” (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 416, 419.

census of San José in 1904 alone registered 116 Nicaraguans (76 men and 40 women, from various parts of the country), including some very skilled, laboring as shoemakers, artisans, shopkeepers, day laborers, domestics, tailors, seamstresses, bakers, blacksmiths, and doctors.⁴³ Nicaraguan Conservatives⁴⁴ plotted to overthrow Zelaya with the support of Costa Rican president Rafael Yglesias.⁴⁵ When passing through Liberia, a German traveler named Karl Sapper noted that he had met a good number of learned Nicaraguans exiles who had been important politicians in their homeland. Sapper estimated that there were over 1000 refugees.⁴⁶ These exiles, though they may have had some supporters within Costa Rica, caused much consternation. The media often depicted Nicaraguan refugees as “destructive foreigners” that represented a threat to Costa Rica’s peaceful national character. A scathing opinion piece published in 1909 in *La Tribuna* criticized presidential candidate Ricardo Jimenez’s association with Nicaraguan expatriates, describing the exiles as “a present and constant threat to our political institutions and the sanctity of our homes.”⁴⁷

Costa Rica, in the midst of its own economic transformations that made it very receptive to immigrant labor, became a prime destination. Costa Rica’s preference for immigrant labor,

⁴³ Costa Rica, *Censo Municipal de San José*, 1904 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 417.

⁴⁴ Among the exiles were members of the Chamorro family. For more on the Conservative exiles see José Amador Uriza, *El drama de Doña Damiana en Nicaragua* (San José, 1946), 39-55 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 417.

⁴⁵ Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 417.

⁴⁶ Karl Sapper, *Viajes a varias partes de la República de Costa Rica, 1899 y 1924* (San José: Imprenta Universal, 1942), 16 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 417.

⁴⁷ “Conceptos sobre el extranjerismo. Los extranjeros perniciosos,” *La Tribuna*, September 7, 1909, in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 423.

however, was not for Nicaraguans. The following section discusses the integration of Nicaraguan laborers into the Costa Rican workforce.

Migration to Costa Rica

Nicaraguans migrated to Costa Rica in search of economic opportunities and to escape political persecution and violence – and sometimes for both of these reasons. Exiles were predominantly elite political figures that were well off and represented the opposition to the Nicaraguan government. Laborers, conversely, migrated to Costa Rica to improve their economic lot. As Ronald Soto Quiros has pointed out, it was actually easier for Nicaraguan laborers to enter Costa Rica and move through its interior than it was for them to get to the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, accessible only via the San Juan River.⁴⁸ The majority of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica worked as day laborers on coffee and banana plantations and cattle ranches, as rubber tappers and miners. They also helped to build the Atlantic railroad as the United Fruit Company expanded its operations.

Coffee cultivation emerged in Costa Rica much earlier than it did in Nicaragua. After independence, the state enacted a series of measures to promote coffee production in hopes that it would stimulate the nascent economy. After initially exporting its coffee to Europe via Chile, Costa Rica eventually cut out the middleman and established direct and regular shipments to Europe from its Pacific port in Puntarenas during the 1840s.⁴⁹ During the subsequent decades, coffee cultivation increased dramatically in Costa Rica, as exports grew from a mere 23,000 kilograms in 1832 to over 1 million in the 1840s and 4 million in the 1850s. By the end of the 19th century, Costa Rica was exporting 20 million kilograms of coffee, mostly to a growing base

⁴⁸ Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 419.

⁴⁹ Mitchell Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 15-6.

of coffee drinkers in Great Britain.⁵⁰ Profits from this industry allowed Costa Rica to build roads, pay off its debt, establish a postal service, rebuild the city of Cartago, pave the streets of San José and Cartago, establish the University of Santo Tomás, and experience an overall increase in imports and exports.⁵¹

The rapid increase of coffee exports necessitated a buildup of Costa Rican infrastructure and the importation of laborers to support expansion. During the early stages of its economic development, Costa Rica had only the one port on the Pacific. During the 1870s, the government began building a railroad that would connect the Central Valley with an Atlantic port in Limón, to facilitate shipment to Europe and the eastern United States.⁵² Foreign investment, particularly the emergence of the American businessman Minor Keith who founded the United Fruit Company, that principally exported bananas to the U.S., were critical to these developments. The construction of a port on the Atlantic, and access to it from the coffee producing regions and the capital, became central to the Costa Rican state's modernization project. The Costa Rican government sought to attract the right kind of immigrants to build the infrastructure. For Costa Rica, like the rest of Latin America (including Nicaragua), the right kind of immigrant was European. Influenced by then-current notions of eugenics and social Darwinism, Costa Rica's elites became increasingly preoccupied with the racial makeup of the nation, believing that

⁵⁰ Lowell Gudmonson, *Costa Rica before Coffee: Society and Economy on the Eve of the Export Boom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 3.

⁵¹ Seligson, 17-8.

⁵² Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica: 1870-1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1996), 17.

Europeans were the ideal immigrants and non-Europeans were inherently inferior.⁵³ As Soto Quiros explains, institutional and intellectual racism intersected with the discourse on immigration as part of a national project that valorized the desired characteristics of the Costa Rican nation: peaceful, honorable, hard-working, respectful of order, and, above all, homogenously white. European immigration, then, was seen as a means of solving many of Costa Rica's problems, such as labor shortage and low population growth rates, but also was meant to be regenerative: immigrants would revitalize the Costa Rican "white" nation, contribute to its development, and ensure its future.

In 1850, the government created the Colonial Protectorate Junta with the purpose of attracting immigrants of European origin. While the Costa Rican state attempted to attract European immigrants it also sought to secure its ability to "defend the Costa Rican nation" by prohibiting the immigration of undesirable races.⁵⁴ Furthermore, elites perceived the mixing of races as dangerous since it would dilute whiteness and promote criminality. In 1862, the "Ley de Bases y Colonización" officially banned the entry of "African and Chinese races."⁵⁵ In 1897, the Costa Rican government banned Chinese immigration. In 1904, a law banned the immigration of Arabs, Armenians, Turks, and gypsies. A 1910 amendment permitted these groups to enter on the condition that they brought enough Costa Rican currency with them: 1000 colones. Four

⁵³ Patricia Alvarenga, "La inmigración extranjera en la historia costarricense," in Carlos Sandoval García, ed., *El mito roto: Inmigración y emigración en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial UCR, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, 2007), 5.

⁵⁴ Soto Quiros, "Un intento de historia," 91-2; Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional," 224-240.

⁵⁵ Alvarenga, "La inmigración extranjera en la historia costarricense," 5.

years later, another law banned them again. In 1905, the Costa Rican state banned a number of other “undesirables”: anarchists, the destitute, migrants accused of crimes, and invalids.⁵⁶

The right kind of immigrant, brought in to realize the potential of the coffee based agro-export economy, would promote Costa Rican “progress” and “civilization” through industrial development, securing Costa Rica’s position as a “modern” nation.⁵⁷ Costa Rican elites idealized Europeans because, as Patricia Alvarenga points out, Costa Rican elites believed they shared cultural and physical traits with Europeans.⁵⁸ Economic considerations forced the Costa Rican government to adopt a more flexible attitude toward admitting undesirable racial groups. The building of the Atlantic railroad, particularly from the Atlantic side, proved to be so arduous that it necessitated the importation of black workers from the West Indies.⁵⁹ Highland Costa Ricans had little interest in venturing out to the Atlantic Coast. As a result, the Costa Rican government brought in Chinese and Italian immigrants, not to mention inmates from New Orleans, to build the railway. However, the harsh working conditions, coupled with poor pay, quickly thinned the ranks of these imported workers. Ultimately, black laborers from the West Indies provided the majority of the labor performed on the railroads as well as upon the adjacent banana plantations of the United Fruit Company. The Costa Rican state tolerated this migration

⁵⁶ Alvarenga, “La inmigración extranjera en la historia costarricense,” 13. See also, Michael L. Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985).

⁵⁷ Ronald Soto Quiros, “Un intento de historia de la inmigración en Costa Rica. El discurso sobre la inmigración a principios del siglo XX: Una estrategia nacionalista de selección autovalorativa,” *Revista de Historia*, 40 (1999): 79-87; Ronald Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los ‘otros’ reafirman el ‘nosotros’” (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 215.

⁵⁸ Alvarenga, “La inmigración extranjera en la historia costarricense,” 6.

⁵⁹ Ronald Harpelle, *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race, Class and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 7, 11-12.

because the government of Costa Rica had a limited capacity to intervene in the business of the United Fruit Company and because they had very little choice, as these were the only migrants willing to come to the region in large enough numbers. This situation repeated itself in many other Central American nations, as West Indians went to work on railroads, banana plantations, and the Panama Canal.⁶⁰

In some respects, the Costa Rican government was not wrong about the ability of many European immigrants to integrate into Costa Rican society. However, European immigrants had their own ideas about where they should work and did not stay in the coastal regions for long, opting instead to relocate to urban areas. For example, some Italian immigrants moved to the capital and worked as artisans and in commerce. Alvarenga analyzes court records as a way to determine where many “foreigners” in Costa Rica resided. Many of the European immigrants made their way to the Central Valley. In Guanacaste, Puntarenas, and Limón, areas where the Costa Rican government was in dire need of labor, Jamaicans, Chinese, Panamanians, and Nicaraguans predominated. European immigrants did not want to work in agriculture. Thus, black labor became unavoidable and tolerated whenever there were labor shortages. Nicaraguan agricultural laborers, despite their undesirable status, came in increasing numbers, thanks in part to a geographical proximity that fomented social, economic, and familial bonds within Costa Rica.⁶¹ Despite their best efforts to attract a white European labor force, Costa Rica ended up relying heavily on a labor force consisting mostly of Jamaicans and Nicaraguans.

According to the Census of 1864, there were already 1196 Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. Nicaraguans made up about 45 percent of all of Costa Rica’s immigrants, and the majority

⁶⁰ Alvarenga, “La inmigración extranjera en la historia costarricense,” 4, 6.

⁶¹ Alvarenga, “La Inmigración extranjera,” 10-12.

resided in Guanacaste and Puntarenas.⁶² The migration of Nicaraguan laborers into Guanacaste during the latter half of the 19th century was a result of the displacement due to the frequent civil conflicts in Nicaragua and a series of coercive labor laws passed by various Nicaraguan governments designed to expand land and labor markets for the coffee export economy.⁶³ Guanacaste, located right across the border from Nicaragua, attracted Nicaraguans because of its proximity and because of the historical ties they shared to the land and its residents.

As noted by Marc Edelman in his study of cattle *haciendas* in northwestern Costa Rica, at the turn of the century the Nicaraguans entering Costa Rica through Guanacaste mainly worked as day laborers and cowboys (*sabaneros*).⁶⁴ In Guanacaste, Nicaraguans found work, squatted on unused land, and/or escaped violence and persecution.⁶⁵ Nicaraguans performed the labor-intensive work of clearing vegetation and employers expected these day laborers to have their own tools, mainly a machete, and work two shifts up to six days a week. Wages were not immediately higher in Costa Rica but work was comparatively less taxing than in Nicaragua, where hours were longer and employers did not always pay in cash. Edelman states that the turnover rate was high for this kind of work but that the proximity of Nicaragua and continual influx of Nicaraguan laborers made this type of labor regime feasible in the border area.⁶⁶

⁶² Costa Rica, *Censo de Población, 1864* (San José: Costa Rica), 66 in Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional," 412.

⁶³ Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: The Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford University Press, 1992), 107-110.

⁶⁴ *Sabaneros* translates literally as savanna men. In the region of Guanacaste, its use referred to cowboys and one of their primary tasks was the search of newborn calves in the open plains. In Edelman, *Logic of Latifundio*, 69.

⁶⁵ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 110.

⁶⁶ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 97-8, 108. Edelman states that wages were roughly equal in Nicaragua and Costa Rica in the 1870s.

Outside of Guanacaste, Nicaraguans also settled in notable numbers along the coasts, in Puntarenas and the Atlantic. The 1864 Census identified a large contingent of immigrants, mostly from Nicaragua and Colombia, attracted to the Atlantic coast by opportunities in rubber tapping, the bramble harvest, and fishing.⁶⁷ The 1883 Census reported 1014 Nicaraguans, a small decrease in the overall number of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. Notably, the 1883 Census counted the presence of 105 Nicaraguans in Limón, marking the first time Nicaraguans appear there. This is most likely a result of Nicaraguan migration during the 1870s to clear brush for the construction of the Atlantic Railroad for the United Fruit Company. During this period, Nicaraguan laborers gained a reputation as the best axe men.⁶⁸ By 1892, the Census reported an increase in the Nicaraguan population to 1302, with the majority of this growth in Guanacaste and Puntarenas (see Table 1).⁶⁹ The migration of Nicaraguans to Puntarenas was a result of serial migration from the Nicaraguan Pacific to Guanacaste, and from Guanacaste to Puntarenas.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Bramble is a type of plant that produces blackberries and raspberries. Costa Rica, *Censo de Población, 1864* (San José: Costa Rica), 64-7 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 412.

⁶⁸ Costa Rica, *Censo de Población, 1883* (San José: Costa Rica), 64-7 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 413-4.

⁶⁹ Costa Rica, *Censo de Población, 1892* (San José: Costa Rica), 15.

⁷⁰ Anne Hayes, *Female Prostitution in Costa Rica: Historical Perspectives, 1880-1930* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 71.

Table 1. Jamaican and Nicaraguan Migration to Costa Rica by Province, 1864-1892

<i>Province</i>	1864		1883		1892	
	Jamaicans	Nicaraguans	Jamaicans	Nicaraguans	Jamaicans	Nicaraguans
San José	3	83	10	73	63	122
Alajuela	1	48	-	54	6	92
Cartago	7	128	-	11	16	24
Heredia	2	7	3	8	5	22
Guanacaste	1	607	-	350	1	446
Puntarenas	9	323	3	413	2	468
Limón	-	-	886	105	641	128
Total	23	1196	902	1014	734	1302

Source: Costa Rica. *Censos de población: 1864, 1883, 1892*, San José; Modified from Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942," 487.

There is very little data that points to the gender distribution of the immigrants during this time period. However, Anne Hayes, in her study of prostitution in Puntarenas, points to the importance of sex work for Nicaraguan female immigrants in Puntarenas, Guanacaste, and Limón. Hayes argues that women were driven to Puntarenas due to poverty and attracted by the opportunities that existed in the port city for cash enterprises such as prostitution. The Costa Rican government legalized prostitution in 1894 in the *Ley de Profilaxis Venérea* and required prostitutes to register and submit to regular medical checkups for venereal disease as a result of liberal public health reforms. Exact data is difficult to ascertain given that the majority of prostitutes refused to register, however, of those registered in the first three years (1894-1897), Nicaraguans made up 5% of the prostitutes in Puntarenas (out of 117 registered), 17% of the

prostitutes in Guanacaste (out of 48 registered), and 5% of the prostitutes in Limón (out of 147 registered).⁷¹

Difficult working conditions became a way of life for many of the Nicaraguan immigrants that migrated to Costa Rica and, certainly, the image of the hard working Nicaraguan is an enduring image in Costa Rica. However, as the following section will demonstrate, Nicaraguan violence proved to be the most prevalent characterization of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica.

Violence and Nicaraguans

In the academic literature, two prominent and dichotomous characterizations describe the Nicaraguan labor population: passivity and violence. The first, passivity, explains why Nicaraguans were such good and highly desired workers. The second, violence, is the more enduring of the two. The stereotype of Nicaraguan violence is built upon violent pluralism as various elements and different interactions contributed to the characterizations of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica.

Marc Edelman affirms that historically Nicaraguans experienced a more rigorous labor system in their native country and, as a result, were more pliable than native Costa Ricans.⁷² “This lived history clearly affected the formation of Nicaraguans’ assumptions about work and their notions about available means of recourse for grievances. It also exposed them to more intense exploitation by landlords on both sides of the border.”⁷³ Furthermore, *hacendados* preferred the Nicaraguans precisely because they were foreigners who were less familiar with the

⁷¹ Hayes, 21, 71-81.

⁷² Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 106.

⁷³ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 110.

region and possessed fewer ties to local peasants. This relatively powerless situation generally prevented Nicaraguan laborers from leaving abruptly or making off with cattle, timber and other *hacienda* property.⁷⁴ National and ethnic division, thus, helped to thwart the formation of unions and other forms of worker solidarity.

Edelman points out that the Nicaraguans who migrated to northwestern Costa Rica and settled there tended to resemble the resident Guanacastecans in appearance, culture and speech. This is due to Guanacaste's historical legacy as a former territory of Nicaragua. Guanacaste and Nicaragua remained so linked that Costa Ricans often referred to Guanacastecans derisively as "*Nicas regalados*" (surplus Nicaraguans).⁷⁵ Thus, the most salient distinctions among the peasantry was not between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans but rather Guanacastecans/*Nicas* and Costa Ricans from the central highlands, referred to as *Cartagos* (named after the colonial capital of Costa Rica, Cartago). Guanacastecans viewed *Cartagos* as "unreliable, selfish, and dishonest." *Cartagos*, for their part, stereotyped Guanacastecans much as they did Nicaraguans, as "impulsive, spendthrift, violent and unrefined."⁷⁶

Laborers were not the only Nicaraguans in the region. Many of the largest plantation owners in Guanacaste were descendants of the colonial elite of Rivas, Nicaragua or from Liberia, Guanacaste and had strong ties to Rivas.⁷⁷ The presence of Nicaraguan ranchers in Guanacaste served to strengthen ties to Nicaragua. Between 1850 and 1900, out of 341 families with

⁷⁴ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 107.

⁷⁵ Phillipe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989); 185; Marc Edelman, "The Devil and Don Chico," in *The Costa Rica Reader*, eds. Steven Palmer and Iván Molina (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 249.

⁷⁶ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 127.

⁷⁷ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 63.

livestock properties in the region, 79 were Nicaraguan and 215 were *Guanacastecos*. The *Guanacastecos* were the third generation of families of Nicaraguan descent or the children of marriages between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans who resided primarily in Liberia.⁷⁸ Families such as that of Alfonso Salazar Aguilar brought all of their skilled laborers from Rivas during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Nicaraguan laborers had worked for the Salazar family for over two generations on properties in both Costa Rica and Nicaragua.⁷⁹

Many of the guards on the Nicaraguan-owned haciendas also came from Nicaragua. Edelman argues that this preference for Nicaraguan guards can be attributed to “Nicaraguans’ reputation for violence and their willingness to use weapons... This experience of civil and interpersonal violence is important in that it contrasts sharply with the relatively pacific history and political culture of Costa Rica.”⁸⁰ Because of their history, Nicaraguans were more likely to be armed or have familiarity with arms. However, the need for guards who were willing to use weapons demonstrates that Costa Rica, despite its “pacific history,” was not free from conflict.

Not all inter-Nicaraguan relationships in Guanacaste were advantageous. For example, the Nicaraguan immigrant squatters who founded the settlement of Quebrada Grande clashed with Nicaraguan planter Francisco Hurtado Guerra. Hurtado moved to consolidate control over his land holdings and threatened to expel squatters from the land if they did not pay him rent. Edelman states that the set boundaries were vague at best. The residents of Quebrada Grande responded in March and April of 1922 by attacking the planter’s main house with gunfire, forcing the Hurtado family to flee to San José. They also burned down a portion of his property,

⁷⁸ Ronald Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional,” 413.

⁷⁹ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 107. For further information on these families, see Edelman 55, 78, 107, 132-3, 139-146, 171, 363-5.

⁸⁰ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 107.

destroyed 2000 coffee bushes, and killed the police officer stationed at the village. Edelman argues that this resort to violence occurred only after peasants had exhausted all legal measures available to them. In the battle against Hurtado, community members appealed to Congress and even sent three persons to retrieve colonial era deeds from Nicaragua. Furthermore, Hurtado had no qualms about utilizing Costa Rica's xenophobia in appeals against the Nicaraguan laborers to curry favor with governmental authorities. Two years after the incidents of 1922, Hurtado's lawyer wrote a letter to San José officials to secure a firearm permit, stating that Hurtado "lives struggling against a herd of Nicas, who nobody knows where they are there...take land and install shacks and dedicated themselves to theft." The appeal in itself contained the increasingly familiar connection of Nicaraguans with violence. This level of violence between a Nicaraguan planter and Nicaraguan peasants in Costa Rica suggests that class trumped nationality in this instance.⁸¹

However, Costa Ricans stereotyped Nicaraguans primarily as perpetrators of violence. Utilizing the written record of an 1882 missionary expedition undertaken by Costa Rican Bishop Bernardo Augusto Thiel, Marc Edelman analyzes the encounter between the indigenous Guatuso-Malekus and Nicaraguan rubber tappers, who sometimes doubled as Indian slavers. As they attempted to gain greater access to areas where rubber trees were plentiful, rubber tappers showed few qualms about removing and/or illegally enslaving the indigenous people who got in their way.⁸² Marc Edelman argues that by the 1919 the term *hulero* not only described a kind of

⁸¹ Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 143-6.

⁸² During the missionary expedition, Bishop Bernardo Augusto Thiel and his travel companions, after failing to come into any fruitful contact with the Gautosos-Malekus Indians, who were indigenous to Costa Rica, traveled along the Rio Frio toward Lake Nicaragua in a last ditch effort to find Indians that may have been enslaved and sold by *huleros*. As the missionary party inched closer to the Nicaraguan border, they encountered a group of Nicaraguan soldiers. Once the missionaries arrived at the San Carlos side of Lake Nicaragua, the Nicaraguan soldiers

labor (rubber tapping), but had other intrinsic characteristics attached to it: “murderousness, slaving, terrorism, and Nicaraguan nationality.”⁸³ Edelman delineates how the commodification of rubber, and the repercussions of its development on the Guatuso-Maleku indigenous people, integrated into the nascent discourse on Costa Rican nationalism.

Bishop Thiel returned to San José from his expedition accompanied by Guatuso Indians who had been presumably enslaved by Nicaraguan rubber tappers. (Edelman accepts that most *huleros* probably were Nicaraguans, but also questions the notion that “nearly all” were Nicaraguan, as much rubber and timber was located in Guanacaste.) Costa Rican officials embraced the Guatuso Indians as “lost brothers”, “proto-Costa Ricans,” and as Edelman argues, “strategic instruments in a nation building project.”⁸⁴ Edelman writes that Thiel was able to convince the government to ban Indian persecution as well as rubber and timber extraction, but that this ultimately had little effect in halting the decimation of this indigenous community. Costa Rican elites utilized the Guatusos to demonstrate the Costa Rican nation’s dominion over an expanding territory as well as to establish a symbolic link between the nation and its

captured the party and transported them across the lake to Granada. Bishop Thiel expressed outrage and explained that the Nicaraguan soldiers did not need to take him prisoner. Nicaraguan officers later informed the Bishop that the Nicaraguan military captured his party because they believed that he was a Costa Rican General disguised as a bishop. Despite his protests, the Bishop arrived in Granada, where Nicaraguan officials promptly released him. This did not prevent the Bishop from taking the opportunity to register the “dishonor” with a notary. In Granada, the Bishop met up with Guatuso Indians who informed him that there were some 200 to 250 Guatusos throughout Nicaragua, all sold by *huleros*. The missionary party did find other Indians and in its report emphasized the role *huleros* had played in the enslavement of the Indians and their subsequent poor treatment at the hands of those who purchased them, presumably Nicaraguans.

⁸³ Marc Edelman, “A Central American Genocide: Rubber, Slavery, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Guastusos-Malekus,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 2 (1998): 356.

⁸⁴ Edelman, “A Central American Genocide,” 376.

indigenous past, while at the same time distancing itself from any atrocities that may have been a byproduct of that same conquest by emphasizing the role of Nicaraguan *huleros*. This perception later solidified as textbooks claimed that the Guatusos considered Costa Ricans *sacas* or friends and that “the Indians show as much affection for Costa Ricans as they do hatred for Nicaraguans.”⁸⁵ Costa Rican elites built Costa Rican national identity upon distinctions with their Nicaraguan neighbors.

As Lara Putnam has demonstrated in her study of immigrants and the politics of gender on the Atlantic Coast of Costa Rica, Costa Rican officials made it clear through their correspondence and published statements that they viewed Nicaraguans as violent outsiders. For example, in 1902, the *agente fiscal* was pleased to note that Manuel Ramírez, a Nicaraguan, did not escape justice for allegedly stabbing and killing Carlos Torres, a Costa Rican, following a gambling dispute, stating: “so often do those men who under the sole name of *huleros nicaragüenses* (Nicaraguan rubber tappers) commit every class of iniquity within our borders.”⁸⁶

Putnam states that there was a correlation between the number of Nicaraguan laborers in Limón and requests for extra manpower and expanded budgets between 1906 and 1909.⁸⁷ For example, the arrival of sixty men in Gaucimo, forty of whom were Nicaraguan, was enough to justify a request for a police station.⁸⁸ Another official call for additional police officers in

⁸⁵ Francisco Montero Barrantes, *Geografía de Costa Rica* (Barcelona: Tip. Lit. de José Cunill Sala, 1892), 200 in Edelman, “A Central American Genocide,” 380.

⁸⁶ ANCR, Serie Jurídica, Limón Juzgado del Crimen 49 (homicidio, 1902) in Lara Putnam, *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 175-6.

⁸⁷ Lara Putnam, *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 175.

⁸⁸ ANCR, Serie Policía 1484 (letter, March 16, 1906).

Limón stated: “There are many Nicaraguans in this jurisdiction.”⁸⁹ Reports of violent altercations involving Nicaraguans also became more common. For example, in 1907, a group of Nicaraguans carrying knives assaulted and injured two men and threw rocks at a business.⁹⁰ Lara Putnam points out that this was not only convenient official slander, but a powerful confirmation of Nicaraguan violence, which had become an “article of faith among *peones* and planters, critics and champions alike.”⁹¹ Putnam recounts how a Nicaraguan migrant resorted to “passing” as a Costa Rican from Puntarenas to avoid the stigma associated with Nicaraguans. While looking for work near Siquierres in 1949, he encountered a Costa Rican grateful to meet up with a *puntarenense*, “because we all know *puntarenenses* are true Costa Ricans and where I’ve been there were only *nicas* and *guanacastecos* and I don’t partner up with those folks.”⁹² Frequent outbreaks of civil war in Nicaragua helped advance the image of Nicaraguan violence.

Political Violence

Nicaraguan political violence expressed itself often through warfare. The revolution against José Santos Zelaya in 1910 brought about another influx of exiles into Costa Rica.⁹³ Following the U.S.-aided Conservative triumph over Zelaya and the subsequent occupation of Nicaragua by U.S. Marines, Nicaraguan political figures, mainly Liberals, made their way to Guanacaste, Puntarenas, San José, and Limón. Nicaragua’s Civil War of 1912 also took a heavy

⁸⁹ ANCR, Serie Policía 1249 (telegram, April 17, 1908).

⁹⁰ ANCR, Serie Policía 1567 (letter, April 20, 1907). See also ANCR Serie Policía 1486 (letter, November 24, 1906); Policía 1564 (letter, September 30, 1907); Policía 1120 (letter, July 9, 1908).

⁹¹ Putnam, 176.

⁹² Archivo Judicial de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, San Pablo de Heredia, Costa Rica, vol. 26, part 1, “Autobiografía de M.G.L.,” 148 in Putnam, 177.

⁹³ Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, 71-5.

toll, claiming between two thousand and five thousand lives.⁹⁴ In the years following the fall of Zelaya, Costa Rican authorities viewed Nicaraguans as dangerous troublemakers.⁹⁵ Outbreak of violence in Costa Rica in 1917 did little to change the perception that Nicaraguans were the source of violence.

Relations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica again became strained under the short-lived Costa Rican dictatorship of Federico Tinoco. On January 27, 1917 General Federico Tinoco overthrew Costa Rican president Alfredo Gonzales Flores in a military coup. Nicaragua, following the United States' lead, refused to recognize the Tinoco government. The situation worsened, as Pro-Gonzales supporters fled to Nicaragua, triggering rumors that an exile force supported by the Nicaraguan government would invade Costa Rica. On May 25 1918, Tinoco responded to the rumors by sending 500 troops to the Nicaraguan border. In order to defuse the situation (and at the behest of the U.S. government), President Emiliano Chamorro proclaimed that Nicaragua would not interfere with Costa Rican affairs. However, tensions remained high between the two nations and Nicaraguan authorities again accused Costa Rica of sending troops to its northern border on February of 1919.⁹⁶

The role of the United States was important, as there was speculation that the Costa Rican government resented the favored position enjoyed by the Conservative government of Nicaragua. The Costa Rican government denied that it felt any jealousy over Nicaragua's close relationship with the United States, as reported in U.S. newspapers. Furthermore, U.S. officials suspected that

⁹⁴ Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, 120.

⁹⁵ Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942," 423-5, 427.

⁹⁶ Arthur Sears Henning, "Nicaragua and Costa Rica on Verge of War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 19, 1919. The *Tribune* reported that 8000 Costa Rican troops had approached the northern border.

the Costa Rican threat had links to the Nicaraguan Liberal exiles in Costa Rica. Costa Rican authorities emphatically denied that the Tinoco government had assisted any Nicaraguan “discontents.”⁹⁷

On May 6, 1919 Julio Acosta, Costa Rican exile and former Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Gonzales administration, invaded Costa Rica and proclaimed a provisional government at Peña Blanca. Nicaragua denied any direct involvement in these actions, despite reports that a Nicaraguan general commanded some of the Costa Rican exile forces.⁹⁸ On May 12, the *Washington Post* reported that the small band of anti-Tinoco exiles, numbering twenty Costa Ricans, were “promptly reinforced by 1,000 Nicaraguans” as a ruse by the Nicaraguan government to attack the government of Costa Rica.⁹⁹ Two days later, Dr. Carlos Lara, a Costa Rican government official, accused Nicaraguans of not only reinforcing the movement against Tinoco, but also leading it. Dr. Lara asserted that the “invasion of Costa Rica had been openly organized in Nicaragua in the last few days with the consent and support of the Nicaraguan government.” Furthermore, Dr. Lara denied that Costa Rican exiles were a principal component of the invading forces since President Tinoco had not “exiled” any Costa Ricans and had only “expelled from its territory two or three pernicious foreigners.”¹⁰⁰

To demonstrate its neutrality, the Nicaraguan government stated that it had arrested 26 persons who had attempted to join rebel forces against Tinoco. The *Los Angeles Times* reported

⁹⁷ “Costa Rica Not Jealous, Says Envoy from Tinoco,” *Washington Post*, February 20, 1919.

⁹⁸ “Costa Rican Army Retires,” *Washington Post*, May 7, 1919.

⁹⁹ “Costa Rica’s ‘Revolution,’” *Washington Post*, May 12, 1919.

¹⁰⁰ “Sees Costa Rica Loyal: Dr. Lara Denies Natives Planned Invasion from Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1919.

that Nicaraguan sources claimed that Tinoco had started a propaganda campaign against Nicaragua and had fabricated the involvement of the Nicaraguans among the rebel forces that were moving against him.¹⁰¹ The Nicaraguan government continued to deny its involvement and, in turn, accused the Tinoco government of attempting to recruit Nicaraguan generals associated with the Zelaya administration, among them General Julian Irias.¹⁰² Fearing an invasion from Costa Rica, the Nicaraguan government requested assistance from the U.S. Marines, as Nicaragua (limited to an army of 500 men following the ratification of the Bryan-Chamorro treaty in 1916) would not be able to defend itself.¹⁰³ The allegations continued between the two nations, reaching something of a crescendo on June 15, 1919, when Costa Rican officials claimed that Nicaragua planned to win sympathy from the U.S. government by dressing Nicaraguan men in Costa Rican military garb and faking an attack on Nicaragua.¹⁰⁴ Tensions between the two nations continued when Nicaragua publicly supported rebel leader Julio Acosta. Amidst growing domestic opposition, continued skirmishes with rebel forces, and pressure from the United States to step down, Tinoco vacated the presidency on August 12, 1919. Following a short period of interim presidents, Costa Ricans elected Julio Acosta president on December 9, 1919.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ "Beat Army of Tinoco: Costa Rican Rebels Gain Strength," *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1919.

¹⁰² "Nicaraguan Asks Help: Requests American Troops be Landed," *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1919.

¹⁰³ "Nicaragua Asks U.S. to Land Troops, Fearing Invasion," *New York Times*, June 9, 1919. The Bryan-Chamorro treaty, signed on August 5, 1914 and ratified on June 19, 1916, granted the United States a perpetual monopoly over the construction of a Nicaraguan Canal.

¹⁰⁴ "Say Nicaraguans Plan Fake Attack," *Detroit Free Press*, June 15, 1919.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997), 132-135.

The Tinoco affair is of note for various reasons. First, it is a concrete example of Costa Rican political instability that resulted in a brief dictatorship and rebellion. Second, the United States refused to recognize the government of Tinoco, diminishing his legitimacy and demonstrating the role of the United States as a de facto kingmaker in the region. Finally, both the governments of Costa Rica and Nicaragua emphasized the role of Nicaraguan exiles as destabilizing agents in the region. The incident served to heighten the perception that the Nicaraguans were dangerous aggressors. Outbreak of civil war in Nicaragua in 1926 and the flow of exiles to Costa Rica again forced Costa Rica to become involved in Nicaraguan affairs.

The migration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica ramped up during the late 1920s due to increased political destabilization in Nicaragua, where Conservative and Liberal politicians triggered another civil war in 1926. Conservative oligarch Emiliano Chamorro led a coup d'état against the bipartisan coalition government of President Carlos José Solórzano. As a result, Nicaraguan Liberals fled to Costa Rica. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that 2000 insurgents were making plans to join the liberal army from Costa Rica.¹⁰⁶ The presence of Nicaraguan “revolutionists” concerned the Costa Rican government, as it did not want to be perceived as having assisted exiles. On September 4, 1926 newspapers reported that Costa Rican authorities, by order of the President, had prohibited 200 Nicaraguan exiles from sailing from Puerto Limón to Bluefields for the purpose of joining the movement against Chamorro.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ “Nicaragua President would Quit,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1926.

¹⁰⁷ “Costa Rica Halts Rebels: Nicaraguans are Forbidden to Sail from Port Limón,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1926.

Liberal forces hostile to Chamorro launched an attack and the U.S. State Department pressured Chamorro to step down to make way for Adolfo Díaz.¹⁰⁸ In November, Chamorro finally stepped down and the United States immediately recognized the presidency of Díaz.¹⁰⁹ The installation of Díaz as president did not end the hostilities. The Liberal opposition claimed that the Juan B. Sacasa was the only person with a legitimate claim to the presidency, as he had served as vice-President under deposed President Solorzano.¹¹⁰ Faced with the possibility of civil war, the United States once again sent in the Marines in 1927, two years after it had pulled them out of the country. Ultimately, U.S. envoy Henry Stimson was able to reach an accord (the Tipitapa Agreement) with the rebel generals on May 4, 1927, on the condition that the United States supervise elections. All but one general, Augusto Cesar Sandino, agreed.¹¹¹

By May 1927, the fighting had largely abated. Sacasa fled to Costa Rica to “avoid bloodshed.”¹¹² Sacasa’s decision to not participate directly in the Tipitapa Agreement and vehemently reject its stipulations augmented his legitimacy. From Costa Rica, Sacasa led the movement against the new government.¹¹³ The U.S. press greeted Sacasa’s arrival in Costa Rica following the Tipitapa agreement with cynicism. The *New York Times* criticized Costa Rica’s

¹⁰⁸ Knut Walter, *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza, 1936-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 14-16.

¹⁰⁹ “U.S. to Recognize at Once New Díaz Rule in Nicaragua,” *Washington Post*, November 16, 1926.

¹¹⁰ Carlos Solorzano died in exile in Costa Rica in 1936. “Solorzano dead at 76 as an exile: The ex-President of Nicaragua succumbs to a heart attack in Costa Rica,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1936.

¹¹¹ Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, 143.

¹¹² “Sacasa Protests our Intervention,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1927.

¹¹³ Paul Coe Clark, *The United States and Somoza, 1933-1956: A Revisionist Look* (Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 3.

leading newspaper, *Diario de Costa Rica*, allegedly under the influence of Mexico, for being “anti-American” after it criticized U.S. involvement in Nicaraguan affairs. U.S. policy in Nicaragua was in part a strategy to contain the Mexican revolution.¹¹⁴ They also criticized the proposal of the *Diario* to raise funds for Sacasa that would have enabled him to explain the Nicaraguan situation to other Latin American nations. The *New York Times* reported estimates that in Costa there were 10,000 Liberals “willing to continue vocal warfare indefinitely but not to bear arms in the Liberal army.”¹¹⁵

The political situation continued to generate friction between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. On May 18 1927, the Costa Rican government denounced the incursion of Nicaraguan forces of the Díaz administration into Costa Rican territory, where they reportedly raided farms, robbed homes, stole cattle and horses, and shot a police guard. The Costa Rican government asked for reparations in response to the assault. According to the newspaper report, Costa Rican public opinion favored Liberal leader Juan Sacasa.¹¹⁶ The refusal on the part of Costa Rica to recognize Díaz’s presidency resulted in Nicaragua cutting off diplomatic relations with its sister nation by pulling its representative from San José.¹¹⁷

In 1928, Nicaragua held national elections supervised by the United States that elevated Liberal and former military leader José María Moncada to the presidency. Moncada’s election

¹¹⁴ The U.S. State Department was concerned Mexico would set up “Bolshevist control” in Nicaragua and block the United States from the Panama Canal. See Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, 142.

¹¹⁵ “Sacasa’s Cabinet will Disperse Today,” *New York Times*, June 1, 1927.

¹¹⁶ “Costa Rica Charges Raid: Demands Reparations of Díaz for Nicaraguan Depredation,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1927.

¹¹⁷ “Nicaragua Recalls Envoy to Costa Rica: Action is Said to be Based on Failure to Recognize Díaz as President,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1927.

was significant, as Gobat notes, since “it ended eighteen years of U.S.-sponsored Conservative rule and permitted a party long ostracized by the U.S. government to come to power.”¹¹⁸ The first peaceful regime change in Nicaraguan history did little to prevent Sandino from engaging in a guerilla war against the U.S. Marines and the *Guardia Nacional* that would last for six years, from 1927 to 1933. The ensuing war between U.S. Marines and General Sandino’s rebel army, the Sandinistas, caused an estimated 20,000 deaths.¹¹⁹ As the Sandinista war expanded beyond the Segovias into Central Nicaragua, the U.S. government decided to withdraw the Marines from the country after the 1932 election, leaving the *Guardia Nacional* in its place. The rise of the National Guard and its leader, Anastasio Somoza, will be discussed in Chapter Four. Here it is enough to note that Costa Rican officials, wary of events in Nicaragua, became concerned Nicaraguan revolutionary activity would spread south.

Conclusion

The labor repression at the turn of the twentieth century and the political violence that accompanied it induced thousands of Nicaraguans to flee across the border. There they found work, and eventually higher wages, in Guanacaste where they became renowned for their ability to work an axe. The racialization of Nicaraguans served to exploit Nicaraguan laborers and distinguish Costa Ricans from their Central American brethren. The following chapter will explore the participation of Nicaraguan laborers in the Costa Rican Communist Party’s massive 1934 labor strike on the banana plantations of the Atlantic. The 1934 Banana Strike offers an opportunity to examine Costa Rican violence.

¹¹⁸ Gobat, 213.

¹¹⁹ Lucrezia Lozano, *De Sandino al triunfo de la revolución* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1985), 41. Gobat estimates that over 1,000 Sandinistas were killed as well as a “large but unknown number of civilians,” in Gobat 246.

CHAPTER THREE

UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS: NICARAGUAN LABORERS IN COSTA RICA AND THE STRIKE OF 1934

“Lo que asombra a muchos contemplativos e idealistas es saber que en el ombligo continental, ¡en Costa Rica! miles de trabajadores que creyeron en un mínimo de democracia, solo encontraron un máximo de explotación.”

“What astounds many thinkers (*contemplativos*) and idealists to discover is that in the navel (*ombligo*) of the continent—in Costa Rica!—thousands of laborers that believed in a minimum of democracy only found a maximum of exploitation.”

Manolo Cuadra

“El comunismo no contempla naciones ni fronteras solo contempla la unión de los trabajadores en general.”

“Communism does not contemplate nations, nor borders, it only contemplates the union of workers in general.”

Rogelio Carlos Mendoza, 1933

During the late 1920s and the early 1930s, a number of factors caused Nicaraguans to migrate to Costa Rica in larger numbers. Augusto Cesar Sandino’s guerrilla rebellion against the U.S. Marines and the newly established Nicaraguan National Guard, two devastating earthquakes in 1926 and 1931, and the global economic depression of the early 1930s exacerbated all of these factors and contributed to an exodus of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica. Ultimately, many of the Nicaraguan laborers entering Costa Rica made their way to the banana plantations for work.¹

Out of the total population of 471,524 persons, Nicaraguans accounted for about 2.25% of Costa

¹ Ronald Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los ‘otros’ reafirman el ‘nosotros’” (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 434. Some Nicaraguans would return, as 700 did in 1930 to fight with Sandino. Others because, as the Nicaraguan Minister to Honduras suggested, of the “bad economic situation in Costa Rica.” In “Nicaraguan Revolt Reported in Honduras,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1930.

Rica's population. Costa Rica's 1927 Census estimated that there were 10,642 Nicaraguans in Costa Rica out of a total of 44,340 foreigners, or 24% of the foreign-born population.² The depiction of Nicaraguans in the mass media of the period suggested much larger numbers of immigrants and asserted that they posed a major threat to order and national sovereignty. In the 1930s there was a shift in the source of Nicaraguan violence in Costa Rica. Whereas earlier associations with Nicaraguan violence were primarily the result of state violence in Nicaragua, disputes between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and small-scale action by Nicaraguan individuals or groups, by the 1930s Nicaraguan immigrants increasingly became willing to participate in social movements in Costa Rica. This is a result of two major factors. First, there was an overall increase in the number of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica and, second, Nicaraguan laborers increasingly worked with the Partido Comunista de Costa Rica (PCCR).

Laborers on the banana plantations worked in extreme geographical conditions, resided in poor housing, and exposed themselves to malaria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia. Many Nicaraguan banana plantation laborers became involved with the PCCR in an attempt to improve their own economic circumstances. Ultimately, their association with the PCCR also offered them an opportunity to shape Costa Rican politics and society. The most significant action undertaken by Nicaraguan and Costa Rican banana plantation workers is the 1934 Banana Strike in the Atlantic Zone. Whereas Bourgois explains Nicaraguan participation in the strike as a product of their political history, I argue that the Communist Party's internationalism and class emphasis appealed to many Nicaraguans workers and spurred them to participate in the labor movement because it offered them a space from which to improve their lives. Historiographical analysis of the 1934 strike has centered on how the strike served as a defining moment in the

² Costa Rica, *Censo de poblacion de Costa Rica 1927* (San José: Costa Rica), 93-4.

formation to the Costa Rican Communist Party. My analysis diverges in that it tries to understand the motivations for and consequences of Nicaraguan participation. Nicaraguans' involvement in the Costa Rican Communist Party, the Banana Strike, and its aftermath provides important insights into the political lives of these laborers.

These events also shed a great deal of light on the role of violence the strike and the events surrounding it. At the behest of the United Fruit Company, the Costa Rican government attempted to dismantle any popular support that the strike may have received. The strike itself was a response to the institutional and structural violence of life and work on the banana plantations. The UFCO created labor unrest and exacerbated discontent among its laborers to ensure division among them. When workers decided to strike in 1934, the UFCO advocated for state violence to suppress the strike. The Costa Rican state's use of violence to repress the strike demonstrates the length elites were willing to go to maintain control, while simultaneously belying elite portrayals of Costa Rica as a peaceful and orderly nation. State violence provoked violent retaliation by the PCCR and the laborers it led. Ultimately, the laborers gained some concessions and the strike was a great catalyst for the PCCR's standing among many laborers. However, the strike also resulted in further linking Nicaraguans with violence.

Nicaraguans did participate in violent activities but it is difficult to demonstrate if any more so than other laborers. The United Fruit Company and the Costa Rican state emphasized Nicaraguan difference, marginalizing Nicaraguans as violent agitators and deporting them. For the United Fruit Company it was a way to unironically blame "outsiders" for interfering with Costa Rican affairs and to discredit the PCCR, a portrayal successfully reflected in the U.S. and Costa Rican press. For the Costa Rican state, it also served to undermine the strike as well as a

mechanism to create greater difference among Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans and preserve the image of Costa Rican peacefulness and its national identity.

Costa Rican state violence is especially relevant to the construction of Costa Rican national identity. These Central American neighbors are similar in that they are predominantly Spanish speaking and Catholic. As such, academics often lump them together as Hispanics.³

However, the concept of “Hispanicity” fails to take into account the role of nationalism and the construction of national difference between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans. Furthermore, Costa Rica has historically viewed itself as white, European, and peaceful. This “imagined nation” emphasizes the central highland population and ignores the populations on the coasts, predominantly immigrants from Nicaragua (viewed primarily as mestizos or Indians), Jamaica, and Panama.⁴ Thus, like in much of Latin America, the non-white immigrants on the coasts, whom the state tolerated only as temporary laborers, were never integrated into the national identity of Costa Rica.

Nicaraguans and Communism in Costa Rica

By the 1930s, Costa Rican authorities were greatly concerned about Nicaraguan immigrants and their propensity for violence. In 1930 alone, Costa Rican authorities accused Nicaraguans of being involved in three plots that threatened to disturb Costa Rica’s stability. In April 1930, a plot to overthrow Costa Rican president González Víquez allegedly involved a

³ The use of the term Hispanic is prevalent in the literature discussing West Indians in Costa Rica. It is primarily utilized to distinguish the Central American Spanish-speaking population from the black (predominantly Jamaican) or white (U.S. or European) English-speaking population on the plantations of the United Fruit Company. Its use is problematic as it bestows upon the Central Americans a monolithic characteristic that obfuscates more than it clarifies. Whenever possible I state the nationality of the person or group discussed and limit my own use to when the author does not state nationality.

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

large number of Nicaraguan exiles. As a result, Costa Rican authorities deported three members of that group. In June 1930, Costa Rican authorities accused another group of Nicaraguan exiles, as well as one Mexican exile, of participating in yet another conspiracy to overthrow the government of Costa Rica. Finally, a protest made up of 300 unemployed laborers that culminated violently in a clash with the police also included Nicaraguans laborers.⁵ In 1934, Costa Rica deported five Nicaraguans, who tore and stomped on the flag of the United States in the Parque Central of San José, in protest against rumors that U.S. Marines had insulted the flag of Nicaragua at the funeral services of Sandino.⁶

Costa Rican authorities emphasized the connection between Nicaraguans and violence even when Nicaraguans were not the perpetrators of a crime, as in the case of Victor Arguedas. In 1931, Arguedas led a group of 15 young men on an attack in San Ramon that resulted in the death of one police official and left several wounded on both sides. Arguedas was a Costa Rican citizen but immediate reports stated that he was a naturalized Costa Rican of Honduran parentage, a self-styled Sandinista general, and that his followers were communists. U.S. Minister Charles Eberhardt commented in his report to the U.S. State Department that this was in keeping with the practice of the Costa Rican “government to refer to the instigators of any disturbance or tendency toward violence as foreigners (usually Nicaraguans).”⁷ Subsequent newspaper reports challenged the erroneous claims and verified that Arguedas was born in Costa

⁵ “Foil 3 Plots to Overthrow Rule in Costa Rica: Seize Nicaraguan Exiles aiding Jobless Rebels,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 15, 1930.

⁶ “Costa Rica Punishes Insults to U.S. Flag: Five Nicaraguans to be Deported for Tearing Banner and Stamping on it in Park,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1934. The five deported Nicaraguans were Col. Gerardo Guillen Largaespada, Juan Jesus Meza, Rodolfo Leal, José Leon Cajina, and Alfredo Fernandez Cuellar.

⁷ USNADF, 818.00B-20 (1931-06-30); USNADF, 818.00B-21 (1931-07-02), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

Rica and never actively engaged with Sandino. Arguedas himself made a statement that he alone had engineered the attack and that it had nothing to do with the current political situation and that the Communists as an organization should not be held responsible.⁸ Costa Rican officials utilized communism as code for “foreign” in order to cast the criminal and the crime itself non-Costa Rican, even when the perpetrators were Costa Rican nationals.

The connection between Nicaraguans and violence increased as the connection between Nicaraguans and Communist activity in Costa Rica became stronger. In the greater geopolitical context, the existence and spread of communism in Costa Rica was of concern not only to Costa Rican officials but also to the United States. Early on there was very little to connect Nicaraguan laborers with communism; however, some Nicaraguan exiles definitely were suspected of being communists. The movement of Nicaraguan exiles into the region led to a close monitoring of their activity and their alleged communism by both governments.

For example, on August 9, 1930 the American consul in Costa Rica received reports that two communists had recently arrived by boat and that they were both anti-American and against Nicaraguan President José Moncada. The two alleged communists were Salomon de la Selva and Adolfo Ortega Díaz, both Nicaraguans. Salomon de la Selva was U.S. educated and had participated in various labor movements in Nicaragua and Central America.⁹ Adolfo Ortega Díaz bitterly opposed the presence of U.S. Marines in Nicaragua. They were to meet with other prominent Nicaraguan exiles in San José: Norberto Salinas and Dr. M. Francisco Tijerino.

⁸ USNADF, 818.00B-20 (1931-06-30); USNADF, 818.00B-21 (1931-07-02), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

⁹ Salomon de la Selva was involved in labor activities throughout the hemisphere, even serving as secretary to American Federation of Labor Chief, Samuel Gompers. See: Derek Petrey and Ileana Rodríguez, “Salomón de la Selva,” *Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Literature, 1900-2003*, eds. Daniel Balderston and Mike Gonzalez (New York: Routledge, 2004), 533.

Salinas, like Ortega Díaz, opposed the Marine occupation in Nicaragua. Charles Eberhardt described Dr. Tijerino as the “brains” of the Nicaraguan opposition to President Moncada, with help from his brother, Toribio Tijerino. This reunion of Nicaraguans was troubling to U.S. diplomats, as they, according to Eberhardt, had no equal in their “unscrupulous cunning and ability to stir up trouble for the Moncada government.”¹⁰

To cite another example, following *La Matanza*, the massacre of thirty thousand rural laborers in El Salvador at the hands of General Max Martínez in 1932, Adolfo Ortega Díaz wrote an article in *El Diario de Costa Rica* on February 11, 1932 condemning the mass assassination of laborers. Eberhardt reported on the writings of Ortega Díaz calling him a writer-agitator and commented on the presence of other Nicaraguans of this type in Costa Rica: Salomon de la Selva, Norberto Salinas de Aguilar, and the recently arrived “notorious” Gabry Rivas. Eberhardt notes that it would perhaps be unfair to class these men as communists; however, in his view they constituted a “disturbing element in any community.”¹¹ Eberhardt knew that these men were not communists, especially since the great majority of them were prominent Conservatives. Their association with Communism most likely stemmed from Conservative support for Sandino. As Gobat has demonstrated, Conservatives sought to establish an alliance with Sandino following their defeat in the Nicaraguan elections of 1928 as a way of making common cause against the Liberals and because they sincerely supported Sandino’s primary goal: the removal of the U.S. from Nicaragua.¹² Toribio Tijerino, while in exile in Honduras, supplied

¹⁰ USNADF, 818.00B-2 (1930-08-13), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹¹ USNADF, 818.00B-33 (1932-04-07), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹² Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 232-266.

Sandinistas with arms and distributed Sandinista propaganda, including the journal *Sandino: Revista antiimperialista*, published by his brother, Dr. Tijerino, in Costa Rica.¹³

The forced connection between Nicaraguan exiles and communism demonstrates a strong conviction on the part of U.S. and Costa Rican officials that communism was an imported product. According to a 1933 report by the U.S. State Department, there was “little natural tendency toward Communism” among Costa Ricans. Furthermore, U.S. Minister Eberhardt did not consider Nicaraguan immigrants the largest foreign or communist threat in Costa Rica and instead believed that the true motivating influence behind the spread of communism in Costa Rica was the Polish Jewish colony, the *Polacos*. The Jewish Poles, escaping persecution in Poland, began arriving in greater numbers between 1929 and 1939. Charles Eberhardt concludes his report on communist disturbances in Costa Rica by stating, “I repeat that I continue of the opinion that in its relations to local Communism this Polish-Jewish invasion is still the most dangerous element to be reckoned with in Costa Rica in these days of disturbed financial, political and labor conditions.”¹⁴ In 1934 Polish peddlers were blamed for spreading communism through their door-to-door selling of goods.¹⁵ The hostility towards Poles can also be viewed as anti-Semitism, as Costa Ricans often used the national marker “Pole” to signify “Jewish.” Their door-to-door business were seen as an affront to other Costa Rican business owners who had to pay for storefronts and other costs of operating established business locations. In light of the economic crisis at the turn of the 1930s, the Jewish Poles were a

¹³ Gobat, 239.

¹⁴ USNADF, 818.00-1419 (1933-06-01), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹⁵ “Costa Ricans urge Census for Poles,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1934.

popular scapegoat worldwide.¹⁶ By 1931, however, it became difficult to deny a homegrown communist movement with the establishment of the Costa Rican Communist Party.

In Costa Rica, the PCCR emerged as the culmination of increased labor agitation in Costa Rica, following the global economic crisis of 1929. By 1934, three major strikes gripped the small republic.¹⁷ Costa Rica's export economy was particularly vulnerable during the crisis as the United States and other European nations raised tariff barriers. As companies reduced production and cut their labor forces, the resultant unemployment led to protests and the creation of collective labor organizations. Among these were *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), which sought to organize workers and the unemployed and the *Partido de Alianza de Obreros, Campesinos e Intelectuales en Costa Rica*, which tried to extend the political reach of labor movements by entering electoral races. In 1929, labor leader Gonzalo Montero Berry founded the *Asociación Revolucionaria de Cultura* (ARCO), an organization "with the purpose of watching over the interest of *capitalino* laborers" and dedicated to educating the working class.¹⁸ Law students Manuel Mora, Jaime Cerdas Mora, and Ricardo Coto Conde were drawn into ARCO's orbit. Vladimir de la Cruz states that with the inclusion of the anti-imperialist law students, ARCO effectively became a center of Marxist studies.¹⁹ The law students helped to establish the Communist Party on July 6, 1931 and took on leadership positions: Manuel Mora,

¹⁶ Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942," 390-410.

¹⁷ Shoemakers in San José, sugar workers in Turrialba, and the banana workers in Limón all went on strike in 1934. Eugene D. Miller, "Labour and the War-Time Alliance in Costa Rica 1943-1948, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 3 (1993): 516.

¹⁸ Vladimir de la Cruz, *Las luchas sociales en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1981), 213.

¹⁹ De la Cruz, 214.

General Secretary, Jaime Cerdas Mora, Secretary of Finances and Ricardo Coto Conde, Secretary of Mailing.

According to historian David Díaz-Arias, the Communist Party's embrace of radical-Marxist discourse differentiated it from other labor organizations and its intellectual forefathers. This was a part of the PCCR's two-pronged strategy for advancing *comunismo a la tica* with a long-term goal (Maximum Plan) of social revolution and a more pragmatic and attainable goal (Minimum Plan) of solving social problems by political means. The PCCR gained support from the unemployed, laborers, and artisans by, as stated in their Minimum Plan, tapping into "the social demands of unfulfilled social policies that the Costa Rican State had tried to solve from the late nineteenth-century."²⁰ Specifically, the Minimum Plan called for political power for the working class, social safeguards against the threat of unemployment, work injuries, sickness, maternity leave, and old age, the abolition of child labor, equal pay for equal work for women, an 8-hour workday, minimum wage, the right to unionize, improved sanitary standards, and hygiene reforms. The party also called for the nationalization of various industries, including transportation, the expropriation of unutilized lands, as well as civic service and educational reforms.²¹ By positioning themselves as the organization with the answers to society's ills, specifically concerning the working poor, the PCCR made great gains among workers. Two of its members gained seats in the National Congress in 1934.

Following their founding in 1931, the PCCR got to work and established a presence throughout the country. The immediate goal of the Communist Party was to extend itself to the

²⁰ David Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories: Populism, Popular Mobilization, Violence and Memory of Civil War in Costa Rica, 1940-1948" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2009), 39.

²¹ For a complete list see Vladimir de la Cruz, *Las luchas sociales en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1981), 249-251

major cities of Costa Rica in order to organize different branches that would propel the labor movement and create union solidarity.²² Just as quickly, the Communist Party caught the attention of authorities. On May 28 1932, Communists held a meeting to discuss how to mobilize workers to support the call for minimum wage legislation and unemployment relief. The police arrived and clashed with the communists, resulting in 3 police injuries and the arrests of over 100 “reds.” The police claimed that they were simply following orders and attempting to force the participants inside since the law did not allow for public assembly. President Jimenez immediately stated his support for the role and actions of the police, affirming that they had complied with the law. Jimenez declared that he would not tolerate any disturbance of the public order. He also threatened to deport or imprison of any foreigners involved in such matters.²³

President Jimenez backed up these threats when a similar episode occurred a year later on May 22, 1933. He ordered the arrests of 40 Costa Ricans and the deportation of all foreign protesters. The Communist Party invited all unemployed laborers to the Communist Club in San José following a general lay-off of laborers employed by the municipality. That morning, a number of the unemployed laborers, along with their wives and children, gathered in front of the club. Costa Rican authorities caught wind of the gathering and sent police forces to the Communist headquarters to prevent the unemployed from staging a public demonstration on the streets of the capital. According to Charles Eberhardt, the press reported that the workers were planning to call on the Minister of the Interior and municipal authorities to protest their lay-offs. The workers went so far as to schedule an appointment with the Minister of the Interior;

²² Marielos Aguilar, *Carlos Luis Fallas: Su época y sus luchas* (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 1983), 48.

²³ USNADF, 818.00B-38 (1932-06-01), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

however, problems arose because they did not secure permission to stage a demonstration or parade in public. A small contingent of police arrived to disperse the crowd. According to Eberhardt, the Communist Party had armed the protesters with picks and shovels, putting them in a powerful position vis-à-vis the police. Carlos Luis Fallas, labor leader from Alajuela and member of the PCCR, commanded the laborers to ignore the police and continue the march to the office of the Minister of the Interior. The ensuing clash left five police officers and four protesters severely wounded. According to the report, one police officer died two days after the incident and another officer was mortally wounded. During the clash, the police captured forty alleged communists, though none of the party leaders.²⁴

The government blamed Communist aggression for the riot, as the clash was later described. This led authorities to conduct a manhunt for all known communist agitators, and swiftly issued arrest warrants for the Costa Rican communists, and authorized the deportation of communist foreigners. This included Adolfo Braña, of Spanish origin, Carlos Herrera and Francisco Blandon, both Nicaraguans, as well as future Venezuelan president Romulo Betancourt. The Costa Rican government promptly deported Braña, Herrera and Blandon, along with two more Nicaraguans, by steamboat.²⁵

Three weeks after the outbreak of violence the government quickly released all detained communists, trying none of them, leading Eberhardt to complain that the communists in Costa Rica were growing bolder since their actions had not really been punished. As an example of the party's boldness, Eberhardt cites a communist attack on an anti-communist engineer named

²⁴ USNADF, 818.00-1416 (1933-05-26), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

²⁵ USNADF, 818.00-1416 (1933-05-26); USNADF, 818.00-1418 (1933-05-31), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

Angelini.²⁶ The engineer had a run-in with a Nicaraguan communist chauffeur when Angelini, reveling in the news that Adolfo Braña had been expelled from the country, shouted to a friend riding in a car, “What about our friend Braña?” The car stopped and when Angelini passed it, the Nicaraguan communist chauffeur hit Angelini over the head with an automobile crank,²⁷ warning the engineer, “Be careful what you say about Braña and other communists.”²⁸ Whereas the Costa Rican government released native-born communists from jail without facing trial, the Costa Rican government did not afford immigrants the same luxury and immediately deported immigrants accused of such actions. Beyond these incidents in San José, the Communist Party realized the importance of establishing a presence on the banana plantations and quickly moved to do so.

Communism on the Atlantic Coast

From the moment of the party’s inception, Communists sought to organize labor in an effort to improve the conditions of Costa Rican workers and increase their own power and influence. As such, it espoused an anti-imperialist program that viewed companies such as United Fruit as detrimental to their goals. They quickly formed a chapter in the heart of banana plantation country in Limón in 1931.²⁹ Ironically, Costa Rican authorities helped the PCCR gain

²⁶ It is very likely that the anti-Communist engineer Angelini was the same man that had been denounced for failing to maintain a water plant clean as well as embezzlement by Braña in his role as city councilman (he had been elected in the 1932 elections). See Ana Maria Botey Sobrado, “Salud, higiene y regidores comunistas, San José 1933,” *Diálogos: Revista Electrónica de Historia* 9, no. 2 (Aug. 2008-Feb. 2009).

²⁷ A hand-crank used to start an automobile engine.

²⁸ USNADF, 818.00B-58 (1933-06-15), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

²⁹ Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, *La huelga bananera de 1934* (San José: CENAP-CEPAS, 1984), 25.

a stronger foothold in the Atlantic Zone. In 1932, Costa Rican authorities arrested Carlos Luis Fallas for inflammatory speech and banished him for one year and one month and one day to the Atlantic region. Fallas, already familiar with the terrain since he had worked for the UFCO in the Atlantic Zone in the 1920s took the opportunity to spread the Communist Party's message to the banana plantations.

When the Communist Party began organizing in the Atlantic Zone, there was a demographic shift occurring on the banana plantations. As Ronald Harpelle argues, Nicaraguans and West Indians were the two largest immigrant groups in Limón around the time of the 1934 strike, but each occupied distinct social and economic positions.³⁰ West Indians who had predominated for decades transitioned into small private farming, small business, and self-employment and middle management positions with the Company. By the 1920s and 1930s Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans began taking the place of West Indians "as the reservoir for inexpensive labor", doing the most strenuous and dangerous tasks on the plantations, working primarily as day laborers clearing land with machetes.³¹ It is important to note, however, that there was some overlap between West Indians and Nicaraguans. The West Indians arriving in Limón in 1927 were evenly split between English-speakers, predominantly Jamaican, and Spanish-speakers, three quarters of whom were coming from Nicaragua (see Table 2).³²

³⁰ Ronald Harpelle, *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race, Class and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 82.

³¹ Phillipe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989), 194; Jeffrey Casey Gaspar, *Limón: 1880-1940, Un estudio de la industria bananera en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1979), 132.

³² Lara Putnam, *The Company they Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 68.

Table 2 Nicaraguans and West Indians in Costa Rica, 1864-1950		
<i>Year</i>	Nicaraguans	West Indians
1864	1196	23
1883	1014	902
1892	1302	714
1927	10642	17248
1950	18904	13749 ³³

Source: Government of Costa Rica. *Censo de población*: 1864, 1883, 1892, 1927, and 1950.

Utilizing a sampling from the 1927 Census of 748 individuals in the communities of Cahuita on the Atlantic Coast and Siquierres, which is located inland from Limón, Harpelle demonstrates that whereas West Indian immigration peaked between 1905 and 1915, the majority of Nicaraguans arrived to Limón between 1920 and 1927.³⁴ According to the 1927 Census, the West Indian population in Limón increased from 641 to 17248 between 1892 and 1927.³⁵

Seligson argues that Jamaicans were able to achieve upward mobility within the United Fruit Company because they tended to be submissive, since they were immigrants and did not want to risk deportation. In addition, Jamaicans spoke English, giving them an edge over Spanish-speaking workers since the managers were most often American. As a result, “blacks were often given better positions on the work crews, and not infrequently a black would be put in charge of a white crew. The most prestigious and high-paying jobs, those with the railroad, were

³³ The 1950 Census did not explicitly estimate West Indians. This number refers to blacks in Limón, the majority of which were West Indians in Charles W. Koch, “Jamaican Blacks and the Descendants in Costa Rica,” *Social and Economic Studies* 26, no. 3 (1977): 351.

³⁴ Harpelle, *West Indians of Costa Rica*, 81-4.

³⁵ Costa Rica, *Censo de poblacion de Costa Rica 1927* (San José: Costa Rica), 93-4.

predominantly in the hands of blacks.”³⁶ Others have explained black upward mobility as the byproduct of the cultural and language differences between West Indians and Costa Ricans. Chomsky points to “the fact that West Indians were familiar with white English-speaking elites and the plantation and had developed a tradition of survival strategies” and argues that West Indians “seem more comprehensible” to North Americans, as they were more culturally familiar to the Company’s managers. It was also economically advantageous for the Company to replace white North American midlevel employees with cheaper black employees who also spoke English.³⁷

Not all West Indians rose within the Company. Many chose to go into subsistence or contract farming. They did so, as Bourgois notes, because they could earn a higher income with their plots than they could as wage employees of the Company.³⁸ Chomsky also points out that the poorest blacks simply left. Nicaraguan and other Central American workers filled the void left behind by poorer black laborers. The remaining blacks had higher earning power due to their own farming or positions within the company and this contributed to the creation of a black middle class on the coast.³⁹

³⁶ Mitchell Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 69. Seligson’s use of “white” here refers to non-black Costa Ricans.

³⁷ Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1996), 50-51.

³⁸ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 74.

³⁹ Chomsky, 50.

By the 1920s, blacks were refusing wages that Hispanics readily accepted.⁴⁰ Bourgois challenges Seligson's portrayal of a submissive Jamaican population, since the very reason that the Company sought to introduce Hispanic workers into the area was to undermine labor unrest among the West Indian population. Nicaraguans first began entering the banana zone in large groups between 1906 and 1908. A large number of Nicaraguans entered as strikebreakers in Bocas Division in 1913.⁴¹ During the first half of the twentieth century, the United Fruit Company combated labor organization by encouraging and maintaining ethnic divisions.⁴² Elderly West Indians interviewed by Bourgois confirm the ethnic divisions and stated that Nicaraguans did much of the work required to complete the Sixaola-Talamanca railroad during the late 1910s and farm clearing in the Talamanca District in 1916.⁴³ In the 1920s, many Nicaraguans shifted over to the banana plantations, becoming the first Hispanics to join that labor force in large numbers.⁴⁴

According to the Census, by 1927 the banana industry employed almost 77 percent of Nicaraguans, compared to 34 percent of West Indians.⁴⁵ Since the 1920s, Nicaraguans earned a reputation as the best workers on the plantations. This reputation persisted well into the 1980s, when a Bocas Division foreman told Bourgois, "Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans are a wild people of caste with thick skin who like to work hard; they are not afraid of sweating. Costa

⁴⁰ Koch, Charles, "Ethnicity and Livelihoods: A Social Geography of Costa Rica's Atlantic Coast" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1975), 276.

⁴¹ Putnam, 62; *La Información*, March 29, 1913 in Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 180.

⁴² Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 199.

⁴³ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 181.

⁴⁴ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 182.

⁴⁵ Harpelle, *West Indians of Costa Rica*, 81-4.

Ricans are wimps when it comes to working.”⁴⁶ This reputation as good workers owes much to Nicaraguans’ willingness to work for low wages and long hours under harsh tropical conditions. Unfortunately, a good reputation was not all that could be had. The long hours, accompanied by unsanitary conditions, malnutrition, a lack of medicine, and alcoholism left all laborers vulnerable to the dangers of malaria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia and in many cases, death.⁴⁷

Costa Rican highlanders themselves also began migrating to the banana plantations during the 1920s. Seligson argues that peasants displaced by a slowing coffee economy began to look for work in the banana plantations, where salaries remained high. These peasants generally hoped to put in a year or two on the plantation and save enough money to start a farm in the highlands.⁴⁸ The actual number of Costa Ricans who migrated to Limón, however, remained small. Census data demonstrates that the banana plantations, outside of the early period between 1883-1892, did not attract much internal migration and, furthermore, from 1892 to 1927 the Costa Rican population in Limón only rose 1 percent per year, from 6298 to 9970.⁴⁹

Newly arrived Nicaraguans and other Central American workers clashed with the already established West Indian population. Discussing the strikebreakers that arrived in the 1910s, elderly West Indians claimed that the Hispanic laborers failed to seriously undermine the strike, since they had trouble handling the poor working conditions and low wages, and lacked the proletarian discipline and skills required for permanent employment.⁵⁰ Furthermore, both West

⁴⁶ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 194.

⁴⁷ See Chomsky, 110-143.

⁴⁸ Seligson, 67.

⁴⁹ Gaspar, *Limón*, 238-9.

⁵⁰ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 180.

Indians and Amerindians described Hispanics “with disdain, claiming they were violent, murderous, alcoholic savages.” Nicaraguans, in particular, were “the most barbarous people.”⁵¹

Even friendly black-Nicaraguan relations reiterated the violent character of Nicaraguans. For example, a self-described *negro cruzado* (mixed-race black person) stated that he was terrified when he went to work at a rubber farm in the 1930s and was surrounded by thousands of *Chontaleños*⁵² (Nicaraguans). People said “they were evil, that in a blink of an eye they’d chop off your head.” He continues: “It’s true that those rubber-men and rice-men never let loose their knives and revolvers and switchblades, but for me things changed; from the littlest to the biggest they liked me.”⁵³ This man does not explain why things changed for him; however, his words make clear that the reputation of Nicaraguan laborers as dangerous men was so deeply ingrained that they remained people to be feared even if they liked you.

Lara Putnam, however, suggests that there is a gendered context to the ongoing violence and drinking on the banana plantations. Arguing against the assumption that violence signified a loss of social ties, Putnam states “violence between men was highly stylized, almost scripted, as insults and threats culminated in duels of honor with clear standards and known consequences. This was not a reversion to some precultural masculine state of nature. This was a particular local culture, one in which loyalty and reputations were important enough to fight over.”⁵⁴

The United Fruit Company, which was wary of a communist threat to their plantations, made great use of the Costa Rican government’s anti-Communist policies in attempts to gain

⁵¹ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 182.

⁵² Chontales is a department in central Nicaragua, west of Lake Nicaragua.

⁵³ Archivo Judicial de la Corte Suprema de Justicia, San Pable de Heredia, Costa Rica, vol. 26, part 2, “Autobiografía de E.N.B,” (18th in vol.), 6 in Putnam, 176-7.

⁵⁴ Putnam, 11.

governmental support in removing troublesome persons. For example, on March 30, 1932 J.H. Stein, an assistant manager of the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, sent the U.S. Legation a memo denouncing the activities of Juan Davela, a notorious Nicaraguan troublemaker, whom Stein accused of organizing a gang for the purpose of robbing the cashier's office, as well as the bank in Limón. Stein lamented that after having reported Davela's intentions to the local authorities they had declared the rumors false and had turned him loose instead of deporting him. Stein reports that Davela and his gang of 8 men proceeded to rob a Company commissary, absconding with \$600 in cash and goods. Authorities captured Davela, but promptly released him soon thereafter. A month later, Davela and his gang, now numbering 15 men, attacked another commissary and a couple of Chinese-owned shops, in one instance wounding one of the Chinese shopkeepers. Juan Davela may have been a criminal, but what is of interest here is the language that J.H. Stein used to warn of the real threat of Davela's activities. Stein writes, "This movement is growing each day as you can see, and with the present number of Nicaraguans out of work...it is assuming serious proportions, and unless measures are taken to stop it, it may grow into a general movement against foreign capital."⁵⁵ The UFCO meant to raise the specter of a general movement against foreign capital, an implicit reference to the communist threat, in order to elicit sympathy, or even fear, from the Costa Rican government. To some extent, this maneuver was successful, as Stein reports that the Costa Rican government sent additional police to deal with Davela and to deport any "suspicious" Nicaraguans. Charles Eberhardt, to whom J.H. Stein had sent his memo, dismissed Stein's assessment in a report to the U.S. State

⁵⁵ USNADF, 818.00B-32 (1932-03-30), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

Department, writing: “The word ‘Communist’ has been connected with these raids, although basically unjustly, for they have been carried out by jobless plantation hands.”⁵⁶

A little over a year before the strike of 1934, the U.S. State Department asked for a report on labor unrest in Limón and the possibility of subversive movements taking hold in the region. On March 31, 1933, Vice Consul Earl T. Crain confidently downplayed the likelihood of radicalism in the region. He cited West Indian laborers’ traditional disinclination towards radical activity as the primary reason for his certainty. Furthermore, due to the scarcity of jobs, he argued that the West Indians who held jobs were grateful and did not want to risk losing them.⁵⁷ In fact, as mentioned above, West Indian laborers on the Company banana plantations had been in decline since the 1920s, as many left work on the plantations to become small farmers or pursue other professions.⁵⁸ Moreover, the West Indian laborers who remained with the company were older, with a median age of 40 as opposed to median age of 27 for Hispanics.⁵⁹ Thus, the Vice Consul did not have a clear idea as to the makeup of the workforce or their actual inclination to strike.

Aviva Chomsky has examined the Communist Party attempt to build a coalition among black and Hispanic workers during the 1930s, emphasizing their class position over racial differences. This was a difficult task, as Costa Rican workers during this period increasingly blamed black West Indian workers for worsening economic conditions. Threatened by the

⁵⁶ USNADF, 818.00B-32 (1932-03-30), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

⁵⁷ USNADF, 818.00B-51 (1933-04-07), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

⁵⁸ Chomsky, 50.

⁵⁹ Putnam, 266.

possible loss of jobs, Costa Rican workers argued that the Company should give preference to native laborers. The Communist Party attempted to forge worker unity by preaching an anti-imperialist internationalist perspective that portrayed the struggle as one between workers and a large multinational corporation.⁶⁰

Party members were conscious of the need to reach out to black and foreign workers. Communist Party organizer Rogelio Mendoza wrote to Lino Bustos and asked that Bustos pay special attention to the black workers. Mendoza believed that the Communist Party and the black laborers shared common interests and fortunes and argued that, by working together, they could overcome all obstacles.⁶¹ On another occasion, Mendoza asked Bustos if all the men in the area were Costa Rican and, if they were, to make sure they register for the upcoming election. Chomsky notes that the Party's primary focus was to establish an electoral presence, but even then, there remained an effort to reach across national and racial boundaries.⁶² In the same letter, Mendoza tells Bustos that regardless of their nationality, even if the laborers were not Costa Rican, they were still communists, since "Communism does not consider nations or borders, it only considers workers in general."⁶³

Despite its efforts, the Party was unable to gain significant traction with black workers. One reason, Harpelle suggests, is that the Communist Party's overtures were half-hearted. The Communist newspaper *Trabajo* rarely published anything in English and only began to do so

⁶⁰ Chomsky, 235-243.

⁶¹ Rogelio C. Mendoza to Lino O. Bustos, n.d.; Mendoza to Bustos, August 26, 1933, ANCR, Serie Congreso, 1032.

⁶² Chomsky, 243.

⁶³ Mendoza to Bustos, April 7, 1933, ANCR, Serie Congreso 1032.

sporadically during the strike.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the black community remained divided over the strike. According to Bourgois, some West Indians day laborers, and even some farmers, supported the strike wholeheartedly.⁶⁵ However, West Indians who supported or participated in the strike seem to have been exceptional. Harpelle argues that West Indians were not as inclined to join the strike for several reasons. The fact that the majority of the strikers were Hispanic newcomers to Limón alienated many West Indians, who were wary of this trend in immigration. West Indians also enjoyed a higher degree of economic security and independence, resulting in a decline of labor radicalism. Asia Leeds posits that West Indian participation within Marcus Garvey's pan-African fraternal association, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), served to stem radicalism.⁶⁶

The UNIA had a large foothold in Costa Rica, with over 23 branches in Limón, and its local leaders worked with the Company to keep West Indian workers from participating in the strike.⁶⁷ Asia Leeds' work explains the UNIA's successful efforts in Limón:

While the ultimate aim of Garveyism was the making of a black nation in Africa for blacks displaced in the Americas and beyond, participation in the UNIA offered West Indians in Limón an ideology of race and modernity that they employed to form an Afro-Costa Rican identity. By being a part rather than fighting Costa Rican Capitalism, West Indians articulated a Costa Rican identity as well as a desire for the industrial development and capitalist uplift of the race.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Harpelle, 79; "Reds Destroy Bananas," *New York Times*, September 10, 1934.

⁶⁵ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 108.

⁶⁶ Asia Leeds, "Representations of Race, Entanglement of Power: Whiteness, Garveyism and Redemptive Geographies in Costa Rica, 1921-1950" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2010).

⁶⁷ Harpelle, 78.

⁶⁸ Leeds, 90.

Thus, Leeds argues that anti-communism, as constructed by Garveyism in Limón, was a way for West Indians to articulate their Costa Rican nationalism. Editorials by West Indian leaders called for moderation and cautioned against joining Communists in the strike, claiming that the Communist Party “knows nothing of conditions existing on a banana farm.” West Indian leaders further warned that “as communists we all become slaves of the government,” and “we can own no property.”⁶⁹ Asserting that a “horse got no business in a cow fight,” West Indians leaders made it clear that the Communist fight was not a West Indian fight. More cynically, Harpelle has argued: “Common cause with Hispanic workers was not desirable to the (West Indian) élite, who were interested in maintaining control over the West Indian community.”⁷⁰ What is clear is that for the West Indian community the risks of joining the strike outweighed any potential benefits, especially if it meant ceding influence to the PCCR.

The United Fruit Company itself fueled ethnic divisions to further deter West Indians from participating in the strike. The UFCO planted newspaper articles and forged a racist petition with counterfeit signatures of strike leaders.⁷¹ The Communist Party’s frustrations over their inability to attract black support can be summed up in a letter confiscated by police authorities and reprinted in the press, where Manuel Mora, de facto leader of the PCCR, wrote to Jaime Cerdas complaining of the “damned blacks” and their reluctance to join the strike.⁷²

Where the PCCR’s efforts with West Indians failed, they succeeded with Nicaraguans. Certainly, Spanish-speaking Nicaraguans offered one less barrier to understanding, and were

⁶⁹ Sam Nation, *Voz del Atlantico*, August 25, 1934; September 1, 1934 in Leeds, 91.

⁷⁰ Harpelle, 81.

⁷¹ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 109; Chomsky 249.

⁷² *El Diario de Costa Rica*, September 23, 1934.

therefore easier to recruit. However, a shared language cannot fully account for Nicaraguan willingness to join the 1934 strike. Furthermore, these workers shared many of the same risks as West Indians – specifically, job termination and deportation. Because Nicaraguans were more recent arrivals than West Indians, they did not have an established leadership presence in Limón. The Communist Party filled the leadership void and offered Nicaraguans an opportunity to participate in improving their own position, not as citizens, but as workers in Costa Rica. When the party called for the strike in 1934, Nicaraguans stood with Costa Rican laborers on the frontlines.

1934 strike

Banana plantation workers issued a petition to the United Fruit Company calling for pay raises, payment every 15 days, payment in cash instead of coupons, union recognition and workmen's compensation. The United Fruit Company's refusal to acknowledge the petition initiated the 1934 strike.⁷³ The Union of Atlantic Workers (*Sindicato de Trabajadores del Atlántico*) organized the strike and kept it going from August 9, 1934 to September 10, 1934. The strike had two distinct phases. The first phase consisted of a work stoppage by 10,000 men.⁷⁴ Other estimates placed the numbers of strikers at 7,000.⁷⁵ By August 12, 1934, the government considered the strike serious and declared martial law, sending 100 policemen to suppress the strikers. The banana workers and stevedores argued that they could not live on 60¢ a day and demanded raises. Banana planters were also unhappy with the returns they were

⁷³ Chomsky, 244; Victor Hugo Acuña Ortega, *La huelga bananera de 1934* (San José: CENAP-CEPAS, 1984), 33.

⁷⁴ Carlos Luis Fallas, *La gran huelga bananera del Atlántico de 1934* (San José: C.G.T.C., 1955), 7.

⁷⁵ "Banana Accord Sought," *New York Times*, August 21, 1934.

receiving from the United Fruit Company and argued that a recent agreement between the government and the Company would further diminish their profits.⁷⁶ The government, in an attempt to dismiss the claims of the strikers, blamed the conflict on the communists, claiming that the Party organizers had manipulated the laborers.

The Communist Party did take responsibility for the strike. Manuel Mora, elected to the Costa Rican Congress as one of two Communist politicians, asserted that the Party planned and directed the strike, as a matter of policy and duty, due to the deplorable working conditions faced by banana workers.⁷⁷ By August 20, 1934, the government began working diligently to reach an accord with planters and banana workers.⁷⁸ On August 26 1934, the strikers and planters reached a truce and agreed on all points of a projected settlement except for wages. The Communist Party also wanted assurances from the government of safe conduct.⁷⁹ On August 28, 1934, sirens blared in San José and signaled the end of the strike, following a settlement between planters and laborers. The agreement, signed in the office of the Minister of Government and Labor Leon Herrera, brought together a committee of workers, planter representatives and Manuel Mora. Noticeably absent from the negotiations was the United Fruit Company or its representative, G.P. Chittenden. The agreement resulted in a substantial pay raise for workers of 15¢ an hour and established an eight-hour workday.⁸⁰ It also abolished the use of coupons and credits as payment, and improved living quarters as well as local clinics. Critically important,

⁷⁶ “Banana Strike in Costa Rica; Martial Law On,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 13, 1934.

⁷⁷ “Says Reds Called Banana Strike,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1934.

⁷⁸ “Banana Accord Sought,” *New York Times*, August 21, 1934.

⁷⁹ “Cutting of Bananas Halted in Costa Rica,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1934.

⁸⁰ “Banana Strike Settled,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1934.

the planters also agreed to convince UFCO to sign the agreement, since the Company refused to participate in the negotiations.⁸¹ For their part, UFCO refused to negotiate with the laborers and refused to recognize the agreement.

Thus, despite the attacks made by the United Fruit Company and what Fallas calls the “bourgeois press,” the strikers were successful in producing an accord with planters mediated by President Jimenez. President Jimenez faced harsh criticism in the press for negotiating with the Communists and for his reluctance to use force to end the strike. Defending himself from these critiques, the president argued that his greatest priority was to bring about labor peace. He stated flatly that he dealt with the Communists because the Communists controlled the strike. Furthermore, President Jimenez, invoking President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Forgotten Man” speech from two years before, responded by stating:

I cannot use force against ideas. I treated with the communists because they represented the workers on strike. Nothing is lost by treating with them...I as the President and as a citizen loving justice, cannot silence the Communists. I cannot ignore the laborers—the forgotten man, overlooked in the shadow of humility. It is my first duty to hear and examine his complaints with justice.⁸²

The peace was short lived. The government did try to persuade the Company to accept the terms of the negotiated deal, but UFCO felt no need to do so, as it insisted that its workers were satisfied and that it would not succumb to the intervention of communists. The refusal of the UFCO to recognize the agreement signed by planters and strikers in late August sparked a second phase of the strike that brought with it increased violence. On September 7, 1934, Manuel Mora threatened to burn all properties belonging to the United Fruit Company in an attempt to

⁸¹ Jaime Cerdas Mora, “La huelga bananera de 1934: Anécdotas y enseñanzas de uno de sus principales dirigentes,” *Revista ABRA* 9-10 (1984), 91.

⁸² “Costa Rica’s Leader Backs ‘Forgotten Man’; Declared Bullets will not Wipe out Reds,” *New York Times*, September 1, 1934.

make the Company comply with the agreement already signed by the other planters. During this second phase of the strike, the government was far less willing to negotiate with the strikers and took a much firmer stance against them. In response to the threats by Mora, President Jimenez reversed himself and said that he would protect all workers and retaliate against the strikers with force. As unrest once again besieged the region, the President dispatched 150 soldiers to the plantations, with 400 more ready to leave the following day.⁸³ According to newspaper reports, communist leaders were waiting for the government to fire the first shots, but would certainly retaliate in kind. “The President declares he will act according to law, but we shall act according to justice,” proclaimed communist leaders.⁸⁴

Manuel Mora kept his promise, and in the days that followed, the strikers burned down bridges and destroyed acres of bananas. The violence was successful in that the United Fruit Company was unable to collect banana shipments.⁸⁵ One plantation owner insisted that this second phase of the strike revealed the communists’ true intentions: to steal and to loot. It was only after the looting and the destruction of railroad tracks and bridges that the government finally resolved to suppress the strike.⁸⁶

The strike ended on September 10, 1934, when government forces raided strikers’ headquarters and captured prominent leaders, including Manuel Mora. Costa Rican authorities apprehended and deported eighteen Nicaraguans. By September 15, 1934, the banana

⁸³ “Costa Rica Strike Chief Plans to Burn Plantations,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1934.

⁸⁴ “Costa Rican Bridges Wrecked in Strike,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1934.

⁸⁵ “Costa Rican Bridges Wrecked in Strike,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1934; “Reds Destroy Bananas,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1934.

⁸⁶ Roberto Alpizar, “Report on Strike of August 10, 1934,” ANCR Serie Gobernacion 11684, September 29, 1934.

plantations resumed operations, under the protection of government troops. Because of the communist literature found at the headquarters, President Jimenez stripped Manuel Mora of his congressional immunity, as the first step to levying charges against Mora. The government charged Mora and three other strike leaders with sedition. Afterwards, authorities continued to look for the strikers to make certain that they would not be able to regroup. One such victim of these manhunts was Jaime Cerdas Mora, who was shot by police.⁸⁷ Carlos Luis Fallas evaded capture for weeks, but police finally arrested him in the home of Manuel Mora on October 12, 1934.⁸⁸

A new contract, signed in December of 1934, incorporated some of the worker demands, including partial improvements in the living conditions of laborers (housing, clinics, and commissaries). Unfortunately, it failed to establish any sort of regulations pertaining to workers' payment.⁸⁹ As part of the 1934 settlement, the government granted the United Fruit Company control of the lands of the Pacific, where it expanded its banana operations. A companion law stipulated that UFCO had to hire a labor force that was at a minimum 60 percent Costa Rican. Chomsky notes that some workers perhaps viewed the stipulation as a success since it offered guarantees as to the percentage of Costa Rican laborers that the UFCO had to hire. However, it was an even greater success for the vision of Costa Rica held by national elites, as it also included a provision that attempt to ensure a "white" Costa Rica by prohibiting the hiring of

⁸⁷ "Banana Cutting Resumed," *New York Times*, September 16, 1934; "Costa Rican Red is Shot," *New York Times*, September 18, 1934; "Costa Rica accuses Reds," *New York Times*, September 20, 1934.

⁸⁸ "Managua Holds Suspects," *New York Times*, October 14, 1934.

⁸⁹ Victor Hugo Acuña Ortega, *La huelga bananera de 1934*, 51.

West Indians on the Pacific plantations and limiting the employment of Nicaraguans.⁹⁰ The role of Nicaraguans in the strike is discussed below.

Nicaraguans and the Strike

During the strike, the UFCO was adamant about characterizing the strike as foreign. Initially, it focused on how “audacious” communists, “professional agitators” under direct orders from Moscow, terrorized the laborers of the Atlantic. Furthermore, the UFCO insisted that it would be more than happy to speak directly with the workers, but that it would not deal with the communist leaders, as they were not from the region or and did not truly represent the people. However, according to Fallas, when President Jimenez sent Minister of Government and Labor Santos León Herrera, with press in tow, to mediate the conflict between laborers and planters and met with the workers themselves, workers responded that they should speak with the leadership at 26 Millas, a *finca* that served as strike headquarters in Limón. Upon the arrival of León Herrera to 26 Millas, the strike leadership allowed the Minister to present an offer from the planters to the workers, but the actual terms were deemed insulting and summarily rejected. The press jumped on this. Now it was not only the communists who were manipulating the workers, but also the “barbaric” Nicaraguans, who dissuaded the workers from accepting by threatening to cut off the heads of those who would dare to sign the agreement at this early stage.⁹¹ The press made Nicaraguan laborers the scapegoats of the strike and depicted strikers as both foreign and violent to diminish popular support for the action, contrasting the strikers to the “true” national character of Costa Ricans as a peaceful people. This was not an uncommon tactic. Across the

⁹⁰ Chomsky, 250; Leeds, 81; Harpelle 86-7.

⁹¹ Fallas, *La gran huelga bananera*, 8, 11-2.

Americas, including the United States, governments made claims against communism and its adherents on the basis of nationalism.

Fallas suggests that the press shifted the blame for the strike from the communists to immigrants; however, reports from the period suggest that the UFCO pursued a xenophobic propaganda campaign from the beginning.⁹² On August 13, 1934, the *New York Times* reported that the Costa Rican press printed that all strike leaders with few exceptions were Nicaraguans, Spaniards, and Colombians.⁹³ There were calls for the persecution of all foreign elements involved in the “revolutionary plot” of the communists, particularly Jews.⁹⁴ After the initial agreement of August 28 1934, the *New York Times* reported that planters did not refer to the work stoppage as a labor strike but as a “revolt with Communists leading Nicaraguan malcontents and former followers of late General Augusto Sandino.”⁹⁵

As Ronald Harpelle demonstrates, the government found it convenient to label foreign elements as ungrateful and responsible for the agitation in the Atlantic Zone.⁹⁶ *La Voz del Atlantico* called on Costa Rican strikers to “wake up to their error at having accompanied these foreign elements, who are fomenting depredation...in our fatherland which offers them such hospitality.”⁹⁷ Planters also played on the prevalent xenophobic sentiment to gain some kind of compensation from the government for damages suffered. For example, planter Augusto

⁹² Fallas, *La gran huelga bananera*, 13.

⁹³ “Says Reds Called Strike,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1934.

⁹⁴ *Defensa Nacional*, October 13, 1934 in Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 206.

⁹⁵ “Banana Strike Settled,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1934.

⁹⁶ Harpelle, *West Indians of Costa Rica*, 204.

⁹⁷ *La Voz del Atlántico*, September 15, 1934 in Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 206.

Alpizar, wrote to the President Jiménez to inform him of the damage committed by “a group of foreigners,” preventing his tenant farmers from earning their living.⁹⁸ While Alpizar complained of “foreigners,” presumably Nicaraguans, he failed to mention that his tenant farmers (*colonos*) were mostly West Indians.

Even the communist leader Arnoldo Ferreto in his description of the 1934 banana strike, asserts that Nicaraguan laborers clamored for a more violent direction to the strike. The labor stoppage, Ferreto states, was meant to be peaceful, a “huelga de brazos caídos”; however, a large number of the banana workers were Nicaraguans and many of them had military experience from the Nicaraguan civil wars and as soldiers and officers of the Sandinista army. Of the workers clamoring for violence with their machetes raised, Ferreto insists, the majority were Nicaraguan.⁹⁹

Phillipe Bourgois argues that many immigrants did not get involved in political activities that might lead to their deportation for fear of death or imprisonment in their home countries. To demonstrate his point, Bourgois cites a Costa Rican leader from the 1934 strike discussing Nicaraguan participation:

Those people [political refugees] were really appreciated [*eran apetevidos*] by the company. Because there was no strong legislation or control, the company could just obtain a special permission for them to stay in Costa Rica so long as they were employed by them. So they had to work for a lower salary without daring to get involved in protest movements for fear of being deported to Nicaragua. Since they were people fleeing a dictatorship there, that made them relatively meek. A lot of them were Sandinistas or deserters from the National Guard. What happened in 1934 was that they had accumulated too much anger and that’s why they exploded.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Alpizar to Jimenez, August 14, 1934, in ANCR, Serie Gobernación 11684; Chomsky, 248-9.

⁹⁹ Arnoldo Ferreto, *La huelga bananera 1934*, (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Elena, 1979), 4.

¹⁰⁰ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 208-9.

This quotation demonstrates the contradictory perception of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. It describes Nicaraguans as docile and meek and at the same time as violent. Often, characterizations of Nicaraguans relied on overly simplistic terms to describe their actions, providing poorly nuanced analysis of their motivations. This particular explanation situates the catalyst of Nicaraguan participation in the strike as the result of anger and/or resentment. However, it neglects to mention whom these Nicaraguans were involved with, namely Costa Rican Communists, and fails to account for their decision to ally themselves to a labor movement outside of their native country.

Subsequent academic analysis of the strike upholds the view that Nicaraguans are innately violent. For example, Bourgois states that management, labor organizers, and West Indians and Amerindian workers viewed “combativity” as a Nicaraguan racial characteristic. He continues by stating that this “national character” has a historical and structural basis. Bourgois argues that Nicaragua’s frequent civil wars and dictatorships and Nicaraguans had fostered a “confrontational and violent style of interpersonal relationships” in its citizens. He further justifies this view of the violent Nicaraguan based on a research trip to a Nicaraguan banana plantation, where he witnessed “child beatings, a bitter hair-pulling, eye-gouging, nail-scratching fight between two women, and frequent displays of violent bravado among young men.” Bourgois goes on to contrast the Nicaraguan propensity for violence, bravado and “militant confrontations” to the Costa Rican ideology of natural peacefulness. Utilizing Ferreto’s pamphlet to illustrate his point, Bourgois argues that “the Costa Rican commitment to national tranquility inhibits militant, confrontational political mobilization” and Nicaraguan militancy emerged as a problem for strike leadership. This analysis places the onus of violence almost

solely on Nicaraguans.¹⁰¹ Even as Bourgois situates Nicaraguan interpersonal violence within a context of historical and structural violence in Nicaragua and the banana plantations, he glosses over the political violence of the Costa Rican state in repressing the strike, and reifies the symbolic violence of how natural it is to assume that Nicaraguans were immediately responsible.

The United Fruit Company and the government were successful in stoking and exploiting public fears concerning Nicaraguan strike leaders. To combat these prejudices, the PCCR published an article in the Communist paper *Trabajo* which asserted that the strike movement was in the hands of Costa Rican leadership and that the public should not allow itself to fall prey to the animosity the ruling class of Costa Rica had fomented against Nicaraguan laborers.¹⁰² This political strategy persisted during the immediate aftermath of the strike. The press blamed the violent turns of the strike on Nicaraguans as a way of undermining the labor movement. It linked the already established stereotype of violent Nicaraguan criminality with the events of the Atlantic and removed any explicit mention of Costa Ricans from the chronicle. For example, on September 12, the *New York Times* reported that the “banana strike has degenerated into a wave of banditry and vandalism against the United Fruit Company by small armed bands allegedly under the leadership of Nicaraguans.”¹⁰³ The acts of banditry included the burning of bridges and branch railroads, the cutting of telephone wires, and the sacking of commissary stores. Costa Rican national police caught a group of eighteen looters, mostly Nicaraguans, armed with machetes and revolvers. The press recast actions taken by the strikers in their struggle against the UFCO as acts of “banditry,” barbarity and criminality.

¹⁰¹ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 201-3.

¹⁰² *Trabajo*, August 24, 1934 in Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 206.

¹⁰³ “Looting in Banana Strike,” *New York Times*, September 12, 1934.

In a report to the Secretary of State dated September 13, 1934, Leo Sack declared that although the strike was over, there remained a Communist threat. The report asserts that many of the banana laborers were ready to get back to the business of work, as the great majority of them, West Indians and Jamaicans, never partook in the strike and were adamantly against it. The report alleged that any failure to work on the part of these laborers was due to intimidation by “stronger-minded white Costa Ricans” and Nicaraguans “who actually inaugurated a reign of terror.”¹⁰⁴

Costa Rican police utilized insults, emphasizing dishonor and lack of respect, to provoke the strikers into lashing out, as they would call out to strikers: “Nica faggots! Why do you not stand like men?” Fallas recalls that these workers, frustrated and angry, would ask to defend their own honor, to demonstrate to the police officers that they were real men. Fallas argues that these police officers insulted the workers as “*Nicas*” because the press emphasized the role of Nicaraguans in the strike and, indeed presented *all* of the strikers as Nicaraguans.¹⁰⁵ Gendered attacks based on masculinity were common on the banana plantations, as men struggled to maintain their honor and reputations. The disparagement, “Nica faggot,” not only called into question their masculinity but their nationality, effectively linking the two.

Still, not all reports and recollections spoke of violent Nicaraguans. Carlos Luis Fallas, in a speech recounting the events that led up to the strike, mentions that he fondly remembers

¹⁰⁴ USNADF, 818.00B-75 (1934-09-13), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹⁰⁵ Fallas, *La gran huelga bananera*, 9.

Lucío Ibarra, an immigrant from Nicaragua.¹⁰⁶ Ibarra served as local leader of Pococí, a canton in northern Limón, during the strike.¹⁰⁷

Jaime Cerdas Mora mentions another prominent Nicaraguan participant, Gato Cárdenas, a former member of the Nicaraguan *Guardia Nacional*, who presided as security chief at 26 Millas. Cerdas describes Cardenas as a brave man who deserted *the Guardia* because of his opposition to its tyranny. A superior officer had ordered Cardenas to kill a man; Cardenas followed the order but felt great remorse and soon resolved to migrate to Costa Rica.¹⁰⁸

Examples of anonymous Nicaraguans appear in the memoirs of the participants of the 1934 strike and serve as a reminder that although they left no official record of their actions during these momentous events, the Nicaraguans were there. According to Cerdas, after the commencement of hostilities during the second phase of the strike, Costa Rican Col. Gallegos burned down ranches in his pursuit of communist leaders. To escape the attacks of Gallegos, Cerdas and Fallas split into two groups to flee into the mountains. However, Cerdas succumbed to the effects of malaria and called on a Nicaraguan laborer that was with him to take charge of the group and get them to safety.¹⁰⁹

Cerdas Mora declares that the strike, particularly its second phase, had severe consequences for the strikers who were not Costa Rican. He states: “The worst was not what happened to us, but rather the suffering that other people had to endure. The government expelled all the Nicaraguans and Hondurans without allowing them to say goodbye to their

¹⁰⁶ Fallas, *La gran huelga bananera*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ferreto, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Cerdas Mora, 94.

¹⁰⁹ Cerdas Mora, 93.

families. The government immediately placed whomever they caught on a boat to Nicaragua.” Cerdas Mora felt guilt over the treatment of the Nicaraguans, as he believed that the Communist leadership was, in part, responsible for their fates.¹¹⁰ The disparity in treatment between Costa Rican and Nicaraguan laborers emerges clearly from the court record. On August 22, 1934, authorities released all but two of the 100 Costa Rican laborers arrested in relation to the strike in habeas corpus proceedings.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, Nicaraguans and other foreign participants faced immediate deportation and had little to no room to operate within the Costa Rican legal system.

The threat and reality of deportation made Nicaraguan participants the most vulnerable of the strikers. The Nicaraguan state sought to discourage its ex-citizens from participating in the strike. For example, the Nicaraguan consul in Limón admonished Nicaraguan laborers for joining the strike and participating in subversive activities and threatened them with “ignominy, expulsion, and perhaps even death.”¹¹² The Costa Rican government deported hundreds of Nicaraguan laborers in the Limón division during the 1934 strike, some with only the clothes they had on their back and leaving behind wives and children.¹¹³ Some of these Nicaraguans had lived in Costa Rica for over 25 years and had established legal residence.¹¹⁴ This mattered little as the United Fruit Company, the government and the press fanned and exploited anti-foreigner sentiment.

¹¹⁰ Cerdas Mora, 94.

¹¹¹ “Costa Rica frees 98,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1934.

¹¹² *La Voz del Atlantico*, September 15, 1934 in Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 206.

¹¹³ Fallas, *La gran huelga bananera*, 14.

¹¹⁴ Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, 206; “Thirty-Two Nicaraguans deported,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1934.

On August 10 1934, Vice Consul Leslie W. Johnson sent the U.S. State Department a report updating the status of the strike, warning that it was more serious than initially suspected. He also reported that Costa Rican authorities arrested 17 strike leaders (ten Costa Ricans and seven Nicaraguans) for destroying bananas.¹¹⁵ On August 16 1934, the Costa Rican government deported seven Nicaraguans alleged to be Communist leaders of the strike, including Juan José Gutiérrez, Gregorio Tellez,¹¹⁶ Fidel Flores, Raimundo Monjarez, Ezequiel Rodríguez, Leocadio Hernandez and Pedro Joaquin Zeledón Saenz.¹¹⁷ By August 21 1934, the Costa Rican government had deported 46 agitators, including 24 Nicaraguans said to be former followers of Sandino who had been forced to seek refuge in Costa Rica after the Nicaraguan general's assassination.¹¹⁸ At the beginning of September, the deported laborers began arriving in Nicaragua in large numbers. Among those deported were Fidel Torres Reyes, Francisco Rojas Bustos, and José Rodríguez Villareina, who had lived in Costa Rica for 25, 12, and 6 years respectively. Also deported were Ernesto J. Martínez, a small plantation owner who had lived in Costa Rica for 13 years, had a wife and two children who were born there. Even Nicaraguans born in Costa Rica were not safe from deportation as evidenced by the case of Emilio Duarte

¹¹⁵ USNADF, FW 818.00B-69 (1934-08-10), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹¹⁶ Tellez, like many deported Nicaraguans, made his way back to Costa Rica. After many years on the banana plantations of the United Fruit Company, he worked as a chauffeur. He was 48 and very ill when he died in a hotel room in San José in September 1948. "Aparecio muerto en un hotel el ciudadano nicaragüense Gregorio Tellez Hernandez," *La Prensa Libre*, September 14, 1948.

¹¹⁷ USNADF, 818.00B-69 (1934-08-17), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹¹⁸ USNADF, 818.00B-70 (1934-08-18), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica; "Banana Accord Sought," *New York Times*, August 21, 1934; "Cutting of Bananas Halted in Costa Rica," *New York Times*, August 27, 1934.

González, who was born in Liberia to Nicaraguan parents.¹¹⁹ The deportation of Nicaraguans had a dual benefit, as the government was able to rid itself of striking laborers and undermine the strike by depicting it as the product of foreign agitation.

In an interview with the Bluefields newspaper *Excelsior*, Ernesto Martínez states that he believes that the government utilized the deportations to frighten the strikers into submission and accept the UFCO's inhumane conditions.¹²⁰ Martínez asserts that the strikers did not utilize violent means, unlike police forces that served as provocateurs, taking orders from Company allies. Police forces abused strikers unprovoked, helping to instigate bloodshed. Martínez also accuses the Company of utilizing various inhumane methods to combat the strike, including starving strikers by preventing the arrival of goods. The UFCO definitely sought to frame the strike as the product of a communist movement, in order to incite an alarmed government to attack the people. Martínez then goes on to list the strikers' true aims: a rise in salary as necessitated by the increasing cost of living in the Atlantic region, fixed prices for large and small producers, a medical clinic in every *finca*, and access to medicines and hygienic goods to ward off diseases and sickness.

Although Martínez states that the government was framing the movement as communist as a way to gain opposition to the strike, it is curious that his list of what banana laborers hoped to gain from the work stoppage is strikingly similar to the Communist Party's Minimum Plan, especially in its relation to workers. This suggests that ideology may have meant less than the tangible goals of the strike itself to Nicaraguan laborers. In other words, the Nicaraguan workers

¹¹⁹ "Es nicaragüense? Entonces él fue el responsable. Así juzga el Sr. Monge, actual Ministro de la Guerra de nuestra 'hermana' del Sur," *La Prensa*, September 4, 1934.

¹²⁰ "Más detalles sobre los nicaragüenses expulsados de Costa Rica," *La Prensa*, September 7, 1934.

were not fighting for communist ideals per se, but rather for an improvement of their conditions as laborers. The goals of the Communist Party proved attractive Nicaraguan laborers and, more crucially, imbued workers with a class perspective, if not an explicitly communist one. This explains *why* Nicaraguans joined the strike - the Communist Program resonated with Nicaraguan laborers.

La Prensa published an interview with another recently deported Nicaraguan laborer named Isodoro Pérez on October 18, 1934 which explained the hardships faced by deported Nicaraguans.¹²¹ Pérez, born in Rivas, Nicaragua, moved to Costa Rica's Atlantic Zone in 1924, where he worked as a day laborer on Finca Damasco. For reasons unknown to Pérez, Costa Rican authorities ordered his arrest. Without money to hire a lawyer, Pérez quickly found himself on his way back to Nicaragua. From Colorado, just inside Nicaraguan territory, Perez managed to walk to San Carlos in eight days on a diet of bananas. Perez asserted that other Nicaraguans faced similar circumstances, as did more than 30 Guanacastecan who were deported by Costa Rican authorities for having accents similar to Nicaraguans. Pérez advised other Nicaraguans not to go to Costa Rica, stating that if they failed to heed his warning, they would fall victim to the hate and ill will that Costa Rica felt towards Nicaraguans.

Isodoro Pérez's account of his expulsion from Costa Rica, in addition to his words of warning, illustrates the marginalization experienced and felt by Nicaraguans migrants to Costa Rica. Pérez emphasized that there existed an established and entrenched hate for Nicaraguans in Costa Rica that was as rooted in labor strife as it was in the prejudices of certain segments of

¹²¹ "Continúa el éxodo de nicaragüenses en Costa Rica," *La Prensa*, October 18, 1934.

Costa Rican society. In light of this tension and discontentment, *La Prensa* reported that the Nicaraguan colony in Costa Rica was organizing itself to deflect future attacks.¹²²

The deportations of Nicaraguans during and after the strike definitely strained relations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The Nicaraguan Congress and press resented the implication, stemming from the deportations, that Nicaraguans were responsible for the strike and viewed the actions of Costa Rica as “unneighborly.” According to a report by the U.S. Legation, Costa Rica attempted to make clear that its intention was self-preservation, not international hostility.¹²³ Despite these assertions, the Nicaraguan press published a series of articles questioning the motives of the deportations. On September 4, 1934, the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa* greeted the arrival of 45 deported Nicaraguans in Bluefields with the headline “Is he Nicaraguan? Then he must be responsible. So decrees Mr. Monge, Minister of War of our ‘sister’ nation to the South.”¹²⁴ The article declares that the actions of Minister Monge, which include depriving Nicaraguans of the right to defend themselves or receive an audience with any authorities, revealed the Minister’s deep-seated hatred of Nicaraguans.

The paper states that Mr. Monge traveled through the fincas of the Atlantic with two hundred armed men in search of Nicaraguans. When the Nicaraguans professed their innocence and asked to know what they were being charged with, the Minister allegedly responded that simply being Nicaraguan sufficed. In a particularly hostile section, the paper asserts that the President of Costa Rica viewed the Nicaraguan as a plagued and leprous individual, worthy of no

¹²² “Graves informes de la mala suerte del Departamento de Bluefields,” *La Prensa*, September 16, 1934.

¹²³ USNADF, 818.00B-75 (1934-09-13), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Meléndez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹²⁴ “Es nicaragüense? Entonces él fue el responsable. Así juzga el Sr. Monge, actual Ministro de la Guerra de nuestra ‘hermana’ del Sur,” *La Prensa*, September 4, 1934.

better treatment than Hitler had meted out to the Jews. Under President Ricardo Jimenez, the paper concludes, Nicaraguans were at the margins of the law, something that would not have happened during the time of General Zelaya or General Chamorro, eras when Costa Ricans were much more careful about committing such hateful and repugnant acts.¹²⁵

The Nicaraguan government's objection to the deportation of its citizens is evidenced by the retaliatory arrest of five members of the Costa Rican National Police in Nicaragua. The armed Costa Rican officers were escorting deportees to Bluefields and had crossed into Nicaraguan territory when Nicaraguan authorities subsequently arrested them.¹²⁶ This incident demonstrates the increasingly strained relations between the two nations.

In early September 1934, the Nicaraguan Congress debated what stance they ought to take toward the government of Costa Rica, in light of the recent events. The ensuing discussion focused on the question of whether Nicaragua should engage Costa Rica directly or through diplomatic channels. In the Chamber of Deputies, most of the representatives wanted to allow the diplomatic process to run its due course. Nicaraguan official Gen. Murillo advocated continued diplomatic relations between the two nations, in order to uncover the motivations behind the deportations. Gen. Murrillo insisted that it was the duty of the executive, not Congress, to resolve such matters. Rep. Urcuyo agreed with Gen. Murillo that diplomacy was the best avenue, as Costa Rica often served as a refuge for Nicaraguans, particularly when Nicaragua suffered internal conflicts. Some representatives, including Rep. Cardenas, argued that the Minister of External Relations should be invited to Congress to provide his account of the incidents. However, other congressmen torpedoed this idea, arguing that the Executive

¹²⁵ "Es nicaragüense? Entonces él fue el responsable. Así juzga el Sr. Monge, actual Ministro de la Guerra de nuestra 'hermana' del Sur," *La Prensa*, September 4, 1934.

¹²⁶ "Costa Rica frees 98," *New York Times*, August 23, 1934.

branch should not share these matters of state with the legislative branch or the public. Others, such as Rep. Argüello Gil, warned against acting brashly and argued that this was nothing more than a tempest in a glass of water (*tempestad en un vaso de agua*).¹²⁷

Representative Gen. Alfredo Noguera Gómez¹²⁸ was the most forceful advocate of calling Costa Rica to account. Noguera Gómez admonished Dr. Argüello Gil for downplaying the severity of the events and declared his outrage at the insulting and violent acts Costa Ricans had committed against Nicaraguans in a nation that “diplomatically calls us brothers, but has proven to be a wolf.” Gen. Noguera Gómez’s incendiary rhetoric demanded that Congress take a firm stance and pass a resolution of support for the savagely treated Nicaraguans who had suffered the humiliation of deportation, because diplomacy would not bring about desired results. He claimed that the Costa Rican authorities’ actions undermined the harmony and friendship between the two nations (fleeting as it was). Furthermore, Gen. Noguera Gómez lamented that in an earlier era such a humiliation would not have occurred (or been tolerated). Nicaraguans would have retaliated and sent soldiers to the border, and beyond that, they would have punished the responsible parties and reclaimed from Costa Rica the territory that was previously Nicaraguan.¹²⁹

The deportations insulted the national pride of Nicaraguan authorities and media. To defend national honor, they romanticized an earlier era of Nicaraguan generals. They linked this

¹²⁷ “En lenguaje diplomático Costa Rica nos llama hermanos, pero ha demostrado ser lobo,” *La Prensa*, September 7, 1934.

¹²⁸ Combined Costa Rican and Nicaraguan forces killed Noguera in Costa Rica in 1944, following a botched plot to invade Nicaragua and overthrow Somoza.

¹²⁹ Gen. Murillo carefully reminded Noguera that Guanacaste had come to be a part of the Costa Rican territory by way of treaty. In “En lenguaje diplomático Costa Rica nos llama hermanos, pero ha demostrado ser lobo,” *La Prensa*, September 7, 1934.

humiliation with the loss of Guanacaste as a way of delineating a series of Costa Rican slights towards Nicaragua's territory and sovereignty. Gen. Noguera Gómez's comments, particularly those involving the retaking of Guanacaste, caused a stir among Costa Rican officials and citizens.¹³⁰ The Government of Nicaragua took steps to assist the deported Nicaraguans and offered them transportation to any destination within the national territory.¹³¹ Of the 44 men deported, 22 chose to remain on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua, presumably making it easier to reenter Costa Rica when the opportunity presented itself. These men traveled to Prinzapolka in the Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic, and Isla del Venado and Punta Gorda, both in the Autonomous Region of the South Atlantic. The other 22 men had not yet chosen a destination; however, they mostly likely chose a similar path and stayed close to the Atlantic. By September 12, 1934 some of the deported Nicaraguans had made use of the transportation offered by the government and arrived in San Carlos, near the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border.¹³²

¹³⁰ "Graves informes de la mala suerte del Departamento de Bluefields," *La Prensa*, September 16, 1934.

¹³¹ "Más detalles sobre los nicaragüenses expulsados de Costa Rica," *La Prensa*, September 7, 1934. 22 of the men chose a passage to the Atlantic Regions. To Punta Gorda (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur): Jorge Victor, Concepción Arancibia Torres, Sabás Barrios, Norberto Morales Serrano, Francisco Jiménez Cerda, José Avilés, Fidel Torres Reyes, Carlos Alberto Obando, Rosendo Rodríguez Villareina, Jorge Orozco Ramírez, Luis Cartin Aragón, Félix Pedro Moncada Torres. To Prinzapolka (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte): Felipe Cajina Zúniga, Alejandro Torres Guzmán, Leocadio García Obando, Andrés Talavera Sevilla, Francisco Gutiérrez Rugama, Emilio Duarte González. To Isla del Venado (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur): Juan José Gutiérrez, Pedro Joaquín Zeledón Saenz, Ezequiel Rodríguez, Silverio Recuana Borge. The 22 men that had not yet chosen a destination: Juan Félix Hernández Chavarría, José Reyes Gutiérrez, Cristóbal Montalván Hernández, Florencio Zúniga Mayorga, Francisco Rojas Bustos, Ernesto Martínez Jinesta, Froilán Martínez Espinosa, Lorenzo Avesilla, Raymundo Monjarret López, José Ordóñez Castillo, Leocadio Hernández, Dimas Martínez González, Teófilo Acuña Pérez, Indalecio López Mendoza, Francisco Cruz Porras.

¹³² "Están llegando a San Carlos los expulsados nicas de Costa Rica," *La Prensa*, September 12, 1934.

In a concerted effort to defuse tensions between the two nations, Costa Rican diplomat Dr. Enrique Fonseca Zuñiga, traveled to Managua to discuss the deportations a couple of weeks after the strike.¹³³ Dr. Fonseca Zuñiga agreed to an interview with the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa*, which proved a success as the journalist effusively professed an admiration for the highly educated and cultured diplomat. In the interview, the Minister spoke with sympathy about the thousands of Nicaraguans who toiled for years in Costa Rica, but assured the journalist that Nicaraguan laborers received the same protections as Costa Rican citizens. The interview closed with the journalist's hopeful plea for Nicaragua and Costa Rica to renew their diplomatic relationship, since the two nations, born together, shared a common religion, language and destiny.¹³⁴

La Prensa had been very vocal and adamant about the perceived injustices that the Nicaraguan laborers had suffered at the hands of Costa Rican authorities. However, once they met the Costa Rican diplomat, they rapidly changed their tune. The Nicaraguan government and press did not have a problem with the Costa Rican authorities oppressing communist militants. What aggravated the Nicaraguan authorities and press was that the Costa Rican government cast Nicaraguans as the communists and the leaders of the strike. In an article on September 22 1934, *La Prensa* reported that the Costa Rican government was dominating the strike through pacific measures, cutting the "bad" communist elements (the majority of whom were foreigners) from the "root" of its society.¹³⁵ The article emphasized the communist threat and glossed over the fact that the "foreigners" were more likely Nicaraguans. At the time of the deportations, the

¹³³ "Costa Rica takes up Expulsions," *New York Times*, September 23, 1934.

¹³⁴ "Ministro de Costa Rica en La Prensa," *La Prensa*, October 2, 1934.

¹³⁵ "Costa Rica corta el mal de raíz," *La Prensa*, September 22, 1934.

Guardia Nacional detained over one hundred men and women accused of being communists all over the republic, including Managua, Masaya, Granada, and Leon.¹³⁶

Days earlier, *La Prensa*, published an article discussing the formation of a labor organization in Managua, *Junta de Conciliación Obrera Nacional*, meant to defend the rights of Nicaraguan laborers. Because the organization registered with the government and functioned within legal parameters, it earned the approval of *La Prensa*, which closed the article by stating: “These movements and organizations by Nicaraguan laborers prove our thesis that Nicaragua is not a land conducive to Communism nor any other force with violent or terrorist character.” Clearly, as far as educated elite Nicaraguans were concerned, could not function within a civilized Nicaraguan society.¹³⁷ These journalists attempted to dissociate Nicaraguan laborers, and Nicaraguans in general, from what they believed to be the stigma of communism by highlighting a “peaceful” and orderly labor organization.

However unwelcome or limited communist activity may have been in Nicaragua, in Costa Rica, the association between Nicaraguans and communism continued during the aftermath of the 1934 strike. The Costa Rican government remained concerned about the influence of the Communist Party, and government agents initiated surveillance programs of all persons suspected to be communists. These government surveillance reports attest to the continued participation of Nicaraguans in communist activities and demonstrate the sustained connection between Nicaraguan and Costa Rican laborers. In March 1935, there were reports of Nicaraguans with “subversive tendencies” fraudulently entering Costa Rica. Local authorities

¹³⁶ “Hay mas de cien detenidos en la republica acusados de comunistas,” *La Prensa*, October 5, 1934. All persons arrested were affiliated with the Liberal party, thus the arrests were most likely motivated by political motivations.

¹³⁷ “Fuertes actividades obreras dentro del orden legal,” *La Prensa*, September 25, 1934.

reported that five Nicaraguan men, Victor Manuel Acevedo, Alejandro Corea, Alejandro López, Celso Cruz and Ricardo Aguilar accompanied Manuel Mora as he spread communist propaganda in Limón.¹³⁸

In May 1935, agents reported that Tobias Vaglio and a group of other men were making their way to El Bosque to meet with Lucio Ibarra, the Nicaraguan laborer that Fallas praises in his memoirs of the 1934 strike. They allegedly met to promote the Communist Party's propaganda and organization. Costa Rican authorities followed Vaglio's movements closely, and though they do not mention Ibarra, it is likely that Vaglio continued to work with Ibarra while he spent time in this region.¹³⁹

By 1935, an informant named Antonio Salas provided Costa Rican police with intelligence on the communist activities in Limón. Salas primarily reported on communist gatherings and on known communists or persons suspected of being subversives. On July 14, 1935, Salas wrote that the Communist Party leadership in San José had sent word to Carlos Burey, a Nicaraguan who lived in Estrella, and "Matarrita", a Guancastecan who lived in Pandora, to be ready for the possible start of a new strike movement. Salas reported that the strike would begin within three months' time.¹⁴⁰ On August 3, 1935, Salas reported that he had had a conversation with a Nicaraguan man named Cupertino Balmaceda. Balmaceda, according to Salas, described himself as a committed rebel willing to do everything asked of him by the Communist Party. Balmaceda was in charge of distributing the weekly correspondence that

¹³⁸ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (March, 1935).

¹³⁹ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (May, 1935).

¹⁴⁰ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (July, 1935).

arrived from San José to the communists in Liverpool, Costa Rica.¹⁴¹ Salas asserts that Balmaceda, one of the Nicaraguans deported following the strike of 1934, mocked the Limón authorities as he bragged about reentering the country illegally by boat. During this time period, the border region was porous and nearly impossible to police vigilantly due to a shortage of governmental resources and geography.

On October 26, 1935, Antonio Salas informed the Limón authorities that communists had held secret meetings to collect dues and organize activities at two *fincas* owned by Don Felipe J. Alvarado. Salas wrote in his report that the communists ridiculed the efforts of Oscar Gutiérrez, who was responsible for keeping communists out of the *fincas*. Salas reported that it was easy for the communists to circumvent infiltrate the *fincas*, as many of their members were Nicaraguan and Guanacastecan laborers who already worked on these *fincas*. Salas also reported that the communists were making plans to distribute identification cards (*carnet*) to the laborers.¹⁴² On November 5 1935, Antonio Salas reported that Nicaraguan Carlos Somarriba had recently returned from exile in Honduras. Salas described Somarriba as a dangerous communist leader who participated in the disturbances of San José that resulted in the expulsion of Adolfo Braña in 1933. According to Salas, the PCCR told Somarriba to avoid police officers for fear of arrest and deportation. There were plans for him to go with Fallas to the lines, because laborers respected Somarriba. Salas reported a conversation he had had with Somarriba in which the latter man told him that if he could shake off the police, he would be able to contribute greatly to the cause, as he was well skilled when it came to electoral politics and organization. Salas

¹⁴¹ Liverpool, Costa Rica is located west of Limón.

¹⁴² ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (October, 1935).

concluded by stating that at first glance Somarriba did not appear to be very intelligent, but that this was an act and that he only pretended to be slow, and was in fact very sharp.¹⁴³

In September 1935, Fulgencio Campos, the Plaza Commander of Limón, reported that he received word that a certain Cardenas¹⁴⁴ had reemerged and that he might be the same Nicaraguan deported during the strike's aftermath. After some investigation, authorities learned that the Cardenas in question was Colombian. What is clear is that Costa Rican authorities were adamant about making sure that they monitored all activities having to do with suspected communists, particularly Nicaraguans. That the Plaza Commander immediately connected the suspect to a Nicaraguan is telling and demonstrates how much Costa Ricans associated Nicaraguans with criminality and communism.¹⁴⁵

Whereas reports of the reemergence of Gato Cardenas proved false, reports that another Nicaraguan strike leader, Fidel Torres, had re-entered Costa Rica and was working on behalf of the Communist Party were true. On November 4, 1935, Cdr. Campos wrote to the Senior Officer of the Ministry of Public Security that police agents had spotted Torres in Limón. Authorities had originally arrested Fidel Torres for entering the country without permission and sentenced him to six months in jail, of which he served only 90 days, before being deported.¹⁴⁶ The reappearance of Torres in Limón demonstrates that deportations, although a common approach

¹⁴³ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935).

¹⁴⁴ Possibly "Gato" Cardenas that Cerdas Mora referred to in his recollection of the strike.

¹⁴⁵ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (September, 1935).

¹⁴⁶ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935).

to dealing with Nicaraguans and other foreign nationals suspected of communist affiliations, did not deter Nicaraguan laborers from reentering Costa Rica and actively supporting the Communist Party.

On Nov. 10, 1935 Cdr. Campos received word that there was a communist meeting held in the home of José Vigil Medina, a Nicaraguan. Carlos Luis Fallas attended and spoke at this meeting. According to the officer who made the report, the majority of the people in attendance were Nicaraguan.¹⁴⁷ It is difficult to know whether this agent had merely reiterated common Costa Rican bias, or if he had accurately recorded the national identities of participants. In any case, the report shows that Nicaraguans remained of special concern for Costa Rican authorities who hoped to quell communist and other efforts at organizing and mobilizing laborers.

The Nicaraguan labor leader, Lucio Ibarra, reappeared in November 1935, when Cdr. Campos informed the Senior Officer of Public Security that a prisoner in custody, Efraín Benavides, had sent Ibarra a letter.¹⁴⁸ Costa Rican authorities detained Efraín Benavides in March 1935 for stealing 2000 dynamite sticks from the Electric Light Company in Liverpool, Costa Rica.¹⁴⁹ In the letter, Benavides asserted that he did not steal the dynamite sticks and that he was the victim of a witch-hunt carried out by authorities who were determined to pin the crime on communists. Benavides asked Ibarra to ask Manuel Mora to appoint a defense lawyer for him. He closed the letter by asking his comrades to mail the reply back to the home of Napoleon Marengo, an accused Nicaraguan communist that been previously arrested in Limón.

¹⁴⁷ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935).

¹⁴⁸ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935).

¹⁴⁹ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (March, 1935).

Benavides clearly believed, rightly or not, that Ibarra had the ability not only to reach Manuel Mora directly, but also to influence his decision to assist Benavides.¹⁵⁰ While the exchange between Benavides and Ibarra demonstrates that while Nicaraguan and Costa Rican communists alike suffered suspicion and repression at the hand of Costa Rican authorities, the threat of deportation made the enterprise infinitely more dangerous for Nicaraguans.

Further illustrating the vulnerable position of Nicaraguan laborers, Costa Rican authorities demonstrated little restraint in pursuing deportation proceedings with immigrants they deemed to undesirable in any way. In November 1935, authorities detained three immigrants, two Nicaraguans named Julio Cesar Romero Uriarte, 23 years old, and Salvador Uriarte Romero, 26 years old, and one Colombian named Alberto Martínez Sáenz, 19 years old, in the border town of La Cuesta for vagrancy, punishable by deportation.¹⁵¹ The three men aroused suspicion when authorities saw them in the company of Alfredo Bonilla, a known Costa Rican communist. Police reports state that the immigrant men accompanied Bonilla when he sent out a “malicious” telegram to another communist in the area. A couple of days later, the group of men attempted to cross over illicitly into Panama, presumably for work. Only Bonilla was able to cross successfully, and Panamanian authorities returned the other three men to Costa Rica, where they stayed at the home of Berta Miranda. Authorities became more suspicious of the three men because they believed Miranda, a Nicaraguan woman, to be a disruptive element in the area.

After three weeks in the area, the police authorities decided to arrest the three men on charges of vagrancy. The men rejected the charge, arguing that they would leave the area and

¹⁵⁰ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935).

¹⁵¹ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935), Article 4496, “Sobre informacón contra Salvador Uriarte, Julio Romero Uriarte, y Alberto Martínez.”

make their way towards Puntarenas as soon as they received some money that they were waiting on. The authorities in Puntarenas, however, informed the authorities of La Cuesta that they did not want the communists back and that they should pursue the charges of vagrancy and only return the communists to Puntarenas as a last resort. As these men awaited their fate, six other communists, also charged with vagrancy, joined them. The newly arrived men, however, were Costa Rican citizens and, as such, were handled quite differently. Authorities offered the six Costa Rican communists passage to Puerto Jimenez where there was work. Initially rejecting this proposal, the men eventually decided to accept it.

The police report claimed that Romero Uriarte, Uriarte Romero, and Martínez Sáenz all rejected the offer to travel to Puerto Jimenez that authorities offered to the Costa Rican nationals. However, this was never a real option for these men, as the police, according to their correspondence, were intent on deporting the foreign communists. For his part, Martínez Sáenz claimed that he was in fact Costa Rican, a native of Limón, son of a Costa Rican mother and a Colombian father. The authorities did not believe him and did not treat him as a Costa Rican national. The authorities justified the deportation of the three immigrant men with charges of vagrancy. Interestingly, the files that cover the arrest and sentencing go beyond the question of vagrancy, describing La Cuesta as a place that had no jobs for outsiders, and claiming that local residents complained of people prowling around at strange hours of the night and numerous lost or stolen items. The police added that the alleged vagrants walked around in the late evenings with menacing looks. The police of La Cuesta gathered testimony from the locals about the character of the three immigrant men from local residents in the town of La Cuesta that were known to be of “recognized seriousness and honor.” Unsurprisingly, authorities did not interview Berta Miranda, presumably because as a “disruptive” person, a Nicaraguan, and a

woman she was not a person of honor and seriousness. A woman who welcomed “unknown” men into her home lacked both honor and seriousness.

Guillermo Chan, Costa Rican business owner of Chinese descent, declared that strange people from the interior had been entering the town for weeks and stated that they appeared to be vagrants, since they did not look for work and would lie on hammocks all day. When authorities asked specifically about the men that were being held, Chan responded that he had seen them at the home of Berta Miranda, asserted that they did not seem to have jobs, and that they had loitered about for more than twenty days. He implied that the migrants must have stolen some sweets from the counter of his store, as the local townspeople were too respectful to have done so.¹⁵²

When authorities interviewed Enrique Esse, a 65-year-old American agricultural farmer, and asked about the three men held, Esse responded that he did not know their names. He did state that the people who stayed in the home of Berta Miranda, like other recent arrivals, had no jobs to speak of and could be seen lazing around. He also claimed that some of them had prior records (*malos antecedentes*).¹⁵³

In his statement, Rafael S. Blanco Mata, a 39-year-old Costa Rican radiograph operator, said that he did not know the names of the three men, but did know that they were foreigners and that two of them were Nicaraguans because they themselves had said so in public. He supported the other witnesses’ claims that the immigrants were staying with Berta Miranda, that they

¹⁵² Guillermo Chan, police interview, ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935), Article 4496, “Sobre informacón contra Salvador Uriarte, Julio Romero Uriarte, y Alberto Martínez.”

¹⁵³ Berta Miranda here is identified as Berta de Levy. Enrique Esse, police interview, ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935), Article 4496, “Sobre informacón contra Salvador Uriarte, Julio Romero Uriarte, y Alberto Martínez.”

seemed to have no jobs, and that they appeared to be idling their time away. Blanco added that recently, late in the evening, he had heard noises coming from his chicken coops, and assumed it must be the foreigners trying to steal property, because such things never happened before their arrival in the area.¹⁵⁴

The final person authorities asked to attest to the character of the three immigrants was Desposorio Santamaría Montero, a naturalized Costa Rican agricultural farmer originally from Panama. Santamaría Montero repeated what the other three character witnesses had said: the men in question were vagrants and spent their days on hammocks in the front of Berta Miranda's home. He added that the only time in three weeks he had seen the men do anything resembling work was when they had brought wood to Miranda's home.¹⁵⁵

The three accused men rejected all charges levied against them, restating that they were not vagrants and were willing to leave the area, as their desire was to reach Puntarenas, and were only waiting on some money. Authorities informed the men that they had a right to disprove the charges within five days by collecting testimony from witnesses that were of "recognized honor and honorability" or by providing reliable and irrefutable (*fehaciente*) documents. Julio Cesar Romero Uriarte declared that he could bring forward no witnesses, as he was unknown in the area, but that he could provide letters of recommendation from people such as the governor of Puntarenas Arturo Volio. Alberto Martínez Sáenz also stated that he could provide documents testifying to his innocence.

¹⁵⁴ Rafael S. Blanco Mata, police interview, ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935), Article 4496, "Sobre informacón contra Salvador Uriarte, Julio Romero Uriarte, y Alberto Martínez."

¹⁵⁵ Desposorio Santamaría Montero, police interview, ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935), Article 4496, "Sobre informacón contra Salvador Uriarte, Julio Romero Uriarte, y Alberto Martínez."

On December 11, 1935, after the five days had passed, and unable to present documents verifying their good character, authorities sentenced the three young men to three months of public or national works as recommended by the 1917 *Ley de Vagos*. Their conviction gave the government the right to pursue deportation proceedings and a few days later authorities sent the Nicaraguans, Julio Cesar Romero Uriarte and Salvador Uriarte Romero, by boat to the Nicaraguan border. The deportation of Alberto Martínez Sáenz stalled, as the costs of deporting him to Colombia proved too high. The three men had very little recourse but to accept their punishment, as they had no way to defend themselves.

Costa Rican authorities did not arrest Romero Uriarte, Uriarte Romero, and Martínez Sáenz for being vagrants. The authorities arrested these men for being communists, and because they were not Costa Rican, they were charged with vagrancy as a mechanism to justify their deportation. A letter sent by authorities at La Cuesta to San José asserts: “All state that they will return to Puntarenas on the next boat within eight days, but since they have proven to be bad elements, I believe it wise to charge them with vagrancy in case the government wants to take the opportunity to deport them.”¹⁵⁶ Deportations served as a mechanism to keep “undesirables” out of Costa Rica, and quite often, this resulted in the expulsion of Nicaraguans.

This could at times lead to controversial incidents, such as the July 1935 deportation of José Almanza, simply because he did not have the appropriate documents. Once deported to Nicaragua, the *Guardia Nacional* killed Almanza. This sparked outrage as some argued that the deportation of Almanza, a Costa Rican resident for years with a Costa Rican identity card (*cédula*), stood as a symbol of Costa Rican rejection of Nicaraguans within its borders. The

¹⁵⁶ ANCR, Serie Gobernacion, Seguridad Publica 1878, Letter C, no. 31 (November, 1935), Article 4496, “Sobre informacón contra Salvador Uriarte, Julio Romero Uriarte, y Alberto Martínez.”

authorities argued that it was a matter of deporting a dangerous individual with a history of criminality in Nicaragua.¹⁵⁷

When Costa Ricans did defend Nicaraguans, they relied upon the alternate stereotype of Nicaraguans as hard working, strong, tough, and resilient.¹⁵⁸ Future president Teodoro Picado generated chaos after he told President Ricardo Jimenez: “Don Ricardo, look at what the *nicas* do and they still want to leave the Almanzas here. Let them keep on defending the Almanzas.”¹⁵⁹ Picado responded to the controversy of his statement by asserting that he had no problem with Nicaraguans and that his comment about Almanza was isolated to that particular instance, as Almanza was an undesirable element because of his criminality, not his nationality. To further alleviate any concerns that he might be anti-Nicaraguan, he reiterated previous comments he had made about the Nicaraguan colony in Costa Rica, stating that he respected the spirit of work and effort that distinguished the Nicaraguan, and paid tribute to their ability to work in harsh conditions in “which perhaps no other man would.”¹⁶⁰ Another future Costa Rican president, Otilio Ulate, also came to the defense of Nicaraguans, again praising their work ethic as well as their role in the development of Costa Rica.¹⁶¹ Nicaraguans’ only chance to be

¹⁵⁷ Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 439.

¹⁵⁸ Soto Quiros, 442.

¹⁵⁹ “Cometido ayer en Costa Rica el primer atentado terrorista,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 18, 1935 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 439.

¹⁶⁰ “El Señor secretario de Instrucción Pública Lic. Don Teodoro Picado, aclara concepto que se le atribuyeron con respecto a nicaragüenses,” *La Prensa Libre*, August 19, 1935 in Soto Quiros, “Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942,” 440.

¹⁶¹ Otilio Ulate, “La leyenda negra,” in Francisco Mayorga Ibarra, *La tragedia del nicaragüense en Costa Rica* (San José: Imprenta Borrás, 1948), in Iván Molina Jiménez, “Dos crónicas nicaragüenses sobre la Costa Rica de la década de 1940, *Istmo* 4 (July-December 2002).

accepted within Costa Rican society depended upon their ability to maintain the image of stoic, silent workers.

Nicaraguans and Banana Literature

Unfortunately, very little documentation speaks to the actual lives of Nicaraguans on the banana plantations, their grievances, and their reasons for joining the labor strike of 1934.

However, one can glean a sense of what life was like on the banana plantations for Nicaraguan laborers through examining the novels written by authors who had first hand experiences with life in these rural plantations. The small number of novels published in the 1930s and 1940s depicting banana plantation life in Costa Rica reveal a world fraught with violence, poverty, and oppression. The Nicaraguan characters in these novels also illustrate how different authors depicted them and shed light on how Costa Ricans imagined Nicaraguans to be. The authors, Carmen Lyra, Carlos Luis Fallas, and Joaquín Gutiérrez were Costa Rican communists who were interested in depicting the difficult conditions of life on the banana plantation. Emilio Quintana, the author of *Bananos*, is the only Nicaraguan of the authors and works I analyze in this section.

In banana plantation novels, Nicaraguans often appear on the margins of Costa Rican society as menacing, dangerous, and desperate. As Carlos Sandoval García articulates,

Nicaraguans are frequently depicted as ‘others’ in the face of whom a more inclusive and critical conception of nation is constructed. Their depiction as criminals or ‘radical agitators’ might be interpreted within the long selective tradition that considers Costa Rica a pacific country exempted from violence.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Carlos Sandoval García, *Threatening Others: Nicaraguans and the Formation of National Identities in Costa Rica* (Athens: Ohio University Research in International Studies, Ohio University Press, 2004), 94.

The emphasis on Nicaraguan violence allows for the reification of a peaceful Costa Rica even when the stories are set in Costa Rica. Thus, when violence occurs it is because an “other” has brought it about.

Carmen Lyra’s “Bananas and Men” (*Bananos y Hombres*)¹⁶³, originally published serially in *Repertorio Americano* in 1931, depicts the arduous life of laborers on the banana plantations. Carmen Lyra, a prominent communist, wrote the vignettes because the Costa Rican Communist Party sent her to the Atlantic to investigate worker conditions.¹⁶⁴ In the first vignette, “Estefanía,” a woman from the lower rungs of Costa Rican society named Estefanía, makes her way to the *bananales* of the Atlantic, where she ends up staying in a *finca* with a Honduran man. There, Nicaraguan laborers rape Estefanía and kill the Honduran man she was staying with. Estefanía leaves the region on a train in the midst of “black men laughing loudly, black women dressed in colors that squawked as loudly as parrots, soft spoken Nicaraguans, and Chinese men.” Lyra does not specifically name Estefanía’s nationality, only stating that she had come from Guanacaste. Because Guanacastecans share many characteristics with Nicaraguans, we can infer that even if she is Costa Rican she resides outside of privilege, having come from the margins of the nation. Furthermore, Guanacaste represents a liminal zone that is uniquely both Nicaraguan and Costa Rican, but never fully either. This unique story stands as one of the few accounts that centers on a woman’s experience on the plantations. As such, it forcefully demonstrates that life on the banana plantations was especially difficult and dangerous for women. Estefanía is broken by her experience on the banana plantation.

¹⁶³ Carmen Lyra, “Bananos y Hombres,” in Luisa González and Carlos Luis Saenz, *Carmen Lyra* (San José: EUNED, 1998), 37-52.

¹⁶⁴ Ana Patricia Rodríguez, *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 61.

In another vignette, “Nochebuena” (Christmas Eve) Juancito Sandino, a young Nicaraguan laborer of about 24 years of age works on a banana plantation. Juancito Sandino was renowned for his resiliency and worked as a *conchero*, so named because the large banana bunches that these laborers carried resembled a *concha* or shell. By using the last name of the famous Nicaraguan revolutionary, Augusto Cesar Sandino, Lyra immediately conjures images of a tough Nicaraguan. Lyra describes Juancito Sandino as very pleasant, with feline features – a man with sweet mannerisms when he is sober that is also capable of revealing “tiger claws” (*garras de tigre*) when he is drunk. The young man with the agreeable voice, the guitar always at his side, and armed with a repertoire of naïve love songs, had brightened many sad evenings and wild parties in those lonely parts. However, things change for the *conchero* when he is exposed to the harsh conditions of the plantation and later suffers from malaria and hemorrhaging lungs. “Now, the poor man wanted to give the same effort as before. He goes with the most able cutters and he has to move a lot to keep up. Pity is provoked watching his feverish face below his felt hat dripping water.” Juancito Sandino was transformed for the worse by his labor on the banana plantations and its unsanitary conditions ruined his health.

Lyra’s last vignette, “The peon that looked like a saint,” introduces Santa María Ignacio Parrales, a Nicaraguan laborer from Rivas, a department in southern Nicaragua. (Of note, some collections that contain Lyra’s *Bananos y Hombres* identify Santa María Ignacio Parrales as a Guanacastecan instead of a Nicaraguan.)¹⁶⁵ Parrales was about 35 years old, thin, with dark serene eyes, and white teeth. Lyra describes Parrales as a man that was well versed in many

¹⁶⁵ Carmen Lyra, “Bananos y Hombres,” in Alfonso Chase, ed., *Relatos Escogidos de Carmen Lyra* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1977), 386. It is unclear as to which version is the original and when the change, in either direction, was made.

things – an excellent cutter, carrier, transporter, and builder of ranches and boats. Shortly after his arrival, he begins to teach the children of the peons and owners how to read and write and how to make traps to capture birds and other small animals. It is also rumored that he is an expert in dealing with snakes. Everyone on the *finca* loves and trusts him, and in the five months since his arrival, no one has seen him drunk or involved in a fight with anyone. However, one day the police come looking for him and arrest him for slitting a corrupt police officer's throat before he had arrived on the banana plantation.

Lyra's depiction of the world of banana plantations is sad and dark, and her depictions of Nicaraguans are tragic. Lyra portrays Nicaraguans as rapists, drunks, absent fathers, and murderers. However, she also depicts Nicaraguans as strong, hardworking, knowledgeable, artistic, sweet, and romantic. Still, her last vignette is telling. The fact that no one had ever seen Ignacio Parrales drunk and violent is understood to be impressive. Furthermore, the end suggests that despite their impression, the townspeople could not truly know what this man, a Nicaraguan, was capable of doing. He who had appeared to be an angel was in fact anything but.

Interestingly, Ronald Soto Quiros suggests that these vignettes, and their imagery of violent Nicaraguans, were at the root of charges that Carmen Lyra, a prominent Costa Rican Communist, harbored anti-Nicaraguan prejudices.¹⁶⁶ Perhaps this may also explain why in some versions the character Santa María Ignacio Parrales appears as a Guanacastecan instead of as a Nicaraguan from Rivas. Lyra denounced these charges, stating that she was not a nationalist and announced that her maternal grandmother was an indigenous Nicaraguan (*india nicaragüense*).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942," 435.

¹⁶⁷ "Carmen Lyra y los nicaragüenses," *Trabajo*, March 9, 1933.

Another notable example of the banana literature is Joaquín Gutiérrez' novel *Puerto Limón*, published in 1950, which takes place on the banana plantations of the Atlantic and centers on three main figures: Hector Rojas, a landowner; Silvano, Hector Rojas' nephew and a student; and Paragüitas, a Nicaraguan laborer. The events of the novel, although fictional, closely follow the course of the 1934 strike.¹⁶⁸ It is important to note that the two Costa Rican characters emphasize the Nicaraguan's rough exterior. Silvano, conflicted by the benefits he enjoys due to his class position and the plight of laborers, views Paragüitas as both a menacing and alluring figure. Despite perceiving the Nicaraguan as less than astute, Silvano is drawn to the man he sees as "a machete, all steel and sharpness."¹⁶⁹ Hector Rojas, the plantation landowner who opposes the strikers because they threaten his livelihood, is antagonistic towards Paragüitas. Rojas refers to Paragüitas as a skinny and unpleasant "Mr. Nobody," and as a "starving Nica" (*nica muerto de hambre*).¹⁷⁰ It is only later, after the strike is over, that Rojas gains a begrudging admiration for the Nicaraguan for the strength of his conviction.

Paragüitas stands in as both the voice of Nicaraguan laborers and the communists and as such expresses an anti-imperialist perspective. He expresses the frustrations of workers who wanted to work with planters like Rojas. He tells Rojas, "No one understands you. The United kicks you as badly as they do us, but you keep believing that we, the peons, are the enemy."¹⁷¹ He explains why the laborers are on strike, detailing the concerns of the workers: the need for

¹⁶⁸ Joaquín Gutiérrez, *Puerto Limón* (San José: Editorial Legado, 2004).

¹⁶⁹ Gutiérrez, 127.

¹⁷⁰ Gutiérrez, 25, 36. *Muertos de hambre* is a common insult utilized in Costa Rica against Nicaraguan immigrants. See Patricia Alvarenga, "Conflictiva convivencia: Los nicaragüenses en Costa Rica," *Cuaderno de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 101 (1997): 40.

¹⁷¹ Gutiérrez, 20.

improved safety measures and hygiene, the lack of medicines such as antivenom (to treat snake bites) and quinine (to treat malaria), low pay, and the inability to purchase basic supplies such as socks or shoes, or food other than rice, beans, and yucca.¹⁷² Paraguitas laments that because the communists attempted to save and improve the lives of laborers in Costa Rica, they were labeled assassins.

Gutiérrez also conveys the frustrations that the communists faced with West Indians. In an interesting exchange between Paraguitas and Tom, a West Indian driver who works for the UFCO, the Nicaraguan strike leader attempts to uncover the reasons for Tom's reluctance to join the strike. Tom responds by explaining that he is alone with three children and could not risk assisting the strike for fear that the company would fire him. Paraguitas shoots back that Tom is not alone, that there are thousands in the Atlantic Zone alone and millions around the world. Tom rejects this configuration, and states that he does not see millions, only the man that pays him on Saturdays. If he were to lose his job, Paraguitas would not be able to give him another one. Paraguitas attempts to convince Tom once more by telling him that the Company pays him so little to put his life in danger, as well as the lives of the laborers on the plantations, while on Wall Street some stockholders make millions doing nothing at the expense of workers. If the workers united, they could force the Company to pay them more, but only if they worked together. Tom tells Paraguitas that he understands, that he would like to help, that he wants the strike to succeed, but that he cannot do anything to help. He apologizes and leaves. Written by a member of the PCCR, this exchange dramatizes the party's assertion that West Indians' failure to join the strike was based on fear of losing their positions.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Gutiérrez, 36, 57.

¹⁷³ Gutiérrez, 79.

When the strike comes to an end, under much better circumstances in the fictional world than in the real one, Paraguitas is above all surprised and relieved. He and his comrades had not passed through all of those difficulties in vain. Even with victory at hand, Paraguitas understands that there will have to be more strikes to prevent the company from treating them like animals, as “it is an illusion to believe that history is made in a few weeks.”¹⁷⁴

A Costa Rican leader, Trino, accompanies Paraguitas in the novel. This demonstrates the collaboration between Costa Rican and Nicaraguan laborers. However, Trino is a secondary leader, whereas Paraguitas is the primary leader. This is notable because it suggests that from the author’s point of view, Nicaraguans were critical to the strike and gave it its voice, as Paraguitas is literally described as a machete, the tool of the laborers. Thus, the machete has a dual symbolism: as the tool of the laborers, but also, as a representative of the perceived violent nature of Nicaraguans. The collaboration between laborers across nationalities is elaborated in detail by Carlos Luis Fallas.

Carlos Luis Fallas’ *Mamita Yunai*, first published in 1941, is the most famous and renowned of the works that explore the lives of banana plantation workers.¹⁷⁵ Fallas offers a firsthand account of life as a laborer and union organizer. Of the Nicaraguans he writes:

Poor Nicaraguan brothers! They come singing, whispering (*arrullando*) illusions, in search of freedom and work...to fall once again in the hands of the “gringo”! To fill the rapacious pockets of the fiscal agent with their labor. They sweat the swamp. They sweat the mountains. Little by little their bodies of steel are transformed by domination (*coyundas*), until they fall with their bodies nailed to the banana plantations.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Gutiérrez, 175.

¹⁷⁵ Carlos Luis Fallas, *Mamita Yunai* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2008). The title, *Mamita Yunai*, roughly translates to *United Mother*, the word *yunai* being a play on the pronunciation of the word “united” in Spanish.

¹⁷⁶ Fallas, *Mamita Yunai*, 195.

Fallas references the influence the United States has had in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The Nicaraguans attempt to escape from the dominance of the US Marines and then the National Guard, which the US military created as its surrogate force within Nicaragua, only to be deceived by the “gringos” of the United Fruit Company. Fallas continues, “Bones of *nicas*, bones of *ticos*,¹⁷⁷ bones of blacks. Bones of brothers!” His depiction of the banana plantations demonstrates that hard work and exploitation were realities that befell all laborers, regardless of their race or nationality. By calling all laborers brothers, Fallas articulates the vision, if not always the reality, of the communist party on the banana plantations.

The image of violent Nicaraguans also appears in *Mamita Yunai*. A Nicaraguan contractor named Pancho threatens to kill his wife after an argument. Interestingly, the man is not a laborer but a contractor whom the laborers enjoy working for, because he pays more and offers better meals than the other contractors. Still, the man’s abusive behavior towards his wife propagates the perception that Nicaraguans are more *machista* than their Costa Rican counterparts and more willing to use physical force to settle disputes. Moreover, similar to Lyra, Fallas describes a world that is very dangerous for women.

An exchange of jokes captures tensions between Costa Rican and Nicaraguan laborers based on nationalized notions of masculinity when the main character, a Costa Rican named Sibaja, jokes to a Nicaraguan that it is impossible not to hit a general in the park in Managua. The joke points to the militarization of Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan jokes back, “You know what they say over there? That the *ticoj* [sic] works with an umbrella to avoid burning his skin.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ *Tico* is the colloquial term for a native of Costa Rica.

¹⁷⁸ Fallas, *Mamita Yunai*, 194. Fallas writes this mimicking a Nicaraguan accent that is difficult to capture in English. The j at the end of *ticoj* is meant to reproduce Nicaraguan pronunciation.

The Nicaraguan's joke reflects the perception on the part of Nicaraguans that Costa Rican laborers were soft and white. While they did work shoulder to shoulder, tensions existed beneath the surface between Costa Rican and Nicaraguan laborers. This theme continues in Emilio Quintana's *Bananos*.

Emilio Quintana's *Bananos*, originally published in 1942, stands as the only one of these works written by a Nicaraguan author.¹⁷⁹ *Bananos*, like the other works, straddles the line between novel and memoir, fiction and political propaganda. There are other parallels with the previous works discussed. Like other plantation narrative authors, Quintana discusses the extreme conditions faced by laborers, the high risk of malaria, the poor diet, and the rampant alcoholism. Quintana explains that drinking alcohol was at times the only escape from the difficulties of that life.¹⁸⁰ Like *Puerto Limón*, the leader of the strike is Nicaraguan. Furthermore, *Bananos* also includes depictions of violent Nicaraguans, including some engaged in assault and murder. In addition, some of the Nicaraguans contractors do not pay fair salaries.

Quintana, however, is also able to present the perspective of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica and their interactions with *ticos*. His book focuses on the plantations of the Pacific, where thousands of Nicaraguans migrated when the UFCO shifted operations westward after 1938. He writes, "Puntarenas, Quepos, Puerto Cortés, Golfito, Río Claro, Piedras Blancas. All these places knew our presence, our unfulfilled wandering restlessness. There we experienced the pain of others with our own pain..."¹⁸¹ In Costa Rica, Quintana finds much of the same despair that he left in Nicaragua, if "only a bit cleaner and not as worn out... There are no fundamental

¹⁷⁹ Emilio Quintana, *Bananos* (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1985).

¹⁸⁰ Quintana, 38.

¹⁸¹ Quintana, 85.

differences between the people or the cities of the two countries... There exists the same daily parade of despair.”¹⁸² Quintana’s denial of difference between Nicaragua and Costa Rica suggests life did not necessarily improve in Costa Rica. In fact, this realization may have been hard to swallow. Of the Costa Ricans, he writes how “certain *ticos* that would look upon Nicaraguans with evil eyes (*malos ojos*).”¹⁸³ An example of the low opinion some Costa Ricans held of Nicaraguans is evident in the story of a Nicaraguan termite exterminator found dead face down in the water. A nurse believes suicide may have been the cause, due to the man’s prolonged battle with illness. The Costa Rican foreman, however, dismisses the possibility of suicide and claims that the true cause of death is the “drunkenness of *nicas*, who only know how to be drunks, irresponsible, and behave badly.”¹⁸⁴ Quintana, offended, threatens to strike the foreman but eventually walks away with his chest puffed out, trying to keep his pride intact.

Quintana presents enduring images of the hardship and despair suffered by Nicaraguan and Costa Rican laborers. Traveling by train to the plantations, the narrator states: “The crossing is littered with cadavers. Cadavers of humble Nicaraguans who abandoned the cruel homeland. Cadavers of unhappy Costa Ricans that went to the jungle in search of better salaries. Cadavers. Cadavers everywhere.”¹⁸⁵ Manolo Cuadra¹⁸⁶, a Nicaraguan poet and Quintana’s friend and collaborator, succinctly identifies the appeal of Quintana’s insight: “What astounds many thinkers (*contemplativos*) and idealists to discover is that in the navel (*ombigo*) of the

¹⁸² Quintana, 88.

¹⁸³ Quintana, 38.

¹⁸⁴ Quintana, 55.

¹⁸⁵ Quintana, 31-2.

¹⁸⁶ Manolo Cuadra, who also fled to Costa Rica, appears in *Bananos*. Manolo Cuadra is discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

continent—in Costa Rica!—thousands of laborers that believed in a minimum of democracy only found a maximum of exploitation.”¹⁸⁷ Quintana also describes Costa Rican violence directed against other laborers, women, and children.¹⁸⁸ By making Costa Rica the setting for such violence, despair, and patriarchy the novel disrupts the myth of a peaceful Costa Rica.

Not all hope is lost in Quintana’s *Bananos*. He speaks of the humanity of humble people in the midst of such brutality. He demonstrates a special appreciation for the women of the banana plantations “who work like beasts”: They wash the clothing of strangers, they knead and bake bread, and they sell simple homemade sweet and desserts (*arroz con leche, cajetas, atolillo*) in an effort to collect a few colones, and they get up at four in the morning to prepare and cook food so that it can be ready at six in the morning when the laborers go to work. Quintana states that Nicaraguan women in particular were the ones that gave themselves fully to this labor, with an enviable fortitude and honor.¹⁸⁹ Quintana effectively utilizes the gendered images of Nicaraguan women to present a positive image of Nicaraguan laborers as a whole.

Interestingly, there is also a racial dimension revealed in *Bananos*. Quintana describes Nicaraguan male laborers admiring the Costa Rican women as white and pretty.¹⁹⁰ The Nicaraguans dream of spending their money on Costa Rican prostitutes who would wrap their white arms around their muscular backs, as they never had been able to do in their native

¹⁸⁷ Manolo Cuadra, “Prólogo,” in Quintana, *Bananos*, 11.

¹⁸⁸ A Costa Rican man beats his female partner (who then proceeds to attack him). Quintana, 39, A child is hit in the mouth and another is left to die on the side of the road. Quintana, 90, 94.

¹⁸⁹ Quintana, 93-4.

¹⁹⁰ Quintana, 88.

Nicaragua.¹⁹¹ Carlos Sandoval García suggests that the desire of Nicaraguan laborers to be with Costa Rican white women reveals that the Nicaraguans have internalized “the key ethnic distinction of the hegemonic version of Costa Rican national identity.”¹⁹² Furthermore, as Sandoval García posits in a footnote, it may betray a desire to be white. Nicaraguans navigated a world in which they worked alongside Costa Ricans, however, they also recognized and internalized their difference.

All the works stand as a condemnation of the United Fruit Company and the exploitation of the laborers. Ana Patricia Rodríguez delineates the emergence of the banana social protest literature as a direct anti-imperialist response to the overarching reach of the United Fruit Company in Central America and the regimentation of labor and life.¹⁹³ The anti-imperialist, pro-labor perspective is evident since all the Costa Rican authors had ties to the communist party and Emilio Quintana was a member of the communistic Nicaraguan Workers’ Party (*Partido de Trabajadores Nicaragüenses*). However, their usefulness goes well beyond this anti-imperialist impetus, because they offer a window into the lived lives of the laborers who remain largely invisible in official documentation.

Both Ronald Soto Quiros and Carlos Sandoval García argue that the Nicaraguan characters in these novels have contributed to the construction of the violent Nicaraguan in the

¹⁹¹ Quintana, 20.

¹⁹² Sandoval García, 94.

¹⁹³ Ana Patricia Rodríguez, *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 51. Among the important works of Central American banana literature Rodríguez cites: For Panama, Joaquín Beleño, *Flor de banana* (1962); For Guatemala, Miguel Ángel Asturias, *Viento fuerte* (1950), *El papa verde* (1954), *Los ojos del enterrado* (1960); For Honduras, Ramón Amaya Amador, *Prisión verde* (1950); For Costa Rica, Joaquín Gutiérrez, *Puerto Limón* (1950); Carlos Luis Fallas, *Mamita Yunai* (1941); Carmen Lyra, *Bananos y Hombres* (1931).

Costa Rican public imagination. Sandoval García states, “Nicaraguans are frequently the ‘others’ in the face of whom a more inclusive and critical conception of nation is constructed.”¹⁹⁴

Undoubtedly, this is the case. However, these novels are also a testament to Costa Rican violence perpetrated not only by the UFCO, but also by Costa Rican laborers, contractors, and planters. Violence was recurrent and did not depend on nationality or ethnicity to manifest itself in the stark conditions of life on the banana plantations, especially when alcohol was readily available to all.

Conclusion

Nicaraguans migration to Costa Rica only increased with the expansion of the banana plantations to the Pacific and the cessation of operations in the Atlantic in 1938. Because the Costa Rican government restricted West Indians from working on the banana plantations of the Pacific following the aftermath of the 1934 strike, and because Costa Rica further restricted the immigration of Chinese, Jewish, and Black laborers, the labor on the Pacific relied heavily on Nicaraguan immigrants.¹⁹⁵ Nicaraguans were more palatable than the other racial and ethnic groups because of their hispanicity. However, this did not mean that they were completely acceptable either and in fact, with the absence of the other groups on the Pacific, the burden of the other fell on the shoulders of Nicaraguans. There they worked alongside Costa Rican laborers and continued to work with the Costa Rican Communist Party.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Sandoval García, 94.

¹⁹⁵ “Moves Against Aliens: Costa Rica Seeks Compliance with Immigration Laws,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1936; “Costa Rica Bars Immigrants,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1936; “Costa Rica Deports Eleven on Charge of Voodooism,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1937; “Jewish Colony Opposed,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1937.

¹⁹⁶ “Nicaragua frees deported Reds,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1937. Costa Rica deported 14 Nicaraguans on charges of communism.

Nicaraguan and Costa Rican laborers involved in the communist party established a bond, one that would continue well into the forties and manifest itself strongly during the Civil War of 1948.¹⁹⁷ These Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans continued to work together over the span of decades to improve their united condition as laborers. The ability of Nicaraguan and Costa Rican laborers to work and organize together speaks to the power of class solidarity to mute, to some degree, cultural and national differences.

For Nicaraguans, despite decades of laboring in Costa Rica and participation in the largest labor strike in the nation's history, things did not get any easier. They remained marginalized and unwanted, but conditions at home were no better. The assassination of Sandino in February 1934, the ascension of Anastasio Somoza and the *Guardia Nacional*, and the poor economic and political situation in Nicaragua ensured the continuance of Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica. It also promoted a new wave of Nicaraguan exiles that would look to Costa Rica as a haven to escape from Somoza's tyranny.

¹⁹⁷ Ferreto, 14; Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 320-1. One such example is Lucío Ibarra, a local leader of Pococí in the 1934 strike. Ibarra participated on the side of the government and communists during the 1948 Civil War and opposition forces killed him on December 19, 1948, along with other Communist leaders from Limón, including Costa Ricans Tobias Vaglio, Octavio Sáenz, Álvaro Aguilar and another Nicaraguan, Narciso Sotomayor in the aftermath of the war.

CHAPTER FOUR
A VIOLENT DICTATORSHIP:
SOMOZA AND THE NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION IN EXILE, 1936-1947

The rise of Anastasio Somoza dramatically altered the Nicaraguan landscape, but the political repercussions of his career resonated far beyond the borders of his own country. I argue that Somoza's authoritarian state, maintained with the tacit support of the United States, engendered a crisis that profoundly affected all of Central America. The most noticeable outcome of the crisis was the creation of a contingent of exiles that increasingly viewed armed revolt as the only viable means of dislodging Somoza from power. These Nicaraguan exiles would help to create the conditions for a more united exile movement known the Caribbean Legion. This chapter will focus on Somoza's efforts to attain and maintain power, the deteriorating political situation in Nicaragua, and the attempts of Nicaraguan exiles to organize against him from abroad. This interconnected network of exiles fell prey to numerous internal divisions, but did manage to unite, however tenuously, in pursuit of a common purpose: the overthrow of Somoza. To date, most of the academic literature had focused on Somoza's domestic opposition,¹ or on his regime's relationship with the United States,² offering minimal analysis of the exiles that went abroad in search of monetary and armed support. By exploring the Nicaraguan exile experience, it becomes clear that Costa Rica and Mexico were the most important to the efforts of the exiles. Costa Ricans, unlike Mexicans, share a border with

¹ Knut Walter, *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza, 1936-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

² See Paul Coe Clark, *The United States and Somoza, 1933-1956: A Revisionist Look* (Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers, 1992); Andrew Crawley, *Somoza and Roosevelt: Good Neighbor Diplomacy in Nicaragua, 1933-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Michael D. Gambone, *Eisenhower, Somoza and the Cold War in Nicaragua: 1953-1961* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1997).

Nicaragua, and thus, the government of Costa Rica became enmeshed in Nicaragua's internal politics as a rising number of political refugees sought sanctuary there. Finally, the commitment to violence brought the regional turmoil to Costa Rica, making it the unlikely focal point in an emerging battle between exiles and authoritarian governments.

The Guardia Nacional

In May 1927, the U.S. military established the *Guardia Nacional* (GN) to take over from the U.S. Marines. The goal had been to train a non-partisan force consisting of six hundred men allotted to take up ten percent of the government's total budget. The war against Sandinista forces caused the GN to balloon in size to a force of three hundred officers and twenty-three hundred soldiers, raising the cost of its upkeep to twenty five percent of Nicaragua's total government budget.³ Anastasio "Tacho" Somoza soon became the *Jefe Director* chosen to lead the *Guardia*, which became the state's most powerful institution once the Marines withdrew.

Anastasio Somoza worked hard to gain control of the National Guard forces.⁴ Despite having very limited military experience, Somoza became the Americans' preferred candidate due to his political acumen. Somoza was a young Liberal who had studied at the Pierce School of Business Administration in Philadelphia. After graduating, he returned to Nicaragua, where he married into a prominent Liberal family. He first gained the attention of U.S. officials when he utilized his fluency in English and friendliness to serve as translator for Henry Stimson at the Tipitapa Conference. Demonstrating intelligence and ambition, Somoza impressed the Marines as a potential liaison to the Nicaraguan government. He quickly climbed within the ranks of the

³ Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 216.

⁴ Richard E. Clinton, Jr., "The United States and the Caribbean Legion: Democracy, Dictatorship, and the Origins of the Cold War in Latin America, 1945-1950" (PhD diss., Ohio University, 2001), 27-8.

Liberal Party, becoming party chief in Leon and then foreign minister for Nicaraguan president José María Moncada.⁵ This position furnished Somoza with a splendid opportunity to deepen his connections with prominent U.S. officials, including important diplomats like Ambassador Matthew Hanna. Hanna was so impressed by Somoza that he wrote the State Department to enthusiastically support Somoza's candidacy for *Jefe Director*: "I look upon him as the best man in the country for the position. I know no one who will labor as intelligently and conscientiously to maintain the non-partisan character of the *Guardia*, or will be efficient in all matters connected with the administration and command of the Force."⁶ President Moncada, General Calvin B. Matthews (the Marine officer who at the time held the reins of the GN), and Hanna made the decision to appoint Somoza despite the presumption that President-Elect Sacasa would make the choice. Walter suggests that Somoza would not have been Sacasa's first choice; however, the President-Elect did approve the appointment.⁷

The withdrawal of U.S. troops, as well as the election of Juan Bautista Sacasa, the Liberal for whom Sandino had initially taken up arms, set the stage for peace negotiations between Sandino and the government.⁸ After the U.S. Marines officially left on January 2, 1933, Sandino met with the *Grupo Patriótico*, a coalition of twelve prominent Liberals and Conservatives. The successful peace talks with President Sacasa in Managua convinced Sandino

⁵ Clark, 5.

⁶ Matthew Hanna to White, October 28, 1932 in William Kamman, *A Search for Stability: United States Diplomacy toward Nicaragua, 1925-1933* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 210.

⁷ Walter, 29.

⁸ "Last of Marines Quit Nicaragua; There 19 Years; New President to Govern without U.S. Aid," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 2, 1933; "Washington ends Task in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, January 2, 1933; "Nicaragua Control Taken by Sacasa: President is Inaugurated as Last of Marines are Withdrawn," *Washington Post*, January 2, 1933.

to sign a treaty on February 2, 1933.⁹ The treaty granted the Sandinistas amnesty, awarded them an agricultural cooperative in the eastern Segovias, and allowed them to maintain a force of one hundred troops for at least one year in exchange for the demobilization of eighteen hundred Sandinistas.¹⁰

A year after the original peace treaty that granted Sandino the right to maintain a standing army of one hundred men, Anastasio Somoza, now installed as head of the GN, ordered them to disarm. Sandino, in response, questioned the constitutionality of the GN.¹¹ Hostilities flared between Sandino and Somoza, despite some efforts at rapprochement.¹² Nicaragua, as Sandino had famously claimed, was made up of three powers: that of the President, that of the GN, and that of Sandino himself.¹³ Knut Walter notes that Sacasa was the only person standing between Sandino and Somoza, “providing Sandino with the ammunition and weapons he needed to maintain his force of men, and placating Somoza and the *Guardia* with a considerable chunk of the national budget.”¹⁴ Sacasa needed Sandino as a bulwark against the political aspirations of Somoza. Writing from Costa Rica over a year earlier, Salomon de la Selva had argued that the government needed to make peace with Sandino, if only to preserve civilian rule. De la Selva astutely observed that because Sacasa was not a “military man”, the government would be

⁹ “Sandino Emerges and Makes Peace” *New York Times*, February 3, 1933.

¹⁰ Gobat, 246-7.

¹¹ Gobat, 264.

¹² “Rift in Nicaragua Closed: Sandino and Guard Commander pledge Brotherhood,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1933.

¹³ *La Prensa*, February 18, 1934 in Gobat, 264.

¹⁴ Walter, 33.

vulnerable if Somoza were able to defeat Sandino. In effect, Somoza would become the “boss of the country.”¹⁵

By February 1934, Sandino was making headway against the National Guard when he reached a compromise with President Sacasa. The compromise called for Sandino to accept a presidential delegate to oversee the Sandinista troops in exchange for a promise by Sacasa to reform the GN within six months. The *Guardia* was outraged when Sacasa named one of Sandino’s confidants as the presidential delegate. This was the final straw for Somoza, who believed that Sacasa and Sandino sought to destroy the GN. On February 21, 1934, Somoza moved to eliminate Sandino. On the very evening that the President and Sandino achieved their compromise, GN officers ambushed Sandino and the rest of his party after the meeting with Sacasa. At the Managua airport on the outskirts of the capital, the *Guardia Nacional* executed Sandino and two of his generals, Francisco Estrada and Juan Pablo Umanzor. Another group of *Guardia* officers in another location killed Sandino’s brother, Sócrates Sandino. Somoza moved quickly to decimate the leaderless Sandinistas and the following day *Guardia* troops massacred an estimated three hundred men, women, and children on Sandinista cooperatives in the Segovias.¹⁶ De la Selva’s earlier statements proved prescient. With Sandino and many of his followers dead, Somoza no longer had any viable military opposition. Neither Somoza nor his men faced any criminal or disciplinary charges, despite Sacasa’s calls for justice;¹⁷ and the Nicaraguan Congress granted Sandino’s assassins amnesty.¹⁸ Emiliano Chamorro, then a

¹⁵ “Would have Sacasa agree with Sandino,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1932.

¹⁶ Gobat, 264; Walter, 32-3; Clark, 9-10.

¹⁷ “Nicaraguan Guard Blamed for Killing: President Appeals to People to Help Him Efface Blot of Sandino’s Murder, *New York Times*, February 25, 1934.

¹⁸ “Killers of Sandino get Amnesty as Benefactors,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1934.

member of the Congress, states that he voted for amnesty to avoid anarchy and to conserve the national peace.¹⁹ Walter demonstrates that the Nicaraguan Conservatives overwhelmingly favored amnesty, citing order as their primary objective.²⁰

Somoza's ascension also required silencing any opposition from within his own ranks. Fellow *Guardia* officers, displeased with his leadership, moved to overthrow Somoza in 1934 and 1935. Aberlado Cuadra Vega participated in both efforts to overthrow Somoza. The son of a Conservative rancher, he began his career with the *Guardia* in 1929, shortly after the U.S. opened a training academy in Managua. Cuadra joined the *Guardia* not because of any loyalty to the government but rather because he believed the life of a government soldier would be less arduous than that of a rebel. He characterizes this decision as a cowardly act and states that he should have supported Sandino's patriotic cause. Cuadra quickly rose to corporal and became an instructor, teaching soldiers how to read and earning a monthly salary of 30 U.S. dollars.²¹ In 1931, Cuadra earned the rank of lieutenant and soon faced off against Sandinista forces. Three years later, Somoza asked Cuadra (and 14 other *Guardia* officers²²) to plot Sandino's assassination.

¹⁹ Emiliano Chamorro, *El ultimo caudillo* (Managua: Ediciones del Partido Conservador Demócrata, 1983), 354.

²⁰ Walter, 33-35.

²¹ Abelardo Cuadra, *Hombre del caribe* (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana EDUCA, 1977), 49-50; Manolo Cuadra, *El gruñido de un bárbaro* (Managua: Nueva Nicaragua, 1994), 204

²² According to Abelardo Cuadra the other fourteen men were: Gen. Gustavo Abaunza, Col. Samuel Santos, Maj. Alfonso González Cervantes, Capt. Lizandro Delgadillo, Capt. Francisco Mendieta, Capt. Polícarpo Gutiérrez, Capt. Carlos Tellería, Capt. Diego López Roig, Lt. Federico Davidson Blanco, Lt. José A. López, Lt. Ernesto Díaz, 2nd Lt. César Chavez, and Camilo González Cervantes in A Cuadra, 116.

The killing of Sandino was a turning point for Cuadra, who felt great guilt and sorrow for his complicity in the murder.²³ Furthermore, the organization of the *Guardia*, which granted undeserving members of the oligarchy the highest positions in its ranks, frustrated the remorseful young officer. Cuadra resented those who had bypassed the military academy's training program, but who by virtue of their rank presumed to give him orders. He also resented favored officers who had never set foot in the mountains during wartime, including Somoza himself.²⁴ The disillusionment caused by killing Sandino coupled with his building resentment against Somoza led Cuadra to plot to overtake the *Guardia* in 1934.

The plan called for Capt. Gabriel Castillo to invite Somoza to Estelí, under the pretense of a celebration, and arrest him. Once arrested, the participating officers²⁵ would place their territories under Martial Law and await new orders. Cuadra and his men would then attack Fort Acosasco in León, followed by the Presidential Palace. The plan did not get very far. Cuadra claims to have had a wide array of support among *Guardia* officers; however, none of that made much difference when word leaked out to the GN headquarters at Campo de Marte in Managua.²⁶

On June 16, 1934, Somoza ordered Cuadra to present himself at Campo de Marte immediately, at which point Cuadra realized that Somoza was aware of the plot. Cuadra made

²³ A. Cuadra, 143-4.

²⁴ Somoza's only prior military experience before becoming commander of the *Guardia Nacional* was a failed attack on Conservatives in his hometown of San Marcos during the Liberal revolution of 1926. See Clark, 5.

²⁵ A. Cuadra mentions by name Maj. Alfonso González Cervantes, Capt. Gabriel Castillo, 2nd Lt. Santiago Delgado, 2nd Lt. Edmundo Delgado, 2nd Lt. Alfredo López, and Lt. Salomón Lagos. He also mentions two other Captains by their initials: A.S. and F.C.

²⁶ A. Cuadra, 145-6.

his way to Campo de Marte, after briefly considering an escape to Costa Rica.²⁷ At Campo de Marte, he was arrested and held in detention along with four other officers. Capt. Gabriel Castillo was the only officer sentenced and, because Castillo did not compromise his accomplices, Cuadra and the other officers went free.²⁸ In December, at the behest of the Salvadoran government, Nicaragua repatriated Castillo, a Salvadoran citizen.²⁹ Cuadra, despite his brush with condemnation, remained committed to overthrowing Somoza, calling himself a “Sandinista until death.”³⁰ He would try again in 1935.

In 1935, President Sacasa asked for a reduction in the national budget that would affect all government services, including the *Guardia*. Somoza decided to reduce the salary of all *Guardia* officers equally, regardless of their pay or rank. This unproportional reduction hurt the GN’s rank-and-file most severely and provided Cuadra with an opening. The first attempt to overthrow Somoza in 1934 had been political and ideological; the second attempt was in essence a labor dispute. As Cuadra points out, to take two cordobas from a general, colonel, or major had minimal impact. On the other hand, to take the same two cordobas from a soldier who only made 12 cordobas a month was a heavy burden.³¹ Cuadra approached Somoza and attempted to reason with him, suggesting that he reduce salaries in proportion to what each officer earned.

²⁷ A. Cuadra, 146.

²⁸ “Nicaragua denies plot rumors,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1934; “Nicaragua jails plotter,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1934; Abelardo Cuadra, *Hombre del caribe* (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana EDUCA, 1977), 141-150.

²⁹ “Salvador asks Mercy,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1934; “Would free Salvadoran,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1934; “Salvador Petition Fails,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1934; A. Cuadra, 150.

³⁰ A. Cuadra. 150.

³¹ A. Cuadra, 151.

Cuadra asserts that Somoza verbally agreed to his plan; however, Somoza never actually enacted such a plan.

A group of *Guardia* sergeants and corporals of the Second Battalion of Campo de Marte approached Cuadra in April 1935, informing him that they (along with the Third Company) had decided to protest the pay cuts, and asked him to take the lead on settling the dispute with Somoza. Managua police, aviation officers, and the Presidential Guard also expressed their willingness to support the negotiations. Cuadra accepted their request and went to speak to Somoza. Somoza, however, convinced Cuadra to act as an intermediary between himself and the protesters, promising to fix the problem within a few days. The following day, Cuadra approached Somoza to put their agreement in writing. Somoza refused.³²

Early the next morning, at 1 a.m., Cuadra attempted to overthrow Somoza. He soon discovered that Somoza had greatly reduced the number of his supporters by ordering them away on patrols. Cuadra faced a court martial that sentenced him to death. Somoza gave Cuadra an opportunity to spare his own life if Cuadra would sign a statement claiming that he had come to an agreement with Emiliano Chamorro that would give Chamorro control of the towers of Hormiguero and Campo de Marte, in exchange for seventy thousand dollars. Cuadra rejected the offer. Eleven days later, President Sacasa intervened on behalf of Cuadra, commuting his sentence to twenty years imprisonment.³³ Cuadra later served parts of his sentence under house

³² A. Cuadra, 156-165. Cuadra asserts that the GN murdered eighteen other members of the Second Battalion after the incident. Four that did survive the incident were 2nd Sgt. Domingo Urbina, Cpl. Mauro Rizo, Pvt. Sebastián Matute, and Pvt. Virgilio García.

³³ A. Cuadra, 168-9. *La Prensa* made an appeal to President Sacasa and Somoza on Cuadra's behalf claiming that Cuadra was an epileptic and a romantic who only wished to lead his own troop. *La Prensa* argued that Cuadra deserved compassion from the authorities. "*La Prensa ante el caso del Teniente Cuadra*", *La Prensa*, April 25, 1935. See also: "Nicaragua Balks Revolt, Eight Said to Face Death," *New York Times*, April 25, 1935; "Nicaragua Denies Revolt," *New York Times*, April 27, 1935.

arrest.³⁴ As Sergio Ramírez notes, Somoza consolidated his authority and power within the *Guardia Nacional* by purging it of any threatening elements.³⁵ Soon thereafter, the *Jefe Director* shifted gears and set his sights on taking on his political opponents, as he prepared to run for president in 1936.

Somoza takes the Presidency

Members of both parties, Conservatives and Liberals, were wary of Somoza's political ambitions and attempted to derail the General's presidential aspirations by agreeing to run a single candidate.³⁶ According to Chamorro, both parties viewed Leonardo Argüello as the best candidate; however, the parties delayed their decision until they met with Somoza.³⁷ Somoza rejected the notion that Liberals and Conservatives would choose the candidate. He determined that he alone should make the choice, as he had willingly withdrawn his own candidacy. Somoza also stipulated that the Congressional elections should replicate the results of 1932, with the parties winning the districts they already held by running only single candidates. Somoza would choose the Supreme Court, in proportion to the strength of the parties. Finally, he required complete control of the *Guardia*, including Fort Acosasco in León. The fort was under the control of the President's nephew and had eluded Somoza's influence. Sacasa rejected this outright, because it would make Somoza the most powerful person in Nicaragua.³⁸ One could

³⁴ "El Teniente Abelardo Cuadra con su casa por cárcel," *La Prensa*, August 19, 1936.

³⁵ Sergio Ramírez, "Introducción," in Abelardo Cuadra, *Hombre del caribe* (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana EDUCA, 1977), 16.

³⁶ Walter 49-50.

³⁷ Chamorro, 355.

³⁸ Walter, 49; Richard Millet, *Guardians of the Dynasty* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), 177.

argue that Somoza's confidence in making these requests demonstrated that he had in fact already achieved that distinction.

In another effort to appease Somoza, President Sacasa and Chamorro met with the *Jefe Director* to decide the national candidate. At a meeting held on May 21, 1936, Somoza proposed the nomination of General Rigoberto Reyes, a fellow officer. Chamorro refused this choice, citing that his party would oppose a *Guardia* officer, as this would give the impression that Somoza had forced this candidate upon them. Chamorro requested that Somoza choose a civilian. Somoza then suggested Dr. Carlos Brenes Jarquín, but Sacasa rejected this nomination.³⁹ Somoza grew tired of having his ambition stifled and moved to strengthen his hold of the *Guardia* and replaced men loyal to the president with officers that would back him. He proceeded to extend his control by replacing local officials with loyal followers. By May 29, Somoza had installed allies in every major Nicaraguan town except for Managua, Rivas, and Corinto. President Sacasa had only two small bands of *Guardia* men still loyal to him, the Presidential Guard and the fort controlled by his nephew in Leon. Somoza launched an assault on the fort.⁴⁰ Sacasa, desperate to stave off Somoza, called on Conservative and Liberal leaders for help, and they finally agreed to nominate Leonardo Argüello for President.

This action came far too late, as 2000 Somoza-led *Guardia* men opened fire on the fort on May 30, 1936. The following day, the *Guardia* attacked the Presidential Palace, officially launching a coup d'état against President Juan Sacasa.⁴¹ With nowhere left to turn, Sacasa arranged an armistice in Managua and surrendered after three days of shooting. Somoza

³⁹ Chamorro, 355.

⁴⁰ Millet, 178-9.

⁴¹ Walter, 49-50; Millet 178-9; "Nicaragua Head Trapped, Rebels Wait Surrender: Revoltors Throw a Ring Around Palace Hill," *New York Times*, June 2, 1936.

declared that he would allow Sacasa to serve out his term, but Sacasa had no interest in doing so and only wanted to get out of the country alive.⁴² Chamorro, who had sought asylum in the Mexican embassy, accused the President of caring more about protecting his relatives than fighting Somoza. The Vice-President, Rodolfo Espinosa, was paid \$20,000 to resign his post and go into voluntary exile.⁴³ Finally, On June 6, 1936, Sacasa resigned as president and fled to El Salvador.⁴⁴ He never set foot in Nicaragua again. Somoza was victorious.⁴⁵

On June 9, 1936, Congress appointed Dr. Carlos Brenes Jarquin as interim President to finish out Sacasa's term. Brenes Jarquin had been one of the candidates proposed by Somoza. Somoza prepared for the upcoming election and, as expected, garnered the Liberal nomination.⁴⁶ Liberal and Conservative opposition leaders regrouped in Costa Rica, in an attempt to plan a successful campaign against Somoza's candidacy.⁴⁷ The opposition, which still had a candidate in Leonardo Argüello, surmised that the *Guardia*'s control of the electoral machinery ruled out any chance of winning the election without help. Thus, a bipartisan cohort of former Nicaraguan

⁴² "Report Nicaraguan President to flee Nation Tomorrow, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 5, 1936.

⁴³ Espinosa went to Costa Rica. Millet, 179-180; "Espinosa Quits Nicaragua: Vice President Resigns and Takes Plane for Costa Rica," *New York Times*, June 9, 1936.

⁴⁴ "Sacasa Starts Exile with Group of Aides: Nicaraguan President leaves Managua for Corinto, Where He Boards Liner," *New York Times*, June 7, 1936.

⁴⁵ Walter, 51.

⁴⁶ "Nicaraguans Choose Somoza for Office: National Guard Commander, Who Led Revolt, Nominated for the Presidency," *New York Times*, June 16, 1936.

⁴⁷ "Liberales y conservadores nicaragüenses residentes en Costa Rica celebran una gran convención," *Novedades*, July 29, 1936 in Ronald Soto Quiros, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942: Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'" (PhD diss., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 442.

presidents made a trip to the United States to ask for supervision of the elections, arguing that the United States had a direct responsibility for the actions of the GN.⁴⁸

The United States refused, maintaining that the Good Neighbor Policy did not permit them to interfere in Nicaraguan affairs.⁴⁹ Confident that he would win, Somoza welcomed back the opposition leaders, including Sacasa, Espinosa, Argüello, and Chamorro, even as presidential candidates. He stated that he had not exiled them and that they were free to return.⁵⁰ The opposition decided to boycott the election, which Somoza won easily.⁵¹ The U.S. State Department's refusal to assist the Nicaraguan opposition was borne out of U.S. President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, which asserted, "the definite policy of the United States from now on is one opposed to armed intervention." Furthermore, the United States had signed a declaration with the other American republics to the effect that "no state has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another."⁵² Historian Richard Clinton suggests that Washington's refusal to voice any opposition to the assassination of Sandino and the forced removal of Sacasa does not indicate complicity, but rather demonstrates a strict adherence to its own policy.⁵³ During the early implementation of the Good Neighbor Policy it certainly seems plausible. Nevertheless, the U.S. government's about face favored the Nicaraguan General. Somoza grasped the implications of the Good Neighbor Policy and his decisiveness actions gave

⁴⁸ Emiliano Chamorro, Adolfo Díaz, and Juan Sacasa.

⁴⁹ "The United States Will Stay Aloof in Revolt of Nicaraguans," *Washington Post*, June 5, 1936.

⁵⁰ "Somoza Welcomes Election Observers," *New York Times*, September 3, 1936.

⁵¹ Millet, 181; "Nicaragua Picks Somoza," *New York Times*, December 9, 1936.

⁵² Clinton, 31-2.

⁵³ Clinton, 40.

him an advantage over opponents that were still playing by the old rules, expecting the United States to intervene in an explicit way.⁵⁴ Washington's silence indicated to Somoza that he was free to pursue his ambitions without recrimination, and convinced the Nicaraguan public that the United States did indeed back him.

The opposition goes into exile

On January 1, 1937, six months after the overthrow of Sacasa, Somoza became President of Nicaragua, gaining 107,201 votes (against the opposition's 169) in an election supervised by the *Guardia Nacional*.⁵⁵ Once in power, Somoza moved to amend the Nicaraguan constitution in order to strengthen the executive's ability to stabilize the nation. In a very unsubtle move, he extended his presidential tenure until 1947.⁵⁶ Somoza was able to push his agenda forward because a broad segment of Nicaraguans supported him, including large landholders, businessmen, labor leaders, intellectuals, and dissident Conservatives.⁵⁷ Facing the prospect of ten uninterrupted years of Somoza rule, much of the opposition went into exile.

Historian Knut Walter argues that Somoza faced minimum opposition until about 1944, describing any political resistance to his rule as a "mixture of isolated incidents and the publication of diverse broadsheets and booklets, within and outside of Nicaragua." Furthermore, Walter argues that the political opposition was "largely committed to moderate reformism and political democratization," and that exile organizations such as the *Comité Patriótico*

⁵⁴ Marcia K. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies and the Costa Rican Civil War of 1948: Picado, Somoza, and the Desperate Alliance" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2000), 110.

⁵⁵ Clark, 45.

⁵⁶ Walter, 91.

⁵⁷ Walter, 52-59.

Abstecionista in New York and the *Comité Revolucionario Nicaragüense* in Mexico City reflected a “middle-class, reformist ideology that was well intentioned but had no organized links to the people.”⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the Nicaraguan exiles were committed to overthrowing Somoza, devoting much time and energy to planning and discussing ways to overthrow the Nicaraguan General, most often from Costa Rica, Mexico, and Guatemala (after 1944).

Domestically, the opposition was fragmented and weak. After Somoza’s rise to power, the Conservative Party failed to present a unified front and split into two rival factions. Representing the interests of sugar planters, commerce, and rightist intellectuals, the Conservatives felt threatened by Somoza’s political and economic ambition.⁵⁹ One faction followed Chamorro and his hard line opposition to working with Somoza. Alternately, Carlos Cuadra Pasos led a splinter group of Conservatives known as *Civilistas* that was more willing to work with Liberals and Somoza. Labor, too, stood divided between leftists and Somocistas. The small left wing *Partido Trabajador Nicaraguense* (PTN), established in 1931, began to buckle under the repression of the Somoza regime and collapsed in 1939. After a series of critiques targeted at Somoza, much of the PTN was jailed and others left to pursue exile in Costa Rica.⁶⁰ For the most part, the opposition that remained in Nicaragua had to (and was willing to) function within the parameters established by Somoza. Only those outside of Nicaragua could directly oppose Somoza.

By the beginning of the 1940s, with the lone exception of Costa Rica, dictators ruled all of Central America: Maximiliano Martínez in El Salvador, Jorge Ubico in Guatemala, Tiburcio

⁵⁸ Walter, 111, 114.

⁵⁹ Jeffrey Gould, “‘For an Organized Nicaragua’: Somoza and the Labour Movement, 1944-1948,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 19, no. 2 (1987): 353-387.

⁶⁰ Gould, “For an Organized Nicaragua,” 357; Walter, 104-5.

Carias in Honduras, and Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua. This “dictatorship belt”⁶¹ produced exiles that continued their opposition abroad. Costa Rica, because of its proximity to the other Central American nations and because it was not a part of the dictatorship belt, became a haven for many of the region’s exiles. Exiles from Honduras⁶², Nicaragua and Panama descended on Costa Rica; and by 1936, the Costa Rican government felt compelled to announce that it would not permit the organization of plots to overthrow neighboring countries.⁶³

The presence of Nicaraguan exiles in Costa Rica exacerbated relations between the Cortes and Somoza, already strained after Costa Rica raised tariffs on imported meat, cheese and cattle.⁶⁴ Newspaper estimates placed the number of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica at 25,000, and there were reports that revolutionary groups were recruiting immigrants to launch an anti-Somoza invasion. Aware of this potential threat, Somoza sent *Guardia* troops to patrol the Costa Rican border.⁶⁵

In an effort to maintain its relations with the government of Nicaragua, Costa Rica threatened to expel Nicaraguans, like Humberto Barahona, who continued to scheme to overthrow Somoza.⁶⁶ Barahona and Somoza had been friends, even *compadres*, before the

⁶¹ Frank L. Kluckhohn, “A Dictatorship Belt: Four of Central America’s Countries Are Ruled By Men Whose Words Are Law,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1937.

⁶² “Honduran Gets Asylum: Costa Rican President Gives Huete, Opposition Leader, Refuge,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1936.

⁶³ “Costa Rica Bans Plots,” *New York Times*, August 14, 1936.

⁶⁴ Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 178. The Costa Rican press attacked Somoza, and further aggravating matters, the government of Costa Rica sided with Honduras in a border dispute between Nicaragua and Honduras.

⁶⁵ “Nicaragua bars Border,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1936.

⁶⁶ “Nicaraguan Exile is Warned,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1936.

assassination of Sandino. After that point, Barahona broke with Somoza, criticizing the dictator's regime, and ultimately fled to exile in Costa Rica.⁶⁷ In October 1936, the Costa Rican government ordered General Crisanto Zapato to leave the country within eight days.⁶⁸ Costa Rican authorities caught Zapato trying to sneak into Nicaragua from Costa Rica a month later and again ordered Zapato to leave, since he had not forsworn his revolutionary activities. Deporting Zapato proved difficult, as neither El Salvador nor Panama would take him. Before the Nicaraguan presidential election in 1936, Costa Rican authorities ordered all Nicaraguan opposition leaders to report to San José, where they would remain under police supervision until after the election.⁶⁹ On March 11, 1937, Costa Rican police arrested 22 Central Americans, mostly Nicaraguans, on the suspicion that they were plotting to overthrow neighboring governments and sentenced them all to deportation.⁷⁰ In 1937, Costa Rican authorities captured Emiliano Alfaro, a Nicaraguan labor activist, and turned him over to the *Guardia Nacional*.⁷¹ The Costa Rica government deported General Roberto Hurtado to Panama in April 1939, after he had engaged in an argument with the Nicaraguan Minister Luis Solorzano in the Costa Rican press. Hurtado had entered Costa Rica, fearing persecution from the GN, without a passport or a permit. The Costa Rican government claimed that it was deporting Hurtado for lack of

⁶⁷ David Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories: Populism, Popular Mobilization, Violence, and Memories of Civil War in Costa Rica, 1940-1948" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2009), 170.

⁶⁸ Zapato was with Sacasa during the raid on the Presidential Palace. "Costa Rica Bars Nicaraguan General Zapato," *New York Times*, October 8, 1936.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, November 14, 1936.

⁷⁰ "Costa Rica Police Raid Revolutionists," *Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 1937.

⁷¹ Carlos Pérez Bermudez and Onofre Guevara López, *El movimiento obrero: aportes para el conocimiento de su historia* (Managua: Ediciones D. Bolaños, 1985), 120 in Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 179.

documentation; however, some believed it was due to his argument with the Nicaraguan minister.⁷²

At times, Costa Rica did more than simply tolerate Nicaraguan exiles. In 1939, President Leon Cortes helped Rosendo Argüello Castrillo, a vocal Nicaraguan dissident living in Honduras, get two of his sons out of Nicaragua. Argüello Castrillo's other son, Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, was already in Costa Rica, where he practiced medicine and served as physician to president Cortes' wife, Julia Cortes. Argüello Ramírez convinced the Costa Rican first lady to write a letter to Somoza's wife, asking for the release of the two Argüello brothers. Salvadora Debayle de Somoza responded in the negative, stating that President Somoza was aware of Argüello Castrillo conspiratorial plot and was keeping the Argüello sons in custody to protect Nicaragua. Undaunted, Rosendo Argüello Ramírez managed (with the help of a small Costa Rican airline) to rescue his brothers on January 19, 1939. San José's entire anti-Somoza Nicaraguan colony celebrated the Argüello brothers' reunion with their parents. President Cortes issued the Argüellos visas to Honduras, allowing them to rejoin other Nicaraguan exiles there.⁷³

Luis Mena Solórzano, the Nicaraguan Minister in Costa Rica, objected strongly to the Cortes' actions. However, Costa Ricans did little to placate him and Somoza, increasingly frustrated, recalled his Minister. After this diplomatic mishap, Cortes took steps to repair his government's relationship with Nicaragua. He grounded the airline that had assisted the Argüellos for three months, cancelled the license of a radio station that had offended Somoza, and considered taking action against a newspaper that had criticized Somoza. Cortes also

⁷² "Costa Rica Ousts Refugee," *New York Times*, April 1, 1939.

⁷³ Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, *Doy testimonio: Conspiraciones y traiciones en el caribe* (DILESA: Managua, Nicaragua, 1987), 27-32; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 180.

deported a Nicaraguan exile that brought four of his children into Costa Rica without permission and confined a group of Nicaraguan exiles to San José, forcing them to request special permits before they could travel. In February 1939, Cortes sent a special diplomatic emissary to Managua to meet with Somoza. The meeting proved successful and Mena Solórzano returned to his post in San José.⁷⁴

When Somoza came to Costa Rica on a good will tour in August 1939⁷⁵, Nicaraguan immigrants opposed the visit for fear that Somoza would convince President Cortes to restrict their asylum. The Costa Rican government prohibited manifestations against Somoza and ordered Nicaraguan political refugees not to go to San José during Somoza's visit. Nevertheless, Humberto Barahona took steps to mobilize opposition to Somoza's visit. Cortes made good on his promise and deported Barahona to El Salvador (he eventually made his way to Mexico).⁷⁶ Based on rumors that 10,000 Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica had planned a coup against Somoza, Costa Rican authorities arrested Nicaraguan Gen. Carlos Reyes Llanes, Gen. Crisanto Zapata, and Col. Alejandro Alfaro. These three Nicaraguans met with President Cortes, who informed them that he would not tolerate hostile activities or even journalistic broadsides critical of Nicaraguan politics. At the request of the Nicaraguan Minister, the Costa Rican government

⁷⁴ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 180-1.

⁷⁵ Somoza visited Costa Rica to discuss Costa Rican use of a future canal. President Roosevelt indicated to Somoza renewed U.S. interest in a canal through the San Juan River and Costa Rica asserted that they should be involved in any treaty concerning a canal. In April 1940, Costa Rica and Nicaragua signed the Cordero Reyes-Zúñiga Montufar treaty, which extended Costa Rica rights to navigate the entirety of the river for commercial purposes in the event of the canalization of the San Juan River. The treaty never went into effect because construction on the canal did not begin. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 181.

⁷⁶ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 170.

expelled Llanes.⁷⁷ In July 1940, newly elected Costa Rican president Rafael Angel Calderón deported Rosendo Argüello Ramírez to Mexico.⁷⁸

In March 1940, Abelardo Cuadra, still under house arrest for his part in the incidents of 1935, fled to Costa Rica on foot. When he crossed into Costa Rica, he avoided reporting himself to the authorities, as he had been warned that the La Cruz border guards were in Somoza's pocket.⁷⁹ After a difficult journey, he arrived in Puntarenas, receiving an enthusiastic welcome from the sizeable Nicaraguan community there. Various Nicaraguans invited Cuadra into their homes for dinner, including Enrique Castillo Martínez, Carlos Rocha, José Dolores Gaméz and even the Nicaraguan consul, Bachiller Montealegre. During these meetings, he learned that the Nicaraguan press was reporting that he had either died in his attempt to leave Nicaragua or been recaptured by the *Guardia*. Cuadra secured a false identification card under the name Víctor Manuel Buján, and then went looking for work on the banana plantations of the Pacific Coast. Cuadra was able to land an administrative position with a banana company in Quepos, thanks to the intercession of Nicaraguan General Gustavo Lacayo.⁸⁰

Despite obtaining this comfortable position with the banana company, Cuadra soon left to join a revolutionary movement against Arnulfo Arias in Panama. Nicaraguan general Enrique Tijerino approached Cuadra in Costa Rica and recruited him as the second-in-command of his small troop, made up mostly of Nicaraguans. Cuadra accepted the offer, with the understanding

⁷⁷ "Safeguards for Somoza: Costa Rica to Prevent Hostility to Nicaraguan President," *New York Times*, July 25, 1939; "Somoza Aids Denies Political Union Plan," *New York Times*, August 4, 1939.

⁷⁸ Argüello Ramírez, *Doy testimonio*, 36-7.

⁷⁹ A. Cuadra, 187-196.

⁸⁰ A. Cuadra, 199-200.

that he would be paid five thousand dollars if they were victorious. Moreover, his new ally promised to supply him with the arms he needed to overthrow Somoza. The mission was a failure for lack of arms and funds. According to Cuadra, a group of Panamanians had contacted Gilberto Reyes, a Nicaraguan cobbler, to orchestrate the operation. Cuadra writes that the Panamanians had contacted Reyes simply because he was Nicaraguan, an identity that marked him, in their minds, as a man of action (*hombre de armas tomar*). Reyes took the money that the Panamanians gave him, kept the majority for his business, and entrusted Tijerino with the military operation, paying him a paltry sum. Panamanian government forces summarily routed Tijerino and Cuadra's forces. Cuadra managed to elude capture and went back to Costa Rica.⁸¹

The Costa Rican police arrested Cuadra upon his return, along with fellow Nicaraguan Manuel Aurelio Gutiérrez. Costa Rican police confiscated a letter Cuadra had written to Emiliano Chamorro (living in Mexico), in which Cuadra had proposed an invasion against Somoza. Cuadra writes that the relationship between Somoza and newly-elected (in 1940) Costa Rican president Rafael Angel Calderón's regime had become quite cordial. As a result, Costa Rican intelligence had intercepted the letter. Cuadra soon discovered that he was not the only Nicaraguan revolutionary being held at the Central Penitentiary in San José. Col. Clemente Cuadra Santos, Col. Carlos Campos, Oscar Armando Castillo, Antonio Espinoza, and Gilberto Reyes were among the countrymen he met there. Later, the Costa Rican government expelled Cuadra, who was unable to receive exile in Central America because Somoza had a long reach in the region and had spread the word that he was a Nazi sympathizer. Ultimately, he had to go all the way to Cuba (and as a prisoner, rather than a traditional exile), towards the end of 1940. Cuadra remained imprisoned upon the island nation until about April 1941, when Costa Rican

⁸¹ A. Cuadra, 201-3.

authorities recalled him (on humanitarian grounds) and granted him his freedom, with a warning that they would expel him again if he suffered a “relapse” – and a reminder that no other nation had wanted to take him in.⁸²

Soon thereafter, Cuadra was able to meet with his brother Manolo Cuadra, who was also in exile in Costa Rica. Through Manolo, Abelardo Cuadra met other Nicaraguans, including Emilio Quintana.⁸³ Somoza exiled Manolo Cuadra in 1939, following the publication of writings that denounced the regime.⁸⁴ Like his brother, Manolo was a former member of the *Guardia Nacional*, had fought the forces of Sandino, and had been arrested in 1935, accused of plotting to assassinate Somoza. However, he was freed at the behest of intellectuals, having earned distinction as a writer.⁸⁵ He capitalized upon this reputation in subsequent years, publishing articles critical of Somoza (which landed him in jail a few more times). In 1937, Somoza accused Cuadra of communist activities and exiled him to Little Corn Island, an island off the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua in the Caribbean Sea.⁸⁶ In a letter to his father, Manolo wrote that he had not been exiled for communism,⁸⁷ but because he was “the only young intellectual of any

⁸² A. Cuadra, 203-212.

⁸³ Emilio Quintana is the author of *Bananos*. See Emilio Quintana, *Bananos* (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1985). Quintana describes the arrival of Manolo Cuadra in Costa Rica in *Bananos*, 81 and the arrival of Abelardo Cuadra in *Bananos*, 73. The other Nicaraguans mentioned in Abelardo Cuadra’s account are Enrique Benard, Julio Almanza, and Santiago Barahona. Enrique Benard was a Nicaraguan working in Costa Rica alongside Manolo Cuadra and Emilio Quintana. Santiago Barahona may be the *tico-nica* (half-Costa Rican, half-Nicaraguan) son of Nicaraguan exile of Humberto Barahona. See Quintana, 73-4.

⁸⁴ A. Cuadra, 199-201, 213.

⁸⁵ M. Cuadra, 218, 225-235.

⁸⁶ “Nicaraguan Radicals Released,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1937.

⁸⁷ According to Olander, Manolo Cuadra joined the PCCR during his exile in Costa Rica.

worth that does not fear [Somoza] and that [Somoza] will never be able to domesticate.”⁸⁸ Two years later, Manolo left Nicaragua, disillusioned, found work in Costa Rica laboring on a banana plantation and felling trees in Shan-grilá (south of Quepos). Emilio Quintana’s *Bananos* contains a passage in which Manolo Cuadra describes his motivations for seeking the life of a peon: “This is where one learns to be a man and human. I ignored this life in Nicaragua. I had become accustomed to the life of a parasite living on pensions managed by kind women. Now I live the life of a primitive and modern man: made of hatchets, machetes and sweat.”⁸⁹ Writing of his life as a laborer in Costa Rica to his brother, Manolo wrote:

I am now an apathetic man, without interesting passions, almost without emotions, with very little will and absolutely bored. Still, I am more or less content since I have taken off the iron corset of Nicaragua, and here I live on six or seven colones daily. It is normal, but the work in the fields is difficult. It is almost only Nicas here. Infer from this the economic state of that horrible fatherland.⁹⁰

Reunited, the Cuadra brothers became boxing promoters in San José. They had little success in this endeavor and soon were unable to pay their bills. Manolo eventually decided to leave Costa Rica and went back to Nicaragua on foot.⁹¹ Abelardo remained, struggling to make it as a promoter and paying the bills by working as a cobbler and, later, as a painter. In 1943, Cuadra went to Mexico to join in another effort to overthrow Somoza. However, the rumors that had lured him there proved to be a false, as leaders of this supposed plot had no tangible

⁸⁸ Manolo Cuadra to Manuel Antonio Cuadra, Little Corn Island, April 12, 1937 in M. Cuadra, 250.

⁸⁹ Quintana, 81.

⁹⁰ M. Cuadra, 261.

⁹¹ Manolo Cuadra continued his opposition to Somoza through his writing and landed in jail in 1943 and 1947. See David E. Whisnant, *Rascally Signs in Sacred Places: The Politics of Culture in Nicaragua* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 159.

connections with the Central American exile movement.⁹² Although Cuadra failed to connect with other Central American exiles in Mexico, there was a significant community in the country at that time.

Mexico became an important refuge for Nicaraguan exiles. As Margarita Silva delineates, under President Lázaro Cárdenas' regime, Mexico demonstrated a willingness to criticize its neighbor to the north, and could condemn other nations it perceived as treading upon the sovereignty of weaker states through its role in the United Nations. By the 1940s, progressives, particularly from Latin America, viewed Mexico as a beacon for solidarity and anti-imperialism and as a defender of smaller nations' rights. Moreover, the Mexican government had shown itself to be sympathetic and tolerant of exiles during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. Silva argues that post-revolutionary Mexico, with its program of agrarian reform, oil nationalization, and anti-imperialist foreign policy, inspired Central American exiles as a model of socio-political development. By emulating Mexico, exiles hoped to secure a better international position for their home nations within the context of a changing world order during the aftermath of World War II.⁹³

Analyzing the archives of Mexico's secret police, the *Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales*⁹⁴ (DGIPS), Laura Moreno Rodríguez discovered that the organization had registered and monitored 23 Nicaraguan exiles (mostly Conservatives) between

⁹² A. Cuadra, 217-219.

⁹³ Margarita Silva, "La Unión Democrática Centroamericana en México: Contexto histórico y actores sociales, 1942-1947," 3-5,8 (paper presented at the V Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, Universidad de El Salvador, San Salvador, July 18-21, 2000).

⁹⁴ The DGIPS, initially known as the *Departamento Confidencial*, became the *Oficina de Información Política y Social* in the 1930s, and the *Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales* from 1941 to 1947.

1937 and 1947. Notable Nicaraguans in this group included Emiliano Chamorro, Ramón Rostan Bengoecha, Segundo Chamorro Argüello, Humberto Barahona Briones, and Juan José Muñoz.⁹⁵ Emiliano Chamorro, a fixture of Nicaraguan politics since the beginning of the century, fled Nicaragua fearing for his life on June 23, 1936. He was in Costa Rica for a brief period, but served most of his ten year exile in Mexico, where he continued to work against Somoza.⁹⁶ In 1938, Chamorro published a flier in Mexico which blamed Somoza for all of the problems that had beset Nicaragua since the Liberal uprising of 1926.⁹⁷

In April 1937, concerned that the Nicaraguan exiles would be successful in securing support from the Mexican government, Somoza asked Minister of Foreign Relations Dr. Cordero Reyes to inform the Mexican legation in Nicaragua that Chamorro and Rostrán were plotting a revolution against the Nicaraguan government. Seeking to avoid conflict with the Nicaraguan government, President Lazaro Cardenas assigned the DGIPS to monitor Chamorro and his associates. In June 1937, the Nicaraguan government asked the Mexican government to publicly deny its support for Chamorro. Cardenas made the announcement, but more out of a desire to maintain Mexico's position of non-intervention, rather than out of sympathy with the Nicaraguan government.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Laura B. Moreno Rodríguez, "El espionaje mexicano tras la pista de los opositores nicaragüenses en México, 1937-1947," 4 (paper presented at the X Congreso Cnrttoamericano de Historia, UNAN-Managua, Nicaragua, July 12-15, 2010).

⁹⁶ Walter, 53; "Ex-Leader Quits Managua: Chamorro, Former President, Goes to Costa Rica by Airplane," *New York Times*, June 23, 1936.

⁹⁷ Walter, 99.

⁹⁸ Archivo General de Nicaragua, Fondo Presidencial, O/P. Secretaria Privada, Sección: Embajadas, 1937, Caja in Moreno Rodríguez, 5.

As the Second World War deepened, Mexico made certain to expel certain undesirables from the country. Eliseo Castro Reina, the DGIPS agent in charge of surveillance, reported the arrival of Segundo Chamorro (Emiliano Chamorro's first cousin), and General Roberto Hurtado in 1941.⁹⁹ Mexico deported Hurtado, expelled from Costa Rica in 1939, to Laredo, Texas, for attempting to secure planes from German Minister Rüdiger von Collenberg in July 1941. The Associated Press labeled Hurtado a Nazi and claimed he was a member of the Nicaraguan Nazi Party.¹⁰⁰ Moreno notes that Mexico expelled Hurtado to the United States for trying to buy arms in 1943, and barred him from reentering Mexico.¹⁰¹

This did not prevent the Nicaraguan exile community from remaining active; for example, the *Comité Revolucionario Nicaragüense* published its *Programa de acción* in September 1938. The *programa* criticized Somoza and the GN, as well as the two traditional parties that had failed to prevent his coup. The *Comité* called for armed struggle against Somoza, the elimination of the *Guardia*, land reform, bank reform, state-led industrialization, anti-imperialist foreign policy, the development of a labor code and social security.¹⁰² Somoza attempted to combat exile propaganda by welcoming all of his critics (including Emiliano Chamorro) back to Nicaragua in December 1941, stating, "General Chamorro, as I have said many times, can return to Nicaragua whenever he wishes, for the doors of Nicaragua are open to

⁹⁹ Moreno Rodríguez, 6-7.

¹⁰⁰ "Mexico Expels Nicaraguan Nazi, Charges Plot," *Washington Post*, July 16, 1941.

¹⁰¹ Archivo General de la Nación, DGIPS, 784, 9, f in Moreno, 7.

¹⁰² Comité Revolucionario Nicaragüense, *Programa de acción* (Mexico: 1938) in Walter 113-4.

all, especially for Nicaraguans who wish to return and work, for we need them. Peace and work with less politics are what the world needs.”¹⁰³

However, the exiles did not return, preferring to continue their activities abroad. In March 1943, Central American exiles from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica formed the *Unión Democrática Centroamericana* (UDC). For the founders of the UDC, Mexico provided the ideal platform from which to denounce U.S. intervention in Central America, exploitation by North American monopolies, and the abuses committed by the dictatorial regimes. As such, the Mexican press received the foundation of the UDC positively. The UDC also had affiliates in El Salvador, where it functioned clandestinely, and Costa Rica, where it operated in the open, although not without limitations. Margarita Silva explains that Article 33 of the Mexican Constitution prohibited exiles and foreigners, in general, from participating in Mexican politics. Furthermore, exiles were not to engage in activities that could cause trouble to the host nation. However, Silva states, despite the second limitation, exiles benefitted from a certain amount of tolerance for criticisms they levied against totalitarian regimes.¹⁰⁴

The UDC’s program centered on the principles of non-intervention, the right of a people to choose its own government, and collaboration between nations to secure the best conditions for work, economic progress and social security. They called for continental unity and solidarity in the defense of human dignity, liberty and democracy. They envisioned continental unity as a tangible force against stronger powers. They also argued that Central America would earn far more respect in Latin American and world affairs as a unified isthmus, rather than as a series of

¹⁰³ “Somoza Bids Foes Return: All Nicaraguans Who Want to Work Welcome, He Says,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1941.

¹⁰⁴ Silva, 3-8.

small republics. To that end, they reinvigorated the call for a united Central American state. The UDC also called for a national economic project that sought to protect national interests against foreign ones, particularly monopolies. They called for the nationalization of utilities, championed the right of nations to exploit their own resources, and aimed to improve living conditions for workers.¹⁰⁵

After the creation of the UDC in 1943, Somoza asked Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho to distance himself from the exiles. Avila Camacho complied by increasing surveillance of Nicaraguan exiles. In October 1944, agents reported that the UDC had agreed to form a committee to overthrow Somoza. The committee, with Emiliano Chamorro at its head, would ask the Mexican government to shelter the organization, as it had for done for Spanish exiles, and name commissions to obtain funds and arms. The Mexican government informed Chamorro to remember his position as an exile and to respect the laws of Mexico.¹⁰⁶

Both Costa Rica and Mexico were important in the evolution of the Nicaraguan exile movement. However, in the period from 1936-1944 they remained unorganized. It would still be another two years before they began making alliances with exiles from other nations and coordinating their plan of attacks to overthrow the region's dictators. While Somoza's opponents abroad continued to make plans, the Nicaraguan general prepared for another presidential run.

Opposition to Re-Election

By 1944, it became clear that Somoza intended to retain the presidency, as he proceeded to remove any obstacles that stood in his way. In April, the two legislative branches approved an

¹⁰⁵ Silva, 9-12.

¹⁰⁶ Moreno Rodríguez, 7-8.

amendment to allow a sitting president to be re-elected if his first term overlapped a period that included a declared state of international war that lasted for at least two years.¹⁰⁷ Somoza publicly stated that he had no real desire to be re-elected, but would do so if the people insisted. However, mounting opposition to his re-election soon erupted.

Young intellectuals were the first to rise up against Somoza. On May 21, 1944, the GN arrested a group of student demonstrators. A month later, another group of students engaged in a solidarity strike, protesting the military junta in Guatemala and chanting “Down with Somoza, assassin of Sandino!” When the protesters reached the presidential palace, the GN opened fire and launched tear gas into the crowd, reportedly killing two and injuring others. Authorities arrested several hundred demonstrators and Somoza closed the universities in Managua and Granada.¹⁰⁸ The following day, the mothers and sisters of the demonstrators, dressed in black, protested the student arrests and demanded their release.¹⁰⁹ On July 8, 1944, the newspapers *La Noticia* and *La Prensa* suspended publication in protest against the arrest of journalists.¹¹⁰

Interestingly, organized labor backed Somoza. Somoza courted labor as a strategic decision designed to regain some popular support and to present himself as a national leader against growing opposition from university students, professionals, businessmen and Conservative oligarchs. Somoza successfully attracted labor by proposing a labor code in 1944. Somoza’s support for a labor code dated back to the earliest stages of his regime; however, he had never followed through on his promises. By 1944, the political climate demanded that he

¹⁰⁷ *La Prensa*, April 20, 1944; *La Prensa*, April 26, 1944 in Walter, 129.

¹⁰⁸ “Managua Strife Reported,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1944; Walter, 130-1; Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 114.

¹⁰⁹ *La Prensa*, August 29, 1944 in Walter, 131.

¹¹⁰ “Nicaraguan Papers Quit in Protest at Arrests,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 9, 1944.

make some concessions to labor. Furthermore, the geopolitical climate favored some tolerance of leftist groups in light of the fact that Nicaragua was allied to the United States and the Soviet Union during World War Two. Thus, Somoza's labor code satisfied many of labor's demands: the legalization of unions and strikes, injury compensation, paid vacation and a minimum wage. In this relatively more open space, the *Partido Socialista de Nicaragua* (PSN), the leftist wing of the labor movement, emerged from the shadows to organize in support of a labor code.

Somoza tried to galvanize the labor movement in order to deploy it against his opponents. However, according to Gould, labor soon divided into a pair of factions split along the lines of generational experience and social background. Representing the old guard, the pro-Somoza group was composed mainly of artisans who had spent much of the 1930s in prison and were much more conciliatory toward the dictator.¹¹¹ Alternately, young wage earners in Managua, León and Chinandega dominated the leadership of the PSN. As a Marxist party, the PSN was far more antagonistic to Somoza. The PSN had links to Costa Rica's Communist Party, and some of its members, including Francisco Hernández Segura, had lived in exile in Costa Rica and worked with Manuel Mora and Arnoldo Ferreto.¹¹² Nicaraguan exiles established the first Nicaraguan Communist Party in Costa Rica in 1940. In September 1944, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover contacted U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle in order to inform him that Nicaraguan exiles in Costa Rica had "organized an affiliate of the Socialist Party of Nicaragua with the

¹¹¹ Gould, "For an Organized Nicaragua," 357. In Chinandega the labor leaders were the "Obreristas," artisans who had enjoyed political popularity for two decades.

¹¹² In Rafael Casanova Fuertes, "Los actores invisibles de la Revolución (1936-1979): El caso de las FARN (1966-1969)" (paper presented at X Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, July, 12-15, 2010); Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 192.

support of Communist Party organization in Costa Rica.”¹¹³ Moreover, Manuel Mora, prominent Costa Rican communist, advised the PSN to work with Somoza to gain political concessions for labor.¹¹⁴ In October 1944, U.S. Charge d’Affairs Walter Washington confirmed that “several Costa Ricans are at present in Nicaragua acting under orders of Mora, and are there engaged in trying to obtain social legislation and other benefits from Somoza’s government.”¹¹⁵ Mora was so influential among Nicaraguan leftists that even Abelardo Cuadra temporarily ended his opposition to Somoza, thanks to the President’s support for a labor code.¹¹⁶

Somoza reached out to the PSN, publicly apologizing for having jailed many of its members, in an effort to counter student initiatives to gain PSN support. Furthermore, he offered to preside over a congress of workers and peasants to bring the two factions together, at which point he proposed social security programs and agrarian reform. The Workers Congress ultimately failed to endorse Somoza’s re-election. However, labor did not outright oppose his candidacy and refrained from endorsing the opposition. PSN and other labor groups came out in support of a labor code and, thus, in support of Somoza during the crisis. Historian Knut Walter

¹¹³ J. Edgar Hoover to Adolfe A. Berle, Jr., USNADF 818.00B-9-744 (1944-09-07), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Melendez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹¹⁴ Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 120.

¹¹⁵ USNADF 818.00-10-3044 (1944-10-30), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Melendez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica. The U.S. Charge d’Affairs feared that if Mora’s involment in Nicaraguan labor became public knowledge Costa Rican-Nicaraguan relations would deteriorate even further.

¹¹⁶ Modesto Valle hijo to Somoza, San José, April 29, 1944, folder “Costa Rica,” box “ASG 002, 1948-58 Secretaria de la Presidencia,” ANN in Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 120-1.

suggests that the hostility to a labor code expressed by Conservatives and business leaders made labor's support for Somoza inevitable.¹¹⁷

More problematic to Somoza's re-election hopes was the increasing fissure within his party. The threat of *continuismo somocista* pitted different factions of the Liberal Party against one another. From this split emerged the Partido Liberal Independiente (PLI), made up of urban professionals, businessmen, students, and ex-Somoza officials. The PLI was vehemently against Somoza's effort to secure another term in office, believing that his government was despotic and violated Liberal tenets regarding government and the economy.¹¹⁸ Specifically, they accused Somoza of "violating the people's political liberties, of corrupting the *Guardia Nacional* and other governmental bodies, of taking advantage of the state's financial institutions for personal gain, and of destroying the independence of the judicial system."¹¹⁹ The PLI viewed Somoza's economic corruption and his attempts to extend his rule to be his most grievous transgressions. Walter denies that the PLI, the party of the middle class, opposed Somoza on ideological grounds, as it did not propose any major changes to Nicaraguan society. Its main program was to do away with *continuismo* and to guarantee public liberties. Furthermore, it sought to modernize the state by "strengthening its political institutions and promoting the development of capitalism along more humane and socially responsive lines."¹²⁰

Carlos Pasos, businessman and leader of the PLI, emerged as Somoza's primary rival for control of the Liberal Party. In July, Pasos called for a general strike and showed the

¹¹⁷ Gould, "For an Organized Nicaragua," 357-9; Walter, 105, 136-8; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 123.

¹¹⁸ Gould, "For an Organized Nicaragua," 362.

¹¹⁹ Walter, 134.

¹²⁰ Walter, 135-6.

opposition's strength by leading a demonstration of 20,000 in front of the U.S. embassy that booed Somoza when he attempted to make a speech. The National Guard broke up the demonstration and forced Pasos, along with twenty others, to seek asylum within the Mexican embassy. Pasos and the other dissidents also asked Costa Rica for asylum, which it reportedly granted.¹²¹ The following day Somoza, fearing the further disintegration of the Liberal Party, vetoed the amendment that would have permitted his reelection, stating: "Although the Constitution reform measure was passed by a great majority, to maintain the unity of the Liberal party I decline the opportunity to be a candidate in the election."¹²² He went on to say that the government's actions had not warranted the political demonstrations and that his vetoing of the bill should defuse any turmoil; those that sought to create instability would be harshly dealt with.¹²³

The PSN opposed the general strike called by Somoza's opposition in 1944, based on the unwillingness of the opposition, particularly the Independent Liberals, to concede certain guarantees for a workable alliance: the promulgation of a labor Code and the legalization of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party. During this period, the PSN followed a program of "national unity", supporting the Somoza government's social program and relegating its own party interests to a secondary status. In a party manifesto the PSN declared, "We opposed the government of General Somoza, but we realized that we were not following a correct political line so we proceeded to rectify it. General Somoza has told us that he too is ready to listen to the voice of

¹²¹ Walter, 132; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 115; *New York Times*, July 12, 1944; "Nicaraguans Call National Uprising Move a Failure," *Washington Post*, July 15, 1944.

¹²² "Somoza Refuses to Run," *New York Times*, July 6, 1944.

¹²³ *La Prensa*, July 6, 1944 in Walter, 133.

the people.”¹²⁴ Gould argues that labor’s support of Somoza “can only be understood in the context of a young, potentially expansive labor movement, weakened by internal divisions, constantly harassed by management and seriously threatened by the possibility of a right-wing takeover.” In return, Somoza allowed unions to flourish from August 1944 to June 1945, a period in which they enjoyed “relative autonomy” and “aided in the consolidation of partial Somocista hegemony in the working class.”¹²⁵

Following the demonstrations and the withdrawal of Somoza’s candidacy, Liberals remained concerned. Roberto Duran Gonzales, Nicaraguan ambassador to Mexico, resigned in protest and fled to Costa Rica.¹²⁶ Leonardo Argüello, Minister of the Interior, resigned in protest over Somoza’s handling of the demonstrations.¹²⁷ Argüello complained that Somoza could have sought out more expedient and politic solutions to the crisis.¹²⁸ Somoza, apparently heeding Argüello’s advice, reached out to Carlos Pasos in an effort to piece the Liberal Party back together; however, Pasos refused to cooperate and left the country instead.

The Nicaraguan exiles pledged to keep on fighting Somoza from abroad. They were confident that an overthrow was imminent.¹²⁹ Somoza responded by offering amnesty to all persons convicted of political crimes, stating: “Any Nicaraguan can return home provided he

¹²⁴ “Manifiesto a la Nación del Partido Socialista de Nicaragua,” Colección Centroamérica, legajo 4, no. 638, IHCA, in Walter, 138.

¹²⁵ Gould, “For an Organized Nicaragua,” 355-365.

¹²⁶ Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 191.

¹²⁷ “Nicaraguan Minister Resigns,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1944.

¹²⁸ *La Prensa*, July 11, 1944 in Walter, 133.

¹²⁹ Carlos Pasos and Gen. J. Castro Weismer went to El Salvador and Carlos Montalban, along with three others went to Costa Rica. “Nicaraguan Exiles to Keep Up Fight: Political Refugees to Oppose Somoza from Salvador and Costa Rica,” *New York Times*, July 16, 1944.

does not wish to create civil strife”.¹³⁰ Exiles, however, reportedly feared a trap.¹³¹ In July 1944, Nicaragua closed its border to Costa Rica, cutting off food exports, on the pretext that the Nicaraguan harvest would only be sufficient to cover domestic needs. However, the *New York Times* reported that growing anti-Somoza sentiment in San José radio campaigns was the real cause.¹³² As analyzed more fully below, Somoza came under increasing attacks and media scrutiny when the Costa Rican opposition moved to discredit the government of President Picado by attacking his links with the Nicaraguan President.

During the period, Somoza monitored Nicaraguan exiles in Mexico, Costa Rica, and elsewhere through Nicaraguan diplomats and informants. Diplomats played an important role as spies for Somoza, cultivating their own informants and sending back reports on exile activity and possible revolutionary plots. Somoza was deeply concerned about his enemies abroad and made great attempts to keep tabs on them.¹³³ Despite warnings from the Costa Rican government, Nicaraguan exiles in that country grew increasingly bolder in their anti-Somoza activity. They threatened Nicaraguan diplomats in San José, causing Minister Portacarrero to resign his post in July 1944. Another diplomat, Justino Sansón Balladares, declared that he did not fear anyone and would defend Somoza with his revolver. However, the threats soon forced Balladares to take refuge within the legation for fear that the exiles would attack him, and Somoza transferred him out of Costa Rica. The Nicaraguan exiles used similar intimidation tactics against

¹³⁰ “Nicaragua Amnesty Aid Voted,” *New York Times*, August 6, 1944; “Somoza says He’ll Stay: Nicaraguan President to Remain Until Successor is Chosen,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1944.

¹³¹ *New York Times*, August 9, 1944.

¹³² “Nicaragua Shuts Border: Closes Frontier with Costa Rica, Cutting Latter’s Food Imports,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1944.

¹³³ Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 167-170.

Portacarrero's replacement, Noel Ernesto Pallais; however, the new Minister refused to abandon his post.¹³⁴ In August 1944, Pallais, asked Somoza for extra funds to watch over Nicaraguan exiles and to combat negative publicity they were stirring up in the Costa Rican press.¹³⁵

Somoza demanded that the Costa Rican government do more to monitor the exiles. Particularly worrisome to Somoza were three Nicaraguan generals: Alfredo Noguera Gomez, Roberto Hurtado and Crisanto Zapata. The Nicaraguan government requested that Costa Rica keep these men in San José. The Costa Rican government agreed to monitor their activity, promising that they would require the three men to report to the Public Security Minister two times a day. However, the Costa Rican government proved unable to fulfill its promise, failing to locate the Nicaraguans in question. A representative of the Nicaraguan exiles, Dr. Horacio Argüello Bolaños assured the Costa Rican president that the exiles would not attempt to foment a revolution from Costa Rican territory.¹³⁶ This proved to be a lie.

At the end September 1944, Alfredo Noguera Gomez led Nicaraguan exiles in a botched invasion attempt of Nicaragua from Costa Rica. The exiles gathered along the border and were under the surveillance of the Costa Rican government. However, Costa Rican authorities refrained from acting until they received confirmation of the exiles' intentions, in order to deflect charges of assisting the Somoza government. Costa Rican forces engaged the Nicaraguan exiles before they were able to cross over into Nicaragua. Battling at the Muelle de San Carlos, a small Costa Rican border town, Costa Rican police forced the Nicaraguan exiles to flee and disperse,

¹³⁴ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 192-3.

¹³⁵ Matilde Pasos, Roberto Dubon Gonzales, and Gabry Rivas are among the Nicaraguan exiles that crop up in the Costa Rican press to criticize Somoza. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 192.

¹³⁶ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 194.

pursuing them along the San Carlos River. During the aftermath of the incident, the *Associated Press* reported the outbreak of street brawls between Nicaraguan exiles and Costa Ricans near the border, resulting in four wounded Costa Ricans. Costa Rican authorities confiscated a small arsenal of six bombs and fifteen sticks of dynamite in a private home.¹³⁷ The *New York Times* reported the arrest of 40 Nicaraguans, all of whom were scheduled for deportation as punishment for their involvement in the plot.¹³⁸

Somoza acted decisively and the Costa Rican president allowed *Guardia* soldiers to cross into his territory, in order to assist Costa Rican forces against the would-be Nicaraguan revolutionaries.¹³⁹ On October 7, Costa Rican and *Guardia* forces killed Gen. Alfredo Noguera Gomez, along with eight to ten other Nicaraguans, putting an end to the armed attempt to overthrow Somoza.¹⁴⁰

According to Abelardo Cuadra, Carlos Pasos organized and financed the invasion. The Costa Rican home of Matilde Pasos, sister of Carlos Pasos, was a meeting place for several Nicaraguans exiles. At one of these gatherings, Dr. Guillermo Pasos Montiel recruited Abelardo Cuadra and other Nicaraguans to invade Nicaragua. Cuadra initially accepted; however, he reconsidered his decision when he learned that Carlos Pasos would not be directly participating

¹³⁷ The three wounded Costa Ricans were: Capt. José Francisco Aguiar Fernandez, Major, J. Ramírez, and Lt. R. Quesada in “Nicaraguan Rebels Wound Costa Ricans,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1944; “Costa Rica Town Retaken from Nicaraguans,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 1, 1944; “Nicaraguan Rebels Wound 4 Costa Ricans,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 1944; “New Clash in Costa Rica: Nicaraguans Battle Defenders at Village Arsenal,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1944.

¹³⁸ “Costa Rica Holds Exiles: Arrests 40 Nicaraguans Linked to Plot to Unseat Somoza,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1944

¹³⁹ “Nicaraguans Fought Rebels,” *New York Times*, October 11, 1944; A. Cuadra, 223.

¹⁴⁰ “Nicaraguan Rebel Killed: Costa Rica Lists Gomez Dead,” *New York Times*, October 10, 1944; A. Cuadra, 223.

in the invasion on the ground. Furthermore, Cuadra had no confidence in Noguera Gómez's leadership, characterizing the man's military tactics as those "that belonged to the turn of the century," and believed that the General had severely underestimated the *Guardia*.¹⁴¹

Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, recently returned to Costa Rica from Mexico, did not think the problem lay with Noguera's tactics but rather with a lack of arms and the fact that someone had already tipped off Picado about the plot.¹⁴² Abelardo Cuadra claimed that a young Nicaraguan from a well-known family had informed President Picado of the planned invasion and the president quickly sent troops to stop them.¹⁴³

The Nicaraguan government praised the efforts of the Costa Rican officers in defeating the Noguera forces, adding that the Nicaraguan people condemned the actions of these exiles.¹⁴⁴ Somoza also condemned the revolutionary plot, declaring that it had "no importance" and that it had not altered the course of the nation. He only lamented the loss of Costa Rican lives.¹⁴⁵ The Costa Rican government ordered most Nicaraguans involved in the plot to leave the country.¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile, in another attempt to appear democratic, Somoza declared that the exiles could

¹⁴¹ According to Cuadra, Matilde Pasos tried to bring him back into the fold, offering him his own command and twenty-five guns on the condition that Cuadra recruit the soldiers. Cuadra insisted that the Pasos provide the necessary men, however, they did not, and this ended Cuadra's role in the attempted invasion. A. Cuadra, 222.

¹⁴² Argüello Ramírez, *Doy Testimonio*, 50.

¹⁴³ A. Cuadra, 222.

¹⁴⁴ "Nicaraguan Envoy Denies Uprisings," *New York Times*, October 8, 1944. The PSN also condemned the attacks. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 121.

¹⁴⁵ "Somoza Condemns Uprising," *New York Times*, October 5, 1944.

¹⁴⁶ Costa Rica did not deport all anti-Somoza exiles. Enrique Tijerino was released at the request of Manuel Mora. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 198.

return to Nicaragua if they obeyed the laws.¹⁴⁷ The exiles balked at this offer, and the *New York Times* reported that seven of their number had taken refuge in Mexico.¹⁴⁸

Somoza, for his part, showed little intention of keeping his promise not to run for president, stating, about a year later, that he would only accept the presidency if he received 65 percent of the vote.¹⁴⁹ This once again inflamed the opposition.¹⁵⁰ Somoza responded with increased repression. Acts of violence and deportations against opponents of the administration did little to improve Somoza's image. Somoza's tentative labor alliance began to come apart and Somoza ordered the arrests and deportations of the PSN leadership and the shutdown of their newspaper, *Obrero* in August 1945.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, in September 1945, four labor leaders were killed en route to exile in Honduras.¹⁵² In October 1945, fifteen Nicaraguan exiles sought refuge in Guatemala after Somoza forced them to walk from Managua to Tegucigalpa.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ *New York Times*, November 8, 1944.

¹⁴⁸ Alberto Noguera Gomez, brother of leader Alfredo Noguera Gomez, was among the exiles. "7 Exiles Reach Mexico," *New York Times*, November 11, 1944.

¹⁴⁹ "Chamorro held Welcome," *New York Times*, July 29, 1945.

¹⁵⁰ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 118.

¹⁵¹ Gould, "For an Organized Nicaragua," 375; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 122.

¹⁵² The four labor leaders were Armando Amador, Manuel Perez Estrada, Carlos Perez, and Juan Lorio. "Nicaragua Killings Told: Four Labor Leaders Reported Slain on Way to Exile," *New York Times*, September 21, 1945. Armando Amador had been Secretary of the Costa Rican affiliate of the PSN. USNADF818.00-9-744 (1944-08-14), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Melendez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

¹⁵³ Nicaraguans Seek Refuge: Barred by El Salvador, They Apply to Guatemala, *New York Times*, October 25, 1945.

This disappointed not only the opponents of the regime within Nicaragua, but also the United States government, which, during the aftermath of World War Two, strove to reconcile its commitment to democracy with the regimes it had supported within the hemisphere.

Somoza, the Exiles, and the U.S. Reformers

Somoza took special care to develop his relationship with the United States government, particularly with President Roosevelt.¹⁵⁴ Before Somoza's visit to Washington D.C. in May 1939, Roosevelt reportedly remarked, "As a Nicaraguan might say, he's a sonofabitch but he's ours."¹⁵⁵ The statement is most likely apocryphal,¹⁵⁶ however, its persistence demonstrates the perception that the United States supported Somoza despite his despotism. During World War Two, the Nicaraguan General moved to legitimize his regime by strengthening its relationship with the U.S. In February 1942, Somoza sent President Roosevelt birthday greetings. Roosevelt replied that he appreciated the greetings and felt honored that Somoza had renamed the principal street in Managua, the Nicaraguan capital, Roosevelt Avenue. He closed the letter by asserting that he valued the meeting they had had in 1939, even more so now that they had a common undertaking. Somoza proclaimed it the greatest letter he had received in his twenty years of public service. He said that he felt that Roosevelt was like a brother to him, a member of his

¹⁵⁴ "Somoza Praises U.S.: Nicaraguan President Has Long Wished to Meet Roosevelt," *New York Times*, November 20, 1938; "Nicaraguan President to Be First of Notables to Visit D.C. in May," *Washington Post*, April 14, 1939; "To Be White House Guest: Nicaragua's President Will Also Visit World's Fair," *New York Times*, April 21, 1939; "Somoza Lauds Roosevelt," *New York Times*, May 1, 1939; "Nicaragua Sees U.S. as Friend, Somoza Says," *Washington Post*, May 2, 1939; "Somoza Suggests Nicaraguan Canal," *New York Times*, May 9, 1939; "Somoza Praises Roosevelt Policy," *New York Times*, May 13, 1939; "Roosevelt, Somoza Sign Trade Terms," *New York Times*, May 23, 1939.

¹⁵⁵ "Nicaragua-I'm the Champ," *Time*, November 15, 1948.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Crawley argues that the statement is a myth encouraged by Somoza. See Andrew Crawley, *Somoza and Roosevelt: Good Neighbor Diplomacy in Nicaragua, 1933-1945* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2007), 152-3.

family. He even claimed to have inaugurated something like a “best friendship” within the first five minutes of his fateful 1939 meeting with the U.S. President. Somoza finished by stating that the United States government had his “whole-hearted and loyal cooperation...in the terrific struggle for democracy and freedom.”¹⁵⁷

During the struggle with Germany and Japan, the U.S. government viewed its relationship with Somoza as beneficial to the war effort. In an effort to stem Nazi influence in the hemisphere, President Franklin Roosevelt sought to tighten the relationships that existed between the United States and the governments of Latin America.¹⁵⁸ When the United States officially entered the war, it viewed the governments of Latin America, even those that were not in line with the democratic principles it espoused, including those of Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic, as friendly allies.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ “Letter Pleases Somoza,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1942.

¹⁵⁸ The fears of a fifth column of Nazis infiltrating Latin America dominated much of U.S. policy during this period. Clinton points out that the threat of a Nazi threat was never as substantial in Nicaragua as it may have been in other parts of Latin America. What Nicaragua did have was a small but economically influential minority of Germans that concerned Meredith Nicholson, U.S. minister. Clinton, 84; Clark, 85. Somoza sought to placate the United States and undertook measures to do so. The Nicaraguan government placed Axis businesses, most of them bearing German names, on a blacklist. “More Nicaraguan Firms are Placed on Blacklist,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 5, 1942. The National Bank of Nicaragua also froze the funds of about 100 Axis properties, most of them German, allowing the Axis nationals money only for living expenses. Somoza also ordered German nationals to be rounded up and be sent inland, an activity that increased after the sinking of a Costa Rican ship by a German submarine in July of 1942. “Managua Widens Axis Ban,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1942. The United States government also requested that the governments of Latin America send German nationals to the United States for internment. Latin American governments, including Nicaragua, sent thousands of Germans to the United States. For example, on March 7, 1942 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Somoza would send forty Axis nationals living in Nicaragua to the United States. Among them were Germans who had lived in Nicaragua for several years and were married to Nicaraguan women. The group also included some second and third generation Germans that had never seen Germany. Nevertheless, all were suspected of being dedicated Nazis. “Nicaragua to Intern Aliens Here,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1942.

¹⁵⁹ Clinton, 64-5.

Somoza exploited the U.S. policy of anti-Nazism to silence critics and opponents of the regime, as he had done with Abelardo Cuadra.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, he viewed the situation as an opportunity to align himself firmly with the United States government and gain greater legitimacy to his hold on power. Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Nicaragua was the first nation in Latin America to pledge military support in case the United States were to enter the war effort, promising to have ten thousand soldiers ready to assist the United States within twenty four hours.¹⁶¹ After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Nicaragua declared war on Japan on December 9, 1941 and two days later declared war on Germany and Italy.¹⁶² Somoza also offered Nicaraguan territory for the use of U.S. forces and the Roosevelt administration accepted his offer, building air bases in Managua and Puerto Cabezas and a naval base at Corinto.¹⁶³

The cooperation between the government of Nicaragua and the United States soon suffered setbacks as reformers within the U.S. State Department began making policy shifts reflecting the changing international political climate as the Second World War came to an end. From 1944 to 1948, the United States government demonstrated a willingness to turn against

¹⁶⁰ Another example occurred in September of 1942 when Somoza claimed to have found evidence that Axis agents were working with Conservatives to create unrest in the country and to plan his assassination. "Plot Menaced Somoza," *New York Times*, September 15, 1942.

¹⁶¹ "Nicaragua Offers to Aid U.S. in War," *New York Times*, November 13, 1941. As Richard Clinton points out, not a single Nicaraguan saw any combat during World War II, Clinton, 83.

¹⁶² Clinton, 82.

¹⁶³ Karl Berman, *Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States since 1848* (Boston: South End Press, 1986), 230-1. Clinton points out that these bases served as important defense points against the Nazi U-boat threat in the Caribbean basin as well as to protect U.S. interests, including the Panama Canal. Nicaragua was also important in that it exported rubber to aid the U.S. war effort. To insure that it would continue to protect U.S. interests in the region Nicaragua was the beneficiary of military aid under the terms of Lend-lease in the form of \$890,000 in aid, mostly in aircraft and ordinance. Clinton, 83, 85, 87; Clark, 97.

Somoza.¹⁶⁴ In the aftermath of World War II, U.S. policy goals underwent intense debate. The debate centered on the differing democratic policy goals within the State Department between “reformers” and “realists.” On the one hand were reformers who believed that U.S. policy should promote democracy, social reform, and human rights. On the other hand, realists argued that the United States should pursue a policy of supporting governments that were friendly to the United States and its interests, as the U.S. could do little to change the political, economic, and social conditions of Latin America.¹⁶⁵ With the threat of Nazism subsiding, the postwar period offered a rare opportunity for the United States to align itself with governments not because they shared a mutual threat but because they shared mutual principles. The State Department’s evolving policies caused exiles to hope that the U.S. might become an ally against oppressive regimes.

By 1944, the State Department began receiving reports which charged that by providing authoritarian governments in the hemisphere arms and ammunition under Lend-Lease the United States was in effect supporting and enabling dictatorships to remain in power by force.¹⁶⁶ Nicaraguans disaffected by the Somoza regime were among the Latin Americans who questioned the United States’ decision to fight tyranny in Europe while supporting authoritarian regimes closer to home.

The Guatemalan newspaper, *Nuestro Diario*, published an editorial by Alberto Ordoñez, a Nicaraguan journalist living in exile in Guatemala. Ordoñez stated that continental defense had

¹⁶⁴ Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 117.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Freeman Smith, “United States Policy-Making for Latin America during the Truman Administration: The Conflict of Personalities, Priorities, and Perceptions,” *Continuity: A Journal of History*, 16 (Fall 1992), 90-1.

¹⁶⁶ Clinton, 91-2.

led the U.S. to arm anti-democratic regimes in the western hemisphere. He went on to claim that the United States' espousal of democracy existed in a vacuum and had no basis in reality for the peoples of Central America.¹⁶⁷

Dr. Alejandro César, a Nicaraguan exile living in Mexico and a former Nicaraguan Minister Plenipotentiary, wrote to Assistant Secretary of State of Inter-American Affairs Nelson Rockefeller in 1945, arguing that Latin American authoritarian governments utilized the "...shipment of tanks, combat planes, arms, and ammunition which they should have used to fight the Axis powers and which in reality they used only to subject and persecute their own peoples, trampling on the Constitution and laws, and perpetuating themselves indefinitely in power." In Nicaragua, the Lend-Lease arms had only served to increase the arrogance of Somoza. César closed by expressing the hope that, since it had armed Somoza against his people, the U.S. government would take steps to remedy the situation once the war was over.¹⁶⁸

Spruille Braden, U.S. ambassador in Havana and future Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, issued a memorandum in April 1945 tackling the issue of U.S. relations with authoritarian regimes. His memorandum, entitled "Policy Respecting Dictatorships and Disreputable Governments," recognized the necessity of collaborating with unsavory regimes during wartime because it prioritized internal order and international collaboration. However, he believed that the United States should reexamine its policies once the war was over, because support of authoritarian governments negated the democratic principles that the United States and its allies claimed to stand for. Furthermore, he called into question the policy of non-

¹⁶⁷ *Nuestro Diario*, December 30, 1944, enclosure to Long to Secretary of State, January 2, 1945, RG 59, 810.00/1-245, NA in Clinton, 88. Ordoñez would later become involved with the Caribbean Legion.

¹⁶⁸ César to Rockefeller, April 9, 1945, RG 59, 817.00/4-945, NA in Clinton 89-90.

intervention, suggesting that non-intervention did not mean that the United States had to accept as "...equals and friends those governments which are the embodiment of principles which we abhor, distrust, and to which we are irrevocably opposed." Furthermore, Braden's concern about the emergence of communism in the post-war period led him to argue that dictatorships "prepare the most fertile soil for that ideology", and as such could succumb to Soviet influence if Latin Americans became disillusioned by the perception that the United States had backed these regimes.¹⁶⁹ In August 1945, Braden's reformist policies were ascendant and he became Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, generating hope among the region's political exiles.¹⁷⁰

Political exiles became hopeful that Braden's appointment signified that the United States would alter its relationship with dictatorial regimes. Humberto Barahona, a Nicaraguan exile living in Mexico, wrote an editorial in the Mexican newspaper *El Popular* praising Braden's selection. Barahona believed that it would lead to reconciliation between the peoples of Latin America and the government of the United States, because Braden's policies were aimed at the elimination of dictatorships.¹⁷¹

The exiles were heartened by Braden's appointment and his policy direction because, as Clinton points out, the shift occurring within the State Department was nothing less than a

¹⁶⁹ Braden to Edward Stettinius, "Policy Respecting Dictatorships and Disreputable Governments," April 5, 1945, 2-6, RG 59, 711.00/4-545, NA in Clinton, 93.

¹⁷⁰ Clinton, 105.

¹⁷¹ *El Popular*, November 2, 1945 in Clinton 106. Angel Morales, a Dominican exile who would go on to become a leader of the Caribbean Legion, wrote Braden directly informing him that Braden's words inspired the people of the Dominican Republic who lived under the despotism of Trujillo. Angel Morales to Spruille Braden, December 22, 1945, RG 59, 710.11/12-2245, NA in Clinton, 107, 192.

fundamental reinterpretation of the long-standing policy of non-intervention.¹⁷² The striking endorsement of collective action, Clinton suggests, was an extension of ideas already promulgated by certain Latin American governments to stem the power and influence of non-democratic regimes in the hemisphere.¹⁷³

Uruguayan Foreign Minister Alberto Rodríguez Larreta's call for multilateral action spurred debate within the region. In a note sent to all of the American republics, Larreta warned that non-interventionism did not protect governments that violated the rights of their citizens. Furthermore, Larreta proposed a reprioritization of guiding principles, arguing that democracy should be emphasized over non-intervention, and thus, that the American republics should take multilateral action when democracy was threatened.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Clinton, 109. Following Braden's appointment as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Ellis O. Briggs became Director of American Republic Affairs. Briggs had been the wartime ambassador of the Dominican Republic and was a reformer along the vein of Braden. In November 1945, Briggs made a speech at the University of Pennsylvania, arguing in favor of cooperation between the American republics to promote democracy. He directly challenged the policy of non-intervention, stating that although non-interventionism opposed unilateral intervention, it did not prohibit governments from working with one another to better the situation in an American republic or, more importantly, to *act* in concert with other nations to "correct conditions which prejudice the safety or welfare of the Americas. Such action is not intervention: it is the legitimate exercise of collective action." Reiterating the sentiments made by Adolf Berle, Briggs asserted that the United States felt a greater affinity with democratically elected governments and thus, "the policy of non-intervention does not imply the approval of local tyranny." Ellis O. Briggs, speech at the University of Pennsylvania, November 20, 1945, *Department of State Bulletin*, XIII: 869 in Clinton, 109; Secretary of State to Ambassador in Nicaragua (Warren), November 23, 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, IX: 1222-3 in Walter, 147.

¹⁷³ Clinton, 109.

¹⁷⁴ Eduardo Rodríguez Larreta, "Nota del gobierno del Uruguay dirigida a los gobiernos de las otras repúblicas americanas," November 21, 1945, in Unión Panamericana, *Consulta del gobierno del Uruguay y contestaciones de los gobiernos* (Washington, D.C.: Unión Panamericana, 1946), 1-5 in Clinton, 110.

The Larreta Doctrine received the immediate support of U.S. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes,¹⁷⁵ the governments of Guatemala, Panama, Cuba, Venezuela, and Costa Rica.¹⁷⁶ Nicaraguan exiles in San José enthusiastically endorsed it.¹⁷⁷ General Carlos Castro and Leonte Pallais, both Nicaraguan exiles who would go on to join the Caribbean Legion, praised the Uruguayan Foreign Minister for his proposal.¹⁷⁸ However, despite the United States' support, and perhaps because of it, the Larreta Doctrine did not gain much traction from the other nations of Latin America. Many Latin American republics believed the Larreta doctrine to be irreconcilable with the doctrine of non-intervention because it would require the use of force, and were wary of U.S. intentions, given the history of U.S. intervention. Furthermore, nations governed by authoritarian regimes were outright against it, since they did not want the Larreta doctrine used against them.¹⁷⁹

Nicaragua's official response expressed agreement with the doctrine's principles, particularly, the importance of defending democracy. However, the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry also highlighted the problems with the proposal, namely that the Nicaraguan constitution prohibited intervention, as did the UN Charter, the lack of internationally accepted

¹⁷⁵ Byrnes stated that the "violation of the elementary rights of man by a government of force...justifies collective multilateral action after full consultation among the republics in accordance with established procedures." James F. Byrnes, speech to the New York *Herald Tribune* Forum, October 31, 1945, *Department of State Bulletin*, XIII: 709-711 in Clinton, 110-111.

¹⁷⁶ Clinton, 111-2. In Panama, there were calls for a severance of ties with the dictatorships of Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic.

¹⁷⁷ "Back Demand for Break: Exiled Nicaraguans Support Paper's Attack on Their Country," *New York Times*, December 3, 1945.

¹⁷⁸ Clinton, 114-5.

¹⁷⁹ Clinton, 112-3.

definitions pertaining to human rights, and the difficult logistics of multilateral action.¹⁸⁰

Notwithstanding these setbacks, the State Department aggressively pursued its reformist agenda.

Somoza's aspirations to maintain power soon put it to the test.

By mid-1945, despite assertions to the contrary, Somoza positioned himself to become his party's candidate for president. The United States sought to make it clear to Somoza that it would be best if he did not run for another term.¹⁸¹ On August 1, 1945, Assistant Secretary of State Rockefeller informed Somoza's ambassador in Washington (Guillermo Sevilla Sacasa) that

¹⁸⁰ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 161-2.

¹⁸¹ The U.S. State Department began formulating a policy to prevent Somoza's reelection. William Cochran, Chief of the Division of Central American and Caribbean Affairs, took the lead on formulating the policy and sent a memorandum to Rockefeller on July 25, 1945. Cochran wrote, "Somoza's re-election ambitions are based on two factors: a) the 'Messiah complex,' or belief that he is the only man capable of running the country, in which he is encouraged by sycophants, and b) his desire to protect his widespread property interests (he was not a rich man when he took office)." Cochran to Rockefeller, July 25, 1945, RG 59, 817.00/7-2545, NA in Clinton, 137. Cochran had been a former first secretary and *chargé d'affaires* at the U.S. embassy in Managua in the early 1940s and had first-hand knowledge of the Nicaraguan situation, all of which lent him great credibility on the question of how to deal with Somoza. Clark states that, "The analysis stood out also because it concluded with the most singularly anti-Somoza judgments of any prepared to that date by a senior U.S. official in a policy-making position." Cochran's policy recommendations would prove critical in how the U.S. State Department proceeded with Somoza. In Cochran's view, there was no evidence to suggest that Somoza would allow free elections and that Somoza's continued control of the GN ensured his reelection. Clark, 139-140. Cochran recommended that Rockefeller make it clear to the Nicaraguan president, through diplomatic intermediaries, that the United States viewed with concern and regret his decision to seek re-election in direct violation of the Nicaraguan Constitution. Cochran, aware he would face opposition as such action appeared to be intervention, stated, "Perhaps it is, but the United States cannot avoid such a charge in any case. Its failure to act (when Somoza has made so much of his close ties with the United States and the fact that he can 'get more' from us than another President) would be negative intervention...we cannot avoid the charge of intervention; and if we are to play a part (and we cannot avoid doing so, let it be on behalf of democratic processes." Cochran to Rockefeller, July 25, 1945, RG 59, 817.00/7-2545, NA in Clinton, 138. As Clark points out, "The report had special significance because it made a firm recommendation that a U.S. official should approach Somoza directly to inform him, simply, that his days were numbered." Clark, 140.

a withdrawal from the election would be looked upon favorably.¹⁸² Rockefeller continued by stating: “Should Somoza run for re-election it might create difficulties for him, would seriously affect relations between the two countries, and might result in a loss of confidence by American opinion in the general development of democracy in the Americas.”¹⁸³

However, in November 1945, Somoza did not believe that his days were numbered and he matter-of-factly informed the State Department that he was going to seek the unified support of Conservatives and Liberals and would only step down as a candidate if he were unable to secure bipartisan support.¹⁸⁴ That same month the Office of American Republic Affairs produced a report entitled “The Rule of President Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua since 1936” that further cemented the State Department’s perception that Somoza was a tyrant at the head of an “iron dictatorship.”¹⁸⁵ Accordingly, the United States became more aggressive in its handling of the Somoza situation. Warren met with Sevilla and informed him that the United States was halting military assistance to Nicaragua, citing a possible clash between Nicaraguan government

¹⁸² Walter, 145.

¹⁸³ Grew (for Rockefeller) to Warren, August 7, 1945, *FRUS*: 1945, IX: 1213-1214 in Clinton, 139. Somoza, for his part, acted as if he was a reluctant candidate, as if he did not have a choice in the matter. Speaking to U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, Fletcher Warren, Somoza gave a variety of reasons as to why he was allowing the proclamations of his candidacy. First, Somoza stated that the people making the proclamations were his friends, and although they were in violation of the law, he could not arrest them because they were his friends. Second, it was the only way to keep certain GN officers in line, as they would otherwise believe that they themselves could make a run at the presidency. Third, there were people in government that would take advantage of his not running for president by using their government positions to make money. Finally, his candidacy would make it difficult for the opposition to come up with a candidate. When the time was right, he asserted, he would step down and help choose a candidate that would be agreeable to all elements, including the United States. Walter, 145-6.

¹⁸⁴ Walter, 147.

¹⁸⁵ Department of State, Office of American Republic Affairs, “The Rule of President Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua since 1936,” November 1945, RG 59, 817.000/11-645, NA in Clinton, 136.

forces and the people of Nicaragua.¹⁸⁶ After months of pressure, in January 1946, Somoza finally announced that he would not run for president.¹⁸⁷

The beginning of 1946 brought an acknowledgement from Somoza that he was losing popular support.¹⁸⁸ *Time* magazine reported an exchange between Somoza and his son Anastasio Somoza Debayle in which the younger Somoza told his father, “Papa you had better abandon the Presidency while the leaving is good. The people are in an ugly mood and we have enough money.” The older Somoza responded by striking his son. Salvadorita, Somoza’s wife, defended her son, asserting that he only spoke the truth: “If your own family can’t tell you what’s going on, she asked, who will?”¹⁸⁹ Somoza did grasp the situation and, after forfeiting his own re-election hopes, he quickly shifted into preparing for the upcoming election.

At the top of Somoza’s list was an initiative to give the elections a veneer of freedom and, even more pressing, the search for a viable candidate to run in his stead. Somoza attempted to accomplish the first feat in June 1946 by allowing the Conservative Party to participate in the

¹⁸⁶ Warren to Cochran, November 15, 1945, RG 59, 817.00/11-1545, NA in Clinton, 140. In a not so subtle gesture, the State Department sent Ambassador Warren a copy of the recent speech delivered by ARA Director Briggs at the University of Pennsylvania. On November 29, 1945, Warren gave the speech to Somoza. Somoza asked for further clarification. Warren responded that it was his personal opinion that Somoza was a dictator and that for months he had tried to make Somoza aware of how the United States government felt about dictators. Warren writes that Somoza was visibly hurt and the Nicaraguan General declared that he, as a friend of the United States, deserved better treatment from the State Department. Somoza then wrote out a statement to the Department of State promising that he would soon publicly renounce his candidacy. Ambassador in Nicaragua (Warren) to Secretary of State, November 29, 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, IX: 1225-1228.

¹⁸⁷ Clinton, 146.

¹⁸⁸ Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 117-119.

¹⁸⁹ “Central America: Tachito Talks,” *Time*, February 4, 1946.

upcoming elections and by reinstating *La Prensa*.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the opposition remained skeptical; and in June 1946, a delegation consisting of Emiliano Chamorro, former Conservative President, Adolfo Díaz, another former Conservative President, and Gerónimo Ramírez Brown, representing the Independent Liberals, asked Braden to have the U.S. supervise elections and take temporary control of the *Guardia*. The delegation remained convinced that Somoza's control of the military would also give him an iron grip on the electoral apparatus. Braden informed the delegation that although he sympathized with them, the United States could not directly intervene.¹⁹¹ Somoza expressed jubilation at the failure of the Chamorro delegation to secure U.S. assistance and viewed it as a personal victory. He praised the State Department for upholding the Good Neighbor Policy and condemned the opposition as unpatriotic for requesting foreign intervention. With the U.S. apparently unwilling to intervene, Somoza continued with his plans to control the election.

Somoza made overtures to the independent Liberals in an attempt to bring some of them back into the fold. In July 1946, Somoza suggested Ildefonso Palma Martínez and Leonardo Argüello as candidates for the presidency. Palma Martínez held greater sway among the independent Liberals, because he had voted against amnesty for the Sandino murders in 1934, while serving as a deputy. Leonardo Argüello was deemed a viable candidate because he had resigned as Minister of the Interior following the disturbances of 1944; however, he still bore the stigma of ties to the Somoza regime. Of the two, Somoza believed that Argüello would be easier to control. Walter suggests that this was the case because Argüello had reached an advanced age (he was into his seventies at the time) and would be grateful and willing to repay his political

¹⁹⁰ Walter, 149-150. The Conservative newspaper was banned in mid-1944.

¹⁹¹ Clark, 149.

debt to Somoza after being “granted” his life-long desire to be president.¹⁹² Three times before—in 1929, 1932, and 1936—Argüello had made a run at the presidency and lost.¹⁹³

At the Liberal Convention in August 1946, Somoza arranged for the PLN to choose Argüello as the candidate. This decision did not please the PLI as it incorrectly believed that it had concluded an agreement with Somoza to support Palma Martínez’s candidacy in July 1946.¹⁹⁴ Thereafter, the PLI sought to make common cause with the Conservatives to put forth a joint candidate to challenge Somoza’s handpicked selection. The PLI convinced the Conservatives that they had siphoned enough votes from the traditional Liberal party to put forward a Liberal as their joint candidate. Viewing this as their best opportunity to unseat Somoza’s chosen candidate, the Conservatives accepted the plan, with the proviso that the Conservative General, Emiliano Chamorro, would ultimately choose the candidate from a list prepared by the PLI. Chamorro returned from his exile in July 1946¹⁹⁵ and it was under these circumstances that Dr. Enoc Aguado was chosen as the candidate to represent the PLI and the Conservatives.¹⁹⁶ Nicaraguan exiles in San José, under the leadership of Federico Solorzano, organized support for Aguado.¹⁹⁷

Having failed to gain support from Conservatives and the PLI, Somoza courted the PSN once again. In early 1946, Somoza allowed the PSN to reenter Nicaragua and promised to make

¹⁹² Walter, 153.

¹⁹³ “Somoza Resumes Rule in Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1947.

¹⁹⁴ Walter, 153.

¹⁹⁵ “Chamorro to End Exile,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1946.

¹⁹⁶ Walter, 154; Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 119; “Nicaraguans Nominate Aguado,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1946.

¹⁹⁷ “Nicaraguans Form Exile Group,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1946.

new concessions. However, the PSN worked to create an alliance with opposition forces. Mistrust between the different opposition factions doomed the possibility of an effective alliance.¹⁹⁸

As hard as Somoza worked to make the elections appear free, it was taken as a given that they would be rigged in his favor. Commenting on the election, one American reported observed: "It is already stolen."¹⁹⁹ By January 1947, a few days before the election, reports surfaced stating that the opposition would ask the United States to set aside or qualify the results, as Somoza controlled the electoral machinery.²⁰⁰

When the day of the election arrived, many independent observers believed that Dr. Enoc Aguado won by a wide margin. However, after the polls closed, Somoza expressed his conviction that Argüello had won the election.²⁰¹ Official returns reported that the Somoza Liberals had received 104,958 votes, whereas the PLI/Conservative candidate Aguado received

¹⁹⁸ Jeffrey Gould, "La alianza frustrada: Los socialistas y la oposición, Nicaragua 1946-1950, *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 19, no. 2 (1993): 51-69; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 123.

¹⁹⁹ Milton Bracker, "Somoza Said to Net \$80,000 on U.S. Deal," *New York Times*, August 26, 1946.

²⁰⁰ Somoza did control the electoral machinery. To further secure his chosen candidate's electoral victory, Somoza passed a series of reforms that guaranteed the desired outcome. First, he gave himself the right to name two of the three members of that national election board, formerly a right that belonged to the two main parties. Second, he passed an arms-control law requiring that all citizens turn over their weapons for a ten-day period that included Election Day. The only persons that were to carry arms were members of the GN, who were fiercely loyal to Somoza. Finally, on the day of the actual election Somoza positioned 4,200 members of the *Guardia Nacional* at the voting polls. Milton Bracker, "Nicaraguans' Plea to U.S. is Foreseen," *New York Times*, January 31, 1947; Milton Bracker, "Nicaragua to Vote Under Guns Today," *New York Times*, February 2, 1947; Walter, 150.

²⁰¹ Milton Bracker, "Nicaraguans Voting Free, Orderly; Violence Flares after Polls Close," *New York Times*, February 3, 1947.

69,904 votes.²⁰² The opposition immediately described the election as a sham.²⁰³ The Conservative newspaper *La Prensa* reported that voter lists had been incorrectly drawn up, voters could not find their polling places, and that results were counted incorrectly.²⁰⁴ Walter argues that it is unlikely that the Somoza Liberals overstated their support, as they actually registered fewer votes than they had in 1936. Walter suggests that what is much more likely is that the opposition was shortchanged.²⁰⁵

For its part, the opposition claimed that it had won in a landslide election, declaring that it had received 107,591 votes to the Somoza Liberals' 37,532.²⁰⁶ Ambassador Warren conceded that this was most likely an exaggeration, but the Embassy did back the opposition's claim to victory.²⁰⁷ Aguado called on the Ambassador, presenting him with evidence of fraud.²⁰⁸ The opposition hoped that the United States would denounce the election, but received only silence.

Undeterred, Emiliano Chamorro declared that if the party was dissatisfied with the official results, it would set up an "exiled government."²⁰⁹ Following the elections, presidential candidate Aguado announced that he would make a trip to the United States to spread the news

²⁰² Walter, 157.

²⁰³ "Nicaraguan Protests: Plans Trip to U.S. to Tell of 'Vicious Election,'" *New York Times*, February 14, 1947.

²⁰⁴ *La Prensa*, April 4, 1947 in Walter, 156.

²⁰⁵ Walter, 158.

²⁰⁶ *La Prensa*, February 25, 1947 in Walter, 158.

²⁰⁷ Clark, 160.

²⁰⁸ Milton Bracker, "Nicaraguan Fraud Charged by Loser," *New York Times*, February 4, 1947.

²⁰⁹ "Exile Regime Considered: Nicaraguan Opposition Awaits Election Results," *New York Times*, February 6, 1947.

of the electoral corruption“to tell democratic leaders how the majority was cheated of its rights by the vicious and unjust handling of the election.” Aguado continued by stating: “If the election should be recognized as fair and clean, it would spur the tyrannies now weighing on other countries. And, if violators of human rights go unpunished, the people will remain exposed to the dangers of dictatorship and communism.”²¹⁰ In April, a few weeks before Leonardo Argüello’s nomination, Aguado was able to secure a meeting with Braden. He asked the State Department not to recognize the government of Leonardo Argüello, due to the widespread fraud. Echoing his response to the delegation headed by Chamorro, Braden claimed that the United States was a strict adherent to a policy of non-intervention.²¹¹

The Nicaraguan opposition had expected the United States to condemn the election and to encourage other democratic governments to follow suit. The opposition perceived the refusal on the part of the United States to denounce the elections as a betrayal to the ideal of democracy. Ambassador Warren noted that there was an increase in anti-American sentiment due to the U.S.’s refusal to supervise the elections and its silence on the outcomes. Not surprisingly, this

²¹⁰ “Nicaraguan Protests,” *New York Times*, February 14, 1947.

²¹¹ Clark, 161. Apart from the desire of the State Department to comply with the policy of non-intervention, there was another consideration to take into account. Milton Bracker, a reporter for the *New York Times*, suggests that Juan Peron’s victory in Argentina in early 1946 tempered the United States’ attitude in how it dealt with authoritarian regimes. The State Department pursued an anti-authoritarian policy in Argentina with the aim of promoting the removal of Juan Péron, only to see Perón emerge victorious. Moreover, Bracker goes on to say, Peron’s victory may have given Somoza the idea that he could get away with more in the present campaign. Milton Bracker, “Nicaraguan Fraud Charged by Loser,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1947. Ambassador Warren received a report from former Somoza minister, Jesus Sánchez, confirming that the Nicaraguan General was indeed pleased with the outcome of the Argentine election as he felt it signified a defeat for the Braden policy that would result in the termination of those officials promoting democracy within the State Department. Warren to Cochran, April 4, 1946, NA 817.00/4-446; Cochran to Braden, April 18, 1946, NA 817.00/4-1846 in Clark 153-4.

resulted in a revival of the belief among the Nicaraguan opposition that the United States had secretly wanted Somoza to remain in power.²¹²

26 Days of Democracy

On May 1, 1947, Leonardo Argüello became president of Nicaragua. Immediately, Argüello served notice that, all evidence to the contrary, he would not be Somoza's puppet. In his inauguration speech, after asserting that he would uphold the Constitution, he told a joint session of Congress that, "I will not—you can be sure of that—be a mere figurehead President." The seventy-five year old head of state drew enthusiastic applause for his surprising declaration of independence. In his address to Congress, Argüello promised to continue the present road-building program and distribute fertile public lands among the peasants. Despite acknowledging some of the Somoza government's achievements, he stressed the need to do more, particularly the need to increase rural schools and wipe out illiteracy.²¹³ Furthermore, he said he would seek to eliminate bureaucratic abuses.²¹⁴ As for his foreign policy, Argüello stated that he sought to maintain good relations with all countries, especially those of Central America and the United States, not only because of their geographic proximity but because of the similarity of their democratic institutions.²¹⁵ His speech was but an introduction to his envisioned break with the Somoza regime.

Upon taking office, Argüello sought to further distance himself from Somoza by removing many employees whose "government" jobs involved labor on the private properties of

²¹² Clark, 161.

²¹³ "Argüello Takes Nicaragua Office," *New York Times*, May 2, 1947.

²¹⁴ Walter, 159.

²¹⁵ "Argüello Takes Nicaragua Office," *New York Times*, May 2, 1947.

Somoza. He also filled his Cabinet with a majority of anti-Somoza men.²¹⁶ In another move that was widely considered antagonistic to Somoza, Argüello granted the University of Managua autonomy.²¹⁷ All of these actions suggested the dawn of a post-Somoza Nicaragua, but nothing made that point more dramatically than Argüello's willingness to reorganize the GN. Argüello reassigned senior *Guardia* officers to less important positions and replaced them with men that had pledged their loyalty to the new president. He also replaced the chief of the Managua police with one of his own men, Col. Alberto Baca.²¹⁸ Finally, in a move that demonstrated Argüello's willingness to go against Somoza himself, he reassigned Somoza's own son, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, a *Guardia* major and commander of the Presidential Guard, to a remote post in León.²¹⁹

Argüello walked a very difficult tightrope by attempting to establish his own mandate while trying to placate Somoza by keeping him on as *Jefe Director* of the *Guardia Nacional*. However, Argüello's independence and his determination to break with and undermine Somocismo incensed the Nicaraguan General. Somoza denounced the President for interfering with the *Guardia* and responded to Argüello actions by having three *Guardia* tanks pass in front of the Presidential Palace. Somoza also reduced Argüello's Presidential Guard from four hundred men to fewer than one hundred, transferring them to his own personal guard to watch over his private properties.²²⁰ Furthermore, Somoza continued preparations for a move against Argüello, while a Somoza-controlled Congress appointed three men (all Somocistas) who would

²¹⁶ Clark, 161; Millet 337.

²¹⁷ "Somoza Resumes Rule in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, May 27, 1947.

²¹⁸ Millet, 337.

²¹⁹ Clark, 161-2.

²²⁰ Clark, 162; Millet 337.

be directly in line to replace Argüello, should he leave office. Somoza, demonstrating his hold on the *Guardia*, sent a telegram to all commanders of the *Guardia* which informed them that they were only to follow orders coming directly from Somoza and to arrest any men that the President might send to replace them.²²¹

The President refused to allow the General to intimidate him. On May 9, he spoke at length with U.S. embassy chargé Maurice Bernbaum, and told him that he was not afraid of either Somoza or the GN. Argüello firmly believed that his program to run the country, having done away with the corruption and inefficiency of the Somoza regime, would earn Nicaragua the national and international prestige necessary to stave off any threat from the military.²²² Intent on demonstrating Nicaragua's freedom, Argüello announced on May 19 that a decree of amnesty for Nicaraguan exiles and opposition would be unnecessary, as all Nicaraguans could return to their homeland. Despite Argüello's attempts to prove that his hold on power was secure, reports to the contrary continued to surface. The *New York Times* printed a statement from Argüello denying reports from other Central American nations that he was a prisoner in the Presidential Palace.²²³ Argüello realized that Nicaragua would never truly recognize him as its leader so long as Somoza remained the head of the GN. With that in mind, the President directly approached the former dictator on May 25, 1947 and informed him that he had 24 hours to leave Nicaragua and that his resignation from the GN was effective immediately. Somoza argued that he needed

²²¹ Walter, 160; Millet, 338-9.

²²² Clark, 162.

²²³ "Freedom Assured in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, May 20, 1947.

to arrange his things, and requested a few extra days' grace before leaving the country. Argüello agreed to give Somoza this extra time and this was his greatest error.²²⁴

Somoza reacted swiftly. He walked from the Presidential Palace down to the headquarters of the GN, only a few hundred feet away, and planned a coup. In the early hours of the following morning, Somoza ordered the GN to execute the coup d'état. The *Guardia* took control of the Campo Marte barracks, the police headquarters in Managua, and the National Palace (where Congress and the majority of the ministries of government were housed), and cut off all communication to the Presidential Palace. Millet posits that Argüello's followers did not expect an attack, as there was no bloodshed. Somoza stopped short of attacking the President directly, opting to wait him out. In the meantime, he secured Managua by surrounding the Presidential Palace and placing other soldiers in key positions.²²⁵ Somoza trapped Argüello in the Palace and placed *Guardia* officers loyal to Argüello under arrest.²²⁶ Argüello refused to resign as President and sought diplomatic asylum in the Mexican embassy.²²⁷ On May 27, 1947, Somoza allowed Argüello, along with his wife and 11 officers who remained loyal to him, to take refuge in the Mexican embassy.²²⁸

²²⁴ *La Prensa*, May 28, 1947; Walter, 160; Millet, 208-211.

²²⁵ Millet 339-40.

²²⁶ "Army Seizes Government of Nicaragua," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 27, 1947; "Somoza Resumes Rule in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, May 27, 1947; "Gen. Somoza Seizes Power in Nicaragua," *Washington Post*, May 27, 1947.

²²⁷ "Gen. Somoza Defends Coup D'Etat," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1947; "Deposed Chief in Nicaragua Seeks Asylum: Ousted Argüello Reported Desiring to Flee to Mexico," *Washington Post*, May 28, 1947.

²²⁸ "Nicaragua Names Sacasa President," *New York Times*, May 28, 1947.

To complete Argüello's removal as President, Somoza convened Congress and asserted that Argüello had planned to rule as a dictator by dividing the GN, assassinating the *jefe director*, and dissolving Congress. Surrounded by *Guardia* officers, Congress had little choice in the matter and declared Argüello incompetent on the basis that he had failed to preserve public order.²²⁹ Congress designated Benjamin Lacayo Sacasa as Provisional President. Lacayo Sacasa was one of the three Somocista designates that was chosen by the Congress to succeed to the presidency in the event of a vacancy.²³⁰ Lacayo Sacasa, a banker and cattleman, would remain acting president pending new elections.²³¹

Somoza had no qualms about taking responsibility for the coup, stating that he had done so because Argüello was tampering with the *Guardia* and that officers that had entered from civilian life were meeting in bars to plan to overthrow him as director. In the interests of maintaining order, he had had no choice but to act, as the *Guardia* was the nation's chief peacekeeping organization.²³² Following the coup, Somoza clamped down on all sectors of society, censoring the press, jailing and exiling opposition members and labor leaders, branding the latter as communists.²³³ Somoza no longer needed the communists and exiled PSN leaders to

²²⁹ *La Prensa*, May 28, 1947 in Millet 340; "Gen. Somoza Defends Coup D'Etat," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1947; "Nicaragua Names Sacasa President," *New York Times*, May 28, 1947.

²³⁰ "Nicaragua Names Sacasa President," *New York Times*, May 28, 1947.

²³¹ "Gen. Somoza Defends Coup D'Etat," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1947.

²³² "Gen. Somoza Defends Coup D'Etat," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1947.

²³³ Jules Dubois, "Somoza Balks at Democracy for Nicaragua: Ruler Who Won't Quit Job Criticizes U.S.," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 15, 1947; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 128-9.

Ometepe Island, located in the middle of Lake Nicaragua, in July 1947.²³⁴ Nevertheless, Somoza was confident that the other American republics would recognize the new Nicaraguan government.²³⁵ This was not the case, as governments across Latin American condemned Somoza's removal of Leonardo Argüello.²³⁶

The coup d'état confirmed the opposition's worst fears, as Somoza demonstrated that he was the only real power in Nicaragua. When the United States subsequently cut off relations,²³⁷ much of the opposition perceived it as a case of too little too late. Furthermore, a segment of the opposition realized that the ballot box would not end *somocismo* and the only way to transform Nicaraguan society would be through armed revolt.

Nicaraguan Exiles React

The Nicaraguan colony in Costa Rica condemned the Somoza coup and sent President Truman a cable denouncing the removal of Leonardo Argüello.²³⁸ The *Unión Democrática*

²³⁴ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 123.

²³⁵ "Somoza Says Coup Will Be Approved: Nicaraguan Dictator Certain Americas Will Agree Change Was Within the Law," *New York Times*, May 30, 1947.

²³⁶ There was an immediate international outcry following the ouster of Argüello. The Guatemalan Congress approved a motion of protest against the Nicaraguan events. "Guatemala Protests," *New York Times*, May 28, 1947. Panama barred recognition of the new Nicaraguan government and pledged to maintain relations with the government of Argüello. "Panama Bars Recognition," *New York Times*, June 4, 1947. Mexico, Ecuador and Costa Rica also withheld recognition and Mexico considered a censure of Somoza. "Three Rebuff Nicaragua: Mexico, Ecuador, and Costa Rica to Withhold Recognition," *New York Times*, June 8, 1947; Mexico Hints at Censure of Somoza Coup; Costa Rica Votes Recognition be Barred," *New York Times*, May 29, 1947.

²³⁷ "U.S. Ignores New Regime in Nicaragua," *Washington Post*, June 6, 1947.

²³⁸ Among the signees: Alfredo Urcuyo R., Carlos A Ramírez, Gilberto Morales Padilla, Uriel Cuadra Argüello, Antonio Vanegas Guevara, Rodolfo Jerez, Benjamin Doñas, A. Lacayo, Alfredo Argüello, Alfredo Martínez S., Adolfo Argüello. "La colonia nicaragüense se solidariza con el editorial de *Diario de Costa Rica* condenando el golpe de Somoza," *Diario de Costa Rica*,

Centroamericana, in conjunction with the Nicaraguan exiles in Mexico, appealed to Mexican President Miguel Alemán, as well as the presidents of Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Cuba, and Panama and the United Nations to take action against Somoza.²³⁹

The mood in Nicaragua following the coup d'état was tense and many observers believed that the country was "ripe for revolution." Journalist Reginald Wood reported that scores of Nicaraguans were prepared to rise against Somoza as soon as they were given leadership and pistols. There were rumors that arms had reached southern Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador in anticipation of a revolt.²⁴⁰ Col. Luis Balladares, chief of the Nicaraguan General Staff under Argüello and exiled in El Salvador, believed that a strike against Somoza would happen "sooner or later" and that it was "presently taking shape."²⁴¹ Nicaraguan General Policarpo Gutiérrez declared that he would take to the hills in open rebellion against the newly established regime.²⁴² *Time* reported that resistance to Somoza was now more insistent, with Gen. Carlos Pasos and Emiliano Chamorro only biding their time.²⁴³

May 28, 1947; La colonia nicaragüense en Costa Rica dirige un cable al Presidente Truman," *Diario de Costa Rica*, May 31, 1947.

²³⁹ "Three Rebuff Nicaragua: Mexico, Ecuador, and Costa Rica to Withhold Recognition," *New York Times*, June 8, 1947; Mexico Hints at Censure of Somoza Coup; Costa Rica Votes Recognition be Barred," *New York Times*, May 29, 1947; "Condena enérgicamente el pueblo de Costa Rica el golpe de Somoza en Nicaragua," *Diario de Costa Rica*, May 27, 1947.

²⁴⁰ Reginald L. Wood, "Short Life Seen for Nicaragua's Somoza Regime: Nation is Found Ripe for Revolution," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1947.

²⁴¹ "Expects Revolt of Nicaraguans to Oust Somoza," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 31, 1947.

²⁴² "Guatemala Protests," *New York Times*, May 28, 1947.

²⁴³ "Nicaragua: Fat Dolly," *Time*, June 9, 1947.

Following Argüello's removal by Somoza in 1947, Chamorro returned to Nicaragua, believing the time was ripe for an uprising. He rejected Civilista leader Cuadra Pasos' proposal designed to prevent an outbreak of violence.²⁴⁴ Cuadra Pasos believed that Chamorro and Somoza could meet to arrange free elections and come to an agreement to transform the GN into an apolitical body. Cuadra Pasos believed that the latter could be achieved with a promise from both parties that the GN would be allowed to keep its institutional structure and that its permanence would not be altered. Somoza expressed a willingness to meet; however, Chamorro insisted that any such meeting should include Argüello. Chamorro was well aware that Somoza would not agree to such a stipulation. Chamorro, along with other Conservatives, did not support Argüello's government after its ouster because they worried about their own party's future if a popular Liberal president returned to power. Chamorro believed that Conservatives' best chance to prevail would be through an armed revolt.²⁴⁵ Walter posits that Chamorro most likely figured that a few armed attacks against *Guardia* posts would inspire a mass rebellion amongst the people and even turn some disillusioned *Guardia* officers against Somoza.²⁴⁶ On September 17, 1947, different groups of would be revolutionaries attacked the *Guardia* at the mining operation of La India to the north of Chinandega and the port of Muelle de los Bueyes on the Rama River in Zelaya, but *Guardia* forces resisted the attack and defeated them.²⁴⁷ A week later, captured rebels quickly confessed their ties to General Chamorro's Conservative party.

²⁴⁴ Cuadra Pasos did a stint in Costa Rica in exile in 1946. *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 23, 1946 in Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 203.

²⁴⁵ Emiliano Chamorro, *La Estrella de Nicaragua*, June 19, 1947; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 124, 127; Walter, 169.

²⁴⁶ Walter, 170.

²⁴⁷ "Raiders Kill Nicaraguan Guard," *New York Times*, September 18, 1947.

Chamorro immediately went into hiding and went into exile when he received safe passage from the government on September 27, 1947.²⁴⁸ Despite the setback, rumors of plots to overthrow Somoza did not subside. At the end of October 1947, reports surfaced that hundreds of Nicaraguan exiles in northwestern Costa Rica were ready to invade Nicaragua.²⁴⁹ The inability of the opposition to unite and agree on a plan of action aided Somoza.

Leonardo Argüello, severely ill, was finally able to leave Nicaragua for asylum in Mexico on November 29, 1947, on the condition that he live as a private citizen and refrain from disturbing Nicaragua's peace.²⁵⁰ In Mexico City, Argüello promised to establish an exile government in Panama. He stated that he had the support of Gen. Carlos Pasos and Dr. Enoc Aguado.²⁵¹ Argüello, however, was unable to carry out his promise when he succumbed to his illness and passed away on December 15, 1947 in Mexico City.²⁵²

Following the death of Argüello, Costa Rica, as well as the Dominican Republic, recognized the government of Nicaraguan President Victor Roman y Reyes.²⁵³ Roman y Reyes

²⁴⁸ Other Conservatives involved in the attack remained behind bars until November. Walter, 167-8; "Nicaraguan is Exiled: Leader of Conservative Party Goes to El Salvador," *New York Times*, September 28, 1947.

²⁴⁹ "Nicaragua Exiles Plan Return," *New York Times*, October 25, 1947.

²⁵⁰ "Nicaraguan Exit Barred: Somoza Refuses to Give Permit to Overthrown President," *New York Times*, October 5, 1947; "Nicaraguan Gains Exit: Ousted President is Permitted to Go into Exile in Mexico," *New York Times*, November 2, 1947; "Argüello Off for Mexico: Deposed Nicaraguan President Leaves with Wife and Son," *New York Times*, November 30, 1947.

²⁵¹ Jules Dubois, "Exile Regime Planned by Nicaraguan: Argüello Tells of War on Graft," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 7, 1947.

²⁵² According to the report, Leonardo Argüello died of a heart attack. In "Leonardo Argüello, Once Nicaragua Head," *New York Times*, December 16, 1947.

²⁵³ "Costa Rica Accepts Nicaragua," *New York Times*, December 27, 1947; "Dominica Recognizes Nicaraguan Regime," *Washington Post*, December 29, 1947.

was inaugurated President of Nicaragua after the Constituent Assembly elected him President in August 1947.²⁵⁴ Guatemala, however, refused to recognize the Nicaraguan government; since its president, Juan José Arévalo, was helping Nicaraguan exiles to plot Somoza's overthrow.²⁵⁵

The Caribbean Legion

The pro-democracy pronouncements made by the United States during and after the Second World War heartened opposition movements to dictatorships in many parts of Latin America. Following democratic victories in Cuba, Venezuela, and Guatemala, opposition movements increased their efforts to topple the authoritarian regimes in the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua.²⁵⁶ Many of these opponents, after suffering setbacks, believed that armed revolt was the only way to institute democracy and remove the region's dictators. The exiles received a boost in their efforts from Guatemalan president Juan José Arévalo. Arévalo welcomed the exiles and together they formed the "Caribbean Legion." Richard Clinton describes the Caribbean Legion as a "loosely-organized affiliation of various exile groups that from time to time coordinated their military activities under the political sponsorship of one of the region's democratic governments."²⁵⁷ As Charles Ameringer explains in his study of the exiles that participated in revolutionary movements from 1946-1950, the Caribbean Legion was more a romantic myth than an actual force:

There was no army—no permanent body of troops—only a "general staff" that called itself the Liberation Army of the Caribbean and also adopted the name Caribbean Legion

²⁵⁴ "Nicaragua Inducts Chief: Dr. Roman y Reyes Inaugurated as President in Managua, *New York Times*, August 16, 1947.

²⁵⁵ "Guatemala Cool to Managua," *New York Times*, December 28, 1947.

²⁵⁶ Piero Gleijeses, "Juan José Arévalo and the Caribbean Legion," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 1 (1989): 133-145.

²⁵⁷ Clinton, 181.

in 1948 during the fighting in Costa Rica. The more romantic “Caribbean Legion” caught on and came to represent the antidictatorial struggle in the Caribbean in the post-World War II years.²⁵⁸

The next section will discuss how the Legion was established, its mission, and its decision to invade Costa Rica, the one nation in Central America that did not have a dictator in place.

In 1947, a group of Dominican exiles in Cuba, their principal hub, attempted to overthrow the regime of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo. The Dominican exiles, similarly to the Nicaraguans, had struggled since the 1930s to remove their recalcitrant strongman. Sexagenarian General Juan Rodríguez García, along with future president Juan Bosch and Angel Morales, led, funded, and plotted the overthrow of Trujillo. Together, with the support of the Cuban government, Guatemalan president Arévalo, and Venezuelan president Rómulo Betancourt, these men assembled an arsenal “that had no equal in the history of filibustering in the Caribbean.”²⁵⁹ By July 1947, the mission was ready with a force of 1200 men from the Dominican Republic, Cuba (including a young Fidel Castro), and Nicaragua (Abelardo Cuadra and José María Tercero).²⁶⁰

In his memoir, Cuadra states that he ended up in Cuba by accident. He believed he had agreed to join a movement against Somoza. He recruited a fellow Nicaraguan, Emilio Álvarez, on the banana plantations of the Costa Rican Pacific and headed to Panama to recruit more Nicaraguans. Cuadra writes that although the Nicaraguan exiles welcomed him, they were hesitant to join his expedition, and he failed in convincing more to join. When Cuadra and

²⁵⁸ Charles D. Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion: Patriots, Politicians, Soldiers of Fortune* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 9. Abelardo Cuadra claims that the term “Caribbean Legion” was coined during the Cayo Confites affair, in A. Cuadra, 241.

²⁵⁹ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 33-39.

²⁶⁰ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 40, 51; A. Morales, 225-249.

Alvarez arrived in El Salvador, they met with Toribio Tijerino and Gustavo Cuadra Bermúdez, who informed the pair that they would have to go to Havana to pick up the arms. It was only when he arrived in Cuba and saw the Dominican Central Revolutionary Committee that Cuadra realized that the mission was not to overthrow Somoza, but rather Trujillo. Alvarez backed out, unwilling to risk his life if it was not to fight against Somoza. Cuadra remained, claiming that this was his destiny, writing: “If on the moon there is a tyrant, to the moon I will go.” Cuadra served as First Lieutenant of Company B of the Batallón Sandino.²⁶¹

Despite the apparent strength in their movement, Ameringer points out that the Dominican exiles waited too long to launch their invasion, particularly in light of shifting U.S. foreign policy. After Spruille Braden’s forced removal and Briggs’ reassignment to Uruguay, the reformers in the State Department were no longer in control. As Clinton asserts, the beginning of the Cold War reversed the fortunes of the dictatorships in the region, as U.S. policy once again aligned with them and dictated rapprochement in the name of anti-communism.²⁶² Furthermore, the exiles did a poor job of keeping their plan a secret and by July reports of revolutionary activity emerged in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and the United States. The Dominican Republic denounced the exiles as a “brigade of communists.”²⁶³ Secretary of State George Marshall subsequently pressured the Cuban government to eliminate the revolutionary activity. The Cuban government diplomatically assured the U.S. government that it would do all

²⁶¹ A. Cuadra, 226-230.

²⁶² Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 42; Clinton, 194.

²⁶³ Clinton, 200, 209.

it could to stop the exiles; however, it simply tried to do a better job of providing cover for the exiles by moving them to Cayo Confites on July 28, 1947.²⁶⁴

The move to Cayo Confites doomed the movement as the exiles dealt with a lack of shelter, food, proper hygiene, rising tensions, rapidly deteriorating morale, and delays.²⁶⁵ Cuadra asserts that he suggested shifting the movement to Nicaragua, where they could take on Somoza. The majority of exiles, however, were not interested in Cuadra's suggestion, as they wanted to continue with their plan to overthrow Trujillo.²⁶⁶ Still marooned on the island in September, the exiles faced another setback when a political crisis in Cuba resulted in the confiscation of their weapons. President Grau informed Juan Rodríguez that he had twenty-four hours to leave Cayo Confites. However, when the exile force made its move on September 22, the Cuban government intercepted and detained them.²⁶⁷ Nevertheless, President Grau freed all prisoners.²⁶⁸ Upon their release, the Dominicans requested the help of the Guatemalan President Juan José Arévalo and he obliged. Arévalo secured the transfer of arms to Guatemala and, thus, Guatemala became the principal destination for Dominican and Central American exiles.²⁶⁹

After the collapse of the exile mission in Cuba, the Guatemalan president assumed a leadership position in the movement of exiles against the region's dictators. Historian Piero Gleijeses argues that Arévalo's motivations were rooted in a "sincere hostility to dictators and a

²⁶⁴ Clinton, 195-197; Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 43; A. Cuadra, 233-4.

²⁶⁵ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 43-5.

²⁶⁶ A. Cuadra, 239-240.

²⁶⁷ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 53-5; Clinton, 211-2, 219.

²⁶⁸ Fidel Castro reportedly evaded capture by jumping overboard, swimming through shark infested waters, and walking twenty miles on foot to his home. See Clinton, 220.

²⁶⁹ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 57; Clinton, 222.

sense of nationalism transcending Guatemala's narrow borders." The greater impetus, however, lay in Arévalo's dream of a unified Central America.²⁷⁰ Arévalo, after failing to achieve this goal diplomatically, became convinced that the region's dictators were the obstacles standing in the way of unification. The removal of Central America's dictators would, Arévalo hoped, lead to the foundation of one unified and democratic Central America. With the arms²⁷¹ in Arévalo's possession, exiles from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, and curiously Costa Rica, arrived in Guatemala to jockey for Arévalo's assistance.²⁷² In this way, as Gleijeses wrote, "Guatemala became Mecca, and Arévalo the prophet."²⁷³

Arévalo had to decide where the weapons would go. The Dominicans, led by Rodríguez, were willing to place their plans to overthrow Trujillo on hold, as well as assist any movement against another dictator, in exchange for reciprocity later. According to Ameringer, the Honduran exiles,²⁷⁴ mostly young military officers, had no clear plan to overthrow Cárías and were content to wait their turn, serving wherever Arévalo deigned to send them in the meantime.²⁷⁵ The Nicaraguans were the largest contingent of exiles that arrived in Guatemala in

²⁷⁰ Piero Gleijeses, "Juan José Arévalo and the Caribbean Legion," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 1 (1989): 136.

²⁷¹ The weapons belonged to Rodríguez but Arévalo exerted control over their use. Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 61-2.

²⁷² Gleijeses, "Arévalo and the Caribbean Legion," 136-7; Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 62.

²⁷³ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 110.

²⁷⁴ The Hondurans who arrived in Guatemala were Jorge Rivas Montes, Francisco Morazán, Francisco "El Indio" Sánchez, Alfredo Mejía Lara, and Mario Sosa Navarro. In Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 62.

²⁷⁵ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 62.

late 1947. They were also much divided.²⁷⁶ The Nicaraguans present were Conservatives Emiliano Chamorro, Gustavo Manzaneres, disaffected Liberals Carlos Pasos, Rosendo Argüello Castrillo,²⁷⁷ Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, and old Sandinistas Toribio Tijerino, Pedro José Zepeda and Juan Gregorio Colindres.²⁷⁸ Other Nicaraguans present were Manuel Gómez, Leonte Pallais Tiffer, Carlos Castillo Ibarra²⁷⁹, Octavio Caldera, and Alberto Ordóñez Argüello.²⁸⁰ José Figueres was the sole Costa Rican representative.

The factions failed to come to an agreement as to who would get the arms, where they would go, and who would lead. Arévalo tired of the fighting among the different exile groups and presented them with an ultimatum: they would have to reach an agreement or he would withdraw support. The exiles finally came together and on December 17, 1948 the leaders of the different nations signed the *Pacto del Caribe*. The pact officially established the *Ejército de Liberación del Caribe y Centroamérica* (Army for the Liberation of the Caribbean and Central America), otherwise known as the Caribbean Legion. Under the terms of the pact, the respective

²⁷⁶ Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron* (Mexico: 1954), 28-35; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 126-7.

²⁷⁷ Somoza, under the impression that Emiliano Chamorro and Toribio Tijerino wanted to discuss a rapprochement, granted the senior Rosendo Argüello permission to leave Nicaragua to meet with Chamorro and Tijerino. See Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 34; "Nicaraguan Gains Exit: Ousted President is Permitted to Go into Exile in Mexico," *New York Times*, November 2, 1947. Rosendo Argüello Castrillo was president of the Nicaraguan Directorate of the Independent Liberals. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 246; A. Cuadra, *Hombre del Caribe*, 70.

²⁷⁸ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 62. Colindres, along with Nicaraguan general Ramón Raudales, were ready to launch a revolt from northern Nicaragua in La Segovias. See Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 246-7.

²⁷⁹ Carlos Castillo Ibarra, along with Edelberto Torres Espinosa and others, founded the *Partido Socialista Revolucionario Nicaragüense en el Exilio* in 1945. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 127.

²⁸⁰ Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 29.

leaders of the exile groups from the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, committed to themselves to the eradication of their respective countries' dictatorships and the reestablishment of liberty and democracy. The Pact also outlined the group's plans for reorganizing the liberated nations, asserting that the resources of each state would be allocated, "as much as humanly possible", towards continuing the Caribbean Legion's mission.²⁸¹ The pact also established the "Supreme Revolutionary Committee," represented by 2 members each from the three named nations: Juan Rodríguez García and José Horacio Rodríguez Vázquez for the Dominican Republic, Toribio Tijerino and Rosendo Argüello Castrillo for Nicaragua, and José Figueres and Rosendo Argüello Ramírez for Costa Rica. The Committee determined each party's contribution, and became responsible for directing the common interests of the allies to secure harmony among them. The pact also committed the allies, upon their success, to work towards the reestablishment of the Republic of Central America. The Committee's goals were ambitious, and quite possibly unrealistic. However, at the time it constituted an alliance that gave direction to their immediate future. Surprisingly, the Costa Rican José Figueres prevailed and convinced the gathering of exiles that the first state to fall should be democratic Costa Rica.

Costa Rica was a strange choice as the starting point for the Caribbean Legion's anti-dictatorial struggle. Despite its nominal political corruption, Costa Rica was a beacon of democracy in a region beset by dictatorships. The Calderón administration, in particular, had instituted and expanded social reforms that benefitted much of its populace and had peacefully coexisted with its political opponents. Thus, to place the governments of Calderón and Picado in the same category as those of Somoza, Carias, and Trujillo was ridiculous. Gleijeses argues that while Calderón and Picado were not guilty of being leaders of authoritarian governments,

²⁸¹ See the full text of the *Pacto del Caribe* in Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 118-122.

in the eyes of many exiles, Calderón and Picado were guilty of a particularly heinous crime: intent on domestic reforms, and aware of the military weakness of their country, they remained aloof from the antidictatorial struggle in the Caribbean and strove to maintain proper relations with the powerful Somoza.²⁸²

Costa Rican support for Somoza became more glaring with when the republic chose to recognize Somoza's puppet government under Román y Reyes. This inflamed the Nicaraguan exiles and when Figueres secured their support by explaining that Costa Rica was the most vulnerable nation, and that once in power he would help his allies to overthrow the other dictatorships. As Marcia Olander notes, the fate of Nicaraguan and Costa Rican revolutionary plotters was linked.²⁸³

The substantial influence of the Nicaraguan exiles is evident in that four of the six signatories were Nicaraguan.²⁸⁴ The decision came down to two opposing Nicaraguan factions: one led by Toribio Tijerino, backed by Emiliano Chamorro, wanted to launch the attack in northern Nicaragua; Argüello, who led the other faction, was adamant that Costa Rica should be first. Ultimately, Argüello's faction of Nicaraguan exiles, including Nicaraguan professor Edelberto Torres Espinosa, sided with Figueres and convinced Arévalo, despite some reservations, to attack Costa Rica.²⁸⁵

²⁸² Gleijeses, "Arévalo and the Caribbean Legion," 139.

²⁸³ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 106.

²⁸⁴ Juan Rodríguez (Dominican), Emiliano Chamorro (Nicaraguan), Gustavo Manzaneres (Nicaraguan), Pedro José Zepeda (Nicaraguan), Rosendo Argüello Ramírez (Nicaraguan) and José Figueres (Costa Rican). In Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 122.

²⁸⁵ Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 12; Gleijeses, "Arévalo and the Caribbean Legion," 139-140; Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 65-6.

By 1947, Figueres had already made great inroads with the Nicaraguan exiles, and benefited greatly from his friendship with Rosendo Argüello Ramírez.²⁸⁶ The two Central American exiles met in Mexico City in 1943, during Figueres' exile from Costa Rica for harshly criticizing the government of President Calderón. In his memoirs, Argüello records his discussions with Figueres regarding the quest for Central American unity and the necessity of looking past local solutions that only addressed singular nations. Argüello suggested that they join the UDC, but Figueres dismissed the group's ideals as too theoretical. Figueres asserted that they needed to form a group based on their own principles and committed to action. Argüello agreed and began recruiting Nicaraguans and other Central Americans to their cause while Figueres worked to raise the necessary funds.²⁸⁷ David Díaz-Arias argues that Figueres' most important accomplishment in exile was convincing other Central American exiles, mostly Nicaraguans, that Calderón's government posed as large a threat to democracy as did the governments of Somoza and Trujillo.²⁸⁸

Figueres and Argüello collaborated on their plan from 1943 until 1947. Figueres and Argüello returned to Costa Rica in 1944. Once there, Argüello connected with other Nicaraguan exiles, including Dr. Octavio Pasos Montiel, Edmundo Chamorro, Alejandro Alfaro, Dr. Samuel Santos, "Quico" Fernández, Chester Lacayo, and Gen. Alfredo Noguera Gomez. In 1945, Argüello returned to Mexico to procure arms for the movement. According to Argüello, he was able to gain the support of Carlos Pasos, who paid for many of the arms, and Dr. Pedro José Zepeda. Eventually, Argüello would come into close contact with Edelberto Torres Espinosa

²⁸⁶ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 245.

²⁸⁷ Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 11-13.

²⁸⁸ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 174.

and secure his help as well. By 1947, Argüello, with the help of his wife, Maria Figuls de Argüello, and his brother, Rodolfo Ignacio Argüello, had built up a substantial arsenal. However, just as he was prepared to transport it to Costa Rica, the Mexican police detained Argüello and Professor Torres.²⁸⁹ According to Argüello, after they lost the weapons, the Mexican government deported them to Guatemala, where he believed his adventure had ended.

With the death of President Leonardo Argüello and arrival of news that there were Dominican arms available, Rosendo Argüello redoubled his efforts. Argüello contacted Figueres and told him to meet up in Guatemala.²⁹⁰ As a result, the exiles of the region were finally able to organize and coordinate their actions. As the Caribbean Legion they potentially presented the greatest threat to the dictators of the region. However, it was Figueres that benefited the most as he convinced the others to go to Costa Rica first.

Conclusion

The rise of dictatorships, particularly those of Somoza, Trujillo, and Carias, with the tacit approval of the U.S. State Department engendered a regional crisis. A good number of the Nicaraguan, Dominican, and Honduran opposition leaders went into exile and began plotting the overthrow of the dictators. The violence of the various states created a hostile environment of increasing political violence throughout the region. Failing to overthrow their respective leaders on their own, exiles banded together, just as the governments of the Central American nations had. The military dictatorships of the region prepared and defended themselves from imminent invasion. Ironically, the exiles would choose to invade the one country without a dictatorship

²⁸⁹ “2 Held for Arms Cache: Mexico Charges Men Planned to Use Guns in Revolutions,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1947; “Se investiga la compra de armas en Mexico,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, February 12, 1947;

²⁹⁰ Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 15-28.

and, thus, the most vulnerable: Costa Rica. Costa Rica was in the midst of a heavily contested election and when the government annulled the victory of the Opposition candidate, Otilio Ulate, Figueres took advantage of the opening and launched his invasion. The Caribbean Legion's invasion not only brought Costa Rica's political crisis to a new level of intensity, but also plunged the country into the wider regional crisis between authoritarian governments and exiles. The next chapter examines the roles played by Somoza, Nicaraguan exiles and Nicaraguan laborers in the ensuing conflict.

CHAPTER FIVE
STRANGE ALIGNMENTS:
NICARAGUANS IN THE COSTA RICAN CIVIL WAR OF 1948

Introduction

In 1940, an overwhelming majority of Costa Rican voters (82.5 percent) elected Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia to the presidency. Eight years later, despite that astonishing mandate, his re-election efforts would help to trigger a civil war in a nation renowned for its democracy and political stability. The problems began when Calderón attempted to consolidate his power within the National Republican Party (PRN). Former President Leon Cortes, who had reluctantly backed Calderón in exchange for a *quid pro quo* in 1944, broke with the PRN after Calderón appointed Teodoro Picado as president of the Congress over Otto Cortes, the son of León Cortes. When the elder Cortes joined the opposition, Calderón found new allies in the Costa Rican Communists.¹

The alliance between Communists and the government allowed the Communists unprecedented access to state power and granted the government the support of a party with a disciplined and organized base of banana workers, urban artisans and wage laborers.² The alliance was borne out of Calderón's advocacy of Social Guarantees (*Garantías Sociales*) and a Labor Code (*Código del Trabajo*). The Communists allied themselves with the government in

¹ Iván Molina, "The Polarization of Politics, 1932-1948," *The Costa Rica Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. Steven Palmer and Iván Molina (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 163-4; David Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories: Populism, Popular Mobilization, Violence, and Memories of Civil War in Costa Rica, 1940-1948" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2009), 70.

² Molina, "The Polarization of Politics," 164; Eugene D. Miller, "Labour and the War-Time Alliance in Costa Rica 1943-1948," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 3 (1993): 515-6.

order to ensure that they would have a role in implementing the social reforms that the president, thanks to his alliance with the Catholic Church, was already advocating.³ To avoid entering a stage of obsolescence, the Communists needed to make themselves more palatable not only to Calderón and the PRN but also to the Catholic Church and its leader, the archbishop of San José, Victor Manuel Sanabria. The Communists did so by dissolving the Communist Party (PCCR), embracing Calderón's social Christian philosophy, and reestablishing themselves as the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP).⁴ The collaboration between the PRN and PVP paid off in 1944, when Teodoro Picado defeated León Cortes in the presidential electoral contest.

During the ensuing four years, Costa Rican politics became severely polarized. This chapter will examine how violence increasingly became a viable option for a Costa Rican opposition desperate to prevent the continued rule of *calderonistas*. As the opposition attempted to turn back the political fortunes of the *calderonistas*, it progressively sought violent means to accomplish its goals. To justify the turn towards violence, the Costa Rican opposition emphasized three principal complaints: the *calderonistas* had stolen the election and would do so again; the Communists dominated the government; and the government's dangerous association with Nicaraguans. I argue that the opposition convincingly presented the government as a corrupt entity overtaken by Communists and Nicaraguans, and was able to position itself as the savior of the Costa Rican nation and justify its defense through unprecedented violence.

³ Calderón was heavily influenced by the teachings of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Catholic Church pursued a program of social reforms to combat the rising popularity of communism among workers in the 1930s and 1940s. Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 39.

⁴ Miller, 518.

This chapter will focus primarily upon the activities of Nicaraguan exiles, laborers, and *Somocistas* during the Costa Rican Civil War. The Nicaraguan laborers and exiles, to say nothing of Somoza, all had their own motivations for participating in the war, and their efforts proved critical to both sides of the conflict. The Costa Rican government and the opposition both bolstered their ranks with Nicaraguans; however, they also (hypocritically) attacked each other for their association with Nicaraguans.

By 1944, the estimated number of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica ranged from 30,000 to 50,000. This growth in migration can be traced primarily to the expansion of UFCO banana plantations on the Pacific Coast, as well as to the continued political repression in Nicaragua.⁵ The Nicaraguan laborers and exiles were mostly anti-*Somocistas*, yet found themselves on opposite sides of a conflict in a country that was not their own. That strange face-off was the result of class antagonism and motivations that made each faction an obstacle to the other's success, even though they were not diametrically opposed.⁶ The Nicaraguan laborers fought on the side of *Vanguardia Popular*, and the government it supported, as the culmination of a relationship forged in the 1930s, particularly during the banana strike of 1934. In the Civil War of 1948, the Nicaraguan laborers fought as *vanguardistas* to protect the Labor Code and the Social Guarantees. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter, *Vanguardia Popular* helped Nicaraguans establish the PSN in Nicaragua. By 1944, Nicaraguans had established an affiliate chapter of the PSN in San José, announcing the charter by publishing a "Manifesto to all

⁵ Portocarrero, Nicaraguan Minister to Costa Rica, estimated 30,000 and Costa Rican president Teodoro Picado estimated 50,000. Portocarrero to Somoza G., San José, February 6, 1944, folder "Costa Rica," box, 1948-58 Secretaria de la Presidencia, ANN in Marcia K. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies and the Costa Rican Civil War of 1948: Picado, Somoza, and the Desperate Alliance" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2000), 176.

⁶ A few of the Nicaraguan exiles did fight on the side of the Picado government, including, Abelardo Cuadra and Enrique Tijerino.

the Nicaraguan Emigrants in Costa Rica” in *Trabajo* that demonstrated the links between Nicaraguan and Costa Rican laborers and leftists.⁷

On the other hand, the Nicaraguan exiles in the Caribbean Legion who aided José Figueres were primarily concerned with overthrowing Somoza and had become convinced that assisting Figueres was the best way to achieve their objective, despite the fact that Costa Rica was a democratic government. Moreover, as Walter suggests, “The characteristic that determined the activities and the objectives of the [Nicaraguan] exiled opposition was, in the final analysis, the class origin of its leadership, which was little different from that of the PLN, the PLI or even the Conservatives.”⁸ Thus, the majority of those involved in the exile movement, particularly the Nicaraguans involved with the Caribbean Legion, had no connection to the Nicaraguan laborers in Costa Rica (or in Nicaragua for that matter). Finally, Somoza ironically assisted a government supported by Communists to make certain that Figueres’ allies would not become a threat to his own rule in Nicaragua.⁹

Calderón, Picado and Somoza

The inauguration of Calderón initiated a rapprochement between the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, as well as a personal relationship between Somoza and Calderón. On the surface, an alliance between Calderón and Somoza seemed unlikely, given that Somoza came

⁷ USNADF818.00-9-744 (1944-08-14), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Melendez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

⁸ Knut Walter, *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza, 1936-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 229.

⁹ John Patrick Bell, *Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 138; Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 111-112; Richard E. Clinton, Jr., “The United States and the Caribbean Legion: Democracy, Dictatorship, and the Origins of the Cold War in Latin America, 1945-1950” (PhD diss., Ohio University, 2001), 229.

to power as the architect of a military dictatorship whereas Calderón became president by building a coalition of left-leaning reformist groups. However, these two governments depended on one another for support and preservation. Apart from being political allies, Calderón and Somoza, were also business partners, through a mutually beneficial arrangement to import Nicaraguan cattle to Costa Rica.¹⁰ Calderón's relationship with Somoza immediately became fodder for the Costa Rican opposition. When Calderón made an official visit to Nicaragua on December 1, 1941, the opposition used photos from the trip as evidence of a close friendship.¹¹

The relationship between Calderón and Somoza was not without its hiccups. After Calderón secured the support of *Vanguardia Popular* in 1943, Somoza reportedly threatened to invade Costa Rica. Somoza's disapproval of Calderón's alliance with the Communists also extended to Calderón's eventual successor and government candidate, Teodoro Picado. Somoza, even in the midst of World War II and the U.S. alliance with the Soviet Union, attacked Calderón for his association with the communist party. Concerned about communist support for Picado,¹² Somoza urged Calderón to stay on as president. However, at a meeting on the border between the two countries in early 1944, Calderón convinced Somoza that the pact with the *Vanguardia Popular* only committed his government to a labor code, and did not secure the Communists a

¹⁰ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 182-3.

¹¹ "Costa Ricans in Managua: President and Party Return Official Visit of Somoza, *New York Times*, December 2, 1941; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 183.

¹² According to Olander, there is some tenuous evidence suggesting that some of the Costa Rican opposition, despite their public condemnations of Somoza, attempted to take advantage of Somoza's reservations about Picado and recruit Somoza to their side. Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 184.

place in the Costa Rican government. Calderón also assured his counterpart that he would never arm the Communists.¹³ Thereafter, Somoza tenuously supported Picado's candidacy.

After Costa Ricans elected Picado president, Somoza's role in Costa Rican politics came under increasing scrutiny. In a letter to Somoza, Nicaraguan Minister Néstor Portocarrero stated, "Nobody can get it out of (the Costa Ricans') heads that the official candidate was supported by Nicaragua," and this caused "rancor against the Costa Rican government elect...as well as against us."¹⁴ The narrative of an intrusive and meddling Somoza had grown to such exaggerated proportions by 1949 that the anti-*calderocomunistas* claimed that the Nicaraguan *Guardia Nacional* had invaded Costa Rica on the eve of the 1944 election, attacked Costa Rican citizens, and forced Picado on Costa Rica.¹⁵ Nicaraguan Minister Portocarrero refuted claims of *Guardia* participation in a report to Somoza, but did confirm the presence of Nicaraguans on both sides of the Costa Rican political divide. Although it could have served Nicaragua's interests to point out that the opposition also counted Nicaraguans among their ranks, Portocarrero felt he could not do so without damaging the interests of Calderón and Picado. Portocarrero limited himself to publicly denying the presence of Nicaraguan armed forces in Costa Rica.¹⁶

According to the Nicaraguan Minister, the opposing sides "forced" Nicaraguans "to participate in the electoral struggle...of course the great majority are on the side of Picado-

¹³ "Somoza and Calderón Confer," *New York Times*, January 6, 1944; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 120, 185.

¹⁴ Portocarrero to Somoza, San José, April 18, 1944, folder "Costa Rica" box "1948-58 Secretaria de la Presidencia," ANN, in Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 184.

¹⁵ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 184.

¹⁶ Portocarrero to Somoza, San José, February 6, 1944, folder "Costa Rica," box "1948-58 Secretaria de la Presidencia," ANN in Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 186.

Communism.”¹⁷ Portocarrero’s confirmation that the majority of Nicaraguan immigrants sided with *Vanguardia Popular*, and by extension with Picado, demonstrates the enduring strength of the ties between Nicaraguan and Costa Rican laborers forged during the struggles of the 1930s. The opposition, for its part, attempted to discredit the government by relying on the standard trope of violent Nicaraguans.

Once in office, Picado’s relationship with Somoza was shaky at best. The Costa Rican president understood that he had to placate the Nicaraguan dictator; however, he did not want to do so at the expense of Costa Rica’s democracy. Picado’s reluctance to repress an increasingly hostile opposition, as well as his continued reliance on *Vanguardia Popular*, only served to frustrate Somoza, who came to see Picado as weak. According to U.S. Charge d’Affairs Walter Washington, “Somoza is somewhat displeased with the course of events in Costa Rica, and there is a suspicion that he would not be entirely displeased to see Picado put in a position of some embarrassment.”¹⁸ The continued existence of a revitalized group of Nicaraguan exiles in Costa Rica in 1944 only worsened the situation and ultimately did lead to Picado’s embarrassment.

Nicaraguan exile Alfredo Noguera’s attempted revolutionary plot finally forced Picado to side with Somoza. Picado’s decision to allow the Nicaraguan GN to cross into Costa Rica to put down Noguera’s attack did not play well in Costa Rica, and allowed the opposition to paint him as a lackey for Somoza. Picado attempted to deny Nicaraguan involvement, arguing that “dark-

¹⁷ Portocarrero to Somoza, San José, February 8, 1944, folder “Costa Rica,” box “1948-58 Secretaria de la Presidencia,” ANN in Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 186.

¹⁸ USNADF818.00-10-3044 (1944-10-30), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Melendez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

skinned” Costa Ricans had put down Noguera Gomez. This failed to appease the Costa Rican opposition.¹⁹

By October 1944, the interim U.S. Charge d’Affairs Walter Washington confirmed the difficult position of Picado in regards to his relationship with Somoza, writing to the State Department:

[T]here are evidences that the spirit of cooperation which existed between General Somoza and President Calderón Guardia is diminishing...[T]he handling of the Noguera Gómez affair by President Picado was such that it played into the hands of the vocal opposition here. This opposition was quick to charge that there was a secret understanding between Picado and Somoza by which the former permitted the latter to send troops of the Nicaraguan National Guard into Costa Rican territory in return for the support which Somoza had lent the last Administration in the Presidential election of last February...[Picado] realizes the domestic situation will now not permit him to be too friendly without being charged with ‘appeasement’...While there is no evidence as yet to show that the disturbances to the North have strengthened the hand of the opposition here (except, to a small degree, psychologically) it is freely predicted that if both [Honduran president] Carias and Somoza should fall the Government of Costa Rica would have to weather a serious crisis.²⁰

The dispatch from the U.S. Charge d’Affairs demonstrates that the regional crisis of dictators in Central America was adversely affecting the domestic political situation in Costa Rica.

Unfortunately for Picado, neither Somoza nor Carias would have to fall for the opposition to ramp up its efforts to dislodge Picado from power.

By 1946, the Costa Rican opposition increasingly pursued direct violence against the state. On June 25, 1946, Costa Rican opposition leaders Fernando Castro Cervantes, Fernando Valverde, and Arturo Quiros planned to broadcast a call for revolution against Picado over the

¹⁹ Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 197-8.

²⁰ USNADF818.00-10-3044 (1944-10-30), Biblioteca Digital Carlos Melendez, CIHAC, San José, Costa Rica.

radio.²¹ A group of armed men surrounded radio station Alma Tica, while the plot leaders aired a call to revolution. The government, however, learned of the plot and foiled it before the announcement could be made. The government ridiculed the participants of the *Almaticazo*, as the failed attack came to be known. Díaz-Arias argues that the experience of the *Almaticazo* only served to invigorate the opposition and harden its commitment to violence. The government's ridicule of the movement, as well as Picado's decision to release all involved, only promoted violence as an alternative.²² As a result, violent acts by the opposition became routine after the *Almaticazo*, including a bomb attack on the home of Manuel Mora in November 1946, and over seventy terrorist acts in 1947.²³

The *Almaticazo* also confirms the presence of Nicaraguans amongst the Costa Rican opposition. The government later released a list of those involved that included the names of Nicaraguan mercenaries.²⁴ Speculation about the presence of Nicaraguans on the opposition's side increased when Mexican authorities detained Rosendo Argüello Ramírez and Edelberto Torres in February 1947. The Costa Rican press eagerly swept away rumors that the Costa Rican opposition had financed Argüello and Torres' acquisition of the weapons as part of a plan to foment revolution in Costa Rica. They stated that members of the Nicaraguan opposition bought the arms for a movement against Somoza.²⁵ When the U.S. State Department declared

²¹ "De la política a la Guerra. Testimonio de Fernando Valverde Vega," *San Isidro del General en llamas*, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001), 105.

²² Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 213.

²³ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 218-9.

²⁴ Bell, 97; Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 212.

²⁵ "Revela el periodico "Flecha" que el contrabando de armas estaba destinado a Nicaragua," *Diario de Costa Rica*, February 12, 1947.

that it had no knowledge of revolutionary plots in the region, the Costa Rican opposition press blasted the government, claiming that authorities had spread the rumors of revolution only to gain arms from the United States to use against the opposition.²⁶

Nicaraguan exiles denied their participation in any Costa Rican plot and emphasized their intention to overthrow Somoza. Rosendo Argüello Ramírez wrote a letter to the *Diario* vehemently denying any attempts to interfere in Costa Rican politics and plots against leaders of *Vanguardia Popular*. He stated that it was solely up to Costa Ricans to address the problems of Costa Rica, that the opposition would never support Nicaraguan intervention, and that Nicaraguans had enough to worry about within their own nation. He explained that the arms had been intended for use in Nicaragua, as part of a plan to overthrow Somoza, and added that the election of Leonardo Argüello had convinced revolutionists to put their plans on hold.²⁷

Argüello's claim that the arms were meant for a revolution against Somoza were certainly plausible, given the rather brazen activities of Nicaraguan exiles during the 1940s. Nicaraguan exiles were not at all reluctant to admit their intention to use arms to overthrow Somoza. In an interview with the Costa Rican newspaper *La Prensa Libre*, Toribio Tijerino justified the use of arms against Somoza. Tijerino stated that in the aftermath of the coup d'état that removed Leonardo Argüello from power, Nicaraguans had the right to "rebel against a despotic government" and use "force to combat force."²⁸

²⁶ "Rotundo fracaso de los gobiernos de Nicaragua, Honduras, y Costa Rica para obtener armas del gobierno norteamericano," *Diario de Costa Rica*, March 27, 1947.

²⁷ "Los propios detenidos en Mexico prueban que las armas decomisadas no estaban destinadas a Costa Rica," *Diario de Costa Rica*, February 18, 1947.

²⁸ "Recurriremos a las armas para alejar a Somoza de Nicaragua," *La Prensa Libre*, January 12, 1948.

The Costa Rican opposition's escalating willingness to use violence, combined with its connection to the exile movements supported by the government of Guatemala and the Costa Rican government's military weakness, alarmed Picado and pushed him closer to Somoza and *Vanguardia Popular*.²⁹ Olander posits: "Had it not been for the exile movement, Costa Rica might have continued its normal course of isolationism and non-alignment." In March 1946, Picado sent Manuel Mora to Mexico to monitor the opposition's movements. Mora confirmed that Nicaraguan and Costa Rican exiles were working in conjunction to overthrow Somoza. More alarmingly for Picado, he also learned that these exiles believed that a successful attack against the Costa Rican government would help to pave the way for a subsequent invasion of Nicaragua.³⁰ Somoza also furnished Picado with further evidence of collaboration between Nicaraguan exiles and the Costa Rican opposition, heightening the sense that they were battling a common enemy.

The Costa Rican oppositionist press was relentless in portraying the Costa Rican government as a vehicle for communism.³¹ Furthermore, as Díaz-Arias demonstrates, once

²⁹ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 212.

³⁰ A student informed Picado and the Mexican embassy about plotting by Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, who "is in constant connection with certain people at San José." Gibson to Secretary of State, April 1 1946, NA818.00/4-146; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 214.

³¹ "La guerra al gobierno emprendida por Mora sólo obedece la consigna de hacer creer que hay distanciamiento," *Diario de Costa Rica*, March 9, 1947; "La oposición hace responsable al Dr. Calderón Guardia de haber metido al comunismo dentro del gobierno," *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 1, 1947; "También para Costa Rica ha llegado la hora de que el pueblo inicie la cruzada contra la infiltración Marxista," *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 9, 1947; "Están nombrando autoridades comunistas en la Zona Atlántica," *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 9, 1947; "Denuncia don Carlos Soley Reyes como están preparando los comunistas el fraude electoral," *Diario de Costa Rica*, June 11, 1947; "El caldero-comunismo solo ha conseguido reafirmar el concepto de que Calderón es comunista," *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 8, 1947; "Se opone el presidente Picado al proyecto para declarar contrario a los intereses y principios de la república el Partido

Otilio Ulate, who became opposition leader following the death of León Cortes, was able to frame *calderonistas* and Communists as one inseparable group (the *calderocomunistas*), he was able to cast his opponents as “outsiders to the national community.” *Ulatistas* exploited the death of Cortes and asserted that *calderocomunismo* had killed him.³² However, this is insufficient to explain the opposition’s success in labeling the government and its allies as “outsiders.”

The opposition solidified the perception that Picado’s government was in the hands of Nicaraguans, arguing that the Nicaraguan government and the immigrants present in Costa Rica had undermined the country’s autonomy. The strike of Brazos Caidos in mid-1947 demonstrated how polarized Costa Rican politics had become, and gave the first indication that Costa Rica was careening irreversibly towards a violent resolution.

Escalating Violence

In July 1947, opposition brigades consisting of young men in Cartago baited government police forces by beating on Communists, screaming, “We want Communist blood.”³³ The *calderonista* Victor Vaglio, along with police forces, responded aggressively. On July 20, the violence escalated when a brigade of young men beat several Communists for crying “Viva Calderón Guardia!” and confronted the police and *calderocomunistas*.³⁴ The resulting clash

Vanguardia Popular, *Diario de Costa Rica*, October 29, 1947; “Destruídos nuestros talleres por comunistas y calderonistas,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, November 4, 1947.

³² Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 225, 246.

³³ Bell, 101; Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 227.

³⁴ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 228.

wounded many, including Opposition leaders and several police officers, and handed the Opposition an opportunity to portray the government police forces as overly aggressive.³⁵

Protesting the police violence in Cartago, Otilio Ulate called for a “*Huelga General de Brazos Caídos*” on July 23, 1947. Intended to be pacific in nature, the strike quickly turned violent, resulting in eight dead within 48 hours.³⁶ The opposition press lambasted the government for recruiting 3000 *calderonistas* and Communists to “hunt” the protesters and warned that a communist coup was imminent. Moreover, the opposition compared the heavy-handed government response to the regimes of Somoza and Carías.³⁷

The Opposition was particularly upset by the government’s importation of laborers associated with *Vanguardia Popular* from Puntarenas and Limón, the banana zones of Costa Rica, to guard the streets of San José.³⁸ The opposition mocked these workers and labeled them *mariachis*, because they wore straw hats and blankets similar to *sarapes* to withstand the cold in San José (see figure 1). *Calderonistas* re-appropriated the term with pride and *mariachi* soon thereafter became synonymous with *calderonista*.³⁹ The opposition emphasized “the otherness” of the workers, many of whom were black and/or Nicaraguan, and, thus, considered to be

³⁵ “Cartago sometida sorpresivamente al terror de la policía,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 22, 1947; Grandiosa manifestación oposicionista se improvisó ayer en San José,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 22, 1947.

³⁶ “Hulega general,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 23, 1947; “Extendida la huelga a toda la republica,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 24, 1947.

³⁷ “El gobierno tiene 3000 hombres sobre las armas,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 24, 1947; “El peligro de un golpe comunista en Costa Rica,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 25, 1947.

³⁸ “Continua en pie la huelga,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 25, 1947; “A los gritos de Viva Calderón y Viva Vanguardia Popular se inició ayer el saqueo de San José,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 29, 1947.

³⁹ Oscar Bakit, *Cuentos Mariachis: Narraciones de la Guerra Civil del 48* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1991), 13; Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 230.

outsiders. The press questioned the shirtless and shoeless workers' fitness to guard the streets of the capital as if they were citizens with something to defend.⁴⁰ As Díaz-Arias writes of the ethnic and class dynamics of the conflict, "the strike permitted them [the opposition] to label *Calderocomunistas* as 'negros,' 'banana workers,' 'Communists,' or just as 'Nicaraguan Somocistas' so conceiving them as 'Others' to the national community."⁴¹ The opposition further implicated Nicaraguans when it claimed that the government had enlisted GN troops in its brigades to control strikers.⁴²

Figure 1. *Mariachis* as depicted by *Diario de Costa Rica*



Source: *Diario de Costa Rica* in Díaz-Arias, 231. For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.

⁴⁰ *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 25, 1947.

⁴¹ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 236.

⁴² "7º día de huelga victoriosa," *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 29, 1947; "Radio Rebelde: la clandestina voz de la revolución. Testimonio de don German Sojo Arias," *Testimonios del 48: De las calles a la guerra*, Tomo III, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001), 263.

After more than a week of clashes between opposition and pro-government forces, riots, and vandalized shops and buildings, Picado, the *Partido Republicano Nacional* (PRN) and the Opposition reached an agreement on August 3, 1948.⁴³ The *Pacto de Honor* mandated an acceptance of the electoral results of 1948, whatever they happened to be, by both sides. Furthermore, the government granted an amnesty for all supporters of the strike. The pact proved advantageous to the opposition, as it could more easily claim electoral fraud than the incumbent government could.⁴⁴

High tension and violence continued to prevail despite the pact. On October 12, 1947, the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica* (CTCR) called for laborers to demonstrate in support of the Picado and the Social Reforms and against the opposition. The CCTRN (*Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores “Rerum Novarum”*),⁴⁵ the Catholic labor organization led by Father Benjamin Nuñez, had called for its own rally the same day and the potential for a violent clash was imminent.⁴⁶ Exacerbating matters, Carlos Luis Fallas marched hundreds of laborers from the banana zones, including many Nicaraguans, into San José to join the demonstration with machetes in hand.⁴⁷ The *columna liniera*, as Fallas’ band of laborers

⁴³ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 234-5.

⁴⁴ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 235. Díaz-Arias suggests that *Vanguardia Popular* did not sign the pact for this reason.

⁴⁵ “Rerum Novarum” was a Catholic labor organization dedicated social justice based on religious principles and to eliminating the influence of communism over the labor unions. Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 124-5.

⁴⁶ “Costa Ricans Parade: Rival Unions Honor Columbus but Include Politicking,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1947.

⁴⁷ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 237.

were called, demonstrated the strength of *Vanguardia Popular* and its ability to quickly organize a large group of laborers in defense of the government. The opposition claimed that Carlos Fallas recruited Nicaraguans in the *fincas* to fight against “our Costa Rican brothers.” According to Robert Delgado, Fallas implored the Nicaraguans to bring their *cutachas* (curved machetes) if they did not have weapons.⁴⁸

José Meléndez Ibarra’s *La Columna Liniera* details the march of laborers from the banana plantations to San José.⁴⁹ According to Melendez, the *columna liniera* consisted of 1600 workers (the “spine” of the revolution)⁵⁰, led by *Vanguardia Popular*, “the brain” (*cerebro dirigente*).⁵¹ They marched to support the government and to defend the Social Guarantees and the Labor Code.

The journey was an arduous one. The *linieros* received help from townspeople to satiate their thirst and hunger; however, this was not enough to stave off frustrations. Some workers felt that their leaders had lied to them about how difficult the trek would be. Some required treatment and could not continue.⁵² The *linieros* also had to deal with the possibility of violence. Melendez recounts how Carlos Luis Fallas and Eduardo Mora, the representatives of *Vanguardia Popular*, directed the workers to maintain discipline. They did not drink, and, in direct contrast to the reports of the opposition, they adopted a friendly and amicable demeanor towards the

⁴⁸ Robert A. Delgado, “Fallas se pasaba todo su tiempo en esta zona preparando a los nicas para que pelearan con nuestros hermanos los ticos,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 12, 1948.

⁴⁹ José Meléndez Ibarra, *La columna liniera* (San José: Ediciones Revolución, 1969).

⁵⁰ Including women who marched with the men and prepared meals for them.

⁵¹ Meléndez, 13, 28, 48.

⁵² Meléndez, 54-5.

people of the towns and cities that they passed through. Fallas told the *linieros* to ignore opposition provocateurs and to avoid all confrontations, asking them to approach *Vanguardia* leaders in the event of physical attacks.⁵³

When they were near Cartago, Picado's men warned them to avoid the city, since the Costa Rican military would not be able to defend the *linieros* against a rumored opposition attack. Eduardo Mora decided to ignore Picado's warning and marched through Cartago, reasoning that the *linieros* were capable of defending themselves. Passing through Cartago, Meléndez asserts that the townspeople welcomed the *linieros* and ignored the misinformation that the opposition had spread about them.⁵⁴

Ultimately, the march was peaceful. The workers arrived in San José and participated in the rally without incident.⁵⁵ Despite the opposition's attempts to characterize the machete-wielding *linieros* as violent *macheteros*, Meléndez asserts that the *linieros* "offended no one, humbled no one, did not hit or harm anyone" and only carried machetes (*rulas*) to defend themselves if attacked.⁵⁶

A peasant in San Isidro, in Puntarenas, recounts that he had been told (presumably by the opposition propaganda) that the *linieros* were made up of Nicaraguan ex-convicts, communist fugitives, rapists, thieves, and assassins prepared to stab anyone who dared to challenge them.

⁵³ Meléndez, 28.

⁵⁴ Meléndez, 62-3. Rumors about fugitive communists, rapists, thieves and assassins taking over the government were rampant in Cartago.

⁵⁵ Díaz-Arias attributes this to a heavy rain that forced the demonstrators to disperse, precluding a clash with the opposition. Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 237.

⁵⁶ Meléndez, 28, 73-4; "El fracaso comunista expuesto a los ojos del pueblo costarricense," *Diario de Costa Rica*, October 14, 1947.

However, in reality, the few street fights that did break out were started by opposition agents who had insulted *linieros*.⁵⁷

Melendez, a nationalized Costa Rican of Nicaraguan origin and a *liniero*, offers one of the only accounts by a Nicaraguan laborer directly involved with *Vanguardia Popular*.⁵⁸ In particular, the author highlights Nicaraguan men telling jokes with each other and with a heavyset woman by the name of Joséfa Pérez, also known as “La Chepa Pollo.” The laborers, including Carlos Luis Fallas, held Pérez in high regard for her labor activism. When Fallas asked to know the women’s reason for coming along, she explained: “we are *vanguardistas* and like good *vanguardistas* we will die for the Party if necessary. You all cannot go alone, at least one woman had to accompany you and you have four. You will be a father figure for the men and we will be mothers.”⁵⁹

The inclusion of “La Chepa Pollo” draws attention to the role of women in *Vanguardia Popular*. The participation of women in the run up to the civil war is scarce but Perez asserts her vitality by stating that the group needed at least one woman, a mother. Whereas Fallas could serve as a father, reinforcing his patriarchal role, there was an even greater need for “mothers.” Despite this traditional division of roles based on gender, in which they cooked and cleaned, the women also marched with the men, playing the part of mothers *and* good *vanguardistas*.

In another exchange, demonstrating the great respect the Nicaraguan laborers had for Fallas, the *liniero* reprimanded a Nicaraguan referred to as “Chontales” for drinking during the

⁵⁷ Miguel Acuña, *El 48* (San José: Litografía e Imprenta Lil, 1990), 286.

⁵⁸ Nicaraguan laborers mentioned by name or nickname: Mariano “Masaya” Cerna Gaitán, Justo “Chanco é Monte” López, “Chontales”, “Talí”, “Peludo.” *La Columna Liniera* is the only account to discuss any participation by Nicaraguan women in the march: Joséfa “La Chepa Pollo” Pérez, Obdulia Pizzaro, “La Chita.”

⁵⁹ Meléndez, 25-6.

march. “Chontales” had brought two bottles of *guaro* (sugar cane liquor), claiming that he could not eat *nacatamales* (Nicaraguan tamales) without drinking. Fallas, angered, took both bottles and broke them. The Nicaraguan, surprised by Fallas’ actions, said, “You know that I am a real man...and only you, asshole (*jodido*), can do this to me.”⁶⁰ For many of these men there was a direct correlation with their ability to fight, their ability to drink, and their ability to defend their honor as men. The assertion that only Fallas could get away with breaking the bottles denotes the fact that the laborers considered Fallas a “real man.” Fallas, in the eyes of the laborers, was not only a union leader but also a colleague, a fellow plantation worker.

Meléndez makes clear that there was a sense of unity and conviction among the workers and closes his memoir by stating that the *linieros* acted with “courage, decency, and patriotism.” He asserts that they deserve a place of honor in Costa Rica’s history, particularly for struggling to bring about and defend the social reforms that had benefited all workers: social security, severance pay, early notice, paid vacations, etc.⁶¹

A quotation from Quince Duncan’s novel *Final de calle* captures two important aspects of the Costa Rican Communist labor movement’s perception of the Nicaraguan laborers involved with *Vanguardia Popular*: “The *Nicas* that are with us do not belong to Somoza. The ones that are with Fallas and the *linieros* are *Sandinistas*...besides, those *Nicas* are from here...They have lived here a long time, working on the banana plantations. They are workers like us.”⁶² First, the “*nicas*” were from “here,” from Costa Rica. Although they retained their national and ethnic Nicaraguan identity, the Costa Rican laborers viewed them as belonging. Second, the quote

⁶⁰ Meléndez, 58.

⁶¹ Meléndez, 75-7, 80-1.

⁶² Quince Duncan, *Final de calle* (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 2000), 63-4.

reiterates *how* this was possible. It was because these Nicaraguans had worked side by side with Costa Rican laborers on the banana plantations. Furthermore, they were described as *Sandinistas*. They, like the Costa Ricans, were workers, and as such, their class position and their anti-*somocismo* trumped their nationality. When the Civil War arrived, thousands of *linieros*, Costa Rican and Nicaraguan alike, would test their resolve and put their lives on the line to defend their ideals.

The 1948 Election

As the day of the election approached, the Costa Rican opposition had clearly identified the three issues they could exploit and use against the government: fraud, the alliance with Communists and the association with Nicaraguans. The opposition framed the electoral contest as a fight that pitted “true” democratic Costa Ricans against outside, non-Costa Rican entities. The opposition press denounced *Vanguardia Popular* for urging its members in Guanacaste, Alajuela, and Puntarenas to vote for Calderón Guardia, claiming that *Vanguardia* was merely an extension of the government.⁶³ Costa Rican law permitted Nicaraguans and other Central Americans the right to vote in elections.⁶⁴ However, the opposition accused the government and *vanguardistas* of electoral corruption by registering Nicaraguans as Costa Ricans with fraudulent identification cards so that they could vote twice.⁶⁵ On January 23, 1948, *La Prensa Libre*

⁶³ “Denunciada ante el tribunal electoral la fusion de comunistas y calderonistas,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 10, 1948.

⁶⁴ “Costa Rican Votes Urged: President Asks Citizens of Other Republics to go to Polls,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1947.

⁶⁵ “El Partido Union Nacional planteo al Tribunal Electoral el problema de las cédulas fraudulentas que se pretende usar como buenas,” *La Prensa Libre*, January 8, 1948; “Se hara la entrega de las 7200 cédulas tachadas de fraudulentas,” *La Prensa Libre*, January 9, 1948; “Individuos de nacionalidad nicaraguense están solicitando cédulas de identidad haciendose pasar por ciudadanos costarricenses,” *La Prensa Libre*, January 2, 1948; “Ayer en la tarde fueron

reported that the *calderonistas* were spreading word that they would use military force to destroy the opposition and stage a coup in case they lost the elections. According to the report the *calderonistas* counted on the support of the Bella Vista barracks, 1500 machine guns, and 200 machine gun specialists imported from Nicaragua.⁶⁶

On February 8, 1948, Costa Ricans finally went to the polls to cast their votes for president.⁶⁷ On February 28, the National Electoral Tribunal (NET) provisionally declared PUN candidate Otilio Ulate victorious.⁶⁸ However, Calderón Guardia and the PRN refused to recognize the results, citing fraud and asked the NET to annul the results.⁶⁹ On March 1, 1948, Congress granted the appeal and nullified the election results.⁷⁰ The accepted narrative of the 1948 presidential election claims that the government and Calderón tried to steal the elections and install a dictatorship by falsely claiming electoral fraud. However, Iván Molina has convincingly proven that the election did have irregularities, that the opposition did commit

presentadas ante el Juez 2º Penal denuncias contra los que han tratado de inscribirse por 2º vez,” *La Prensa Libre*, January 7, 1948.

⁶⁶ “Los calderonistas se han dado a regar la especie de que cuenta con el Cuartel Bella Vista para dar un golpe de estado,” *La Prensa Libre*, January 23, 1948. Picado’s recognition of Somoza puppet Roman y Reyes in December 1947 prompted the press to further advance the notion that the Costa Rican government and Somoza worked out an alliance. *Diario de Costa Rica* reprinted an article from Guatemala claiming that Picado only recognized Roman y Reyes to gain military aid from Somoza and to force Calderón into office. Roberto Paz y Paz, “Traición a la democracia,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 9, 1948.

⁶⁷ “Costa Rica Will Elect Chief Today,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1948; “Costa Ricans End Violent Campaign,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1948.

⁶⁸ “Ulate is Declared Costa Rican Victor,” *New York Times*, February 29, 1948.

⁶⁹ “Costa Rican Count in Doubt,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1948; “Costa Rican Congress to be Asked to Void Presidential Vote,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1948; “Costa Rican Vote Clouded by Fraud,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1948.

⁷⁰ Molina, “The Polarization of Politics,” 167; “Costa Rica Annuls Presidential Election; Ulate Disappears as Supporter is Killed,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1948.

fraud, and that the *calderonistas* justifiably questioned the results.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the possibility of violence loomed after the annulment of the election results.⁷² The PUN and the PRN, in an effort to avoid war, began ongoing negotiations for a peaceful settlement.⁷³

The peace talks stalled because Figueres took advantage of this palpable outrage and launched his uprising on March 12, 1948. Figueres claimed that he acted in defense of Ulate; however, given that he had already pledged Costa Rica to an assault on Central American dictatorships, he needed to make certain that he was in a position to fulfill his commitments to the Caribbean Legion. Thus began the “War of National Liberation.”⁷⁴

The War

The involvement of Nicaraguans on both sides of the conflict had an impact on the course of the war. Figueres relied on the expertise of exiles from the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua, while the government relied on the expertise offered by Nicaraguans Enrique Somarriba Tijerino and Abelardo Cuadra, as well as rank and file Nicaraguans that fought as part of the communist brigades. What is clear is that Nicaraguans were critical to the efforts of both

⁷¹ Iván Molina Jiménez, “El resultado de las elecciones de 1948 en Costa Rica. Una revisión a la luz de nuevos datos,” in *Democracia y Elecciones en Costa Rica. Dos contribuciones polémicas, Cuaderno de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 120 (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 2002), 33-70; “Uncounted Votes Burn in Costa Rica,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1948; Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 243.

⁷² “Coups Feared in Costa Rican as Government Defeat Looms,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1948; “Reds Plot Coup in Costa Rica Winner Charges,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 11, 1948; “Costa Rica Fears New Uprising by Disgruntled Reds,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 13, 1948.

⁷³ “Truce in Costa Rica is Won by Archbishop,” *New York Times*, March 5, 1948; “Costa Rica Wins Truce: Compromise will be Sought before Midnight,” *New York Times*, March 8, 1948; “Costa Rican Truce Holds: Archbishop, Fearing Civil War, Continues Political Mediation,” *New York Times*, March 9, 1948; “Costa Rica Mediation Off,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1948.

⁷⁴ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 242-4.

sides, and some of them gave their lives to the struggle. Furthermore, the perception of Nicaraguans in the war effort is important, as both sides accused each other of bringing in “belligerent Nicaraguans” in an attempt to delegitimize their claims to saving Costa Rica. Ultimately, *figueristas* were more successful in portraying the government forces as dependent on Nicaraguans and Somoza, especially after the GN intervened on behalf of Picado’s government. Somoza’s intervention proved disastrous for Picado, and paved the way for Figueres’ victory. This section will focus on the participation of Nicaraguans in the Civil War and its consequences.

Figueres and his men began gathering at his hacienda *La Lucha* in February 1948. After Congress annulled Ulate’s victory, the rebels acted quickly to put their plan in motion. The *figueristas* took advantage of the government’s slow response to rebel movements and launched their attack on March 12 by taking San Isidro de El General in Puntarenas as well as certain sections of the Pan-American Highway. San Isidro was critical because it had an airport that facilitated the importation of arms and men. Figueres brought in enough arms to equip one thousand men. By April, Figueres’ forces would grow to over six hundred people.

Critical to the planning and execution of the war strategy were the contingent of exiles that entered Costa Rica under the banner of the Caribbean Legion. Without the aid of these exiles, it is unlikely that Figueres would have stood a chance against the Costa Rican government. Figueres designated Dominican Colonel Miguel Ángel Ramírez as commander of the rebel army and was accompanied by fellow Legionnaires from the Dominican Republic (Horacio Ornes Goisou) and Honduras (Jorge Rivas Montes, Mario Sosa, Francisco Morazán, Presentación Ortega, Alfredo Mejía Lara, Francisco Sanchez, Marcos Ortega, and Jacinto Castro). Among the Nicaraguans who joined Figueres were Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, Jacinto

López Godoy, Francisco Castillo, Octavio Caldera, Emilio Gómez Roveló, José María Tercero, Julian Salaverri, José Santos Castillo, Rodríguez Matus and Antonio Velasquez and Adolfo Báez Bone.⁷⁵ Argüello Ramírez affirms the presence of a large contingent of Nicaraguan among the *figueristas* forces, whom he referred to as the “key men” (*hombres claves*) of the company.⁷⁶ The actual number of Nicaraguans is disputed, as Argüello places the number in the hundreds (with the majority, at the insistence of Figueres, disguised as Costa Ricans). Figueres places the total number of exiles, Nicaraguan or otherwise, at a much smaller eighteen. Historian Marcia Olander places the number of total exiles at around thirty, based on her reading of memoirs and other sources.⁷⁷ Whatever their exact number might have been, the exiles’ most important contribution was the military experience they brought to the war effort.

When the war began, the government underestimated the capability of the rebel forces. The *figueristas* demonstrated their strength by killing a contingent of four soldiers, the personal bodyguard of Calderón, sent to capture José Figueres. *Figueristas* also attacked the single government battalion of about sixty-five trained Costa Rican soldiers, *Unidad Móvil*.⁷⁸ Beyond *Unidad Móvil*, the government counted only 300 soldiers, many of whom lacked training and

⁷⁵ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 249-250; Juan Diego López, *Los cuarenta días de 1948: la Guerra Civil en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2000), 27; M. Acuña, *El 48*, 182; Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, *La Guerra de Figueres: Crónica de ocho años* (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1998), 540; Romilio Durán Picado, *San Isidro de El General: Ciudad Martir* (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1995), 28; Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron* (Mexico: 1954), 39, 42.

⁷⁶ Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 42.

⁷⁷ Argüello Ramírez, *Doy Testimonio*, 67-72; José Figueres Ferrer, *El Espíritu del 48* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1987), 155; Marcia Olander, “Costa Rica in 1948: Cold War or Local War?” *The Americas* 52, no. 4 (1996): 477; Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 250.

⁷⁸ “Battle in Costa Rica: Policemen Killed as Mobile Unit Fights Opposition,” *New York Times*, March 13, 1948.

arms, in addition to a police force of about 1100 men, with old or non-functioning weapons. Scrambling to enlist experienced men to fight on their side, the government quickly turned to *vanguardistas* and Nicaraguan soldiers.⁷⁹ Picado's reliance on the *vanguardistas* gave the opposition the ammunition to paint him as a communist.⁸⁰

After an attack on San Ramón, a town north of San José, the Costa Rican government awarded Nicaraguan Abelardo Cuadra a command, which he shared with Costa Rican Captain Aúreo Morales.⁸¹ Cuadra and Morales led a group of 120 men and successfully defended San Ramón, temporarily halting the opposition's momentum.⁸² When Abelardo Cuadra reached San José in February 1948, he detected the "scent of revolt in the air." According to Cuadra, both Picado and Figueres asked for his support in the conflict. Cuadra decided to join the incumbent Costa Rican government's side, because the *medallitas*, the pejorative term for opposition youth, supported Figueres' cause. Cuadra viewed the *medallitas* as the recalcitrant rich. Moreover, he found it too great a contradiction that the Caribbean Legion, a group which he had belonged to, and had been formed to combat the dictatorships of Trujillo and Somoza, would come to Costa

⁷⁹ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 250-2.

⁸⁰ Jules Dubois, "Martial Law is Proclaimed for Costa Rica: Red 'Dictator' Charge Hurlled at Chief," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 14, 1948; Jules Dubois, "Costa Rican Army Battles Anti-Communist Revolution," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 15, 1948; Jules Dubois, "Red Flag Flies as Costa Rica Fights Revolt," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 16, 1948; Jules Dubois, "Tells of Reds' Grip on Rule in Costa Rica," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 20, 1948; "Costa Rica Consul Denies Government is Communist," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 26, 1948.

⁸¹ Aúreo Morales became notorious for his cruelty during the Civil War. Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 285.

⁸² Abelardo Cuadra, *Hombre del caribe* (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana EDUCA, 1977), 253; Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 251. Cuadra complains that the government initially under-utilized him as an instructor for the Confederation of Costa Rican Workers (CTCR) militias and other volunteers in Alajuela while

Rica to overthrow a government which had been responsible for much social progress, and had the support of the unions and the poor. Thus, he sided with the *Vanguardia Popular*, of the *calderonistas*, of the *mariachis*.⁸³

According to Cuadra, the little success that the government did enjoy was due to the command of another Nicaraguan, former sergeant of the GN, Juan Leyva. In an attempt to bolster his own forces, Cuadra recruited a former lieutenant of the *Guardia*, Justo Salamanca. Salamanca had fought with Cuadra in the war against Sandino in the Segovias and was a part of the *Guardia* uprising against Somoza in 1935. Salamanca had initially planned to assist Figueres, but Cuadra was able to convince him to join the government forces instead.⁸⁴

Cuadra credits much of the success that Figueres enjoyed to the number of experienced soldiers in his ranks, particularly those who were a part of the Caribbean Legion. He felt that the government forces were severely lacking in experienced soldiers. He devoted a great deal of time to training his men, so as to avoid a defeat like the one that would befall Nicaraguan Enrique Somarriba Tijerino. Of the 350 men commanded by the latter, only a few (including his cousin Uriel Cuadra, Bayardo Páez, Justo Salamanca, and the 30 or 40 Communists led by Carlos Luis Fallas) could have been described as soldiers.⁸⁵

The PVP quickly moved its *brigadas de choque* to the frontlines. It was able to mobilize worker militias as well as the *mariachis* that had participated in the *Huelga of Brazos Caidos*. The workers, made up of Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans, were well disciplined and willing to

Figueres' forces were making early gains in the conflict. Cuadra writes that he always shared command with a Costa Rican, mostly Carlos Luis Fallas.

⁸³ A. Cuadra, 251-2.

⁸⁴ A. Cuadra, 255.

⁸⁵ A. Cuadra, 254.

fight for the PVP to protect the Social Reform.⁸⁶ Manuel Mora attempted to convince General Enrique Somarriba Tijerino, a reputed former Sandinista who lived in Puntarenas as a cabinetmaker (*ebanista*), to join the government forces. This was no easy task, since Tijerino hated Calderón for his friendship with the Nicaraguan dictator. Every year, on the anniversary of Sandino's death, Tijerino would publish an incendiary diatribe against Somoza; and every year, Calderón and later Picado would imprison him.

This made Tijerino, in some ways, a likely *figuerista*, and the opposition did court him as well. According to Pedro José García Róger, *figuerista* and friend of the Nicaraguan *sandinista*, Tijerino had agreed to fight against the government after Picado's victory in 1944, accepting the command of a mixed troop composed of Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans who had worked with him. However, that plan had come to naught when León Cortes had cancelled the revolt. This frustrated and disappointed Tijerino who had intended to keep his group together and use them to overthrow Somoza, after securing a victory in Costa Rica. In 1948, when *figueristas* asked him to join them, he roundly refused, stating, "I do not want anything to do with you. You are all paper fighters who are only good for writing in newspapers. I am not going to get involved with politician sons of bitches (*hijueputas*) who are only good for upsetting people but do not have the balls (*güevos*) to fight like men."⁸⁷ This, however, would not keep Tijerino out of the fight.

Tijerino agreed to join the government forces after Manuel Mora promised to furnish him with the arms and men he needed to realize his long-cherished revolt in Nicaragua. Tijerino met with Carlos Luis Fallas to recruit men among the banana workers in Puerto Cortés. Fallas

⁸⁶ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 253.

⁸⁷ "Guerrilla 'Valverde Vega'. Testimonio de Pedro José García Roger," *Testimonios del 48: Baño de Sangre*, Tomo V, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2003), 75-77, 84.

designated the workers organized there, like those that protested in September 1947, the *Columna Liniera*. Unfortunately, many of the workers were poorly armed, many carrying only *machetes* or Remington rifles that were infamous for exploding in the hands of persons who fired them.⁸⁸

Despite the lack of proper weapons, Fallas and Tijerino moved against the *figueristas* in an effort to retake San Isidro de El General. Based on the reputation of Tijerino alone, the rebels fled San Isidro. However, Manuel Ángel Ramírez, the Dominican Legionnaire, was determined to recapture San Isidro for the rebels and led his troops into a confrontation with *La Columna Liniera*. After some early success, the *linieros* withered under two days' worth of incessant machine gun fire and Tijerino called for a retreat.⁸⁹ Francisco Valverde Vega, an opposition member caught in the trenches that day, bore witness as Tijerino's retreat lost cohesion and wrote that a bullet went through the leader's cranium during the chaos. General Enrique Tijerino died at 7pm on March 23. Ramírez' soldiers won the critical victory and buried Tijerino with military honors.⁹⁰ Whereas the opposition granted Tijerino military honors, many of the men in

⁸⁸ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 253-4, 256; "Guerrilla 'Valverde Vega'. Testimonio de Pedro José García Roger," *Testimonios del 48: Baño de Sangre*, Tomo V, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2003), 84; Marielos Aguilar, *Carlos Luis Fallas: Su época y sus luchas* (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 1983), 196-7.

⁸⁹ M. Acuña, *El 48*, 197-210; Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 256-7. For a detailed account of the Battle of San Isidro see: Juan Diego López, *Los cuarenta días de 1948: La Guerra Civil en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2000), 87-99.

⁹⁰ "De la política a la Guerra. Testimonio de Fernando Valverde Vega," *Testimonios del 48: San Isidro del General en llamas*, Tomo II, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 112-116; "Del 'Petit Trianon' al campo de batalla. Testimonio de Coronel Elías Vicente," *Testimonios del 48: San Isidro del General en llamas*, Tomo II, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 180-5.

his troop did not enjoy the same graces. Instead, *figueristas* threw their bodies into a ditch, doused them with gasoline, and burned them.⁹¹

The lack of suitable arms cost Tijerino his life. Garcia Rogér suggests that the Costa Ricans purposefully gave Tijerino poor weapons, as they knew that he intended to overthrow Somoza afterwards. Furthermore, there was a request for newer guns and bullets after Tijerino successfully recaptured San Isidro. The government sent alcohol instead.⁹² Had the government provided Tijerino with enough arms to ensure his survival, Garcia Róger argues that the Civil War might have ended differently.⁹³

Tijerino was held in high regard by his opponents.⁹⁴ According to Miguel Acuña, the day before he was killed, Tijerino visited the hospital to check on some of his men. There, he spotted the wounded Jacinto López Godoy (also known as “El Indio Godoy”) and engaged him in an

⁹¹ “Del ‘Almaticazo’ a San Isidro. Testimonio de don Manuel Antonio (Tuto) Quirós Núñez,” *San Isidro del General en llamas*, 141; “Un Cartago en armas. Testimonio del coronel don Dagoberto Cruz Obando.” *Testimonios del 48: De las calles a la Guerra*, Tomo III, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001), 286. According to Tuto Quiros, they burned the bodies because they were already too decomposed and because there was not enough time because the soldiers had to get back to fighting. Dagoberto Cruz asserts that during the burning of bodies after the battle with Tijerino, they heard screams from someone buried and burned alive. Rosendo Argüello Ramírez also mentions that *figueristas* burned the bodies of soldiers after the battle of El Tejar. In Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, *Doy testimonio, conspiraciones y traiciones en el Caribe* (Managua: Talleres de Dilesa, 1987), 78.

⁹² Nicolas Pérez Delgado, *Volando Bala 1948*, (San José: Producciones Culturales Macondo S.A., 1998), 156; Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 283.

⁹³ “Guerrilla ‘Valverde Vega’. Testimonio de Pedro José Garcia Roger,” *Baño de Sangre*, 84; Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 257.

⁹⁴ Fellow Nicaraguan Rosendo Argüello Ramírez praised the Nicaraguan general because he fought courageously and maintained his anti-*somocismo*, affirming that Tijerino fought against Figueres because he knew whom Figueres truly was. Argüello Ramírez laments that he still had to suffer great disappointment to discover the true nature of Figueres. Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 40-1.

amicable conversation, despite the fact that they were fighting on opposite sides of the conflict.⁹⁵ This prompted López Godoy to declare that Tijerino was a gentleman (*caballero*). Per this account, after the government falsely claimed that the government forces had retaken San Isidro, some rebels came up with the idea that they would throw Tijerino's corpse from a plane into the *Parque Central* to demoralize government forces. Godoy, offended by the suggestion, told his commander about Tijerino's honorable conduct, and Ramírez decided to grant him military honors.⁹⁶

By March 24, 1948, Picado began looking to diplomacy to end the war. He established the *Comisión Negociadora* to resolve the conflict. After some maneuvering, Picado, with the help of Archbishop Sanabria, was able to convince Ulate, Calderón and the Communists to accept a conciliatory candidate: Julio César Ovarés.⁹⁷ However, he was unable to convince Figueres, who quickly rejected the negotiated peace on April 3, 1948. Figueres stated that the revolution aimed not only to defend Ulate, but also to create a new Costa Rica, free of *calderonismo*. Díaz-Arias noted that Ulate's willingness to negotiate with the government gave Figueres a good pretext for altering his stated war aims.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Jacinto López Godoy has his own tales of courage and bravery. When López Godoy joined the rebels, Fernando Valverde Vega sent him to Roberto Fernández Durán, who was to hand López Godoy a machine gun. López Godoy refused, stating, "The enemy is carrying my machine gun and I am going to take it away from him. Give me a knife." López Godoy obtained a blade of about 25 inches and this was his weapon of choice. Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, *La Guerra de Figueres: crónica de ocho años*, 348.

⁹⁶ M. Acuña, *El 48*, 207-210.

⁹⁷ "Truce suggested by Costa Ricans," *New York Times*, April 2, 1948.

⁹⁸ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 257-9; "Costa Rica Rebel Chief on Air," *New York Times*, April 4, 1948.

On April 5, 1948, determined to recapture San Isidro and avenge the death of Enrique Tijerino, Carlos Luis Fallas enlisted 100 men to fight by his side, including Abelardo Cuadra. He renamed his troops "*La Columna de la Victoria*."⁹⁹ Cuadra is not kind in his assessment of the great majority of the Nicaraguans involved in the conflict. Cuadra writes that Nicaraguan immigrants joined both sides, but that the government got the worst of the bunch: "Throughout the campaign, I was continually disappointed by my countrymen as fighters." The Nicaraguans that joined the *figueristas* did not fare better in Cuadra's analysis, as he states that they did not excel much as soldiers and that they did not rise above mediocrity.¹⁰⁰ In an account of a battle in which many of the soldiers took cover instead of standing in the line of fire, Cuadra lamented: "And to think that half were Nicaraguans!" Another similar situation caused Cuadra to write: "If there is anything that is revolting it is to deal with cowards."¹⁰¹ Cuadra's description of the Nicaraguan fighters is unfair in many ways. The Nicaraguan laborers were not trained soldiers, and the great majority of them were armed only with machetes; yet they put their lives on the line by enlisting with the Communists.

Cuadra writes that the government panicked and Picado recalled all government forces to San José to defend the capital. Once there, Picado named Cuadra as Chief of Staff and

⁹⁹ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 260; A. Cuadra, 251-2; López, *Los cuarenta días de 1948*, 163; M. Acuña, *El 48*, 285-7.

¹⁰⁰ A. Cuadra, 252.

¹⁰¹ A. Cuadra, 258-261. Cuadra reserves his greatest scorn for a former sergeant of the GN, identified only by his last name, Martínez. Martínez was a distinguished and renowned soldier famous for his bravery during the war against Sandino. Cuadra, excited to have Martínez join the ranks of the government, quickly handed him the leadership of one contingent of troops. In one of the final battles against Opposition forces, Martínez disobeyed the orders of Cuadra and retreated to San José falsely reporting that Opposition forces had surrounded Cuadra and his men, and that Cuadra had been injured and possibly captured. Cuadra writes, "I cannot explain the conduct of this man so renowned for his valor...If it were not for our defeat, I would have had him court-martialed as a traitor."

Commander in Chief of the forces of Alto Ochomogo.¹⁰² However, this made little difference as the rebel forces had taken Limón and Cartago by mid-April.¹⁰³ The conquest of Cartago involved a particularly bloody battle at El Tejar, just outside of Cartago, that resulted in a massive victory for *figueristas*. Now within striking distance of the Capital, Figueres began the negotiations in earnest.¹⁰⁴

On April 14, 1948, Picado met with Figueres' representative (Father Benjamín Nuñez) and came to an agreement which required Picado to resign the presidency and grant *figueristas* complete amnesty.¹⁰⁵ However, this did not immediately end the conflict, as the Communists began operating independently of the government and quickly secured San José with 1200 men ready to fight. Soon, Nuñez contacted Mora to discuss a second settlement. Despite negotiating this tentative agreement, Picado, through his own representatives, granted Somoza the right to intervene and defend the Costa Rican government with the *Guardia Nacional*.¹⁰⁶

Following the election, Somoza had seemed prepared to accept an Ulate presidency, despite his preference for a Calderón victory, because Ulate was not involved with Figueres' revolutionary activity. However, Figueres' decision to launch his attack changed Somoza's

¹⁰² A. Cuadra, 257. Although according to Díaz-Arias, the troops that went to Ochomogo were led by Costa Rican General Jorge Volio. Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 263.

¹⁰³ "Rebels Seize 2 Costa Rican Cities," *Washington Post*, April 13, 1948; Costa Rican Rebels Threaten Capital, Washington is Told," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 14, 1948.

¹⁰⁴ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 262-3.

¹⁰⁵ "Costa Rica Rival Sign Cease-Fire as Rebel Advance Menaces Capital," *New York Times*, April 14, 1948; "Costa Rican Open Talk to End Strife," *New York Times*, April 15, 1948; "Rebels Accept Peace Plan in Costa Rica," *Washington Post*, April 16, 1948; "Truce Reported Extended," *New York Times*, April 17, 1948.

¹⁰⁶ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 266-8.

perspective on the ongoing Costa Rican political situation. Fearful that a Figueres victory would metastasize into an attack on his regime, Somoza offered his assistance to Picado. In an effort to bring international attention to the exile movement in Central America, Somoza continually denounced Guatemala's assistance to the exiles.¹⁰⁷ His intervention in Costa Rica became more pronounced when Rene Picado, Costa Rican Minister of Public Security and the president's brother, visited Nicaragua on March 16 and returned to Costa Rica with thirty-five former *Guardia* soldiers in tow. The following day, Somoza sent twenty more *Guardia* soldiers. By March 18, Somoza had sent seventy men and two AT-6 planes to Costa Rica.¹⁰⁸ According to the *New York Times*, Nicaraguan Ambassador Guillermo Sevilla Sacasa addressed reports that 1000 Nicaraguans were fighting for the government of Costa Rica by stating that these Nicaraguans were not fighting under orders of the Nicaraguan government, but rather as volunteers, influenced by the "close relations between the peoples of the two countries."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ "Nicaraguan Charges Plot: Says President of Guatemala Foment a Revolution," *New York Times*, January 29, 1948. Somoza claimed he was ready to respond to Guatemalan aggression with force and wanted the world to know who was responsible if war broke out in Central America. Guatemala officially denied such accusations, claiming Somoza suffered from "persecution delirium," in "Somoza Charge Denied," *New York Times*, January 30, 1948.

¹⁰⁸ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 237; Jacobo Schifter, *La alianzas conflictivas: Las relaciones de Costa Rica y Estados Unidos de la Segunda Guerra Mundial a los inicios de la Guerra Civil* (San José: Asociación Libro Libre, 1986), 266-7; Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 254; Charles D. Ameringer, *Don Pepe: A Political Biography of José Figueres of Costa Rica* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), 53; "Costa Rica seen making gains," *New York Times*, March 24, 1948. Clinton discusses Somoza's clumsy use of anti-communism to justify his intervention at this stage of the Costa Rican conflict. See Clinton, 237-9.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Times*, March 26, 1948. Somoza did pull out some *Guardia* soldiers due to international pressure. "Nicaragua Recalling Troops," *New York Times*, March 26, 1948; "Costa Rican Rebels Gain: Nicaraguan Soldiers are Flown Back to Managua," *New York Times*, March 27, 1948; Robert Bruskin, "Costa Rican Reds Make Hay while Rival Parties Battle," *Washington Post*, March 28, 1948; "Costa Rica Appeals to 2 Republics for Help Against Rebels," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 29, 1948; "More Nicaraguan Seen in Costa Rica," *New York Times*, March 31, 1948; "Use of Nicaraguans Halted," *New York Times*, April 1, 1948.

Somoza did not believe that his assistance to Calderón and Picado violated his anti-communist stance, arguing that neither Calderón nor Picado were Communists, although both had erred by seeking an alliance with the *Vanguardia Popular*.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Olander argues that Somoza's intervention had more to do with self-preservation than with saving Picado's government.¹¹¹

Picado had attempted to limit Somoza's involvement; however, as the tide of the war turned in the rebels' favor, he became desperate and granted Somoza greater permission to intervene.¹¹² Somoza, playing his own game to secure recognition from the United States, informed the U.S. Chargé d'Affairs in Managua that Picado had authorized large-scale Nicaraguan intervention on April 16, 1948. Somoza's troops invaded Villa Quesada in northern Costa Rica the following day. Five hundred Nicaraguan soldiers positioned themselves in Costa Rican territory, while another two thousand soldiers awaited further instruction at the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border.¹¹³ Picado had not secured a consensus on allowing Somoza to enter the country's conflict, and his supporters quickly abandoned him.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Kyle Longley, "Peaceful Costa Rica, the First Battleground: The United States and the Costa Rican Revolution of 1948," *The Americas* 50, no. 2 (1993): 164.

¹¹¹ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 275.

¹¹² "Documentos de la intervención nicaragüense en la guerra civil de Costa Rica," *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 24, 1948.

¹¹³ "Nicaragua Cites Defense," *New York Times*, April 20, 1948; "U.S. Protests Somoza Action," *New York Times*, April 20, 1948; "Nicaragua Recalls Troops," *New York Times*, April 21, 1948.

¹¹⁴ Dias-Arias, 266-270; Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 238-9; Clinton 240-1. Guatemala responded to Nicaragua's invasion by threatening to intervene directly.

Following the invasion by the GN, Manuel Mora threatened to join the *figueristas* to repel the Nicaraguan forces.¹¹⁵ This reversal of fortune led to serious peace negotiations between the Communists and the *figueristas*. Figueres, Nuñez, and Manuel Mora met secretly at Ochomogo and signed the *Pacto de Ochomogo* on April 17, 1948. The pact offered protections for the PVP, its members, and the Social Reform.¹¹⁶ Under increasing international pressure and weakened by the Communists' withdrawal from the conflict, Picado signed the *Pacto de la Embajada* on April 19, 1948.¹¹⁷ Aside from one small skirmish with Nicaraguan Modesto Soto,¹¹⁸ the Pact ended the war. The Pact called for Picado's resignation and military demobilization.¹¹⁹ It also required Picado, Calderón, and the PRN leadership to leave the country, but granted general amnesty to all, regardless of political affiliation. Most significantly,

¹¹⁵ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 240.

¹¹⁶ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 271.

¹¹⁷ "Costa Rica Rival Reach Agreement," *New York Times*, April 20, 1948.

¹¹⁸ "Un jefe nicaragüense alzado en armas atacó Esparta y Liberia y va buscando la frontera con gran cantidad de rehenes ulatistas," *La Prensa Libre*, April 23, 1948; "El nicaragüense insurgente, Modesto Soto, llegó a La Cruz," *La Prensa Libre*, April 24, 1948; "Heroica resistencia hizo la Plaza de Liberia a los alzados del nicaragüense Modesto Soto," *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 25, 1948; "Con 250 hombres armados atacó a Liberia el nicaragüense Modesto Soto pero fue repelido en una batalla bizarra que duro tres horas," *La Prensa Libre*, April 27, 1948; "25 prisioneros abandonó en San Ramón el general nicaragüense Modesto Soto," *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 27, 1948. Modesto Soto's son, Chico Soto, explained in an interview conducted by Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa* in 2003 that his father was a *sandinista* who left Nicaragua for Costa Rica in 1940 because of Somoza's persecution of *sandinistas*. Chico Soto affirms that his father joined the Costa Rican military and defended the government of Picado when Figueres launched his invasion. After a number of battles, he fled to Nicaragua, along with 250 Costa Rican soldiers at the end of the war. According to Chico Soto, Somoza granted Modesto Soto permission to re-enter Nicaragua, nevertheless, the younger Soto accuses Somoza of killing his father in 1950. See "Don Chico Soto, el 'Trovador errante' por muchas razones," *La Prensa*, March 23, 2003.

¹¹⁹ Santo León Herrera finished out Picado's term, which ran until May 1, 1948. "Costa Rica Seats Acting President," *New York Times*, April 21, 1948.

from a social perspective, it featured clauses to protect the Social Guarantees and the Labor Code. On May 1, 1948, Ulate agreed to allow a Junta, with Figueres as its president, to run the government for eighteen months.¹²⁰ The Costa Rican Civil War was over.¹²¹

In spite of the provisions of the *Pacto de la Embajada*, the end of the war brought increased repression of those on the losing side. The victors targeted *calderonistas* and Communists and deported Nicaraguans. Calderón Guardia, Teodoro Picado and some *calderonista* leaders were able to flee to Nicaragua.¹²² The initial persecution resulted in the killing of some *calderonistas* even after official conclusion of hostilities.

The Junta government also attacked all labor associations with connections to *calderonismo*, banning the CTCR, the PVP, and all communist unions.¹²³ Manuel Mora mistakenly believed that Figueres would abide by the agreement reached at Ochomogo and refrain from dissolving the PVP. Figueres denied that he ever made the agreement and proceeded to outlaw the PVP.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the Junta fired all public employees linked to

¹²⁰ “Military Junta Will Assume Costa Rica Rule, Says Figueres,” *Washington Post*, April 23, 1948; “Rule of Costa Rica by Junta is Planned,” *New York Times*, April 26, 1948; “Figueres Committee to Govern Costa Rica,” *Washington Post*, April 27, 1948; “Leaders of Revolt to Rule in Costa Rica at Least 18 Months,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 4, 1948; “Junta in Costa Rica to Take Office Today,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1948; “Costa Rica Has New Rule,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1948.

¹²¹ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 271-2.

¹²² “Ex-President and 35 Ready to Flee Costa Rica,” *New York Times*, April 22, 1948; “Picado Takes Nicaraguan Post,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1948.

¹²³ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 324; “Figueres Pledges Costa Rica Shift,” *New York Times*, April 23, 1948. The deep seated hatred *figueristas* maintained for the *calderocomunistas* is evident in an article published in 1951 that defined *mariachis* as dishonest, immoral, lazy, stupid and incompetent. “Definición del ‘Mariachi’,” *La Republica*, March 6, 1951 in Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 330.

¹²⁴ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 290-1; Jules Dubois, “Costa Rica Reds Fired by Priest in New Cabinet,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1948; “Costa

calderocomunismo and authorized employers to do the same.¹²⁵ Fearing for their lives, prominent Communists, including Manuel Mora and Carmen Lyra, fled Costa Rica and sought exile in Mexico.¹²⁶ The Communists, unlike the *calderonistas*, could not go to Nicaragua, since Somoza was a staunch anti-communist. The new Junta government jailed other PVP leaders, including Carlos Luis Fallas, Arnoldo Ferreto, Jaime Cerdas Mora, and Enrique Mora. Three policemen executed five communist prisoners, including the Nicaraguans Lucío Ibarra¹²⁷ and Narciso Sotomayor, while en route from Limón to San José, in a place called *Codo del Diablo* (Devil's Elbow) on December 19, 1948. The Junta also intended to kill the PVP political bureau (Carlos Luis Fallas, Jaime Cerdas, Arnoldo Ferreto, Luis Carballo, and Adolfo Braña); however, Archbishop Sanabria intervened and prevented the execution of these plans. The Junta justified the violence as a necessary measure to avoid a counter-revolution; however, Díaz-Arias asserts that it was symptomatic of the violence that both sides engaged in during the war.¹²⁸

This violence was most evident in the treatment of Nicaraguans during the conflict. To further discredit the government, *Figueristas* claimed that they were fighting against

Ricans Shake Evils of Communism,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 24, 1948; “Rights Curbed, Reds Seized in Costa Rica,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1948; “Vanguard Party Banned: Costa Rican Decree Charges Group Follows Kremlin Line,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1948; “El presidente Figueres relata su entrevista con Manuel Mora V. en el alto de Ochomogo,” *Prensa Libre*, February 10, 1949.

¹²⁵ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 326-7. Educators at all levels were subject to close examination based on their political affiliations and many resigned or switched schools in an attempt to conceal their political backgrounds.

¹²⁶ “Costa Rica Red Flies to Mexico,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1948.

¹²⁷ Lucío Ibarra participated in the banana labor strike of 1934. See Carlos Luis Fallas, *La gran huelga bananera del Atlántico de 1934* (San José: C.G.T.C., 1955), 6.

¹²⁸ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 313-321.

Nicaraguans or the GN¹²⁹ instead of Costa Ricans. The opposition claimed that “many Nicaraguans came over, the baddest ones, because good Nicaraguans would not come.”¹³⁰ Díaz-Arias asserts: “By employing the Costa Rican national discourse toward Nicaraguans, it was easy for *Figueristas* to depict their challengers as monsters.”¹³¹ The dehumanization of Nicaraguans, described as “*nicas grandotes*” (huge Nicaraguans) and “*muy feos los bandidos*” (the bandits were very ugly), made it easier to kill them.¹³² Jorge Montero Gómez, a *figuerista*, questioned men dressed in the garb of the Nicaraguan GN in Ciudad Quesada, located in the center of the northern province of Alajuela. He asked them what were they doing in a country that was not their own. The Nicaraguan men responded that they were sent there to fight. They did not specify who had sent them. Montero Gómez responded that they were far from their country and

¹²⁹ Fernando Valverde Vega, in his account of the battle with the Nicaraguan General Enrique Tijerino at San Isidro de El General, located in Puntarenas, states that he heard GN soldiers yelling “Viva Somoza.” “De la política a la Guerra. Testimonio de Fernando Valverde Vega,” *Testimonios del 48: San Isidro del General en llamas*, Tomo II, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 114. Another *figuerista*, Elías Vicente, attests to the presence of documents among the dead that revealed that some of them were GN soldiers after the battle of El Tejar. “Del ‘Petit Trianon’ al campo de batalla. Testimonio de Coronel Elías Vicente,” *Testimonios del 48: San Isidro del General en llamas*, Tomo II, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 180-5. Fernando Ortuño Obrado states that *figueristas* captured a Nicaraguan *Guardia* soldier. “El sitio de San Isidro: Prisionero de Tijerino. Testimonio de Fernando Ortuño Sobrado,” *Testimonios del 48: San Isidro del General en llamas*, Tomo II, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 219.

¹³⁰ Gabelo Gamboa, interview by David Díaz-Arias, October 2008, Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 281.

¹³¹ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 280-1.

¹³² “Emigdio (Milo) Ureña Chanto en primera línea,” *Testimonios del 48: La hora del fin*, Tomo VI, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2004), 155.

that they had not come to fight, but to loot, rape, and shed Costa Rican blood. He then proceeded to shoot and kill the Nicaraguans.¹³³

Harold Mora Gómez, the author of the account and brother of Montero Gómez, writes that his brother made sure the men were dead (*bien muertos*) so that they would not have to suffer. He closes his account by stating that the killing was a legitimate act of war, since foreigners “had no business in Costa Rica.” According to Mora Gómez, had the *mariachis* (*calderonistas*) captured any of the few foreigners that fought with the *figueristas*, they surely would have done the same. While accepting that some might look negatively upon these tactics, he admits that he too would have killed the Nicaraguans.¹³⁴

When Opposition forces overtook the capital, they outlawed all foreigners involved in the military forces of the fallen government. Cuadra took temporary refuge in the Mexican embassy, where his son Abelardo, Uriel Cuadra and Bayardo Páez later joined him. Before leaving Costa Rica, Manuel Mora went to the embassy and handed Cuadra and the others some money. Cuadra and Salamanca fled to Venezuela, Abelardo Cuadra, Jr. and Páez to Nicaragua, and Uriel Cuadra to Mexico.¹³⁵

The Junta government also enacted institutional measures to punish the losers of the war. The Tribunal of Probity (*Tribunales de Probidad* or TP) and the Tribunal of Immediate

¹³³ “Un soldado de primera línea. Testimonio de Haroldo Mora Gómez,” *Testimonios del 48: San Isidro del General en llamas*, Tomo II, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 90-1.

¹³⁴ “Un soldado de primera línea. Testimonio de Haroldo Mora Gómez,” *Testimonios del 48: San Isidro del General en llamas*, Tomo II, Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, ed., (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 91.

¹³⁵ A. Cuadra, 262-3. Cuadra writes that towards the end of the Civil War, he met with Calderón Guardia who told him, “All my friends have abandoned me, yet you, who I expelled from the country, continues to fight for me.”

Sanctions (*Tribunales de Sanciones Inmediatas* or TSI) allowed the victors to legally persecute anyone known as a *calderonista* from 1940 to 1948. The Junta government placed many of the *calderonistas* on a blacklist and seized their properties. Those protesting the seizure of their property were required to appeal to the TP, at which point they had to prove that they had acquired their property without government assistance. If they did not appeal, the property went up for public sale. The TSI allowed people to sue the *calderocomunistas*, as groups or individuals, for a wide assortment of grievances. The tribunals had the effect of further dividing an already fractured republic.¹³⁶

While Figueres was trying to impose his vision of a new Costa Rica, he still had to deal with the promises and commitments he had made to the exiles who had helped to secure his victory. Following the success of the revolution, the exiles in Costa Rica waited for an opportunity to launch an invasion of Nicaragua.¹³⁷ Still heavily invested in overthrowing the true dictatorships of the region, the Caribbean Legion now turned to Figueres. However, Figueres' priorities shifted as he transitioned from opposition rebel to Junta President. Many prominent Costa Ricans, including president-elect Ulate, did not care for Figueres' entanglements with the Caribbean Legion and pressured him to cut ties to the group.¹³⁸ By December 1948, internal and external factors soon derailed all revolutionary plans.

¹³⁶ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 322-4. The TSI, for example, charged Rene Picado with murder for the death of Carlos Valverde. "Costa Rica Trial Opens," *New York Times*, July 24, 1948.

¹³⁷ Jules Dubois, "Exile Plotting Revolts for 3 Latin Republics," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 25, 1948.

¹³⁸ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 307-8; Clinton, 244-6; Bell, 155-6; Rodney Kyle Longley, "Resistance and Accommodation: Costa Rica and the United States during the Rise of José Figueres" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1993), 152; *Diario de Costa Rica*, May 26, 1948.

The Caribbean Legion Exits Costa Rica

According to Ameringer, Dominican general Juan Rodríguez complicated Figueres' situation, because Rodríguez now expected to assume the leadership of the exile movement. Figueres did not intend to hand over control of the exiles or weapons, however, because he still needed Rodríguez' arms to protect himself from a possible attack from the *calderonistas* in exile in Nicaragua. Thus, in order to keep the weapons he promised to return twice as many weapons to Rodríguez, as well as provide lodging and cover expenses for the exiles in Costa Rica. Arévalo attempted to convince Figueres not to pull out of the Caribbean Legion, since all involved had made a pledge to topple all of the dictators. He suggested that they draft a new agreement which addressed the realities of the current situation. The new agreement, signed on September 21, 1948, provided for no organizing committee and furnished no way of implementing its stated aim of removing the region's dictators.¹³⁹ Figueres successfully removed Costa Rica from any tangible commitment to act.

Figueres also had a troubled relationship with Nicaraguan Rosendo Argüello Ramírez. Although initially loyal to Argüello, the two eventually had a falling out, and Argüello ultimately published a memoir titled, *By Whom We Were Betrayed...and How*.¹⁴⁰ Argüello's memoir stands as a condemnation of Figueres for betraying the ideals of the Caribbean Legion. Figueres named Argüello Ramírez as secretary general of the presidency and chief of the presidential guard. True to his word, Figueres also named Rosendo Argüello commander of the exile forces (and of the projected Nicaraguan invasion force) and provided him with a camp at Rio Conejo and 245,000 *colones* to train and sustain his troops. Argüello was successful in reforming the

¹³⁹ Charles D. Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion: Patriots, Politicians, Soldiers of Fortune* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 75-6.

¹⁴⁰ Rosendo Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron* (Mexico: 1954).

presidential guard, cleaning up the barracks and parade ground, and improving security.

However, his reliance on Nicaraguans drew the ire of other high-ranking Costa Rican Junta officials, including Edgar Cardona, Fernando Valverde Vega, and Frank Marshall. Argüello later claimed that these men resented the Nicaraguans and were determined to “force the Nicaraguans out of Costa Rica or traitorously kill them.”¹⁴¹

Other exiles expressed their dissatisfaction with Argüello’s leadership in Costa Rica.¹⁴² Alberto Bayo, Cuban general with the Caribbean Legion, was critical of the Nicaraguan exiles, and particularly of Rosendo Argüello Ramírez’s leadership.¹⁴³ In his memoir, Bayo questions Figueres’ decision to make Argüello Ramírez commander, given that the latter lacked military experience. Bayo writes that Argüello’s camp at Rio Conejo was poorly organized and as the invasion of Nicaragua failed to materialize, many of the Nicaraguan exiles drank away the money earmarked for the revolution: “That monthly budget appeared to be a large bottle of alcohol (*guaro*), and quickly and everyday, its contents were diminished until they drank every last drop; not one rifle, not one plane, not one machine gun was bought with that budget.”¹⁴⁴

According to Bayo, many of the Nicaraguan exiles, including Carlos Pasos, Carlos Rivera Delgadiollo, Antonio Velásquez, and Adán Vélez, were also concerned about Argüello’s

¹⁴¹ Argüello Ramírez, *Quienes y como nos traicionaron*, 66, 71-3; Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 80; Charles D. Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile: The Antidictatorial Struggle in the Caribbean, 1945-1959* (Miami, FL: University of Miami Press, 1974), 83. Argüello Ramírez claims that tensions between the *figueristas* and the Nicaraguans became so tense that they resulted in the murder of one of his men, a Nicaraguan captain named José Santos Castillo. Furthermore, Argüello Ramírez accuses Frank Marshall of making repeated attempts on his life.

¹⁴² See Longley, “Resistance and Accommodation,” 155.

¹⁴³ Alberto Bayo, *Tempestad en el Caribe* (Mexico: 1950).

¹⁴⁴ Bayo, 93.

leadership abilities. That Argüello was a civilian, not a military professional, frustrated those Nicaraguan exiles with military training, and they plotted to remove him as commander. They confided in Bayo that they would bide their time until they had crossed into the Nicaraguan border to name a new commander and replace Argüello Ramírez. Since the exiles never launched an invasion of Nicaragua, they never had the opportunity to replace Argüello.¹⁴⁵

After eight months of planning, the exiles had nothing to show for their efforts. Bayo blamed the failure of the enterprise on the “free Nicaraguans” who did not want to or did not know how to take advantage of this opportunity to overthrow Somoza. The constant in-fighting, drunkenness, and lack of organization and inactivity took its toll and reduced the forces dedicated to toppling Somoza from one hundred and fifty men to forty. Furthermore, Somoza successfully infiltrated the camp with spies.¹⁴⁶ According to Bayo, the biggest obstacle for the Nicaraguan exiles in Costa Rica was that “the Nicaraguan exiles were a group of men united by their hatred of the dictatorship, but divided by their ambitions.”¹⁴⁷

Incidents involving Nicaraguan exiles further compromised Figueres’ position.¹⁴⁸ In May 1948, unknown assailants attacked the Nicaraguan Legation with machine gun fire.¹⁴⁹ In

¹⁴⁵ Bayo, 91-3. Argüello Ramírez notes that he faced opposition from Carlos Pasos and Gustavo Manzanares. For more on the opposition to Argüello Ramírez see Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile*, 82-3.

¹⁴⁶ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 86.

¹⁴⁷ Bayo, 104, 120, 150-1.

¹⁴⁸ Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile*, 84.

¹⁴⁹ There were allegations that “Somoza spies” were responsible for the shooting in an attempt to promote conflict between the two countries. “Pronunciamiento de la colonia nicaragüense en Costa Rica sobre el atentado sobre la legación de su país,” “Ametrallada anoche por elementos desconocidos la legación de Nicaragua,” *La Prensa Libre*, May 28, 1948; “Varios interrogatorios se han hecho sobre el ametrallamiento de la legación de Nicaragua,” *Prensa Libre*, May 29, 1948; “Logradas las primeras pistas para descubrir a los autores del

late August, Nicaraguan exiles assaulted Dr. Pedro Joaquin Rios, a member of the Nicaraguan Chamber of Deputies in San José. Costa Rican authorities ordered several Nicaraguans suspected of attacking Rios to leave the country within forty-eight hours.¹⁵⁰ However, the most troubling incident of all was the capture of Edelberto Torres in July 1948, during a stopover in Managua on a flight from Guatemala to Costa Rica. From Torres, Nicaraguan authorities confiscated a letter written by Arévalo addressed to the exiles in Costa Rica.¹⁵¹

By October, many of the Legionnaires, frustrated by the lack of progress, shifted their base of operations from Costa Rica to Guatemala. Figueres took the opportunity to state that the withdrawal of the Caribbean Legion had commenced.¹⁵² Still, Argüello maintained that Figueres could be counted upon to support their endeavors. In November, Bayo and Argüello secured “fourteen planeloads” of weapons for an invasion against Somoza from Cuban president Prío Socarrás.¹⁵³

ametrallamiento a la legación nicaragüense,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, May 29, 1948; “Legation is Machine-Gunned,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1948; “La junta de gobierno dispuso esta mañana que se acelere, con mayor amplitud, lo de la investigación en el atentado a la legación de Nicaragua,” *La Prensa Libre*, June 4, 1948; “Aprobada hoy en junta de gobierno la contestación que se dará al gobierno de Nicaragua en lo del ametrallamiento a su legación,” *La Prensa Libre*, June 8, 1948.

¹⁵⁰ “Agredido fuertemente por 3 nicaragüenses el diputado de hermano país Pedro Joaquin Rios,” *La Prensa Libre*, August 16, 1948; “Nicaraguans are Aroused,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1948; “Se intensifica la búsqueda de los asaltantes del diputado nicaragüense Doctor Rios,” *La Prensa Libre*, September 2, 1948.

¹⁵¹ Longley, “Resistance and Accommodation,” 154; “Release of Torres Asked: Educators of 14 Nations Join in Plea to Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1948.

¹⁵² “El General Ramírez en la mañana de hoy me notifico la desmovilización de la ‘Legion Caribe,’” *La Prensa Libre*, November 27, 1948.

¹⁵³ Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile*, 84-5. Rumors of Cuban support were rampant and threatened to derail the operation. “General José Figueres espera revolucionar en Nicaragua con ayuda del Presidente Electo de Cuba, Sr. Prío Socarrás,” *La Prensa Libre*, September 4, 1948. Socarrás provided the weapons on the assumption that Figueres would

During the Costa Rican Civil War and its aftermath, Somoza remained vigilant about the exile activity in Costa Rica, continually drawing attention to revolutionary plots.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, his intelligence officers compiled a list of all enemies residing in San José, including 114 Nicaraguans (see Appendix B).¹⁵⁵ Figueres countered Somoza's charges by accusing the Nicaraguan strongman of helping Calderón to organize a counter-revolutionary movement from Nicaragua.¹⁵⁶ By September 1948, fears that tensions between Nicaragua and Costa Rica could escalate into a military confrontation were palpable.¹⁵⁷

continue to allow Argüello Ramírez to use Costa Rica as a base. Ameringer notes that Bayo claims that he secured the arms on a second trip with Juan Bosch, without Argüello Ramírez, because Argüello Ramírez had failed in their initial trip to convince Socarrás to provide the exiles with weapons.

¹⁵⁴ Longley, "Resistance and Accommodation," 154-5, 157. Aware of the resurgent anti-communism in the United States, Somoza referred to the would-be revolutionaries as communists to impel the United States to intervene. "Unrest in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, April 25, 1948; "Nicaragua Protests Rebel Advance," *Washington Post*, April 26, 1948; "Nicaraguan Charge Reds Plan Invasion," *Washington Post*, April 28, 1948; "Nicaragua Appeal to Exiles," *New York Times*, May 24, 1948; "Drop War Talk, U.S. Warns Five Latin Republics," Jules Dubois, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 26, 1948; "Costa Rica Arrests Reds," *New York Times*, May 31, 1948. Dominican Dictator Rafael Trujillo also denounced the government of Figueres. "Deny Costa Rican Rule Aids Latin American Plot," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 18, 1948. Costa Rica did not protect all anti-Somoza Nicaraguan exiles as evidenced by the arrest of Nicaraguan General Carlos Reyes Llanes following the discovery of arms. Reyes Llanes claimed that the arms were for a revolution against Somoza. "El General Reyes Llanes dice que el movimiento subversivo no era contra la Junta de Gobierno sino contra el Gobierno de Nicaragua," *La Prensa Libre*, September 14, 1948; "Exiled Nicaraguan Seized," *New York Times*, September 15, 1948; "Es muy posible que sean los tribunales comunes los que conozcan del caso del General Reyes Llanes," *La Prensa Libre*, September 16, 1948.

¹⁵⁵ Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 86, 141-5. Somoza claimed that the majority, if not all, persons listed were involved with the Caribbean Legion. The persons listed lived in San José and moved freely between Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico.

¹⁵⁶ "Plane Circles Costa Rica," *New York Times*, June 1, 1948; "Costa Rica Nips Plot to Overthrow Regime," *New York Times*, June 21, 1948; "Costa Rica Reports Plot," *New York Times*, July 11, 1948; "Nicaragua Denies Border Peril," *New York Times*, September 9, 1948.

¹⁵⁷ "War of Nerves Stirs Central America as States Begin Arming," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 16, 1948; Sumner Welles, "Latin Intervention," *Washington Post*,

Those fears became a reality when a group of *calderonistas* invaded Costa Rica from Nicaragua near the end of the year. On December 10, 1948, Calderón Guardia, with the support of Somoza, led the *calderonistas* that had fled to Nicaragua into Costa Rican territory and took the town of La Cruz. The Costa Rican *Junta* sent troops to confront the *calderonistas* in the north and successfully drove them back into Nicaragua. Figueres also invoked the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, also known as the Rio Pact, of the Organization of American States (OAS) to protest Nicaraguan aggression.¹⁵⁸

September 21, 1948; "Costa Rica Guards Borders," *New York Times*, October 5, 1948. "Somoza Sees Plot Against Nicaragua: 'Strong Man' Says 4 Neighbors Also Connive to Attack El Salvador, Honduras," *New York Times*, October 16, 1948; "Somoza 'Warning' of Plots Assailed: Object of Nicaraguan's Fear Call it a Smoke Screen—See No Central American War," *New York Times*, October 17, 1948.

¹⁵⁸ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 307; Clinton, 246. The OAS was formally established eight months earlier. Sumner Welles had suggested the use of the OAS to resolve the Central American crisis. See Sumner Welles, "Threat to Solidarity," *Washington Post*, October 26, 1948. For responses on Welles' op-ed piece see "Latin Threat to Peace," *Washington Post*, November 2, 1948; "Latin Intervention," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1948; "Intervention in Central America," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1948. U.S. diplomacy observers were concerned with the events unfolding in Central America. An op-ed piece by Sumner Welles, former Under Secretary of State, questioned Figueres' motives, particularly welcoming a good number of exiles opposed to the governments of Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador. Welles also questioned the intentions of Figueres' supporter, Juan José Arévalo and his desire to "impose" a Central American Union. Welles called on the United States government to cooperate with the Organization of American States to curtail the threat to war in Central America. See Sumner Welles, "Caribbean Storm," *Washington Post*, June 1, 1948; Sumner Welles, "Caribbean Threat," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1948. Alvaro Rossi, First Secretary of the Costa Rican embassy in Washington, D.C. disputed Welles' claims in Alvaro Rossi, "Costa Rica Revolt," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1948; "Costa Rican Communists," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1948. See also "Costa Rica Scramble," *Washington Post*, July 3, 1948. Other Costa Ricans also attempted to sway U.S. opinion, Danilo Jimenez, "Latin American 'Communism,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1948; Bernardo Vargas, "The New Costa Rica," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1948. Costa Rica had just ratified the Rio Pact on November 28, 1948, becoming the fourteenth nation to do so and the minimum required to bring it into effect. "Hemisphere Defense Pact Joined by Costa Rica," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 29, 1948; "Costa Rica Ratifies Rio Defense Pact," *Washington Post*, November 29, 1948. Clinton describes the Rio Pact as a U.S. sponsored anti-communist military alliance against external aggression. See Clinton, 246.

Upon examining the situation, the OAS reprimanded both Nicaragua and Costa Rica for sponsoring exile groups. The OAS ordered the removal of all remaining exiles associated with the Caribbean Legion. Furthermore, the organization compelled the two governments to adhere to the principle of non-intervention. As a result, the Costa Rican government disbanded and deported the exile brigades that had assisted Figueres during the Civil War of 1948, effectively ending the Caribbean Legion's career in Costa Rica and Nicaragua.¹⁵⁹ In February 1949, Nicaragua and Costa Rica signed the Pact of Amity, which committed both nations to controlling revolutionary elements, patrolling their mutual border, and resolving future disputes peacefully.¹⁶⁰

This important agreement terminated Argüello's dreams of launching an invasion from Costa Rica.¹⁶¹ Soon thereafter, Figueres asked Argüello to take a vacation to Mexico or Cuba. In

¹⁵⁹ "Expulsión de los emigrados costarricenses de Nicaragua y de los emigrados nicaragüenses de Costa Rica," *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 13, 1949. Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 308; Clinton 246-7; Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile*, 85-6. Bayo criticized Figueres' decision to internationally decry Somoza's actions and involve the OAS because it resulted in a condemnation of the exiles that were in Costa Rica planning the overthrow of Nicaragua. See Bayo, 150.

¹⁶⁰ "Suscrito hoy el pacto de Amistad entre Nicaragua y Costa Rica," *La Prensa Libre*, February 21, 1949; "El pacto Costa Rica-Nicaragua es la expresión de los pueblos que anhelan con ardor vivir en paz," *La Prensa Libre*, February 22, 1949; "A Pact of Amity Between Central American Republics," *New York Times*, February 22, 1949. The Caribbean Legion attempted once more and failed to overthrow Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in a plot known as *Luperón*. Some Nicaraguans also participated in this final operation: Manuel Gómez, Antonio Orue Reyes, José María Tercero, Luis Gaboardi Lacayo, Mario Alfaro de Alvarado, Luis Morales Palacios, Jaime Alfaro de Alvarado, Miguel Ruiz C., Guillermo Roche V., Noé Cabezas G., Guillermo Ruiz Martínez, Juan José Ruiz, Alberto Ramírez, Alejandro Selva. See Ameringer, *The Caribbean Legion*, 95, 145-6; "8 invaders killed and 4 seized in Dominican Republic," *New York Times*, June 23, 1949.

¹⁶¹ Bayo, 153-156. Bayo asserts that some of the Nicaraguan exiles left in Costa Rica made a last ditch effort to mount an offensive against the Nicaraguan dictator, however, they no longer had the support of either Argüello Ramírez, and more importantly, Figueres. Costa Rican police forces twice arrested Nicaraguan exiles that attempted to invade Nicaragua.

February 1949, the Costa Rican government announced the departure of many prominent Nicaraguans – including Rosendo Argüello.¹⁶² Figueres was unable to maintain his support for the Caribbean Legion while advancing his project for a new Costa Rica. Furthermore, and most significantly, both the *Junta* and Figueres realized that in order to support the claim that their revolution was authentically Costa Rican, they had to purge themselves of the exiles that had helped them to achieve their victory. As Olander suggests, the exiles' standing threat to Costa Rica's sovereignty "made it politically expedient to minimize this participation."¹⁶³

Nicaraguans after the War

In the aftermath of the war, Costa Rica became an increasingly hostile environment for Nicaraguans. Francisco Ibarra's provocatively titled memoir *The Tragedy of the Nicaraguan in Costa Rica*, published in 1948 in the wake of the Civil War, offers a stirring defense of Nicaraguan immigrants.¹⁶⁴ Countering images of violent Nicaraguans, Ibarra begins by stating that Nicaraguan teachers, poets, journalists, businessmen, laborers and peasants have all contributed to Costa Rica's great civilization project of the twentieth century. He admits that Nicaraguans had fought on both sides during the Civil War, but reminds readers that the government had recruited many Nicaraguans, while others had joined in the fighting because they sincerely believed in the reforms or fell victim to the siren call issued by the leaders of the

¹⁶² Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile*, 86; "Los ultimos 40 miembros de la Legion Caribe salieron hace cuatro dias," *La Prensa Libre*, February 1, 1949. Emiliano Chamorro broke with the Argüellos in February of 1949 after the revolutionary plans never materialized and they lost the support of Figueres. See "La prensa nicaragüense afirma que Chamorro rompio con los señores Argüello," *Diario de Costa Rica*, February 9, 1949.

¹⁶³ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 249-250.

¹⁶⁴ Francisco Ibarra Mayorga, *La tragedia del nicaragüense en Costa Rica* (Imprenta Borrásé: San José, 1948), in Iván Molina Jiménez, "Dos crónicas nicaragüenses sobre la Costa Rica de la década de 1940," *Istmo* 4 (July-December 2002).

Vanguardia Popular. Nevertheless, he asserts that *conscious* Nicaraguans also fought on the side of the government. He laments Costa Ricans' failure to defend the honorable Nicaraguans who have made numerous intellectual, political, and economic contributions to Costa Rican freedom instead. According to Ibarra, it stands to reason that the Nicaraguan colony in Costa Rica should not suffer attacks and disparagement for the actions of a few delinquents.

After listing various notable Nicaraguans in the fields of politics, literature, education, and business, Ibarra makes special mention of the Nicaraguan immigrants who labored and lost their youth on the dangerous banana plantations of Costa Rica. The Nicaraguan laborer, Ibarra continues, has with "Franciscan abnegation contributed to Costa Rican progress", greatly benefiting the families of San José. At the very least, Ibarra asked Costa Ricans to give Nicaraguans enough time to weather the storm of the Somoza regime, at which point the Nicaraguans immigrants could return to their homeland. He closed by arguing that Nicaraguans could improve their situation in Costa Rica by accepting the fact that they were indeed foreigners in that country. As such, they would realize that they had neither the right nor the obligation to interfere in Costa Rican politics. Furthermore, he argued, Costa Ricans factions had made a distressing habit of exploiting Nicaraguans for their own benefit, with dire consequences for the Nicaraguan laborers and peasants in the aftermath. This was a direct reference to the repression experienced by the Nicaraguan laborers on the coasts in 1948.

By October 1948, the Costa Rican Junta government wanted to register all foreigners (citing Nicaraguans specifically) in order to control their activities.¹⁶⁵ Following the *calderonista* invasion, Costa Rican authorities captured thirty-eight Nicaraguans (presumably GN soldiers) and arrested sixty-three Nicaraguans laborers in Golfito and Puerto Limón, for fear

¹⁶⁵ "El empadronamiento de extranjeros se hara en todo el pais," *La Prensa Libre*, October 6, 1948.

that they would join the *calderonista* invasion. Somoza accused Costa Rica of abusing Nicaraguans, which Costa Rica vehemently denied. As a result, Somoza promised to send a ship to pick up a thousand Nicaraguan laborers in Costa Rica. Somoza made good on his word and sent the “Cocibolca” at the end of January to pick up any Nicaraguans who desired to return to their homeland.¹⁶⁶

Costa Rican newspaper *La Prensa Libre* revealed some of the antagonism Costa Rica felt towards the Nicaraguan laborers when it wrote that many of the Nicaraguans boarding the “Cocibolca” were “the famous members of the *Columna Liniera* who under the command of the Communists, ran the streets of San José ferociously and aggressively, with their unsheathed machetes over their shoulders. In between their ‘vivas’ for Calderón, the Nicaraguans asserted that they would be back in Costa Rica.” *La Prensa Libre* implied that they would do so violently.

The Nicaraguan laborers and prisoners eventually made their way to Nicaragua. By February 10, almost four hundred Nicaraguans arrived in the Nicaraguan port of Corinto. The Nicaraguan press interviewed the repatriated Nicaraguans as they disembarked from the ship. The Nicaraguans accused Costa Rican authorities of being abusive and wanting to finish with the *pinoleros* (Nicaraguans) in Costa Rica.”¹⁶⁷ Costa Rican authorities sent the Nicaraguan prisoners of war to Managua by plane on March 8, 1949, following the signing of the Pact of Amity.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ “El gobierno de Nicaragua repatriara a 1000 nicaragüenses radicados en Costa Rica,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 11, 1949; “El ministerio de gobernación ordeno investigar la detención en masa de nicaragüenses en Golfito,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 11, 1949.

¹⁶⁷ “Llegó a Puntarenas el barco “Cacibolca” para llevarse a los nicaragüenses repatriados,” *La Prensa Libre*, January 31, 1949; “Los nicas repatriados, al embarcarse el el “Cocibolca,” lanzaron vivas a Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia,” *La Prensa Libre*, February 7, 1949. The Nicaraguan press claimed that the “Cocibolca” would make another trip, as there remained four thousand Nicaraguans in Costa Rica who desired to leave. “387 nicaragüenses llegaron a Corinto a bordo del “Cocibolca,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, February 10, 1949; “Cerca de

By 1950, Costa Rica increased its efforts to restrict the immigration of Nicaraguan laborers. Rodrigo Araya Borge, the Chargé in the Costa Rican embassy in Nicaragua, claimed that Costa Rican diplomats blocked Nicaraguan applications for vacation visas based on the assumption that the Nicaraguans were after employment in Costa Rica.¹⁶⁹ In order to dissuade economic immigration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica, Araya Borge began charging undesirable Nicaraguans a \$25 deposit.¹⁷⁰ In 1951, the Ulate government announced a policy to limit the immigration of “Chinese, as well as Nicaraguans, Jews and colored [people].”¹⁷¹

The Census of 1950 placed the official number of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica at 16,467 out of 30,128 persons born outside of Costa Rica (See Table 3).¹⁷² Interestingly, by 1950 the amount of Nicaraguans women entering Costa Rica almost equaled that of men, 8032 to 10872. Women entered the region as mothers, wives, daughters, and as demonstrated in the case of Joséfa Pérez, as laborers in their own right. Olander posits that the immigration of Nicaraguans in search of work and asylum, as well as the treatment Nicaraguans received in Costa Rica, were

4 mil nicas mas residentes en Costa Rica seran repatriados,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, February 12, 1949.

¹⁶⁸ “Los 38 prisioneros de Guerra nicaragüenses satisfechos del trato recibido,” *La Prensa Libre*, January 4, 1949; “Dentro de pocos dia se repatriara a los prisioneros nicaragüenses,” *La Prensa Libre*, March 2, 1949; “Devueltos los prisioneros nicaragüenses,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, March 8, 1949.

¹⁶⁹ Chargé Araya Borge to Toledo Escalante, September 27 1950, no. A-81, folder 2684, ANCR in Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 177.

¹⁷⁰ Araya Salas to Chief of Official of Public Security Gonzalo Segares Garcia, July 28, 1950; Toledo Escalante to Araya Salas, August 7 1950, No. 8981/DC, folder 2684, ANCR in Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 177.

¹⁷¹ *Tribuna Libre*, February 19, 1951; Araya Borge to Segares Garcia, Managua July 5, 1950, no. G-31, folder 2684, ANCR in Olander, “Central American Foreign Policies,” 178. Translation by Olander.

¹⁷² Costa Rica, *Censo de Población, 1950* (San José: Costa Rica),

factors that created mutual resentment between the two nations.¹⁷³ By 1950, the Nicaraguan Black Legend had not diminished and had become a fixture in the imagination of the Costa Rican public.

Table 3. Nicaraguan Migration to Costa Rica by Gender and Province, 1950

Province	Nicaraguan Men	Nicaraguan Women	Nicaraguan Total
San José	1062	1386	2448
Alajuela	2518	1822	4340
Cartago	96	113	209
Heredia	64	49	113
Guanacaste	1648	1108	2756
Puntarenas	3978	2503	6481
Limón	1506	1051	2557
Total	10872	8032	18904

Source: Government of Costa Rica. *Censo de población*: 1950, Cuadro 7

The end of the war brought the removal of hundreds of Nicaraguan laborers, exiles, and GN soldiers from Costa Rica. As such, Nicaraguans served as scapegoats for the war and the violence that accompanied it. The new Costa Rican government hoped their exit, along with the repression of the *calderocomunistas*, would serve as cathartic events that would bring about the rebirth of a peaceful and democratic Costa Rican nation. However, as Díaz-Arias delineates, Costa Rican politics continued their hostile trajectory despite the removal of Communists and Nicaraguans from the social equation. The Civil War demonstrated Costa Ricans' capacity and willingness to use violence. Still, they were able to *remember* the war as one of extreme circumstances, and in this way, to justify any violence perpetrated. The dissolution of the Costa Rican Army, an already small force in 1948, is an example of Costa Rica's attempts to symbolically recapture a bygone era. Nevertheless, the elimination of the standing army did not necessarily lead to the elimination of violence. Costa Rica's continued involvement in attempts

¹⁷³ Olander, "Central American Foreign Policies," 176.

to overthrow Somoza and the continued monitoring and deportation of Nicaraguans during the 1950s demonstrates the state's ability to adapt and utilize the institutional mechanisms at its disposal.

Somoza Versus Figueres

At the start of 1955, Nicaragua and Costa Rica were once again on the precipice of war. Somoza helped *calderonistas* invade Costa Rica (again) with the hopes of dislodging Figueres from power. Figueres repeatedly attacked Somoza for assisting the Costa Rican exiles. On January 12 1955, Somoza dared Figueres meet to him at the border with revolver in hand to settle their dispute in a duel. Somoza reportedly called Figueres a "damn liar" for insisting that Nicaragua was behind the *calderonista* invasion and said, "If he has so much personal hate for me, let's put it on a man-to-man basis. There is no reason for bloodshed between our two countries. If he hates me, as was evident when he tried to assassinate me, then why not settle it this way?"¹⁷⁴

This incident provides important insights into the relationship between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Somoza and Figueres became bitter enemies after the events of the Civil War of 1948 and the *calderonista* invasion of December 1949. This created something akin to a little Cold War between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, a violent rivalry, in which the two leaders supported exile movements against the other as well as continually accused the other of fomenting discontent and promoting revolutionary movements. By 1955, the row between Nicaragua and Costa Rica had devolved into a heated personal quarrel between the two presidents. Furthermore, Somoza's duel challenge maintained the stereotype that Nicaraguans were violent aggressors; however, Figueres and Somoza both engaged in a dangerous game of

¹⁷⁴ "Nicaraguan Chief Dares Costa Rica's to a Duel," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1955; "Somoza Challenges Figueres to a Duel," *New York Times*, January 13, 1955.

brinksmanship that brought the two nations perilously close to war.¹⁷⁵ Figueres had reinitiated hostilities with Nicaragua when he assisted the Nicaraguan exiles in April 1954 and Somoza, unsurprisingly, reacted in kind. Whereas their systems of government were indeed different, the confrontation between Figueres and Somoza, and the exile movements of both nations, demonstrates that Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans were both willing to engage in violence to achieve their goals, thus creating a violent rivalry. Figueres would weather the storm whereas exiles ultimately killed Somoza in 1956.

After the Caribbean Legion exile movement deteriorated, Emiliano Chamorro resigned himself to looking to a political solution with Somoza. As a result, Chamorro ended his exile and returned to Nicaragua in January 1950. On March 31 1950, Chamorro and Somoza signed a pact, which set the date for the upcoming presidential election to May 21, 1950 and conceded some electoral seats in the Constituent Assembly and some ministerial positions to Conservatives, in exchange for the termination of Chamorro's opposition. When pressed to explain the change of heart, Chamorro stated that he had attempted to overthrow Somoza for over a decade and every effort had failed, thus, he decided to pursue a peaceful alternative. The subsequent Pact of Generals (*Pacto de los Generales*) signed on April 3, 1950 limited the electoral contests to the two traditional parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, and delineated how the two parties would divide seats in the Constituent Assembly, judicial appointments, and departmental electoral boards. Even when the Nicaraguan Congress appointed Somoza interim president following the death of Victor Roman y Reyes, the Conservatives remained optimistic

¹⁷⁵ "Costa Rican Irked by Talk on Duel," *New York Times*, January 21, 1955. Father Benjamin Nuñez, Costa Rica's representative to the United Nations, rebuked the contention that the conflict stemmed simply from a personal rivalry and believed that it was a confrontation of two ideological philosophies: democracy and dictatorial rule.

that the elections would be fair and that they could finally defeat Somoza in a presidential electoral contest. To their disappointment, Somoza won handily.¹⁷⁶

Chamorro's decision to end his exile did not put an end to the exile movement. The Nicaraguan opposition in exile viewed the Pact of Generals as an act of treason on the part of Chamorro as it legitimated Somoza's rule. The *Partido Revolucionario en el Exilio*, based in Mexico City, published a pamphlet demanding that Chamorro and Somoza both hang from the same lamppost and called for Nicaraguans to abstain from the 1950 Presidential Election.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, exiles attempted what Walter calls "the first serious military undertaking against Somoza." In April 1954, members of exile organizations *Partido Revolucionario de Nicaragua* (PRN), based in Costa Rica, and *Unión Revolucionaria Democrática* (URD), based in Mexico, along with former GN soldiers,¹⁷⁸ attempted to overthrow Somoza violently.¹⁷⁹

The plotters decided to strike Somoza directly by attacking the headquarters of the *Guardia Nacional* and Somoza's offices reasoning that if they could take out the central command of the *Guardia* as well as Somoza, the regime would be unable to withstand the assault. The exiles raised money and arms and had the arms shipped to Costa Rica.¹⁸⁰ Figueres,

¹⁷⁶ Walter, 175-179; "Somoza is Leading in Nicaragua Vote: Landslide for Liberal Party is Seen Over Conservatives—Election is Peaceful," *New York Times*, May 22, 1950; "Nicaraguan Liberals Win," *New York Times*, May 26, 1950.

¹⁷⁷ Alejandro Argüello Montiel to Somoza, San José, Costa Rica, May 8, 1950, Fondo Salvadora de Somoza, no. 8, ANN, in Walter, 228. Walter posits that low voter turnout proved critical to the Conservative electoral defeat.

¹⁷⁸ Many of the GN soldiers involved included those Somoza dismissed following the overthrow of Leonardo Argüello in 1947. See Walter, 231.

¹⁷⁹ Walter, 230.

¹⁸⁰ Walter, 231. Among those that made monetary contributions were Cuban president Carlos Prío Socarrás and Mexican actor Mario Moreno, better known as *Cantinflas*.

officially elected president of Costa Rica in 1953, continued to quietly support Nicaraguan exile movements against Somoza. In Costa Rica, the exiles met with representatives for Emiliano Chamorro, who at this point agreed to support the exiles, and offered to furnish them with 300 men and 8 safe houses in Managua. Along with the 25 plotters already in San José, there would be 325 revolutionaries to overthrow Somoza. In late March, they transported the weapons to Nicaragua and eventually to the hacienda of a Conservative sympathizer that would serve as their headquarters. Unfortunately, Chamorro was unable to deliver on his promises and only provided 80 men and no other safe houses.¹⁸¹

The plan called for the rebels to split into four groups: two to intercept and capture Somoza in his farm at Montelimar on the Pacific, another to take on *El Hormiguero*, police headquarters, and the last to attack *La Loma*, the presidential palace. However, things quickly fell apart because of the shortage of men. By April 5, 1954, the government was aware of the plot and the rebels attempted to flee the country. The GN killed or captured some of the rebels and the others sought asylum in the embassies of Guatemala and Costa Rica. The government declared martial law and clamped down on all opposition.¹⁸² The government jailed many prominent Conservatives and Independent Liberals, including Emiliano Chamorro and Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, editor of opposition newspaper *La Prensa*. However, after some time

¹⁸¹ Walter, 231-2.

¹⁸² “Nicaragua Foils Assassins’ Plot: Martial Law Declared after Somoza Escapes Ambush—Gunfire Kills Three,” *New York Times*, April 6, 1954; “Nicaraguan Rebel Chief Slain,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1954. See also “6 Nicaraguans Get Exit Right,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1954; “3 Nicaraguans Banished,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1955.

Somoza pardoned the majority of those arrested and convicted. As Walter suggests, Somoza's leniency demonstrated that he did not fear the opposition.¹⁸³

Somoza accused Figueres of supporting the assassination attempt on his life. Costa Rica, feigning ignorance, denied the charge and promised to launch an investigation into the allegations made by Nicaragua that the revolutionaries and arms originated in Costa Rica.¹⁸⁴ Even before the attack, Nicaraguan authorities had informed the Costa Rica government that there were Nicaraguans in Costa Rica illegally trafficking weapons, specifically identifying Pablo Leal as a leader whose home functioned as exile headquarters before the launch of the invasion.¹⁸⁵ Tensions only increased after the attack and Nicaraguan diplomats requested that Costa Rica provide protection from Nicaraguan exiles related to Rafael Prasslin and Pablo Leal, the latter whom reportedly killed during the invasion.¹⁸⁶ At the end of April, Costa Rican authorities reported that Nicaraguan nationals in the Banana Zones of the Pacific were recruiting other Nicaraguans to participate in armed movements against Somoza. The Minister of Labor, Otto Fallas Monge, ordered police forces to extinguish these efforts. Fallas Monge cited the reemerging Costa Rican policy of neutrality.¹⁸⁷ In May, Costa Rican authorities interrogated two Nicaraguans, Federico Solórzano Montiel and Adan Cardenas, under suspicion of trafficking and buying arms.¹⁸⁸ Costa Rica also promised to deport any Nicaraguans involved in revolutionary

¹⁸³ Walter, 232-3. See also "Nicaraguans' Immunity Lifted," *New York Times*, October 16, 1954.

¹⁸⁴ "Costa Rica Rejects Charge," *New York Times*, May 22, 1954.

¹⁸⁵ ANCR, Seguridad Publica 1344 (March 24, 1954).

¹⁸⁶ ANCR, Seguridad Publica 1344 (April 12, 1954); "Nicaraguan Rebel Chief Slain," *New York Times*, April 10, 1954.

¹⁸⁷ ANCR, Gobernacion 41538 (April 21 1954, April 23 1954).

movements and urged many Nicaraguan exiles to leave the country following the April attack, including some who were naturalized Costa Ricans or who were married to Costa Rican citizens.¹⁸⁹

The Costa Rican government went on the diplomatic offensive following the accusations to stave off a retaliatory invasion from Somoza: It asked OAS to intervene, chided the U.S. for providing Somoza with arms, and made sure that Panama did not have pact with Somoza that committed it to an invasion of Costa Rica.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, by June, Nicaragua cut off diplomatic relations with Costa Rica, claiming that Figueres had thrown himself “in the arms of international adventurers.”¹⁹¹ In late July, Somoza mobilized troops to the Costa Rican border claiming that Costa Rica had violated Nicaraguan sovereignty by crossing planes and boats into Nicaraguan territory.¹⁹² Figueres responded by stating that Costa Rica stood ready to defend

¹⁸⁸ ANCR, Seguridad Publica 1344 (May 4, 1954).

¹⁸⁹ ANCR, Seguridad Publica 1037 (July 15, 1954). The Nicaraguan exiles asked to leave Costa Rica: Adolfo Ortega Díaz, Federico Solorzano Montiel, Gen. Alejandro Cardenas, Antonio Orue Reyes, Edmundo Vargas Vasquez, Emilio Alvarez Miranda, Dr. Carlos Aguero, Gen. Roberto Hurtado, Dr. Emilio Ortega Tapia, Jesus Flores, Julio Tapia, Abraham Mendoza, Alberto Gamez, Gen. Adan Velez, Adolfo Ortega, Dr. Arturo Velasquez Alemán, Guillermo Urbina Vasquez, and M.A. Herrera.

¹⁹⁰ “Frontier is Closed: Nicaragua Bars Traffic to Costa Rica After Shootings,” *New York Times*, April 7, 1954; *New York Times*, April 8, 1954; “Costa Rica asks Parley: Appeals to Americas Group to Settle Nicaragua Dispute,” *New York Times*, April 15, 1954; “Costa Rica Assails U.S.-Nicaragua Tie,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1954; “Costa Rica Concerned: Figueres to See President of Panama on Nicaragua Issue,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1954; “Panama Reassures Costa Rica on Pact,” *New York Times*, April 26, 1954. Somoza also accused Venezuelan President Romulo Betancourt of being involved in the plot. See *New York Times*, April 9, 1954.

¹⁹¹ “Nicaragua, Citing ‘Plot,’ Breaks with Costa Rica,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1954.

¹⁹² “Nicaragua Guarding Costa Rican Border,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1954; “Nicaragua Sends Force to Costa Rican Borders,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1954; “Nicaragua Rushes Troops to Border in Latest Dispute with Costa Rica,” *Washington Post*, July 31, 1954; “U.S. Eyes Tension on Latin Frontier,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1954.

itself as the Costa Rican people had demonstrated that they were not easily scared. However, he added that talk of war was “madness.”¹⁹³

Around the same time, the government of Costa Rica became concerned that *calderonistas* intended to launch an invasion against Figueres.¹⁹⁴ However, beyond the *calderonistas*, varying sectors of the opposition were uniting against the Costa Rican president. Figueres came under attack from business owners who were displeased with his economic reforms after he forced the UFCO to renegotiate a new contract in June 1954.¹⁹⁵ In the context of the forced removal of Arbenz in Guatemala, also in June 1954, Figueres appeared vulnerable.¹⁹⁶ Importantly, Figueres broke with Otilio Ulate. The break between Ulate and Figueres occurred when a *figuerista*-dominated Congress rejected a constitutional amendment that would reduce the mandatory interval between presidential terms from eight years to four year, thus preventing Ulate from running for president in 1958.¹⁹⁷ In July, Figueres put down a domestic revolt by Costa Rican rebels.¹⁹⁸ By November 1954, Otilio Ulate and Rafael Angel

¹⁹³ “Figueres Discounts War Talk,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1954; “Figueres Asserts Viewpoint,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1954.

¹⁹⁴ “Costa Ricans Fear Invasion,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 10, 1954; “San José Blacked Out,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1954; “Costa Rica Ends Curbs,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1954.

¹⁹⁵ “Costa Rica Signs with United Fruit,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1954.

¹⁹⁶ “Guatemala Erupts,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1954; “Orders Martial Law in All Guatemala,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 21, 1954; Dana Adams Schmidt, “Guatemala Highlights Latin-America’s Ills,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1954; Milton Bracker, “Guatemalan Peace Won by Teamwork,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1954.

¹⁹⁷ Díaz-Arias, “Social Crises and Struggling Memories,” 332.

¹⁹⁸ “Costa Rica Calls Up Army in Disorders,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1954; “Costa Rican Band Routed,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1954; “Costa Rica Quells Rebels,” *Washington Post*, July 28, 1954. One of the rebels, Claudio Mora Molina, fled into Nicaragua. See “Costa Rican Rebel Flees,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1954.

Calderón, bitter enemies during the 1940s, became allies to combat Figueres and turned to Somoza for assistance.¹⁹⁹

Somoza was eager to assist any movements against his isthmian rival and allowed three hundred *calderonistas* to train in Nicaragua, resulting in an invasion of the Costa Rican territory on January 11, 1955.²⁰⁰ Costa Rica immediately severed relations with Nicaragua, requested U.S. military assistance, and appealed to the OAS to intervene.²⁰¹ Nicaragua, predictably, denied all charges and insisted it was a neutral party.²⁰² The OAS, as it had done in December 1948, once again intervened and prevented the invasion from becoming a real threat to Figueres and Costa Rica.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ “Costa Rica Raises Invasion Warning,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1954; “Costa Rican Chief Says Plot Failed,” *New York Times*, November 28, 1954; “Costa Rica is Tense Over Invasion Fear,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1954; “Central America is Beset by Tension,” *New York Times*, December 26, 1954.

²⁰⁰ “Nicaragua Invades Costa Rica,” *Atlantic Daily World*, January 12, 1955; “Costa Rica Loses Town in Uprising Laid to Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1955; “Costa Rica Troubles,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1955.

²⁰¹ “Nicaraguan Envoy is Told to Leave,” *Washington Post*, January 11, 1955; “Costa Rica Severs Relations,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1955; “Costa Rica Voices Hope for U.S. Aid,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1955; “Costa Rica to Get U.S. Aid,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1955. Even before the actual invasion, Costa Rica had petitioned the OAS to look into rumors of an invasion originating in Nicaragua. See “Costa Rica Warns OAS Nicaragua Plans to Attack,” *Washington Post*, January 9, 1955.

²⁰² “Managua Denies Charge,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1955; “Nicaragua Closes Border,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1955; “Somoza Pledges Neutrality,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1955.

²⁰³ “OAS Council Serves Notice on Nicaragua: Measure to Halt Flow of Arms to Costa Rica Asked,” *Washington Post*, January 15, 1955; “Figueres Credits OAS Help,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1955; “OAS Proves its Value,” *Washington Post*, “Peace Commission Back,” *New York Times*, January 29, 1955; Russell H. Fitzgibbon, “OAS Again Emerges Winner of Wars Among the Americas,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 1955; “Finding on Inquiry into Costa Rica Revolt,” *New York Times*, February 18, 1955; Dana Adams Schmidt, “Inquiry on Costa Rica Hints Nicaragua Assisted Revolt,” *New York Times*, February 18, 1955.

The tension between Somoza and Figueres was still visible during a visit from U.S. Vice-President Richard Nixon in February 1955. When Nixon arrived in Nicaragua on February 19, 1955, Somoza, in a gesture portrayed as impolitic by the *New York Times*, demonstrated his collection of weaponry confiscated during the attack on his life in April 1954 and insinuated multiple times that the weapons had been furnished by Costa Rica and its president José Figueres. At a press conference during Nixon's visit, a reporter asked Somoza what he would like from the United States, and he replied, referring to Figueres, "I will accept a guarantee of Uncle Sam that he will tie the hands of that crazy man." Nevertheless, Nixon secured a pledge from Somoza that he would work to end the rift. When Nixon arrived in Costa Rica, Figueres was hesitant, stating that he "would not sit at the table with Somoza" because "it would be a disappointment to democracy in Latin America" and the Nicaraguan General had placed Costa Rica "on the defensive for the last eleven years." (Eleven years a clear reference to allegations that Somoza helped Picado win the presidential elections of 1944.) Despite indications to the contrary, Figueres, ultimately, declared that he was willing to go "more than half way to resolve any differences."²⁰⁴ Both leaders were willing to cooperate in exchange for continued support from the U.S government. During this time Somoza's involvement with the *calderonistas* ended as

²⁰⁴ Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 336-7; "Nixon Goes Today on Goodwill Tour," *New York Times*, February 6, 1955; Paul P. Kennedy, "Action by Somoza Mars Nixon Visit," *New York Times*, February 20, 1955; Paul P. Kennedy, "Nixon Trip Spurs Foes of Somoza," *New York Times*, February 21, 1955; Paul P. Kennedy, "Somoza Promises Nixon End of Rift," *New York Times*, February 22, 1955; "Nixon Arrives: Figueres Won't Talk to Somoza," *Washington Post*, February 22, 1955; "Figueres Tells Nixon He'll Meet Somoza More than Half-Way," *New York Times*, February 24, 1955; Floyd Barger, "2 Presidents Give Nixon Peace Pledge," *Washington Post*, February 23, 1955; "Nixon Returns in Role of Latin 'Peacemaker,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 6, 1955; "Costa Rica, Nicaragua Organize Amity Group," *New York Times*, March 9, 1955.

Calderon Guardia left for exile in Mexico on February 15, 1955.²⁰⁵ The assassination of Somoza in 1956 would permanently end the personal rivalry between the Nicaraguan General and the Costa Rican president.

On September 21, 1956, Somoza had just accepted his party's nomination for President in León when Rigoberto López, a Nicaraguan poet and student, infiltrated the Casa del Obrero and shot Somoza several times at close range. The security personnel immediately killed López, however, Somoza suffered severe injuries and died from his wounds a week later, on September 29, 1956 in Panama.²⁰⁶

Reports after the shooting focused on who may have been behind López. Many emphasized the rivalry between Figueres and Somoza, suggesting that Figueres may have played a role in the attack.²⁰⁷ The accusations against Figueres led to a diplomatic standoff between Nicaragua and Costa Rica in November 1957, with Costa Rica alleging that exiles in Nicaragua were plotting to assassinate Figueres. The dispute ended after Luis Somoza and Figueres signed an agreement settling the conflict.²⁰⁸ There were even suggestions that the Caribbean Legion

²⁰⁵ "Calderon Guardia Leaves," *New York Times*, February 16, 1955. Calderon Guardia would be allowed to return to Costa Rica in June 1958. See Díaz-Arias, "Social Crises and Struggling Memories," 337-9.

²⁰⁶ "Somoza Wounded by Assassin; U.S. Doctors Sent," *New York Times*, September 23, 1956. Somoza was flown to the Gorgas Hospital in the Panama Canal Zone under orders from U.S. president Eisenhower. "White House Acts Swiftly," *New York Times*, September 23, 1956; Walter, 234.

²⁰⁷ "Somoza Accused Neighbor of Plot: Nicaragua-Costa Rica Feud Dated to 1948 Overthrow of Dictator's Ally," *New York Times*, September 23, 1956; Jules Dubois, "Somoza Long Marked for Death," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 23, 1956; Jules Dubois, "Latin Nations Join to Solve Somoza Plot," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 26, 1956; "Managua Urged to Free Suspects," *New York Times*, September 26, 1956.

²⁰⁸ "Central America Peaceful Again," *Washington Post*, December 18, 1956; "2 Nations End Dispute," *New York Times*, December 18, 1956.

had been reconstituted and were behind the attacks. Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Oscar Sevilla Sacasa claimed that the exiles were forming a “united front” and were coordinating activities from Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Sevilla listed nine Nicaraguans as leaders of the group: In Mexico, Manuel Gomez Flores (thought to be the sole survivor of the attempted attack on Somoza in 1954), Hernan Robleto, Juan José Meza, Adolfo Zamora, and Alberto Gamez. In Costa Rica, Adolfo Díaz, Ernesto Solorzano Thompson, and Virgilio Vega Fornos. In El Salvador, Sevilla named Toribio Tijerino.²⁰⁹ According to friends of the assassin, López had said if he ever did anything, he would do it alone because he did not want to implicate anyone.²¹⁰ Ultimately, neither Figueres nor a reconstituted Caribbean Legion were a part of the plot.

According to Walter, López spent some time in El Salvador with Nicaraguan exiles, where he learned to use a gun. Previous attempts to overthrow Somoza proved unsuccessful, largely because the exiles were unable to keep their intentions quiet. López, on the other hand, was involved in a plot that involved fewer than ten people, did not include the traditional leadership of the Opposition, the PLI or the Conservatives, and was able to get through Somoza’s security and shoot the Nicaraguan General at close range.²¹¹ However, the very same reasons López was successful prevented any momentum to build as the traditional opposition leaders were caught off guard and could not capitalize on Somoza’s death. Instead, the

²⁰⁹ Jules Dubois, “Exiles’ Revolt Plot Charged by Nicaragua,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 27, 1956; Peter Kihss, “Nicaragua Tells Americas of Plot,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1956; Peter Kihss, “Nicaragua Sees Exiles Uniting,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1956.

²¹⁰ Jules Dubois, 200 Arrested in Shooting of Gen. Somoza: Two Sons Suspect a Conspiracy,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 24, 1956.

²¹¹ Walter, 234.

Nicaraguan government responded with a high level of repression, preventing the fall of the regime.²¹²

Conclusion

The participation of Nicaraguans critically influenced the outcome of the Costa Rican Civil War. Without the participation of Nicaraguans, particularly Rosendo Argüello, José Figueres would not have been able to secure the weapons necessary to overthrow the Costa Rican government or convince Nicaraguan exiles and the rest of the Caribbean Legion to strike first in Costa Rica. The Nicaraguans, along with the Dominicans and Hondurans, also provided training and experience that the Costa Rican rebel forces did not possess. On the government side, Picado would have not been able to hold out as long as he did without the participation of the Nicaraguan laborers who were a part of the *columna liniera* with Fallas, such as José Maria Meléndez and Lucío Ibarra, or the soldiers Abelardo Cuadra and Enrique Tijerino, who gave his life defending Costa Rica.

The Civil War also had long lasting impact on the relationship between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. As the Cold War became a primal concern for the United States, the Costa Rican Civil War and the ensuing standoff between Nicaragua and Costa Rica proved a testing ground for a shift in U.S. policy. Importantly, the OAS became a powerful instrument to resolve conflicts within the region.

²¹² Peter Kihss, "Nicaragua Holds 200 of Opposition in Somoza Attack," *New York Times*, September 24, 1956; Walter, 234-5.

CONCLUSION

When I traveled to Costa Rica to conduct research in the fall of 2009, several persons asked me where I was from. When I responded that I was Nicaraguan, I was told on more than one occasion that I did not look Nicaraguan. This is most likely attributable to the fact that my family migrated to the United States from Nicaragua in 1982 when I was a young child. Thus, my appearance, my dress, and my accent were all different from immigrants who had migrated directly from Nicaragua. That I did not “look” or “sound” Nicaraguan was meant to be a compliment. The comment, however, was meant to communicate something beyond my appearance: I should not identify as a Nica. Different Costa Ricans took the time to explain to me that the Nicaraguan in Costa Rica only commits violent acts and drains public services, that he is a parasite. But they also told me that the difference could be explained through the history of both nations: peaceful Costa Rica and violent Nicaragua. Almost eighty years after Nicaraguans lamented the persistence of the Nicaraguan black legend, I was being told that I should not identify as Nicaraguan. My dissertation argues that the stigma against Nicaraguans can only be understood by analyzing moments of conflict, of violent plurality, between the two nations and peoples that ultimately exacerbated the view of Nicaraguans in Costa Rican society. I argue that violence, as exercised by multiple actors for a variety of ends, played a critical role in the evolving relationship between the two nations, in the development of Costa Rican national identity and the formation of a Nicaraguan black legend in Costa Rica.

This dissertation is a history of Nicaraguan and Costa Rican relations. It was initially conceived as a study of Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica. However, what emerged, is a complicated analysis of the role that foreign relations, interregional politics, and immigration play in the construction of national identity. A large part of this dissertation is dedicated to

understanding the political, diplomatic and military histories of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, especially when they intersect with one another. Furthermore, it examines the impact of international elements in the relationship between Nicaragua and Costa Rica: rising U.S. hegemony over the region, communism, capitalist imperialism, and other regional factors. This history demonstrates how the elites of both nations, as well as international factors, defined many the conditions that served as the impetus of Nicaraguan immigration as well as the context of reception in Costa Rica. It coincides with Viotta da Costa who argues, “It is impossible to understand the history of the powerless without understanding the powerful.”¹ The history of the powerful (and the powerless) in Central America, however, is one that is filled with violence.

Violence

Soto Quiros suggests that Nicaraguans served as the fundamental “other” in the creation of the Costa Rican’s peaceful “national character” and respect for order. However, few studies have attempted to detail to what degree Nicaraguans participated in the formation of Costa Rican national identity, the nation-state, and the role that violence played in these transformations. This dissertation attempts to address these concerns.

There is a history of Nicaraguan bellicosity that can be pointed to and is often referenced when discussing Nicaraguan instability. It assumes that warfare and extreme political repression are the only indexes by which to measure violence. By this measure, Nicaraguans are clearly more violent than their Costa Rican neighbors. The problem lies in that the presumption of Nicaraguan violence is then used to justify marginalization, injustice and abuse of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica and to undermine social movements. Furthermore, it obfuscates more subtle forms of violence. Thus, I argue that by accepting that there is a plurality of violence, that

¹ Emilia Viotti da Costa, *The Brazilian Empire: Myth and Histories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), xvii.

violence is a strategy, we can begin to understand how Nicaraguans have become marginalized in Costa Rican society.

Violence exists on a variety of levels. What becomes evident by my examination of the history of Nicaragua and Costa Rica is that different actors exercised violence in different ways. We can categorize Nicaraguan state violence as the most typical insofar that it is also the most obvious. Nicaraguan state violence was highly visible and public. Attempts by others, in the “field of the state,” to challenge the state only served to increase its visibility. Thus, the constant civil wars and coup d’états only served to enhance Nicaragua’s reputation as a “violent” nation. The Costa Rican state, on the other hand, emerged from a sometimes-turbulent 19th century as the more stable of the two countries and would not confront a violent overthrow of its government until 1948.

Labor violence marked Nicaraguan immigrants as particularly hostile to the Costa Rican state. Despite the leadership of Costa Ricans in the communist movements of the 1930s, it was Nicaraguan laborers who were often isolated as the most violent of the participants. This is claim often been repeated in the literature. Their reputation for toughness and willingness to endure harsh conditions lent itself quite easily into making the case that Nicaraguans were more willing than others to engage in violent acts. Costa Rica attempted to distance itself from the national labor disturbances by pointing to a foreign element. This had less to do with the actual events on the ground and more to do with how states attempt to control laborers and migrant populations. In times of great upheaval, migrants were the most vulnerable. Furthermore, as my dissertation demonstrates, there were multiple violent actors: the Costa Rican state, the United Fruit Company, and the Costa Rican Communist Party all engaged in heightening the violence during the labor upheavals.

Deportation, itself a violent act, allowed the Costa Rican state to demonstrate its strength and its ability to remove dangerous elements from the nation. The removal of “undesirable elements” is a strategy employed by nation-states to maintain an idealized racial vision of the nation. This is in line with developments in other parts of Latin America. For example, Marc McLeod highlights that during the 1930s the Cuban government revealed cultural and racial assumptions against Haitians when they repatriated large amounts of Haitians labor migrants citing low morality, illness, and vices.² Similarly, the Costa Rican government has made similar claims about Nicaraguan migration at the turn of the twenty first century. However, during the period under study for this dissertation, Costa Rican government authorities utilized Nicaraguan violence to justify Nicaraguan deportations. Violence, in this way, became a Nicaraguan cultural and racial trait in Costa Rica. The deportations only further augmented their position as ethnic outsiders.

In the majority of Latin America, particularly in nations with a large degree of racial mixture, a positive sense of mestizo national identity developed. Nicaragua was not an exception to this rule. Nicaraguan governments pursued a policy of mestizaje to advance their national vision of modernity. This vision, gendered and racialized, sought to remove the “backwardness” of the Indians and replace it with liberal visions of civilization and modernity. Indians were deemed barbarians and impediments to national progress. In Costa Rica, mestizaje as a national movement did not emerge. Because Costa Rica’s central population was largely white, it imagined their entire nation as white, ignoring the majority of nonwhite groups on the

² Marc McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba, 1912-1939,” *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 3 (1998): 599-623.

geographical margins of the nation. Similar to the national programs of Argentina and Uruguay that promoted whiteness as an integral component of the national character, Costa Ricans looked down on Nicaraguan immigrants for being what they deemed an inferior mixed population: Indian in type if not in name. As Nicaraguan immigration to Costa Rica became increasingly significant and as their participation in politics became more pronounced, Costa Ricans increasingly viewed Nicaraguans as a distinct racial group, susceptible to violence and criminality, and a threat to Costa Rican national project. By 1948, the racialization of Nicaraguans justified Costa Rican brutality against Nicaraguans during and after the Civil War. Ultimately, violence against Nicaraguans became normalized.

The Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza best personified the violent Nicaraguan “other.” Anastasio Somoza’s role in the development of the Nicaraguan state is taken as a given. However, this dissertation demonstrates that Somoza holds an outsized position in the formation of the Costa Rican nation-state and national identity as well. After his rise in 1936, Somoza often served as a facilitator, instigator, and catalyst for events in Costa Rica during the 1940s. His relationship with Calderon and later Picado effectively mobilized an opposition that feared that Somoza’s influence had become too great.

Somoza also affected the perception of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica. This has important ramifications of how immigrant communities are perceived. Too often, immigrants are isolated from the experiences or events in their home countries; however, this is impossibility when discussing neighboring states. The proximity of Somoza to Costa Rica, and the potential for intervention, shaded how Nicaraguans were seen in Costa Rica. In many ways, the actions of Somoza influenced the perception of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica more so than the actions of immigrants themselves. Somoza, lastly, explicitly affected the formation and direction of the

exiles that would eventually succeed in overthrowing Picado. It was Somoza's violent dictatorship that forced exiles to pursue a policy to overthrow a democratically-elected government in Costa Rica.

Nicaraguan exiles in their struggle to dislodge Somoza from power relied on the rhetoric of democracy. However, their efforts, unlike Figueres, did little to cement a link between Nicaraguans and democracy in international eyes. The primary difference is that the Nicaraguan exiles were unsuccessful, whereas Figueres won and in this way was able to mold his legacy. The way Costa Ricans remember Figueres largely is a result of the political battles fought in the years after the civil war, as well as his ability to remain a prominent architect of his own legacy. History has not been as kind to the Nicaraguan exiles, who were remembered more for being interlopers than defenders of democracy. This dissertation demonstrates that the Nicaraguan exiles, along with exiles from the Dominican Republic and Honduras, were critical to the success of the Figueres revolution.

Ultimately, Nicaraguan involvement in Costa Rican affairs, despite their intentions and outcomes, served to cast Nicaraguans as meddling outsiders. For Costa Ricans, the nation was to be defended from foreign violence, be it in the form of communism or Nicaraguan immigrants and exiles, which threatened order and democracy. It was up to the "sons of Costa Rica" to defend her from interlopers. Yet, Nicaraguan authors challenged the notion of Nicaraguans as threats and repositioned themselves as the heroes. Nicaraguans utilized the image of laboring women to demonstrate both strength and vulnerability in Costa Rica. In the novels of Emilio Quintana, laboring women represent the virtuous Nicaraguan. Similarly, José Melendez utilizes the images of Nicaraguan women marching with men to demonstrate the courage and bravery of Nicaraguans. Depictions of Nicaraguan males were also used to demonstrate strength and

fearlessness, at times, through violent means. It was a double-edged sword for Nicaraguans. If they were quiet, they were docile and easy to exploit; if they challenged the status quo they were unruly and a threat to the nation. To redefine their own masculinity, Nicaraguans challenged Costa Rican notions of masculinity based in order and civility and attempted to recast them as “weak.”

My dissertation brings to the fore the entanglements between the two nations that have contributed to an enduring rivalry. The rivalry between Nicaraguan and Costa Rica has ebbed and flowed, however, it has never dissipated. My dissertation argues for the importance of examining immigration, foreign relations, and interregional politics in the development of national identity and nation-state formation. The influence of immigrants and exiles as influencing factors in the formation of the nation-state suggests that scholars stand to benefit by looking beyond domestic considerations. Immigrants and exiles symbolically carry the flags of their nations. This has the effect of both maintaining connections with their homelands and serving as representatives for their nations in their adopted lands. As such, their participation in local and regional politics, labor, and war offers opportunities to examine questions of citizenship, nation, identity, and violence.

The history of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica suggests that Nicaraguans have made immense contribution to Costa Rica through their work, lives, and deaths. The Nicaraguan immigrants did not listen to their compatriot Francisco Ibarra who implored them to recognize that they were foreigners and should not interfere in Costa Rican affairs. Instead, Nicaraguans did the exact opposite, staking a claim in Costa Rican society by participating in her affairs.

EPILOGUE

The dissertation ends with the death of Somoza because the landscape of Latin America was dramatically altered by two events of the 1950s. First, the United States made a shift from its Good Neighbor Policy into one of communist containment as the Cold War began. The overthrow of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 was a clear indicator of the shifting winds. Second, the Cuban revolution in 1959 would confirm the fears of the United States but importantly for the case of Nicaragua, dramatically influence the direction of the opposition movement. While some of the opposition continued to seek exile in Costa Rica, a new generation of the Nicaraguan opposition, inspired by the Cuban revolution, began their revolution in the countryside. In 1963 Carlos Fonseca Amador founded the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional. While the FSLN toiled in the countryside without much success during its first decade, it was ultimately successful in overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. Still, Costa Rica played an important role in the success of the FSNL as it hosted the Nicaraguan exiles, *Los Doce*, that lent the FSLN the credibility and legitimacy necessary to garner popular support. The victory of the FSLN, however, was shortlived as it was soon mired in a civil war against the U.S. sponsored *Contras* that would not end until 1990. This led to waves of refugees fleeing Nicaragua to Costa Rica, Honduras and the United States.

The end of the Sandinista Revolution and the Contra War in Nicaragua in 1990 did not diminish the migration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica. Extreme levels of poverty and the scarcity of jobs in Nicaragua, coupled with the demand for laborers in sectors that Costa Ricans were abandoning—agriculture (coffee and sugar cane), construction, and domestic work—encouraged

the immigration of Nicaraguans. By the year 2000, unofficial estimates placed the number of Nicaraguans from 330,000 to 400,000, making up about 8-10 percent of the total Costa Rican population. The influx of Nicaraguans resulted in the emergence of discriminatory, racist and xenophobic policies and attitudes. Molina Jiménez correctly asserts that these policies and attitudes have their origins in the racial ideology of 19th century liberals that fomented the creation of a white and pure Costa Rica. Thus, the present immigration has parallels to experiences of Nicaraguans sixty years before. The difference between the present and past migrations is that the majority of the earlier wave of Nicaraguan immigrants stayed on the margins of Costa Rica, on the coasts, laboring on its plantations, whereas today much of the contemporary immigration is centered in the cities and in the capital, San José, making the presence of Nicaraguans all the more felt by the greater populace.³

Costa Rica, a modern country in the 21st century with a vibrant tourism economy, has learned how to commodify its peaceful image, selling t-shirts that read “No Army Since 1948.” However, Costa Rican society harbors an extreme resentment against Nicaraguans that sometimes explodes in episodes of violence. The death of 24-year-old Nicaraguan Natividad Canda Mairena on November 10, 2005 in Costa Rica demonstrated the tense relations that existed between Nicaraguan immigrants and their hosts. Canda Mairena was killed as a result of being attacked by two Rottweilers which were guarding a private property that Canda Mairena trespassed. The incident caused uproar in Nicaragua and Costa Rica as reports surfaced that several Costa Rican first responders looked on as the dogs attacked Canda Mairena, refusing to offer assistance. Many Costa Ricans defended the police action because Canda Mairena had trespassed private property. An investigation later revealed that responders had opportunities to

³ Iván Molina Jiménez, “Dos crónicas nicaragüenses sobre la Costa Rica de la década de 1940, *Istmo* 4 (July-December 2002).

put down the dogs without hurting Canda Mairena (which they claimed as the principal reason they did not act) as video footage demonstrated the dogs stepping away from the victim during the attack. Ultimately, authorities absolved the eight police officers from any wrongdoing in September 2005.⁴

Importantly, Canda Mairena ignited a social firestorm in Costa Rica that resulted in a great backlash against Nicaraguans. A few weeks after Canda Mairena was attacked by dogs, a fight between Costa Ricans and Nicaraguan immigrants left five migrants injured and another Nicaraguan stabbed to death. As Kathryn Rose Goldade delineates, Nicaraguan immigrants believed that first responders allowed the dogs to attack Canda Mairena because they could tell he was Nicaraguan. Furthermore, the coverage of the death by the Costa Rican press angered Nicaraguan immigrants, which they perceived to be insensitive.⁵

More recently, the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica have attacked one another in the press following an incident in November 2010 in which Nicaraguan soldiers crossed into disputed Costa Rican territory. The Nicaraguan government argued that it was not in Costa Rican territory and cited Google Maps as its source for its claim. Furthermore, Nicaragua cited the Cañas-Jerez treaty of 1858 and the Cleveland arbitration of 1888. The Costa Rican government ultimately convinced Google to recognize its definition of the border. The Nicaraguan government, however, would not relent and militarized the region, sending eighty

⁴ “Investigan muerte de nica por ataque de Rottweiler,” *El Nuevo Diario*, November 11, 2005; “Policías a juicio en caso de Canda,” *La Prensa*, June 3, 2011.

⁵ Kathryn Rose Goldade, “South-to-South Migration, Reproduction, Health and Citizenship: The Paradoxes of Proximity for Undocumented Nicaraguan Labor Migrant Women in Costa Rica, (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 2008).

soldiers. The Costa Rican government responded by sending fifty police officers to the region.⁶ This dispute echoes the fights of the 19th century and demonstrates that the tensions between Nicaragua and Costa Rica have historical origins that go back to independence.

The ghosts of the past resonate in the conflicts and debates of the present. Nevertheless, to say that Nicaraguans only engaged in violence in Costa Rica or were only confronted with violence would be a falsehood. The dissertation also provides examples of the contributions Nicaraguan immigrants made to the development of the Costa Rican democracy as well as collaborative efforts between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans. This dissertation demonstrates the willingness of Nicaraguan workers to fight for the rights of the laboring classes in Costa Rica as an integral part of the Communist Party in the 1930s and 1940s. They would later march and fight in a war to defend the rights established by the Social Reforms during the administration of Rafael Calderon. Second, Nicaraguan exiles and soldiers fought alongside Figueres, however misguided, in an effort to rid the region of dictators. Thus, beyond violence, the Nicaraguan immigrant has been critical to the development of Costa Rican society. Whereas the Nicaraguan Black Legend continues to mark the experience of Nicaraguan in Costa Rica, it is also true that Nicaraguan immigrants in contemporary Costa Rican society continue to combat it.

⁶ “Nicaragua usa ‘error’ en mapa de Google para justificar incursión,” *La Nación*, November 4, 2010. See also “The First Google Maps War,” *New York Times*, February 28, 2012.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MAPS

Figure 2. Map of Nicaragua



Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 1997
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/nicaragua_pol_97.jpg

Costa Rica

- International boundary
- - - Province boundary
- ★ National capital
- ⊙ Province capital
- +—+— Railroad
- Road

0 25 50 Kilometers
0 25 50 Miles

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Costa_Rica_map_detail.PNG

APPENDIX B

NICARAGUAN IMMIGRANTS IN COSTA RICA, 1963

NICARAGUAN IMMIGRANTS IN COSTA RICA, 1963

Table 4. Nicaraguans in Costa Rica by Age, 1963	
Age	Nicaraguans
Under 5	482
5-14	1819
15-24	2246
25-34	3267
35-44	3645
45-54	2451
55-64	1508
65-74	622
75 and over	369
Ignored	58
Total	16467

Source: Government of Costa Rica. *Censo de población*: 1963, cuadro 58

Table 5. Nicaraguans in Costa Rica by Years of Residence, 1963	
Years of Residence	Nicaraguans
Less than 1 year	1131
1 year	1073
2 years	901
3 years	942
4 years	882
5 years	770
6 years	558
7 years	538
8 years	496
9 years	347
10 years	661
11 years	280
12 years	513
13 years	344
14 years or more	6066
Have always resided in Costa Rica	849
Unknown	116
Total	16467

Source: Government of Costa Rica. *Censo de población*: 1963, cuadro 60

Table 6. Nicaraguans in Costa Rica by Gender and Province, 1963			
Province	Nicaraguan Men	Nicaraguan Women	Nicaraguan Total
San José	1417	1787	3204
Alajuela	2765	2181	4949
Cartago	77	57	134
Heredia	152	102	254
Guanacaste	1069	895	1964
Puntarenas	2100	1464	3564
Limón	1445	953	2398
Total	9025	7442	16467

Source: Government of Costa Rica. *Censo de población*: 1963, cuadro 61.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF ANASTASIO SOMOZA GARCÍA'S ENEMIES (CARIBBEAN LEGION)

LIST OF ANASTASIO SOMOZA GARCÍA'S ENEMIES (CARIBBEAN LEGION)

Nicaraguans with Military Experience

Manuel Gómez F.	Colonel
Federico Cabrera	Captain
Gustavo Zavala	Captain
Edmundo Vargas Vásquez	Captain (Pilot)
Rafael Ch. Praslin	Lieutenant
Augusto Cuadra	Lieutenant
Guillermo Cuadra	Lieutenant
Abraham Mendoza	Lieutenant
Agustín Alfaro	Lieutenant
Mario Alfaro	Lieutenant
Adolfo Baéz Bone	Lieutenant
Joaquín Cortés	Lieutenant
Nicolas Sequeira	Lieutenant
Antonio Orue R.	Lieutenant
José María Tercero D.	Lieutenant
Julio Alonso	Lieutenant
Julio Tapia	Lieutenant
Alejandro Selva	Lieutenant
Aberlardo Cuadra	Lieutenant
Alberto Ramírez	Lieutenant
Wladimir Barquero	Lieutenant
Adolfo Vélez H.	Lieutenant
Amadeo Baena	Lieutenant

Nicaraguan Civilians with Rank

Emiliano Chamorro	General
Carlos Pasos	General
Carlos Castro Wasmer	General
Roberto Hurtado	General
Carlos Rivera Delgadillo	General
Adan Vélez	General
Antonio Velásquez	General

Alejandro Cárdenas
Ramon Raudales
Carlos Reyes Llánez
Octavio Pasos Montiel
Rosendo Argüello (Castrillo)
Rosendo Argüello hijo (Ramírez)
Eduardo Conrado Vado
Eduardo Jarquin Báez

Felipe Argüello Bolaños
Carlos Castillo Ibarra
Juan José Mesa
Ricardo Orúe Reyes
Gustavo Manzanares
Mariano Fiallos Gil
Ronaldo Delgadillo
Rodolfo Correa
Leonte Pallais Tiffer
Horacio Fernández R.
Edmundo Delgado
José León Montes
José Antonio Montes
Toribio Tijerino
Indalecio Bravo Silva
Julio García Mongalo
Juan Martínez Reyes (Ex-Guardia Lieutenant)
Enrique Molina
José Tapia V.
Luis H. Morales
Bismarck Flores
Guillermo Quezada
Octaviano Morazán
Octavio Caldera
Antonio Álvarez
Alejandro Lacayo C.
Hildebrando Miranda
Federico Solórzano Montiel
Gonzalo Rivas Novoa
Alejandro Cuadra
Raúl Montalván
Miguel Ángel Argüello
Manuel Ignacio Argüello
César Cáster Cantarero
Alberto Noguera Gómez
Dolores Morales hijo
Mariano Morales
Víctor Hurtado
Carlos A. Prado
Virgilio Vega Fornos
Eddie Escobar
Guillermo Borge
Nemesio Ordóñez
José Simón Delgado
Rodolfo Argüello
José Durán

Armando Urbina Vásquez
 Carlos Urbina
 Francisco Castillo
 Jacobo Jáen
 Clemente Cuadra
 Juan Francisco Fonseca Rivas
 José Félix Córdoba
 Alejandro Benavides
 Eduardo Hurtado
 Mexsicale Castillo
 Gilberto Bello
 Florencio Martínez
 Domingo Ramírez
 Adam Argeñal
 Melecio Benavides
 David Marengo
 Hermógenes Pineda
 Antonio Valle
 Herman Mairena
 José María Pavón
 Mario Morales
 Ernesto Morales
 Aníbal Tórres Nacimiento
 Arnoldo Muñoz
 Luis Mairena
 Juan Rivera
 Vicente Corrales
 Raúl Viduarre Barrios
 Arturo Téllez
 Guillermo Ruiz 114

Hondurans

Jorge Rivas	Colonel
Herman Aguiluz	Colonel
Presentación Ortega	Colonel
Alfredo Inextroza	Colonel
Mario Soussa	Major
Francisco Sánchez	Major
Paco Morazán	Major
Alfredo Mejía Lara	Major
Eberto Ramírez	Captain
Jacinto Castro	Captain
José Galeano	Captain
Moisés López	Lieutenant
Pedro Moncada	Lieutenant
Marcos Ortega	Lieutenant

Dominicans

Juan J. Rodríguez	General
Miguel A. Ramírez	General
Horacio Rodríguez	Major
Horacio Hornes	Major
Alejandro Fidel Sánchez	Major
Julio Castillo dumas	Major
Amado Soler	Lieutenant
Británico Guzmán	Captain
J.A. Cilfa	Captain

Cubans

Juan Bosch
Pedro Abren
Rafael Bilbao y Hue
Arturo Maxferrer
José Manuel Alemán

Spaniards

Felipe Laned
Agustín Maurele
H. Robira

Guatemalans

Federico Mora Peraza

Salvadorans

Gabriel Castillo	Captain
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Germans

Frank Marshall
Bernard Potter
Rodolfo Potter
Carlos Von Rehnitz
Guillermo Von Bergman
Agatón Lutez
German Lutez

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