# THE PATH TO FAVOR: TIBURCIO CARÍAS ANDINO AND THE UNITED STATES, 1923-1941

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Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

History

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December 6, 2012

Date

2012

American University

Washington, D.C. 20016

For Susan and My Parents

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the United States' relationship with Honduran politician Tiburcio Carías Andino between 1923, when Carías became a major fixture of Honduran politics, and December 8, 1941, when Honduras declared war on Japan and began a new chapter in Carías's relationship with the United States. Most scholarship has depicted Carías as little more than an obedient puppet controlled by the United States and the United Fruit Company, the classic client dictator running the archetypical "banana republic." This dissertation challenges the validity of Carías's supposedly unquestioned compliance with US demands, and demonstrates that Carías was an independent actor capable of using, manipulating, and defying the United States for his own purposes.

The dissertation begins by studying the United States' understanding of Honduras from the late nineteenth century through the beginning of Carías's presidency. Guided by the belief Honduras was a land rich with natural resources but home to a degenerate race, US policymakers showed themselves eager to pacify the country by any methods available. The United States' desire to stabilize Honduras for the purpose of making it more productive and prosperous brought Washington into conflict with Carías throughout the decade before his presidency. During the 1920s, far from the patron-client relationship some have described, Carías threatened and instigated revolutions when US officials advocated peace, undermined the US backed presidency of Miguel Paz Baraona, and used anti-US sentiment to his political advantage. Once

he successfully took power, US policy shifted to grudging acceptance of his stabilizing rule, even as he continued to defy directives from Washington on a range of issues.

The dissertation demonstrates that during the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration the United States failed to practice its espoused policy of noninterference in Honduran affairs. Evidence for direct US intervention in Honduras can be found in US support of the Honduran military during the 1930s, the manipulation of the Honduran economy during the Great Depression, and the heavy pressure Carías's government received from the United States on major matters of domestic and international policy. The dissertation shows that members of the Roosevelt Administration, while claiming to promote democracy and the self-determination of Latin Americans, instead consciously found themselves encouraging dictatorship in Honduras. This study illuminates how Latin American dictators used the United States' repudiation of interference in the region to their own benefit.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every dissertation represents the labors of more than just its author, and this one is no different. If this dissertation has any positive attributes they are undoubtedly due to the assistance I received from the many gracious people who invested their time and energies into it. I am particularly indebted to my academic advisor Max Paul Friedman who guided me through this unnatural process. His unparalleled advice and rarely duplicated dedication to his students is known far beyond the halls of American University, and was the primary reason I chose to attend the University's PhD program. I was never once disappointed working with Friedman in four years of graduate study, and I can only hope to reproduce a fraction of the positive influence he has had on my academic development for any future students I may have. I am also exceedingly grateful to the other members of my dissertation committee who somehow managed to find the time in their busy schedules to read and comment on my work. Eileen Findlay's careful reading and quality commentary helped to refocus entire sections of the dissertation proposal, and saved me on several occasions from making serious errors and overlooking valuable points. Peter Kuznick's expertise in US history proved especially useful in keeping the formation of US foreign policy in my sights. His words of encouragement and kind demeanor were never unappreciated.

There were many Hondurans who also made this work possible, and were instrumental in helping me during my research in Honduras. The person responsible for getting my Honduran research started was Darío Euraque. Not only did he provide me with dozens of difficult to locate works, but he also read every chapter, and provided me contact information for numerous Honduran archives and historians. With Euraque's contacts and valuable advice concerning the effects of the 2009 Honduran coup on conducting research in his native country, I was able to meet with Yesenia Martínez and Mario Argueta. After having dedicating countless hours to the

study of Carías, speaking with Argueta was a surreal experience. Not only is he the world's foremost expert on Carías, but he is also one of the humblest and most helpful historians I have ever met. With his assistance doors opened that would have otherwise remained closed to me. Simply mentioning his name was enough to make people smile and spend hours bringing documents to me.

Anyone who has been to Tegucigalpa knows it is a difficult city to navigate. Luckily, I had the assistance of Lenin O'Connor, a well-connected family friend who not only drove me to every meeting, archive, and interview during my stay in Tegucigalpa, but also spent hundreds of hours helping me find, translate, and gain access to his country's history. Other helpful Hondurans who deserve recognition include: Colonel Erin O'Connor, who spoke to me about the Honduran perspective on US-Honduran relations; Policarpio Callejas (the grandson of Venacio Callejas); Vilma O'Connor, who provided me accommodations; and Nilda Lopez de Torres, who worked diligently to obtain permission for me to read in the Honduran foreign ministry archives.

My family also warrants special acknowledgement. My parents surrendered large amounts of money and time to see that I received an education, and somehow managed to put up with my complaining along the way. I will be eternally grateful for their sacrifices. No one is more responsible for helping me finish this work than my wife Susan. As I researched and wrote full-time for over a year, she put a roof over my head, food on our table, and still managed to be wonderful. I have yet to learn of any dissertation that did not try the patience of its author. I wanted to give up more than once, but Susan outmaneuvered me with her unrivaled ability to soothe my worries and occasionally convinced me I might someday find employment with a PhD in history.

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# INTRODUCTION

"The city of La Lima, the official residence of the United [Fruit Company] was the true capital of Honduras during the time of Carías and his successors as well."[1]

-Honduran author Filander Díaz Chávez

"In some recent work, Latin American leaders—even if they never achieved the defiance of a Fidel Castro—now appear as genuine partners in the relationship [with the United States], acting with autonomy and pursuing their own interests to the best of their ability within an asymmetrical framework."[2]

-Diplomatic historian Max Paul Friedman

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Honduras is usually depicted as a "banana republic," a country wholly controlled by US business interests and the whims of policymakers in Washington. However, scant attention has been given to the foreign policy of Honduras during this period. Less still has been written on the relationship between the United States and Tiburcio Carías Andino. This is no minor oversight since Carías was arguably the most important Honduran political figure of the twentieth century, and because much of the world refers to Honduras—with incomplete evidence— as *the* "banana republic." A majority of those who touch upon US-Carías relations depict him as pliant pawn of the United States, but none offer conclusive evidence to support their portrayals. Instead, most of these claims are based on seriously biased political and personal perspectives. Yet recent scholarship has overturned conventional wisdom regarding the United States' relationship with early twentieth century Caribbean dictators. These scholars have demonstrated not only that the political,

[1] Filander Díaz Chávez, *Carías, el último caudillo frutero* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras,

[2] Max Paul Friedman, "Retiring the Puppets, Bringing Latin America Back In: Recent Scholarship on United States-Latin American Relations," *Diplomatic History* vol. 27 no. 5 (2003): pp. 621-636.

economic, and military objectives of the Caribbean nations did not always coincide with those of the United States, but these smaller and weaker players often shaped and defied US policy.

For over a century, Honduras has been at the receiving end of a slew of derogatory statements, jokes, and scholarship. To this day it is commonly referred to as the "Essential Banana Republic," "An American Colony," the "Pentagon Republic," "the easy pawn," "USS Honduras," "a Captive Nation," and as a "State for Sale."[3] This kind of depreciatory thinking is so pervasive it has even entered the Honduran psyche. For example, a common joke amongst Hondurans is that the reason why their country has yet to have a social revolution is due to the fact it is so poor it cannot afford an aristocracy to rebel against. Some Hondurans think so little of their governors they have rechristened their capital city "Tegucigolpe," a pun on the Spanish word for coup d'état, and refer to the massive US American embassy there as the place "*donde reside el verdadero poder*" ("where the true power resides"). Undoubtedly, the US-Honduran relationship has been dominated by the Colossus of the North, and Honduras, more than most countries in the hemisphere, has played host to the imperial reach of US economic and military power. However, recent scholarship has shown dictators in the Caribbean Basin during the 1930s and 1940s exercised a significant amount of agency in their relations with the United States despite the preponderance of power held by the larger country. While it would be an

[3] For examples of those who see Honduras as a victim of United States policy and refer to the country in a pessimistic tone see: Thomas P. Anderson, *Politics in Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua* (New York: Praeger, 1988), pp. 127-130; Thomas M. Leonard, *The History of Honduras* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2011), p. 81; William I. Robinson, *Transnational Conflicts: Central America, Social Change and Globalization* (New York: VERSO, 2003), p. 118; Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras, State for Sale* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1985); Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The US Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 52; Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), p. 178; Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *A brief history of Central America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 111; Frederick Stirton, *Inside the Volcano: The History and Political Economy of Central America* (Boulder: Weaver, Westview Press, 1994), pp. 100-102; Rachel Sieder, "The Politics of Exception and Military Reformism (1972-1978)," *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 27 no. 1 (February 1995): pp. 99-127. A rare example of a scholar willing to argue that Honduras at times controlled its own destiny and development is Darío A. Euraque. See Euraque's *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

overstatement to argue Carías exercised the kind of independence dictators Fidel Castro, Anastasio Somoza, and Rafael Trujillo are now recognized for, it is reasonable to ask whether he was more than just a "puppet."[4] After all, Anthony P. Maingot points out that the "degree of local independence" in the Caribbean with the United States "can vary greatly."[5]

By approaching US-Carías relations with the idea he was at least somewhat capable of controlling his and his country's destiny, and by exploring Honduran sources, this study overturns the assumption Carías was merely a pawn of the United States. In doing so, this dissertation contributes to revising our understanding of Honduras as *the* "banana republic" *par excellence*, because Carías had more than a few of the leadership qualities his fellow independently minded dictators possessed, and was more than willing to challenge Washington when it suited him. Bananas were important to the Republic of Honduras, but it was politicians like Carías who helped shape its destiny as much if not more than any monocrop. Thomas M. Leonard puts it best when he writes, "Central American nations, individually or collectively, pursued identifiable objectives in their relations with the United States and that they did not always succumb to Washington's dominance."[6]

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[4] For studies arguing Latin Americans exhibited a significant amount of agency in their relationship with the United States between the 1920s and 1940s see: Friedman, pp. 621-636; Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and the United States During the Rise of* José Figueres (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), pp. ix-xiii; Kenneth J. Grieb, *Guatemalan Caudillo, the Regime of Jorge Ubico: Guatemala, 1931-1944* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), pp. 4-9, 67-79, and 248-252; Paul Coe Clark, *The United States and Somoza, 1933-1956: A Revisionist Look* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1992), pp. x-xviii, 8-11, 20-28, 69-72, 130, and 179-191; Andrew Crawley, *Somoza and Roosevelt: Good Neighbour Diplomacy in Nicaragua, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 1-5, 42-43, 60-61, 95-97, and 203-209; Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 1-5, 127-149, and 230-240; Allen Wells, *Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR, and the Jews of Sosua* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. xx and xxvi; and John H. Coatsworth, *Central America and the United States: The Clients and the Colossus* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 1-14.

[5] Anthony P. Maingot, *The United States and the Caribbean: Challenges of an Asymentrical Relationship* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 2-3. See also: Robert A. Pastor, *U.S. Foreign Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 33.

[6] Leonard, "Central America and the United States: Overlooked Foreign Policy Objectives," *The Americas*

By the close of 1941, the United States and Carías had one of the closest relationships Washington had with any contemporaneous Latin American head of state. Carías followed the United States' foreign policy lead on nearly every major issue, routinely praised the United States and its politicians for the Good Neighbor policy and US leadership in the hemisphere, and did all he could—with the exception of refusing to abandon his practice of employing of US pilots in his Air Force—to further US designs in Honduras. Reciprocating its southerly neighbor's agreeableness, the United States included Honduras in its Lend-Lease program with a $1.3 million allocation that drastically ballooned the country's small military expenditures, provided Carías with recognition and overt moral support, and allowed him to conduct whatever business he needed to maintain power no matter how distasteful it may have been to US policymakers.

This warm and mutually beneficial relationship was the consequence of both parties constantly adapting their policies to fit the world's ever changing political, economic, and cultural realities over a nearly two decade long period. When the United States and Carías first encountered one another in 1923 they were far from the friends they would eventually become. They began their association as adversaries struggling for the presidency of Honduras. The United States did all it could short of military intervention to prevent Honduras from falling into its then predictable cycle of election violence that Honduran political culture and US business interests had kindled for decades. As the United States attempted to negotiate a peaceful transfer of presidential power, Carías refused to go along with US-backed schemes to appease all parties or promise to conduct himself peacefully. Time and again Carías instigated unrest and even

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vol. 50 No. 1 (June 1993): pp. 1-30. This dissertation compliments the arguments of Euraque who maintains a new historiography needs to be created for Honduras. See: Euraque, "El Imperialismo y Honduras como 'Repúblicas Bananera': Hacia una nueva Historiografía" (paper presented at the Conference of the Latin American Studies Associtation at Guadalajara, Mexico, April 1997).

threatened US officials with revolution if his demands for free and open elections failed to materialize. When the presidency was denied to him by electoral fraud, Carías brazenly defied the United States' warnings and main policy objective of peace promotion and rebelled against President Rafael López Gutiérrez's regime.

During the 1924 War of Revindication, when a rebellious coalition led by Carías formed to overthrow the Liberal Honduran government, the United States' worst fears for Honduras were realized. Not only was international business disrupted, US citizens threatened with extortion and death, and over $20 million of damage done to the country, but the United States' policy of supporting the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 was shown impotent to forestall the chaos it was designed to prevent. Freshly adopted by the Central American republics, the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 was a formal agreement by signatories not to recognize any government on the isthmus that came to power as a result of a revolution or coup, but in the aftermath of the war the rebels were the only group capable of providing rule of law and were therefore acknowledged. The civil war Carías instigated was the bloodiest in Honduran history and claimed thousands of lives including at least one US American. The war taught both Washington and Carías valuable lessons about how the other operated and how much resolve was required if their goals were going to be achieved for the country. Employees of the US State Department came to the conclusion the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 was the only hope for a peaceful future in Honduras, and the country's best defense against the destabilizing actions of *caudillos* like Carías. More importantly, many US officials in both the civilian and military sectors felt the war proved the Hondurans were helpless to provide their country with peace, prosperity, or anything more than something that resembled Medieval civilization without serious changes to its government and economy. Carías witnessed the United States' failure to

manipulate the evolution of events in Honduras, and accordingly decided to again defy Washington's warnings, this time by pursuing the Honduran presidency despite being no longer eligible for it under the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Evidence of his independence can be seen in the fact he only withdrew his presidential bid when the UFCO and his domestic allies refused to support him.

By 1925, Carías had proven himself the most formidable Honduran politician and more than capable of standing up to the dictates of Washington, but like all successful statesmen he chose domestic and international political expediency over risking his career and possibly his life. Instead of seizing the presidency in an unfavorable environment during the presidency of Miguel Paz Baraona, Carías attempted to force concessions out of the Honduran president by threatening to overthrow him. In the process he and the United States routinely sparred over the fate of the Honduran government. Carías repeatedly moved to emasculate Paz Baraona, and every time he did so US officials were there to quell the respective situation they found unsettling. This arrangement ultimately favored Carías over all other parties, because he was able to control important aspects of the Honduran government while at the same time remaining eligible for the presidency according to the requirements set forth in the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. In reality, it was unlikely Carías ever seriously contemplated a coup because he lacked the military strength necessary to fight the Nationals who supported the government, the Liberal Party, and Generals Gregorio Ferrera and Vicente Tosta. Whatever the case, Carías and Washington remained antagonists as Honduras remained economically unstable and politically feeble despite its democratic government.

When Vicente Mejía Colindres came to the Honduran presidency in 1929, domestic and international events began to rapidly take place that created the conditions necessary for Carías

to not only come to power legally but also maintain it for many years to come. Beginning with the onset of the Great Depression the already struggling Honduran economy fell into a state of despondency. US and Honduran policymakers were gravely worried about the Honduran government's inability to pay its employees, lawlessness, the country's damaged or destroyed infrastructure, and the vast numbers of unemployed workers who they felt might be tempted by the few communists operating on the North Coast. Besides the structural problems facing the country, the United States was also forced to face the fact that anti-Americanism was rampant throughout Honduras. Hondurans were tired of being treated as second-class citizens within their own borders by US citizens, and the United States' repeated trampling of their national sovereignty. In 1932, matters were made even worse when members of the Liberal Party rebelled to overthrow Mejía Colindres in an effort to prevent Carías from becoming president. From the United States' perspective Honduras was quickly falling into a state of anarchy that threatened both US business interests and potentially the Panama Canal. For Washington the situation in Honduras could hardly have been worse.

In a compilation of US newspaper articles dealing with Latin America, Graham Hovey writes, "Readers of this book will be struck, I think, at what a revolutionary development for its time the Good Neighbor policy of Franklin D. Roosevelt really was, with its pledge—the promise Latin Americans had been seeking from the United States—of non-intervention in their affairs."[7] However, the course of US policy toward Honduras over the 1920s shows that by the time Roosevelt announced the policy in 1933 its guiding principles were already well formed. Throughout the 1920s, the United States exhibited an ever-increasing desire to avoid costly military interventionism and overt meddling in the affairs of Latin America. Washington was

[7] Graham Hovey and Gene Brown editors, *Central America and the Caribbean*, (New York: Arno Press, 1980), p. vii.

remarkably slow to realize its actions had created a tremendous amount of animosity in the region, but once it had, it searched for ways to achieve its goals without antagonizing its less powerful Latin American neighbors. Tight budgets, anti-Americanism, and a sense of hopelessness about ever achieving any lasting change in the region combined to discourage the United States from landing marines, relying on gunboat diplomacy, or using nonrecognition to control the affairs of others.

Although these developments frustrated the United States and troubled Hondurans, every one of them aided Carías's political career. In 1932, as the United States inched toward fully implementing the Good Neighbor policy and increasingly exercised aloofness in Honduran affairs, Carías triumphed in the polls and thus legitimated his presidency in accordance with the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Additionally, when he and Roosevelt both became presidents in the spring of 1933, Carías fell into an almost completely failsafe domestic situation. Not only had his two main political rivals Tosta and Ferrera died during the Mejía Colindres Administration, but he was also fortunate enough to have soundly militarily defeated a large portion of the Liberal Party in 1932 and early 1933 while defending his electoral victory. In other words, he had few if any significant political enemies at home and a fresh start with a new administration in Washington, which desperately wanted to save money and improve the United States' reputation overseas. Perhaps most importantly from the United States' point of view, Carías excelled at ruling over a country suffering from anarchy and financial ruin. The Honduran state of affairs was so poor most US observers had little faith in his ability to improve the situation. Had Carías only performed marginally and maintained the status quo for Honduran finances, rule of law, and the economy, he would have been considered among the ranks of the less than inspiring presidents who came before him. However, the significant gains he made in

nearly every major sector not only ingratiated him in the hearts and minds of many Hondurans—especially those not on the receiving end of his repressive tactics—but also many US Americans.

Carías's mastery of Honduras's domestic problems was not the only reason his relationship with the United States improved within the first few years of his presidency. He also proved extremely skillful at manipulating official US opinion of his regime. Not only did Carías fill the Honduran presses with praise for the United States, its politicians, and policies in order to demonstrate his affinity for his powerful neighbor, but he never overlooked an opportunity to prove his eagerness to meet the wishes of Washington. Whether at an official banquet with US diplomats present or pushing the Reciprocal Trade Agreement through a reluctant Honduran Congress, Carías always made sure he played the part of friend and ally to the United States.

There were a number of early returns Carías received from the United States for his stabilizing successes, and these were fundamental in providing him the domestic strength necessary to institute *continuismo*. He was not only allowed to purchase US planes outfitted with military hardware, but given the liberty to employ US American pilots to fly them in combat against Honduran citizens. In 1934, only a year after he came to power and the Good Neighbor was inaugurated, Carías directly benefitted from the United States' noninterference philosophy through Washington's willingness to alter the US arms embargo on Honduras more to his liking. Contradictorily, while the United States' rewriting of the arms embargo was justified in Washington as an effort to treat Honduras in a less paternalistic fashion, it ultimately gave more military strength to Carías at the expense of his opposition, and to a large extent decided who controlled violence in Honduras. In essence, besides not amending it at all, changing the arms embargo to allow only Carías's government to decide who managed Honduras's weapons was the most paternalistic option available to US policymakers. By acquiescing to the national

makeup of the Honduran Air Force and providing Carías a preponderance of arms access, the United States would no longer need to protect its citizens or infringe upon the sovereignty of the Hondurans by sending gunboats or marines to its shores because Carías could now enforce peace for the United States.

Partially due to his pacification of Honduras and the noninterference clause of the Good Neighbor policy, Carías was not given any serious trouble from the United States for his *continuismo*, but he was no "puppet" of Washington. He was more than willing to please Washington when it suited him, yet he was unwilling to give into all of its demands. This was nowhere more the case than on the issue of employing US pilots in the Honduran Air Force. Concerned about appearances more than the well-being of the Honduran people, the US government was continually worried US mercenaries flying under a Honduran flag would discredit the Good Neighbor policy. When pressured to guarantee US officials US pilots would not be used in military operations, Carías lied and promised something he knew he was unwilling to deliver. Desirous to see US pilots employed rather than nationals of fascist countries, and eager to see the Honduran peace remain, the State Department opted to abide its discomfort and permit Carías his essentially scaled-down version of the US American Air Force. With the freedom to do as he pleased, Carías resisted all attempts to overthrow his presidency. Another example of Carías's willingness to ignore Washington's policy objectives was his manipulation of the Honduran-Nicaraguan boundary dispute to improve his domestic standing. While Washington scrambled to assuage the quarrel before it tarnished the recent declarations of the 1936 Buenos Aires Peace Conference by erupting into armed conflict, Carías intensified and prolonged the matter. A pragmatic leader, Carías kept up appearances with the United States but stood his ground in the interests of his own power when he judged doing so was worthwhile.

As the prospect grew that war in Europe and Asia might involve the United States the international environment dramatically influenced US-Carías relations. Believing there was a real possibility Honduras might fall victim to Nazi sabotage and subversion, and that its resources and Air Force could be commandeered by the Axis, the United States moved to strengthen its relationship with Carías to assure his power and loyalty. Fully aware Washington's fixation on Axis nationals provided him with new and potentially substantial prospects to attract its support, Carías slowly began making life difficult for those of German ancestry and cut diplomatic and commercial ties with Germany. Impressed with Carías's performance and eager to retain his fidelity, the US government provided Carías with previously unmatched levels of moral and military support. However, there were limits to Carías's enthusiasm and ability to gratify the United States. This was never more the case than when Carías received pressure from Washington to accept Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis during the late 1930s. The political price necessary to permit the entry of sizeable numbers of Jews into his country was simply too high for Carías to pay, and as a result we are able to see the limits of Carías's deference to the United States.

Because of its interests and readiness to meddle in Honduran affairs, it comes as no surprise the United States was a top priority for Carías throughout the period in question, but since his main impetus was little more than maintaining and increasing his power Carías was forced to approach the Northern Colossus with a complex array of tactics rather than the comparatively straightforward promotion of stability. To describe Carías's presidency as pro-US American is an oversimplification and misleads people to believe he failed to exercise agency in his relationship with Washington. In reality, Carías never shied away from pursuing his own career regardless of what the US government thought. Before he was president, instability served

him more than stability because it could have potentially placed him in the presidency several times. As a result he pursued revolution, undermined Honduran presidents Miguel Paz Baraona and Vicente Mejía Colindres, and manipulated the Honduran political scene to create the conditions he saw as advantageous. When he became president, his goal of maintaining and increasing his power remained the same, but his tactics changed. As the leader of the Honduran establishment stability suited him, not only because it led to support from the United States, but also because of the domestic benefits it offered. According to this perspective, Carías appears more an independent actor and someone capable of influencing the United States than a puppet.

**The Historiography of Tiburcio Carías Andino**

Although Carías was arguably the most influential political figure in Honduran history, researchers in both Honduras and the United States have largely overlooked him as a topic of scholarship. This oversight by US scholars is not unexpected due to the lack of attention Honduras has received in the academy.[8] When Honduras is present in US scholarship information about the country is often erroneous and superficial. Historian Thomas P. Anderson explains that work on Honduras by "even those close to the scene" is often "reduced to a series of clichés, most of which are inexact and some of which are entirely off the mark."[9] Honduran writers have given Carías more attention than their US American colleagues, but their level of professionalism, like that of their US counterparts, often falls short of satisfactory for many specialists. US critics of Honduran historians maintain their Honduran colleagues fail to provide

[8] Even as early as 1959, John Martz called attention to the lack of interest in Central American issues. He writes that there was a "semi-active resistance to knowledge of and interest in the area, particularly in scholarly circles" (*Central America, The Crisis and the Challenge* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959], p. vii).

[9] Anderson, p. 165. For an example of the typical treatment Carías receives in US literature see: Thomas L. Pearcy, *The History of Central America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), pp. 55-56. For more on the shortcomings of academic scholarship on the history of Honduras see: Kenneth V. Finney, "Honduras," in *Research Guide to Central America and the Caribbean*, eds. Grieb, et al. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 44-53.

adequate evidence for their claims, and that their objectivity is commonly compromised by their political and personal loyalties. The current state of US-Honduran diplomatic history is hard to undervalue. Besides a few dozen political science and historical studies that focus on the Central American Crisis of the 1980s and the US-dominated banana industry of the North Coast during the first three decades of the twentieth century, few noteworthy works exist. Simply stated, a tremendous amount of work in US-Honduran relations remains to be done.

Significant studies of Carías began emerging shortly after his ascendency to the Honduran presidency. Due to Carías's political dominance and his censorship of the Honduran press it is no surprise that an unmistakable dichotomy was present in these early writings. Honduran historian Darío A. Euraque describes these early works as falling into one of two categories: "either hagiography or anti-hagiography."[10] In both cases writing is strikingly emotional, political, and haphazard.

Seeking political and personal favor, Honduran and foreign Nationalist Party members wrote a constant stream of praise for Carías. One of the first complimentary books to emerge was *Un pueblo y un hombre; Honduras y el general Carías* by Gilberto González y Contreras. González y Contreras portrays Carías as the only man capable of bringing order to Honduras and helping the country achieve its full potential.[11] In his book *Reportaje sobre Honduras*, Mexican author Salvador Maldonado R. credits Carías for giving Honduras peace, a respectable economy, a sound fiscal standing, public confidence, and for strengthening democracy.[12] Guatemalan

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[10] Euraque, "Social, Economic, and Political Aspects of the Carías Dictatorship in Honduras: The Historiography," *Latin American Research Review* vol. 29 no. 1 (1994): p. 238-248.

[11] Gilberto González y Contreras, *Un pueblo y un hombre; Honduras y el general Carías* (Tegucigalpa: Imprenta La Democracia, 1934). See also González y Contreras, *El ultimo caudillo* (Mexico City: Costa-Amic, 1946).

[12] Salvador Maldonado R., *Reportaje sobre Honduras* (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1946), pp. 30-31.

author Margot Lainfiesta in *Honduras comienza hoy* explains that she supports Carías's rule because like Jesus Christ, Carías is a *caudillo* and that *caudillismo* is necessary for "human institutions" to function properly.[13]

Although not a monograph on Carías, *Bananas, Gold, and Silver: Oro y Plata* by David Saavedra presents Carías favorably and as a healthy and robust leader who "still looks full of youth, like that of a man who has lived in contact with nature" despite being fifty-six years old.[14] In 1941, Romualdo Elpidio Mejía wrote *La obra patriótica del Congreso nacional; el ideal continuista y el esfuerzo reivindicador* an unapologetic defense of Carías and the Honduran Congress's extension of his rule to 1949. According to Mejía, Carías, to who he refers as "el Jefe supremo," deserved to be president for nearly a decade longer due to his numerous "magnificent" accomplishments, "all of Honduras's security and progress," and his wisdom in bringing the country into a closer relationship with the United States.[15] Another example of a Nationalist Party member supporting Carías's *continuismo* is Daniel Hernandez and his book *La justification historica de La Actual prolongacion en el poder*. Hernandez writes, "Honduras needs a dictator of peace; of political peace; an apostle of peace; an evangelist of peace." Hernandez thought Carías was just such a dictator, because "never in the history of the planet" has any leader brought so much progress to his people so quickly from chaos and civil war.[16]

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[13] Margot Lainfiesta, *Honduras comienza hoy* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografia nacional, 1937), pp. 5-6. For an excellent discussion on *caudillos* and *caudillismo* see: Hugh M. Hamill, editor, *Caudillos: Dictators in Spanish America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

[14] David Saavedra, *Bananas, Gold and Silver; Oro Y Plata* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1935), p. 201.

[15] Romualdo Elpidio Mejía, *La obra patriótica del Congreso nacional; el ideal continuista y el esfuerzo reivindicador* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1941) pp. 21-22. See also Mejía, *La vida y la obra de un estadista* (Tegucigalpa: La Epoca, 1942).

[16] Daniel Hernández, *La justificación histórica de la actual prolongación en el poder* (La Esperanza: n.p., 1940), pp. 35-36.

One of the best examples of the early hagiographic works on Carías is *Biografía del dr. y gral. Tiburcio Carías Andino* by Lucas Paredes. Paredes describes Carías in his early years as "vigorous," "brave," "healthy and robust," a "hard worker," and as "enthusiastically striving to fight the battles of the future." Paredes goes on to justify Carías's *caudillismo* and *continuismo* by comparing him to other "*caudillos*" such as "Jesus Christ," "the Buddha," "The Prophet Mohammad," and "Martin Luther." However, as great as Carías was for Paredes, four years simply was not enough time for him to fix all the problems of Honduras, so he felt an extension of Carías's rule was sensible. According to Paredes, when Carías was born "the Sun…saw the birth of a man called upon to save his people, but it is not until 1933 that the man begins to fulfill the mission of Destiny."[17]

Most of the early "anti-hagiographic" writings on Carías are just as polemical and passionate as those written by his admirers. However, due to the iron grip Carías held over Honduran presses and the limited resources available to his opposition in exile fewer critical works exist. The best early work written by Carías's detractors was done by his greatest political opponent, Angel Zúñiga Huete. Forced into exile, Zúñiga Huete repeatedly tried to overthrow Carías by any and all means at his disposal. Therefore, it is no surprise his writings reflect his zealous political views and his personal troubles caused by Carías. Fearing for his and his family's safety, Zúñiga Huete wrote *Desastre de una dictadura*. In this short work and others Zúñiga Huete blasts Carías for corrupting Honduran democracy and accuses him of a plethora of

[17] Lucas Paredes, *Biografía del dr. y gral. Tiburcio Carías Andino* (Tegucigalpa, D.C., Honduras: Tipo-litografía Ariston, 1938), pp. 25, 59, and 311-315. Other praiseful accounts of Carías can be found in: Julián López Pineda, *La reforma constitucional de Honduras* (París: Ediciones Estrella, 1936); López Pineda, *Democracia y redentorismo* (Managua: Tipografia Guardian, 1942); Carlos Izaguirre, *Readaptaciones y cambios* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografia nacional, 1936); and Antonio Ochoa-Alcántara, *La nueva Honduras (hacia un verdadero nacionalismo)*, (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1934).

other crimes including selling the country to the US banana companies and pilfering the national treasury.[18]

In the 1940s and 1950s, only two significant US works addressed Carías, William Stokes's *Honduras: An Area Study in Government* and William Krehm's *The Banana Empire*. Although Stokes's book is a general study of Honduran politics, he offers a brief history of Honduras and a number of noteworthy observations about Carías and his regime. Stokes finds Carías's election in 1932 to be more than a simple change in government, he writes "In many ways the election meant the beginning of a social, material, and governmental revolution." Stokes is impressed with the order Carías brought to Honduras along with Carías's modernizing road building program, the progressive Constitution of 1936, and the difficulty he had in discovering "instances in which force" was "used by the government to control the policy or opinions of individuals." Stokes is also willing to excuse Carías's *continuismo*, because it had "historical precedent" in Honduran politics. It should be noted that like many of his sycophantic predecessors Stokes was heavily influenced by his close relationship to Carías and his family, whom he "frequently" visited and who bestowed personal favors on him.[19]

Krehm offers none of the praise Stokes gives to Carías, and instead presents a more realistic and harsh account of the dictator's rule. Krehm, a well-traveled Canadian journalist, calls Honduras the most "woebegone" of all the Central American republics. He presents a bleak picture of what life under Carías was like describing the national library as akin to a "neglected

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[18] Angel Zúñiga Huete, *Desastre de una dictadura* (Kingston, Jamaica: Times, 1937)*;* Zúñiga Huete, *Un cacicazgo centroamericano* (Mexico City: Imprenta Victoria, 1938), pp. 2-40; Zúñiga Huete, *Idolo desnudo* (Mexico City: Accion Moderna Mercantil, 1939); Zúñiga Huete, *Carta abierta a Tiburcio Carías Andino* (Mexico City: n.p., 1943); Zúñiga Huete, *Cartas: una actitud y una senda* (Mexico City: n.p., 1949); and Zúñiga Huete, *Conflicto civico entre la dictadura y el pueblo: mi contribucion por la liberacion de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Imprenta "La Razon," 1949).

[19] William S. Stokes, *Honduras: An Area Study in Government* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1950), pp. ix, 12, 96, and 257-261.

chicken coop," government officials as corrupt and lazy, and the prison system as excessive and torturous. He writes "Martial law, with brief intervals, was in force from the moment Carías took power to the spring of 1946…The Press was gagged, the prisons jammed." Besides being brutal and oppressive, Krehm also portrays Carías as ridiculous, impulsive, and incompetent. As evidence for this he recounts the infamous but unverified story that Carías outlawed baseball. Carías supposedly did so because he thought it would undermine his rule, but he declared it legal when his nephew convinced him national security would improve because the sport would be good practice for throwing hand grenades.[20]

Although not as well-known as the work of Stokes and Krehm, Frederick Higgs's thirteen-page book *Carías Andino of Honduras* is another rare example of US scholarship from the 1940s dealing with Carías. Higgs appears to have only one purpose in writing this book, to indoctrinate his readers with an abhorrence of Carías. In the first few lines of the introduction, Higgs describes Carías as an "unsociable, grouchy, stubborn and selfish man." He was a cold-blooded killer, thief, torturer, and was so dim witted he was unable to work as a lawyer. He was a coward that ran from battles, and rode to power on the backs of others. Obviously an impassioned diatribe, Higgs's work still has value in a number of his unsupported claims. He describes Carías and his government as devout admirers of the Nazis who supported the governments of Mussolini and Hitler until the United States declared war on the Axis. Additionally, he claims Carías used Lend-Lease military aid to strengthen his hold on the government, and that he used US monies from the construction of the Pan American Highway to enrich his friends and supporters. Furthermore, he accuses Carías of seeking the United States'

[20] William Krehm, *Democracies and Tyrannies of the Caribbean* (Westport, Conn: Lawrence Hill & Co, 1984) pp. 79 and 89-96.

approval and support by calling his opponents "communists."[21] Higgs's unsubstantiated accusations unwittingly portray Carías not as a pawn or puppet of the United States, but rather a skilled and adaptable ruler seeking to influence US policy to his own benefit.

During the 1980s, no doubt inspired by tremendous violence and upheaval, a number of Honduran historians began reexamining the "peaceful" years of the Carías regime. This new generation of scholars usually, but not always, went beyond simple judgments about what kind of dictator Carías was and began investigating social, political, and economic aspects of the period.[22] However, it should be noted even this more recent Honduran scholarship is often limited to only a few pages or a chapter and often lacks cited evidence and basic historical analysis.[23]

While only focusing on labor organization and left leaning politicians before and after Carías's rule Mario Posas's *Luchas del movimiento obrero hondureño* is a fine example of reputable scholarship. On his one page dealing the period between 1933 and 1949 Posas claims, "during the repressive regime of General Carías …the workers' movement lost its visible form and abilities."[24] Developing his critical view of Carías in a later book written with Rafael del Cid, *La construcción del sector público y del Estado nacional en Honduras, 1876-1979*, Posas and del Cid claim Carías was so much the pawn of the United Fruit Company that he

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[21] Frederick Higgs, *Carías Andino of Honduras* (Mexico, D.F., 1945), pp. 3-14.

[22] Euraque, "Social, Economic and Political Aspects of the Carías Dictatorship in Honduras," p. 239. Writing in 1959, Martz, was one of the last authors to almost entirely focus on judging Carías's rule (Martz, pp. 114-124). See also: Mario Rodríguez, *Central America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 128 and 142.

[23] For an example of a 1980s study of Honduras addressing Carías's rule only in passing see: James A. Morris, "Honduras: The Burden of Survival in Central America," in *Central America: Crisis and Adaptation* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1984), pp. 189-225.

[24] Mario Posas, *Luchas del movemiento obrero hondureño*, (Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1981), p. 88.

embarrassed the country. According to Posas and del Cid, pleasing the foreign banana companies meant eliminating all labor organization and when necessary "physically eliminating" troublesome workers. Posas and del Cid sum up their perspective of the Carías regime when they quote a phrase Carías's detractors popularly used to describe his regime, "*encierro*, *destierro*, *y entierro*" ("imprisonment, exile, and burial").[25]

One of the few book-length studies on Carías to emerge during the 1980s was *Carías: el caudillo de Zambrano, 1933-1948* by Alejandro Sagastume. Sagastume's monograph is largely based on the polemical works of the 1930s and 1940s and offers little analysis of Honduran history. Euraque calls the volume "outdated" and "unsubstantiated."[26] However, the book does offer some value to the researcher as a collection of Honduran sources from the Carías period.[27] Carlos Contreras argues in *Hacia la Dictadura Cariísta* that Carías was able to take control of the Honduran government in an autocratic fashion because he eliminated his opposition and strengthened his hold of the military in the civil war of 1932. Contreras offers an original thesis, but one only lightly supported.[28]

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[25] Posas and Rafael del Cid. *La construcción del sector público y del Estado nacional en Honduras, 1876-1979* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1983), pp. 106-113. Euraque supports this assessment in "La Historiografia sobre la dictadura del General Tiburcio Carías Andino (1933-1949)," in *La educacion para la libertad y la democracia: moral, civismo y urbanidad en el régimen dictatorial, 1933-1949*, edited by Oscar Zelaya Garay (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia, 2008): pp. i-xx. Euraque also maintains Carías exhibited "a general subservience to the dictates of U.S. foreign policy" (pp. ii-iii). Though not focused on the Carías regime, Euraque briefly examines his leadership and his interactions with the United States in his extensively researched book, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972*. Here Euraque argues Carías was "amply supported by the U.S. government," and in a "quasi-fascist" fashion crushed political opponents and labor movements (pp. 36-38 and 68-69).

[26] Euraque, "Social, Economic and Political Aspects of the Carías Dictatorship in Honduras," p. 241.

[27] Alejandro Salomón Sagastume F., *Carías: el caudillo de Zambrano, 1933-1948* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Graficentro Editores, 1988).

[28] Carlos Contreras, *Hacia la dictadura cariíasta: La compaña presidencial de 1932* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Iberoamericana, 2000).

Another Honduran volume from the 1980s dealing with Carías is Rafael Bardales Bueso's work *El fundador de la paz*. Bueso fleetingly traces Carías's life from childhood and explores his often-ignored connections with the Liberal Party during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The book's real value is Bardales Bueso's inclusion of dozens of Carías's letters and presidential addresses and even Carías's correspondence with President Roosevelt. Bardales Bueso's interpretation of events is largely absent, but his judgment of Carías as leader of Honduras is obvious. Bardales Bueso writes:

> "It could be said that the Everlasting Lord put Tiburcio Carías Andino on Honduran ground on March 15, 1876…He [Carías] prepared the earth and made the soil fertile for it to give good fruit. He planted the seed and it…grew into a tree of peace that generously shades *the Honduran people."*[29]

Two 1980s critics of the Carías regime are Filander Díaz Chávez and Emma Bonilla. In *Carías, el último caudillo frutero*, Díaz Chávez argues Carías was a destructive force, which devastated Honduran democracy and capitalist development. Díaz Chávez believes Carías's relentless efforts to destroy political opposition to his rule resulted in the weakening of political parties and the underdevelopment of Honduran democracy. He claims Carías unconsciously made himself a pawn of the fruit companies, and thus turned the country into a "colony" of the United States. He writes, "the city of La Lima, the official residence of the United [Fruit Company] was the true capital of Honduras during the time of Carías and his successor's as well."[30] Unfortunately, Díaz Chávez's arrest and subsequent confinement as a political prisoner of Carías prevents him from making sound observations about the regime. Furthermore, the almost complete lack of sources precludes the book from making a substantial contribution to historical knowledge of the regime.

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[29] Rafael Bardales Bueso, *El fundador de la paz* (San Pedro Sula, Honduras: s.n, 1989), pp. ix-x.

[30] Díaz Chávez, pp. 80-91.

Emma Bonilla's book *Continuismo y dictadura* recounts the tragic but inspirational story of Carías's persecution of her and her family and their eventual flight into exile. Daughter of Liberal Honduran President Policarpio Bonilla and close relative of numerous high-ranking Liberal Party officials, Bonilla was at the heart of the opposition movement. She took part in the famous July 4, 1944 march through the streets of Tegucigalpa, and even presented US Minister to Honduras John Erwin a bouquet of flowers despite his apprehension to accept them for fear of showing signs of support for Carías's opposition.[31] Notwithstanding some factual errors and a complete lack of sources, the book is a valuable record of rare first-hand experiences of those that suffered under the Carías dictatorship.

Mario Argueta is one of the most accomplished Carías experts and author of several Honduran histories dealing with the first half of the twentieth century. Two of his books from this period are *Bananos y política: Samuel Zemurray y la Cuyamel Fruit Company en Honduras* and *Los alemanes en Honduras: datos para su estudio*. In *Bananos y política…* Argueta skillfully explores the connections of the banana companies and the Honduran government before the presidency of Carías. In the final pages of the book, Argueta claims the election of Carías signaled a "marriage" or "symbiosis" between the Honduran state and the United Fruit Company, and the relationship benefitted the fruit company more than it ever did Honduras. In

[31] Emma Bonilla, *Continuismo y dictadura* (Tegucigalpa: n.p., 1989), pp. 62-66. Another critical account of Carías's regime is Steve Lewontin's short essay, "'A Blessed Peace': Honduras under Carías," *Honduras: Portrait of a Captive Nation*, eds. Nancy Peckenham and Annie Street (New York: Praeger, 1985): pp. 85-88. Lewontin describes Carías as a stabilizing force in Honduras and credits him for bringing the country sixteen-years of relative peace, but he also notes the terrible price Honduras paid in the process. He argues Carías left "United Fruit's power…unchallenged," and essentially allowed the company to take advantage of his weak country. He notes Carías's brutality, murder, and militarism, and states that his actions were so unpopular both domestically and in the United States that they cost him his political support, which eventually forced him to step down in 1949.

*Los alemanes en Honduras*… Argueta examines the German community of Honduras in the years before World War II, but admittedly only scratches the surface of the tragic history.[32]

Although somewhat sympathetic to Carías in his book *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época*, Argueta manages to explore Carías and Honduras in the context of the banana companies, the Great Depression, World War II, and Central American history. In terms of US-Honduran relations Argueta is reserved in his conclusions, but he supports his assertions with reproducible evidence. In a few pages Argueta outlines what he sees as the basis of US-Honduran relations during the Carías regime. During the 1930s, he maintains that US policy toward Honduras was guided by the desire to promote commerce and new opportunities for foreign investment. According to Argueta, Carías worked hand-in-hand with the US State Department and the US banana companies to encourage a favorable business climate free of labor organizations and trade regulations. He also maintains that the 1935 US-Honduran Reciprocal Trade Agreement failed to provide Honduras with any tangible benefits. Instead, he claims the Agreement "was a significant sacrifice for the government of Honduras, and one that favored the banana companies."[33] Argueta maintains US support for the Carías regime began drying up toward the end of World War II, but that Carías made himself a faithful ally of the United States throughout his rule. Argueta writes Carías was "extremely desirous to align the policy of Honduras with the dictates of Washington," and that he was constantly proclaiming himself as pro-US.[34] While Argueta's arguments are guarded they do provide a base from which to build a larger contribution to the history of US-Honduran relations.

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[32] Mario Argueta, *Bananos y política*, pp. 64-71; and *Los alemanes en Honduras: datos para su studio* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 1992), pp. 48-54.

[33] Argueta, *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras, 2008), pp. 175-183. The first edition of this book appeared in 1989.

[34] Argueta, *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época,* pp. 187-191.

Written in 2005, Thomas Dodd's *Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* is a fine biography of Carías and the regime's most authoritative history. A former US ambassador to Uruguay and Costa Rica and professor of Latin American history and diplomacy at Georgetown University, Dodd is an accomplished expert in Latin American history. Dodd surveys and analyzes Carías from his birth in 1876 to his death in 1969; in doing so, he demonstrates the immense impact Carías had on the formation of the Honduran state and its modern politics. Dodd maintains that Carías brought Honduras out of the misery of constant civil war and political obsolesce and placed it on a path toward development and modernization. His main argument is that Carías was a relatively "benevolent dictator" who came to power, maintained that power, and brought the country stability because he related to Honduras's rural majority and satisfied the country's chronic desire for peace.[35]

Carías's voice appears only occasionally, but Dodd presents the reader with a portrait of the ruler that depicts him as a cautious and pragmatic man willing to do anything to bring peace to his country. Dodd examines Carías's road building program, interest in new technologies, and willingness to restructure Honduran politics to serve his goals. While generally esteeming of Carías, Dodd does claim Carías failed to develop the economy, but credits him for balancing the national budget during the Great Depression and for the majority of his rule. He maintains Carías "made significant strides building the country's infrastructure," and that the roads built during his rule were essential to transforming the country. In the end, Dodd finds Carías to be "neither a thinker nor a visionary," but a man dedicated to "the singular objective of creating order and maintaining peace."[36]

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[35] Thomas J. Dodd, *Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), p. 5.

[36] Dodd, pp. 5 and 240-242.

Dodd also provides the most thorough investigation of Carías's foreign policy. According to Dodd, "President Carías had three foreign policy objectives: first keep peace with his four Central American neighbors…second, develop and maintain close ties with the United States; and third, participate in the international conference system in the Americas." Dodd believes Carías needed to maintain good relations with his neighbors, because his opponents could potentially use foreign bases to undermine his regime. In terms of the US-Honduran relationship, Dodd sees Carías bending to Washington's desire. Dodd argues, "Only Washington could provide Carías the resources to achieve his objectives," so Carías was all too happy to do the bidding of the United States.[37]

Dodd supports these claims with solid evidence from US archives, Honduran newspapers, and the limited Honduran archives available at his disposal. He convincingly asserts that due to the world economic downturn Carías needed the financial support of Washington to help him stabilize his regime. He also portrays Carías as a strong supporter of the Allied Powers during World War II since Carías committed ships, sailors, bases, and war material to the war effort. While Dodd's research is persuasive his study limits the amount of independence Carías had with the United States. Furthermore, his overall objective was not to explain the US-Honduran relationship during Carías's tenure in office, but to explore the nature and history of his regime. Dodd's work leaves a considerable amount of US-Honduran history unexamined and therefore assumes many of his conclusions of Carías's relationship with Washington.[38]

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[37] Dodd, pp. 153-173.

[38] Dodd, pp. 270-275. Miguel Cáceres y Sucelinda Zelaya Carranza argue in "Honduras Segurdidad Productiva y Crecimiento Economico: La Funcion Economica Del Cariato," *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* vol. 31 (2005): pp. 49-91, that three decades of civil wars and chaos in the early twentieth century led to a economic and agricultural depression in non-banana producing rural regions of Honduras. They maintain the stability Carías brought to the country and his dedication to coffee production saved the Honduran economy from ruin, but only at the expense of the rights of his political opponents.

## Carías and the Good Neighbor

Examining US-Carías relations between 1923 and 1941 provides a wide window to better understand the evolution of US policy from one of forceful intervention, to indirect influence, and finally a return to unambiguous intrusion. In the 1920s, Honduras, like many of its Central American and Caribbean neighbors, endured a significant amount of US presence in its economic, political, and cultural affairs. US Americans dominated the North Coast banana industry, routinely landed on their shores in military uniform, and regularly decided the fate of Honduran presidents. From the United States' perspective, Honduras was also a less than pleasing neighbor. It was consistently host to civil wars, rampant with anti-American sentiment, and a potential catalyst for international conflicts. Although the relationship was troubled and each party usually resented the other, it was nonetheless close. Too much money was at stake for US investors to tolerate the country falling into anarchy, and the Panama Canal Zone too nearby to allow the national security establishment to ignore the small nation. Honduran governments desperately needed the revenue the agricultural tariffs provided to function, and were therefore forced to abide the presence of the gringos.

From its inauguration, the Coolidge Administration was fully aware the United States' policy of dictating terms and landing troops in the Caribbean needed to be changed if the United States was going to be viewed as anything other than imperial in the region. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes made substantial efforts to keep the United States neutral in Honduran affairs, and often refused requests to disembark marines to protect US interests. However, he could not resist instructing US officials in Honduras to assist in maintaining and brokering peace when domestic politics threatened or gripped the country with civil war. Although he understood the need for Washington to adopt something resembling the Good Neighbor well before it was

officially adopted by the Roosevelt Administration, emergency pressures, unforeseen crises, and a lack of strong Honduran governments encouraged him to react in ways he knew were detrimental to the reputation of the United States in Honduras. Hughes was so unsuccessful in establishing better interaction with Latin America that President Coolidge was forced to leave the familiar comfort of the United States for a conference of the Americas in Havana, Cuba in 1926 to try to improve hemispheric relations.[39]

Real change to US-Latin American relations did not come until the Hoover Administration, when both President Hoover and Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson legitimately began reaching out to Latin America. Genuine efforts to improve relations between the two peoples were made even before Hoover took office. As President-elect, Hoover traveled throughout the region on a goodwill mission and even visited Amapala, Honduras.[40] In 1930, the Clark Memorandum was published thus renouncing the United States' right to interfere in Latin American affairs whenever it deemed fit.[41] Although Latin America would have to wait several more years before the final US troops were withdrawn from Haiti and Nicaragua, and the United States refrained from sending its gunships to troubled ports, the United States' urge to withdraw from direct interventionism can plainly be seen. This growing tendency to remain aloof from the region's affairs should come as no surprise since the region remained unstable despite decades of efforts to stabilize it, anti-US sentiment was at an all-time high, and the US government simply

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[39] A rare example of a volume tackling US-Central American relations over the broad sweep of its history is John E. Findling's *Close Neighbors, Distant Friends: United States-Central American Relations* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

[40] Richard J. Beamish, "Amapala-L'Union…Our First Port," in *President-elect Herbert Hoover's good will cruise to Central and South America, this being a log of the trip aboard the U.S.S. Maryland,* ed. Harry W. Hill (San Francisco: Book Press, 1929), pp. 27-30.

[41] Joshua Reuben Clark, *Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930).

could no longer afford the costs of maintaining military interventions due to the Great Depression.

More often than not, Roosevelt is credited with bringing the Good Neighbor to US foreign policy, but what the new policy meant for US-Latin American relations is a major point of contention. Although the fundamental principles of nonintervention and noninterference can clearly be seen in the Republican administrations of the 1920s, Roosevelt gave the policy its name and successfully provided Latin America with a performance that convinced many—but far from all—in the region the United States had truly turned over a new leaf.[42] Much of the literature dedicated to explaining the nature of the Good Neighbor policy focuses on Washington's motivations and objectives in implementing it. Interpretations of the policy have evolved much over the years but were originally quite praiseworthy in accordance with the prevailing orthodox or nationalist viewpoints. To most US academics writing in the first few decades after World War II, US hegemony in Latin America made sense due to the instability of regional political institutions, economic interests, and national security concerns.[43]

Bryce Wood is one of the foremost apologists of the Roosevelt Administration's foreign policy toward Latin America. In *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*, Wood argues that US influence in Latin American domestic affairs, and especially Central American, was "undivestible" because of the United States' size, location, and economic reach. For Wood, US power in the region during the Roosevelt Administration had mixed results but generally

[42] Mark A. Stoler, "The Roosevelt Foreign Policy: Flawed, But Superior to the Competition," in *Debating Franklin D. Roosevelt's Foreign Policies, 1933-1945*, eds. Justus D. Doenecke and Stoler (Oxford, United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), pp. 113-125. Franklin D. Roosevelt first used the phrase the "Good Neighbor" at his inaugural address in March 1933. It was not a new term. The Hoover and Coolidge Administrations used it, but Roosevelt and his Secretary of State Cordell Hull moved to make it a reality more than any prior US administration had, and made it a point to refer to their policy in the hemisphere as the Good Neighbor on a regular basis.

[43] Louis A. Perez, Jr., "Intervention, Hegemony, and Dependency: The United States in the circum-Caribbean, 1898-1980," *Pacific Historical Review* vol. 51 no. 2 (May 1982): pp. 165-194.

benefited its recipients. He writes the Good Neighbor policy was "not simply rhetoric, as were the Good Partner and other so-called policies that followed it," but rather a serious abandonment of intervention and interference and the adoption of beneficial economic agreements. He also goes a step further and asserts that the reciprocal trade agreements made a "great contribution…to the development of" US-Latin American relations.[44] Over two decades later, Wood continued to defend the policy in *The Dismantling of the Good Neighbor Policy*. In this volume, Wood examines the gradual abandonment of the policy from 1943 to the CIA backed Guatemalan coup in 1954. He lauds the policy as "unique" because it was a rare example of a "great power" voluntarily refusing to exercise its power against smaller and weaker states.[45]

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[44] Bryce Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. ix, 136, and 286-287. Wood's main thesis is that the Good Neighbor policy was the product of the combined philosophies and experience of the Coolidge, Hoover, and Roosevelt Administrations. He maintains President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull were convinced of the necessity to implement new policies after having witnessed years of failure and frustration in direct intervention strategies. Alexander DeConde has a similar argument in *Herbert Hoover's Latin American Policy* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1951). DeConde maintains that as Secretary of Commerce Hoover promoted Latin American trade and investment as early as 1921. Furthermore, he points out it was Hoover who traveled throughout the region on a ten-week foreign relations mission in late 1929 and drew down the US military presence in Nicaragua and Haiti.

[45] Wood, *The Dismantling of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 192. Wood argues in this volume that the Good Neighbor policy was gradually abandoned after 1943, and was finally scrapped when the CIA backed the 1954 Guatemalan coup. Finding other scholars so willing to defend the merits of the Good Neighbor policy is difficult. In *The United States and Latin American Wars, 1932-1942* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1966), Wood examines the diplomacy of the United States in Latin America in three Latin American conflicts: the Chaco War (1928-1938), the Leticia dispute (1932-1934), and the Marañón incident (1941). In each case, Wood argues the United States adhered to the Good Neighbor principle of noninterference and did little more than urge the belligerents to seek negotiations to settle their differences. Another author willing to praise US policy in Latin America is Robert Freeman Smith. Although focused on post-World War II history, Freeman Smith's *The Caribbean World and the United States: Mixing Rum and Coca-Cola* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994) offers a defense of overall US interaction with the region, but he is also willing to criticize certain aspects of the Good Neighbor policy. Freeman Smith believes the policy "was characterized by ambiguity and confusion" due to the competing nature of government agencies and personalities, and its haphazard evolution throughout FDR's administration (p. 19). The first major historical assessment of the Good Neighbor was published in 1950 by Edward O. Guerrant. His work *Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1950) noted failures and inconsistencies in the policy but found overwhelming reason to praise it. He writes, "The United States has never had a foreign policy toward any area that was more successful than the Good Neighbor Policy." Guerrant believes the economic and social policies Roosevelt and his administration promoted in the region were aimed at bringing "mutual benefits to the entire hemisphere." Additionally, Guerrant believes the policy was finished when it was adopted by Truman, because although the new president stated he would adhere to it his "administration abandoned the spirit if not the letter of the Good Neighbor" (p. 212).

Historians of US-Latin American relations who view the United States as a destructive imperial force have dominated the region's scholarship from the early 1960s to the present. This literature is based on the belief the United States rarely if ever acts unselfishly, and instead is founded on the premise the United States seeks wealth and power wherever it can. These detracting scholars attributed the region's economic underdevelopment, social upheaval, and frequent political turmoil to decades of US interference and manipulation. As a result this has affected historians' interpretation of the nature of the Roosevelt Administration's Good Neighbor policy, and how it was executed in Central America.[46]

The renowned revisionists William Appleman Williams and Walter LaFeber pioneered these broad accusations in their respective books *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*. In his extremely influential book Williams argues that the US's relationships with the world was based on an "Open Door" policy that sought to continually expand its markets and prosperity. Williams believes that besides this economic goal many in the United States felt justified imposing their will on their world due to their exceptionalist beliefs. When it came to Latin America Williams maintains that US foreign policy was geared toward magnifying US American exports, increasing the

[46] As a general rule US-Central American relations are usually described in the broader context of US-Latin American relations. For examples see Graham H. Stuart and James L. Tigner, *Latin America and the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975) and Gordon Connell-Smith, *The United States and Latin America: An Historical Analysis of Inter-American Relations* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974). According to Connell-Smith, the United States has promoted itself as an anti-imperial power, but the country's policies in Latin America have proven otherwise. Connell-Smith sees the United States pushing out foreign competitors from the hemisphere, being motivated by racism, and interest in dominating the domestic affairs of the weaker Latin American states. He finds the United States' support of dictatorships to be an obvious indication that it opposed reform or anything that might change the status quo in the region. According to Mark T. Berger's overview of US studies of Latin America in *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) the Roosevelt Administration first endured and later embraced dictatorships in the Caribbean Basin. Berger writes, "They brought political stability and order without the cost of political problems associated with the direct military intervention of previous decades." Furthermore, Berger believes the United States strengthened its hold of the region by replacing private bank loans with that of the US government's Export-Import Bank. In many ways the conditions associated with the Export-Import Bank's loan contracts gave the United States direct oversight of isthmian finances and building projects (p. 49).

importation of unprocessed natural resources, and the fostering of US business "while at the same time developing a regional political system based on local rulers loyal to the basic interests of the United States."[47] Similarly, LaFeber argues in *The New Empire* US foreign policy goals were guided by the belief the United States overproduced and thus needed to seek foreign markets to avoid economic stagnation. What made the American Empire "New" was that Washington tended to eschew traditional colonies in favor of trade and investment dominance. In Latin America this meant pushing foreign competitors such as Great Britain and Spain out and creating favorable balances of trade. According to LaFeber, South and Central America "appeared to be a virgin prize well located for an easy seduction."[48]

Many subsequent revisionist authors have tended to use Williams and LaFeber's work as a blueprint for explaining the US relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean. For these economically inclined historians the Good Neighbor policy was an attempt to create a more favorable climate for US business. Revisionist David Green, author of *The Containment of Latin America: A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy*, believes US policy toward Latin America was thoroughly imperial during the Roosevelt Administration. Green argues US diplomats understood their policies undermined the interests of the region's inhabitants, but ignored the negative results because their primary goal was the strengthening of US capitalism. For Green, the New Dealers in Washington knew being a "Good Neighbor" meant giving Latin America its fair "share," but that this goal was only half-heartedly pursued. Green believes the Good Neighbor policy was aimed at maintaining the region's dependency on the USA by stifling nationalism and trade with nations other than the United States. This was

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[47] William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co, 1959), p. 151; see also Williams, *The United States, Castro and Cuba* (New York, 1962).

[48] LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 186.

done by a concerted US determination to encourage the region to adopt reduced tariffs for US manufactured products, and the exclusion of third parties in trade negotiations between the United States and Latin America.[49]

Lloyd Gardner, a student of Williams, argues in *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* the presence of President Roosevelt and his officials in the White House and State Department did little to change the imperial foreign policies of the United States. Gardner believes that due to the Great Depression the United States eagerly sought export markets and conditions favorable to aiding the US economy. He admits the United States was motivated by other considerations such as national security and ideology, but maintains economics were paramount. He sees the Good Neighbor policy "as a result of policies from earlier years and traditions." As evidence for this assertion Gardner focuses on the 1934 Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, which he feels the architects of the Good Neighbor policy used for what they believed to be "the only practicable way to restore lost trade in Latin America."[50]

In *Trade and Hemisphere: The Good Neighbor Policy and Reciprocal Trade*, revisionist Dick Steward examines the economic policies of the Roosevelt Administration in Latin America. For Steward the Good Neighbor policy used the "rhetoric of idealism" but in practice was "imperialism." By examining a number of reciprocal trade agreements in detail he skillfully shows how the United States intimidated its southern neighbors into adopting trade agreements that were not to their advantage. In the process he believes the United States "retarded

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[49] David Green, *The Containment of Latin America; A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 37-50.

[50] Lloyd Gardner, *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* (Madison, Wisconsin: 1964), pp. vii and 328.

industrialization, entrenched dictators, encouraged monocultures, stifled an incipient bourgeoisie, and put the region squarely within the trade orbit of America's Open Door empire."[51]

While Steward only fleetingly deals with the Honduran Reciprocal Trade Agreement, he does assert Carías's strongman rule "facilitated business" for the United States to the point it was willing to overlook his unconstitutional *continuismo*. Steward argues Carías did not originally want such an agreement with the United States because it damaged trade with Germany and England. Honduras enjoyed particularly favorable balances of trade with these nations, and the United States' proposal lacked sufficient incentives to justify potentially cutting exports to them. Secretary of State Cordell Hull attempted to assuage Carías's reservations by claiming that with the agreement Honduras would be able to find growing markets for its products in the United States, so that it could make up for any possible lost revenue from impaired foreign trade or depressed Honduran domestic production. Steward believes Carías finally agreed to the disparaging economic arrangement on December 18, 1935, because he "used economic bait to serve political ends." In other words, Carías wanted to please the United States and coax it to look approvingly on his regime.[52]

In *Good Neighbor Diplomacy*, Irwin Gellman offers a thorough investigation of the policy he sees as completely the construction of Roosevelt and his administration. For Gellman, the policy was simply a matter of necessity because the United States could no longer afford direct intervention in Latin America due to the Great Depression. He calls the Administration's policy the "golden age of Pan-American cooperation," because he feels its architects genuinely sought to improve the country's relationship with Latin America. However, he still maintains

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[51] Dick Steward, *Trade and Hemisphere: The Good Neighbor Policy and Reciprocal Trade* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), p. viii.

[52] Steward, pp. 212-214. Unfortunately, Steward offers no traceable evidence to support his discussion of US-Honduran economic relations during the Carías regime.

that the Good Neighbor policy was a conscious effort to exert American power in the region. He believes the Reciprocal Trade Agreements promoted US interests often at the cost of Latin American economies. For Gellman, the Good Neighbor era ended when the reins of power were transferred to Truman. With prosperity returning to the United States, Gellman argues the government no longer gave Latin America the priority it enjoyed under Roosevelt.[53]

Another school of thought posits that US policy towards Latin America has been driven by national security concerns. Supporters of this view see the Good Neighbor as a strategy aimed at developing allies, keeping foreign competitors out of the region, and safeguarding raw materials imperative for war-making.[54] An example of this school can be found in the work of Leonard, whose several works on the United States' relationship with Central America stress the importance of the US government's desire for stability. In *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability*, Leonard surveys US-Central American relations from independence throughout the 1980s. He argues that over the course of this long period the United States reliably sought to establish stability in its relationship with the region. At times this meant edging out foreign competitors, the landing of troops, or the United States' acquiescence of dictatorial rule. During the first half of the twentieth century the United States assured its

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[53] Irwin F. Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy: United States Policies in Latin America, 1933-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 227. A less condemning but still negative appraisal of the Good Neighbor policy can be found in Frederick W. Marks, *Wind Over Sand: The Diplomacy of Franklin Roosevelt* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 217-250. Marks measures the success of the Good Neighbor policy by assessing how much "authentic respect" and "friendliness" it inspired in Latin America. He finds that despite massive diplomatic efforts and huge transfers of financial and military aid Latin Americans generally maintained an unenthusiastic view of the United States. He attributes this lack of success to unfavorable reciprocal trade agreements and Latin Americas' historic distrust of the United States.

[54] John Child argues in *Unequal Alliance: The Inter-American Military System, 1938-1978* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980) the United States was only able to implement the noninterventionist principle of the Good Neighbor policy because the external threats to the region were miniscule. He believes that once danger of US hegemony to the region returned in the form of the Axis the United States abandoned the policy and returning to traditional practice of interfering in the politics of its neighbors (pp. 16-17). Max Paul Friedman comes to the same conclusion in *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

strategic dominance by strengthening its economic hold of the region and preventing the encroachment of all rivals whether fascist, Marxist, or capitalist.[55]

Although Leonard only fleetingly examines Carías's rule in his various discussions on the United States' quest for stability in the region, he does make a number of interesting arguments that this study evaluates in detail. In a largely descriptive survey, *The United States and Central America 1944-1949: Perceptions of Political Dynamics*, Leonard examines five Central American republics and their relationship with the United States during an important transitional period. In this volume, Leonard focuses on US perceptions of local elites and the overthrow of dictators such as Jorge Ubico in Guatemala and Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in El Salvador. Leonard believes that in the postwar environment support for dictatorship waned, but the US desire for the containment of communism gave Central American elites opportunities to enhance their own political careers. In regards to Honduras Leonard offers little analysis, but he does review the most important political events and sums up US diplomatic opinion. Because Carías provided political stability and a favorable business climate, Leonard believes the US State Department and banana companies maintained high opinions of Carías. He asserts that due to Carías's "success" US American interests were reluctant to see him step down in 1949.[56]

In a short but definitive work entitled *The Decline of the Recognition Policy in United States-Central American Relations, 1933-1949*, Leonard skillfully explains the origins, use, and abandonment of the United States' nonrecognition policy in Central America. He believes the

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[55] Leonard, *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), pp. 1-3.

[56] Leonard, *The United States and Central America 1944-1949: Perceptions of Political Dynamics* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1984), pp. 107-126. In *Central America and United States Policies, 1820s-1980s: A Guide to Issues and References* (Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1985), Leonard again argues the primary purpose of American diplomacy toward the isthmus in the first half of the twentieth century was the promotion of stability. He maintains the United States pursued this policy because stability was both good for business and prevented foreign powers from encroaching on US hegemony.

United States gradually abandoned the practice of non-recognition because it sought better relations with Latin America, and wanted to avoid the appearance of purposefully influencing the domestic affairs of sovereign states. He examines the extralegal means the presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras used to both assume the presidency and extend their terms of office. In doing so, he argues the United States was displeased with Carías's *continuismo*, but that it refrained from withdrawing recognition and support of Honduras due to the principles of the Good Neighbor policy and the need for allies in the impending hostilities with Germany and Japan. After the war, he asserts US officials "avoided meddling in the political turmoil" of the region but "privately pressured for constitutionalism." From 1944-1947, Leonard contends the United States had a low key but definitive "anti-dictatorial stand."[57]

It is important to note Leonard describes US-Central Americans relations as dynamic, because in his opinion, they were not completely dominated by the Northern Colossus. In *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability*, he admits that the United States exercised tremendous power and was able to expunge European competitors from the region, but also at times local elites defied US efforts to control them and pursued their own interests. As an example of Central American agency, Leonard briefly describes how Carías attempted to manipulate US policy toward his country by agreeing to a particularly imbalanced reciprocal trade agreement. He writes, "Carías rationalized that a reciprocity agreement with the United States lessened the threat of its intervention in his nation's political affairs. Such a trade pact

[57] Leonard, *The Decline of the Recognition Policy in United States-Central American Relations, 1933-1949* (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, 1985), pp. 1-25. In his book *The Chains of Interdependence: U.S. Policy Toward Central America, 1945-1954* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), Michael L. Krenn corroborates Leonard's findings regarding the United States' stand on dictators in the two years just after World War II. Krenn writes that after October 1945 "Washington did not support dictatorships" meaning that "No 'favors'" would be presented to them as they had during World War II (p. 139). For another author arguing the United States was motivated by a desire to achieve stability in Central American affairs see: William Kamman, *A Search for Stability: United States Diplomacy Toward Nicaragua, 1925-1933* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 1-17 and 119-125.

otherwise offered little advantage." According to Leonard, Carías's desire to begin the practice of *continuismo* in 1935 encouraged him to consent to giving the United States "tariff reductions ranging from 33 to 75 percent" while demanding no favorable concessions in return. Additionally, by assenting to sell more goods to the United States, Carías deprived his countrymen of potential profits from countries such as France and Germany who offered more favorable terms of trade.[58]

J. Lloyd Mecham is another author arguing national security concerns guided US diplomacy in Central America. In *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, Mecham strongly defends US policy in the Americas for what he sees as its success in bringing about an inter-American system aimed at promoting peace. He believes the United States provided the leadership necessary for the establishment of security alliances during World War II and later the Organization of American States. For Mecham, the Good Neighbor policy was crucial to the development of this "Pan Americanism," because it allowed the United States to befriend its southern neighbors in both "word and action." He believes during the Roosevelt Administration the country "discovered that a policy of good neighborliness paid rich dividends in reciprocal cooperation, particularly in erecting a security barrier against overseas aggression." Mecham does not contend the Good Neighbor policy was "enunciated with the idea of winning allies against non-American aggressors," but he states this "was a happy by-product of the new policy," which was really aimed at promoting peace and security.[59]

In *The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century*, Lester Langley explains US involvement in the region, both before and after World War II, as being primarily

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[58] Leonard, *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability*, pp. xiv and 106. Leonard's account of Carías and the US-Honduran reciprocal trade agreement of 1935 is less than one page long.

[59] J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), pp. 112, 123, and 468-469.

concerned with purging foreign influence. Langley supposes the United States never had a grand plan to exploit the Caribbean but rather saw itself as presiding over a "Caribbean empire without colonies" which had "honest governments and stable economies." In regards to the Good Neighbor policy, Langley believes the Roosevelt Administration worked to "safeguard American interests" in an era of tight budgets and rising Caribbean nationalism. For Langley, Roosevelt's options were not simply intervention or nonintervention, but rather the "style and means by which the United States achieved its historic goals of Caribbean security, political guidance, and subordination to the American economy." When it came to "giving Latin Americans a share," he argues liberalized trade "actually worked against" the region's sovereignty and prosperity by making Caribbean states more dependent on the United States. As for the Caribbean dictators of the Good Neighbor era, Langley asserts the United States openly accepted them "as the best alternative to direct intervention to guarantee stability and safeguard American economic interests."[60]

Similarly, in *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, LaFeber argues Washington sought "stability" more than any other policy outcome in implementing the Good Neighbor policy. Washington wanted "stability" in the region because of its desire to see

[60] Lester D. Langley, *The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 121-133. For further work arguing the Good Neighbor policy and general US policy toward Latin America was motivated by security concerns see Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin American Policy of the United States: An Historical Interpretation* (New York, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943); Dana G. Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974); and Cole Blasier, *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976). Munro argues in *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* US foreign policy goals in the Caribbean prior to the Roosevelt Administration were driven by the desire to encourage stability because instability invited European involvement, jeopardized the Panama Canal, and discouraged the overall progress of the region. He even claims the United States' relationships with dictators during the 1930s were vindicated because of the democracy their countries later enjoyed. Blasier argues in *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America* the United States policy towards Latin America is largely based upon perceived threats to national security from world powers such as Great Britain, Germany, and later the Soviet Union. He maintains the United States generally opposed revolutionary movements and governments, because they often seized private US property and more importantly provided opportunities for foreign powers to replace US interests.

the "status quo" maintained. LaFeber writes, "As long as the regimes maintained order and protected private property, they were perfectly acceptable." According to LaFeber, democracy was an afterthought, because supporting a Central American dictator was more cost effective than an invasion and more reliable than a chaotic democratic system. In other words, in order for the Good Neighbor policy to be effective the United States needed dictators. When the Latin American dictators sustained the "status quo" they were rewarded, "the governments received from the United States much of their food supply, most of the markets needed by their one-or-two-crop economies, and nearly all their foreign loans and military supplies." LaFeber briefly analyzes the rule of Carías and his relationship with the Good Neighbor. Predictably, Carías is portrayed as yet another proxy of the United States. The kind of ruler that Washington needed in order perpetuate its dominance of the Honduran export based economy. LaFeber sees Carías as little more than a puppet of the United States, Cuyamel, and later the United Fruit Company, stating that in 1932 Carías virtually "grabbed power" with "little opposition."[61]

Beginning in the 1980s a number of cultural examinations of the US-Latin American relations began to emerge, and as a result, the Good Neighbor policy began to be understood as a cultural phenomenon. In this literature individuals' and societies' perceptions are considered alongside economic and national security concerns. The best example of an author approaching the Good Neighbor policy from a cultural perspective is George Black's *The Good Neighbor: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean*. Black uses sources such as newspapers, travel literature, fiction, advertisements, and film to show how Central America and the Caribbean have been portrayed in US American culture since the late

[61] LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions,* pp. 63-64, 83-86 and 133-134. LaFeber's charge Carías "grabbed" power with "little opposition," demonstrates the pervasiveness of misunderstanding and erroneous information surrounding Honduran history. In reality, far from "grabbing" power Carías squarely won the presidential elections of 1932, but was forced to defend his electoral victory against a Liberal party uprising. What LaFeber describes as a "little opposition" was actually a full-scale revolution.

nineteenth century. Black believes that after the closing of the Western frontier that the Caribbean Basin or "backyard" became a stage where American identity was affirmed and created anew. He believes the United States has often spoken kind words about and to Latin America but that its policy never matched its professed ideals. In accordance with his argument, Black maintains the Good Neighbor policy to have been a smoke screen for US imperialism. Like other critics he notes the tension between the United States' supposed values of democracy and freedom and support of strongmen during the Good Neighbor era and in the early Cold War. Black argues US American culture contributed to the sense that all the United States could hope to accomplish in the region was promote stability and deny it to foreign powers. By backing dictators the United States was realizing both goals simultaneously.[62]

In another cultural approach to US-Latin American relations, Lars Schoultz argues in *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* that the Good Neighbor policy did not represent a change of thinking for US policymakers. US officials continued to refer to Latin Americans as "lazy," dark, "emotional," "backward," "ignorant," and "quick-tempered" during the Good Neighbor era. New Deal diplomats were just as unlikely to believe democracy could take hold in Central America as their predecessors were. According to Schoultz, the United States' announcement that nonintervention was a pillar of US policy at the Montevideo conference of 1933 was nothing more than window dressing for promoting US interests. Schoultz maintains that during the 1930s and 1940s the United States still sought economic expansion at the cost of the Latin American states despite calling for friendship and

[62] George Black, *The Good Neighbor: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp. 59-91. Black also has an excellent discussion on the meaning of the Caribbean as the "backyard" of the United States. He writes that the "backyard" is an intimate place where one can "sunbathe nude, relax with a barbecue, let the pets run wild," but it is also a place where "garbage is dumped" and where people "play." Most importantly, the "backyard" is "a place where the owner makes his own laws" (p. xv).

understanding. The only change was that instead of directly intervening the United States now controlled the region through "puppet" dictatorships. It was not until the end of World War II that the United States "briefly" stopped supporting dictatorships, but once communism was perceived to be a threat the Good Neighbor policy of backing dictators was quickly reinstituted.[63]

In *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos*, Fredrick B. Pike asks the same question that Donald Dozer asked in 1959, "*Are We Good Neighbors*?"[64] In answering the query Pike offers neither robust praise nor condemnation for the policy. Pike writes that during the Roosevelt Administration that people in the United States were "no better than we had to be" towards Latin America, but also that they could "have been a good deal worse." According to Pike, the United States' restrained behavior was the result of Roosevelt's connection to the common man. He was a man of the people, not just for US Americans but also Latin Americans. Furthermore, Roosevelt, more than any of his presidential predecessors, knew the downsides of free market capitalism. With the trials and tribulations of the Great Depression all around them the President and the US citizenry felt empathy with Latin America and its poverty. For Pike, this US American change of heart resulted in a policy that was more progressive, "utopian," and "communitarian." Nevertheless, Pike admits that the US government

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[63] Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 253 and 316-317. Another cultural examination of the Good Neighbor can be found in Fred Fejes's *Imperialism, Media, and the Good Neighbor: New Deal Foreign Policy and United States Shortwave Broadcasting in Latin America* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1986). In this work Fejes takes on a "Marxist critique of capitalism" and attempts to show how media such as film, newspapers, and particularly radio programming were used as tools of US imperialism (p.3). In Fejes's view, "the United States found it necessary to construct mechanisms for the dissemination of a world-view which would seek to show that the 'true' interest and welfare of all the client states…were closely tied to the interests and welfare of the imperial power" (p. 76).

[64] Donald Marquand Dozer, *Are We Good Neighbors? Three Decades of Inter-American Relations, 1930-1960* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1959). Although not focused on the Good Neighbor policy, Dozer feels the policy benefited both the United States and Latin America through increased trade and by providing the amiable conditions necessary for the uniting of the hemisphere during World War II. He feels the policy began to unravel during World War II due to the United States' determination to win the war. As the United States continued to interfere in the region to achieve its wartime aims one of the essential characteristics of the policy was discarded.

intimidated Latin American leaders with the Navy and the stationing of troops in the Caribbean, and begrudgingly acknowledges the United States continued to do business with unscrupulous leaders all in the name of the Good Neighbor.[65]

In his assessment of what motivated US leaders to plan and execute the Good Neighbor policy Pike finds the policy was the result of the previously mentioned cultural and personal inputs as well as economic and security objectives. Keeping the United States in the good graces of Latin Americans helped thwart the economic designs of European and Japanese rivals, and restrained their power in the hemisphere. Pike finds "there is no possibility of separating" economic and security objectives in US foreign policy in the region. As for the policy's decline, Pike maintains that the need for Cold War allies, containing communism, and the death of Roosevelt changed the policy but did not alter the overall US goodwill toward the region. In Pike's view the Good Neighbor lived on in the spirit of mutual acceptance and cooperation. Because of the Cold War it was advantageous for the United States to strengthen and support its southern neighbors rather than abandon them.[66]

In an attempt to explain why the United States has supported dictatorships throughout its history, David F. Schmitz investigates the United States' relationships with right-wing dictatorships around the globe. Schmitz concludes the United States has befriended unsavory governments because it was motivated by racial prejudice, the longing for economic stability, and the desire for a stable world in the face of perceived international threats. According to Schmitz, the United States abandoned its dedication to the self-determination of peoples and

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[65] Fredrick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), p. xi.

[66] Pike, p. 174. Seeming to ignore tremendous evidence to the contrary, Pike writes the United States only occasionally inferred in the affairs of Latin America after Roosevelt's death and used "relatively rare coercion" (p. 303).

international democracy, and instead sought to promote economic stability through the containment of social and political unrest. Additionally, racist and paternalistic notions of the inferiority of Southern Europeans, Latin Americans, and other dark skinned peoples led many in Washington to believe that these "child-like" populaces needed the "guidance" only authoritarian regimes could provide. Schmitz's work demonstrates that US foreign policy towards authoritarian regimes remained nearly static before and after World War II. Writing on the Good Neighbor policy in Latin America Schmitz states "Dictatorships and military rule served American interest well by preserving order, controlling radical reform movements, and protecting American investments while obviating the need for U.S. intervention."[67]

While the aforementioned scholars have debated the nature and legacy of the Good Neighbor policy in other Central American and Caribbean nations, none have yet fully analyzed its effects on US-Honduran relations. Undoubtedly, the US-Honduran relationship during this period was unique, and so not considering its distinctive characteristics when evaluating the policy leaves any conclusion only partially supported. Additionally, examining how Carías and his regime confronted the policy is paramount to understanding how it was accepted and dealt with by Central American governments. Therefore, the study aims to contribute to the various debates surrounding the policy by tracing how relations between the nations developed throughout the 1920s to World War II. It also examines what drove US policy toward Honduras and evaluates the claims made by the competing interpretations.

The view from Honduras makes the United States appear less concerned about giving the Hondurans the proverbial New Dealer "fair share," and more focused on encouraging stability

[67] David F. Schmitz, *Thank God They're on Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 10-22 and 84.

for the purposes of US economic prosperity and at times national security. In Honduras, the Good Neighbor was actually an abandonment of promoting the United States' supposedly cherished ideals of democracy, justice, and freedom. Instead, New Deal diplomacy in Honduras strengthened dictatorship and overtly augmented the United States' economic dominance at the expense of the Honduran economy. In this sense, the Good Neighbor was merely a modified extension of US dollar diplomacy from previous decades, which was primarily concerned about pacification for the purposes of US business and protection of the Panama Canal Zone. Additionally, the study reveals the unraveling of the Good Neighbor, when World War II appeared on the horizon in the late 1930s. Faced with what they saw as a menacing "Fifth Column" US officials began unambiguously aiding Carías to bolster his regime, and pressuring him to cut ties with Axis countries and accept the immigration of Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis.

Between 1923 and 1941 the main consideration for the United States in its interaction with Carías, and Honduras in general, was the promotion of peace and stability in a country most US officials understood as degenerate but naturally endowed with tremendous resources. There were numerous reasons why Washington sought stability in Honduras, and these changed according to the necessities of world events. During the 1920s, peace in Honduras translated into greater protection for US American lives and property. Due to their destructive nature the seemingly endless civil wars, political crises, and possibility of communism spreading were the main causes of concern for US policymakers. This was consistent with the United States' interaction with the rest of the Caribbean Basin, and with its citizens' identity as an altruistic and modernizing people. In the throes of the Great Depression, predictability in Honduran affairs was a necessity because Washington's New Dealers were interested in alleviating the United States'

economic woes through increased trade. In this regard, US-Carías relations differed little from other Latin American countries who also signed Reciprocal Trade Agreements. As World War II drew closer, stability contributed to US national security in the form of reliable natural resources for the upcoming war effort, and more importantly by denying the Nazis a potential foothold in the Americas. When Carías threatened this stability he was an adversary, but during his presidency, when he provided it, he became an ally. The view from Honduras indicates the Good Neighbor policy was little more than a smokescreen that allowed the United States to encourage stability in Honduras while claiming aloofness.

The Good Neighbor policy's support for Carías's dictatorship was both a strength and a weakness for US policy. On one hand, it was ingenious because it allowed the United States to take a less visible role in the affairs of Honduras, and therefore guard itself against Latin American criticism and save the financial cost of sending US forces for both short and long term occupations. This allowed Washington to still reach its policy objectives of economic prosperity and national security through the promotion of stability. On the other hand, aiding Carías's rule was a major liability for the Roosevelt Administration. Dictatorship conflicted with the aforementioned traditional US values and thus caused a considerable amount of cognitive dissonance amongst US policymakers and the general public. It also put the United States under international scrutiny anytime Carías imprisoned, murdered, tortured, stole from, or ordered the aerial bombardment of his own people.

## Chapter Descriptions

Chapter 1 explores US cultural perceptions of Honduras, and argues the country's reputation in the United States as a land flush with unexploited natural resources and populated by degenerate men encouraged the US government to tolerate and sometimes support Carías's

dictatorship. Chapter 2 complicates the widely held popular belief Carías and the United States were always allies. Tracing the US-Carías relationship from February 1923 to February 1924, the chapter demonstrates Carías routinely thwarted US attempts to avoid a civil war by arranging some sort of a compromise candidate between the competing factions, and that Carías actively tried to change US foreign policy towards his country to better suit his needs. Chapter 3 investigates how Honduras's War of Revindication influenced US-Carías relations and claims the conflict taught Carías the United States lacked complete control of his country's politics, and that the United States' weakness created an opportunity for him to exploit his country's power vacuum.

Chapter 4 argues Carías possessed a remarkable willingness and ability to ignore US policy aimed at preventing him from reaching his country's presidency, and that the United States did everything in its power, short of military intervention, to block his efforts. It also examines Carías's relationship with the United Fruit Company and how the State Department reacted to their alliance. Chapter 5 illuminates the continued troubles between Washington and Carías during the presidency of Miguel Paz Barahona. During the period in question, Carías did all he could to render Paz Barahona powerless as president of Honduras, while the United States attempted to strengthen his government. Obviously at odds with one another, Carías and the United States gradually learned to operate without unnecessarily antagonizing the other. This helped prevent Carías from staging a coup against Paz Barahona and made the US appear less meddlesome in the affairs of its southerly neighbors. Chapter 6 examines the US-Carías relationship in the four years prior to Carías's presidency, and claims the United States began to distance itself from Honduran affairs in its effort to appear more neighborly. After over a decade of conflict with the State Department, Carías's tactics changed as well, and he adopted a more

conciliatory approach to the United States. This change in US and Carías's policies allowed him to grow in power and ultimately assisted him in achieving the strength necessary to institute *continuismo*.

Chapter 7 argues Carías worked diligently to show the United States he was a stabilizing force in Honduras during the first few years of his presidency, and the United States rewarded him with limited moral and military support for his success in ending his country's traditional cycle of revolutions. He also manipulated the United States by proving himself agreeable to the Reciprocal Trade Agreement of 1935, so that his rewriting of the Honduran constitution in 1936 would be overlooked by the United States. Chapter 8 maintains Carías did everything possible to convince the United States he was the best available leader in Honduras for the United States' purposes. It shows Carías was ultimately successful in influencing the United States to acquiesce to his undemocratic manipulation of his country's government, and his refusal to relinquish the employment of US pilots in his Air Force. Finally, chapter 9 argues the United States eventually fully embraced Carías's tyrannical rule in the years just before World War II because it feared the alternatives. Motivated by fear of a potential Nazi takeover of Latin America, and its need for resources and allies in its coming conflict with the Axis powers, the United States fully supported Carías's leadership and sent him an abundance of military and moral aid to assure his rule. In the process the United States also abandoned what was left of the noninterference clause of the Good Neighbor, and thus effectively ended the policy in Honduras.

# CHAPTER 1

## PARADISE WASTED: US PERCEPTIONS OF HONDURAS BEFORE CARÍAS'S PRESIDENCY

"The Honduran has a reputation for revolutions, and he sees to it that a year rarely passes without one…Any friendly advances that one makes to those in authority are as likely as not wasted, as a new government may come into office in the following week, and all the important positions will be redistributed, with brilliant partiality, to the friends and relations of the President."

-Peter Keenagh, a travel writer demonstrating the resilience of US assumptions of Honduras five years after Carías's ascension to the presidency.[1]

In the last two decades a number of scholars have examined the history of US American perspectives of Latin America, and a concrete consensus has emerged. Simply stated, cultural historians have found that for the majority of the United States' history its citizens considered their southerly neighbors as inferior in almost every respect, and this prejudice manifested itself in US foreign policy toward the region.[2] While much has been written on the importance of cultural perspectives in the broad sweep of US-Latin American history, few scholars have meaningfully examined how US perceptions of Honduras influenced the relationship between the two countries.[3] This is a significant oversight, because US Americans generally viewed

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[1] Peter Keenagh, *Mosquito Coast; An Account of a Journey Through the Jungles of Honduras* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1938), p. 23.

[2] For examples of scholars arguing for the impact of US American cultural views on US-Latin American relations see: Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998). Schoultz argues that for the last two centuries US policy toward Latin America was dominated by the "belief in Latin American inferiority" (p. xv). By analyzing hundreds of editorial cartoons depicting US-Latin American relations from the 1860s to the late 1970s, John J. Johnson found that the United States' "responses to hemispheric problems and situations are conditioned by culturally imposed qualities of character…reflected in its perceptions and evaluations of realities" (Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980], pp. 3 and 310). Fredrick B. Pike examines US American stereotypes of Latin Americans and finds that people living south of the Rio Grande were generally deemed to be "effeminate" and "primitive," and that these and other stereotypes justified the United States' exploitation of their politics and natural resources (Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* [Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1999], pp. xiii-xvii).

[3] In *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), Alison Acker briefly argues US portrayals of Honduras in the popular media have created an inferiority complex amongst Hondurans.

Honduras, with the possible exception of Haiti and Nicaragua, as the most inferior and uncivilized country in the Caribbean Basin. This chapter argues US assumptions and stereotypes of Honduras prior to the *Cariato* contributed to US foreign policy during Carías's rule. US policy towards Carías was based on then contemporaneous events, but also the preconceived notions of policymakers who formed their knowledge of Honduras through depictions through numerous popular, academic, and business sources.

Edward Said explains in *Culture and Imperialism* how imperial cultures "maintained hegemony over the peripheries," and how support is sustained for the exploitation and dominance of foreign peoples. He argues Western culture provides "codes of intellectual and moral behavior" that ignore or trump those of the non-Western world. Using the works of popular authors such as Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, and Jane Austen, Said demonstrates how national identities are shaped and maintained while those of the dominated are disregarded. Said's work shows how popular literature has been used to stress the power and superiority of Western culture. More specifically he explores how Western cultural sources have diminished the importance of the Other by overlooking their histories, perspectives, and experiences. Over many years, the repeated narrative of Western superiority and the disregard for counternarratives contributed to the notion that Westerners not only deserved to rule but also needed to rule.[4] For Said, culture and imperialism are uniquely intertwined and ultimately inseparable from one another.

Said's theoretical work on the importance of cultural sources is uniquely suited to explaining US-Honduran relations before and during Carías's reign. Although the United States

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She maintains the entire country "seems resigned to frustration and despair" because of the way they have been represented in the US media (pp. 16-25).

[4] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), pp. xiii-51.

did not colonize Honduras or rule the country through Carías as a proxy, US culture did provide narratives that allowed the United States to tolerate and at times support Carías for its own benefit. The creators of US culture addressed in this chapter contributed directly, sometimes consciously and at others unconsciously, to US policy towards Honduras. Some of the writers purposefully advanced a particular narrative of Honduras simply to reap rewards from its exploitation. Others unintentionally underwrote the mission of those who meant to profit from

Honduras by helping to create cultural perspectives on the country, which justified US political and economic hegemony. In either case, whether overtly imperial or naïvely descriptive, Said's findings support the notion these cultural sources minimized Honduran perspectives and instead stressed US designs.

Said also takes his work one step further by arguing "discourse insisting upon American specialness, altruism, and opportunity…only rarely" considers "'imperialism' as a word or ideology."[5] John Carlos Rowe builds upon this argument by demonstrating that the United States "understood its foreign policies to be functions of its commercial ambitions," and that taken as a whole the United States believed it was an anti-imperialist force that destroyed corruption and decadence and replaced them with economic innovation, democracy, and prosperity. Rowe believes this understanding of US identity allowed the country to take on imperial projects that otherwise would have caused significant cultural dissonance.[6] The US-Honduran relationship during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provides support to Said and Rowe's arguments, because during this period, a vast majority of US citizens encountered Honduras in a simultaneously positive and negative light. The articles, books, and other media they were

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[5] Said, p. 8.

[6] John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. ix-xi.

exposed to showed not only the backwardness of Honduras, but also its need for US assistance and its potential to turn a profit for those brave enough to combat its endemic difficulties. In other words, according to the information available, Honduras fulfilled and contributed to the United States' identity as a benevolent and modernizing force in the world while simultaneously satisfying its desire for economic expansion.

Historian Kevin Coleman agrees with this sentiment and argues Latin Americans during the period were seen as "savages who need 'us' (the White business class of the U.S.) to save them from themselves," and redemption given to them through the expansion of the US economy into the region. Coleman uses the work of Frederick Upham Adams' *Conquest of the Tropics: the story of the Creative Enterprises conducted by the United Fruit Company* and Charles D. Kepner Jr. and Jay H. Soothill's *The Banana Empire: A Case Study of Economic Imperialism* to argue there were two narratives to understanding US-Honduran relations during the twentieth century. Coleman believes the first to emerge was the idea of the United States as a savior to the region. He maintains this narrative was widely available for decades prior to Carías's rule, and the second narrative, that of "challenging the [first] ideology with evidence," did not emerge until the 1930s.[7] This essay focuses Coleman's widely accepted claim the United States understood itself as a modernizing force in Honduras by specifically examining why the United States felt this logic applied to the country, and it ramifications for the US-Carías relationship.

For most US Americans, Honduras was a place of vast untapped wealth, of rich mahogany jungles, endless banana fields, mines loaded with precious metals, and a country inhabited by a simple people willing to work for a few pennies a day. The problem posed to the

[7] Kevin Coleman, "Historical Narratives on the Banana Industry: Imperial Arguments in U.S.-Honduran Encounters," in *Latin American Essays*: *MACLAS* vol. xviii, edited by Christina Turner, et al. (Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies, 2005), pp. 86-105. See also: Coleman, "A Camera in the Garden of Eden," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* vol. 20 is. 1 (2011): pp. 61-94.

United States by popular, academic, and official sources was that Honduras was also a land filled with degenerate men. They were portrayed as a people unable to rule themselves, constantly fighting, and almost hopelessly lazy, ignorant, untrustworthy, and conniving, or as kind, helpless, and destitute. Lacking practically every virtue that US Americans held dear, Hondurans were generally seen as a people desperately in need of the United States' guidance and developmental support. Faced with the widely held assumptions that Honduras was flush with natural resources but cursed by debased men unable to provide their country with peace and stability, US policymakers during Carías's dictatorship were more apt to endure and at times support the dictator.

## The Garden of Eden Needs A Gardner

Three main themes emerge from depictions of Honduras's natural environment. The first is its portrayal as an intact and unadulterated paradise. In this vein the country is full of possibilities, and offers audiences the kind of idyllic lifestyles most people can only dream about. As Eden, Honduras is a prize ready to be picked and then turned into profit, but in order for it to be rewarding it must first have a guiding hand. The second theme is that of Honduras as a wilderness. In this representation Honduras is unproductive and therefore a "wasteland." Wildernesses are wild, chaotic, and dangerous, and such a place needs outside assistance if it will ever be beneficial. Wilderness is a positive feature, because it allows eager US Americans to fulfill their personal and national identities in its demolition. Thirdly, Honduras is portrayed as a bountiful garden, a place where the hand of man has broken ground and improved its natural state. This can be seen in the portrayals of the profitable and US owned banana plantations and mining operations, industries that did not exist prior to the arrival of US Americans to Honduras.

In all three cases, Honduras begs and requires the assistance of the United States to reach its full potential.[8]

**Honduras as Eden**

One of the main ideas of Honduras US Americans were presented with in North American literature was the idea that was an Eden-like paradise. Some commentators bluntly asserted Honduras was "THE GARDEN OF EDEN"; others were subtler about their enthusiasm, but regardless of their approach any student of Honduras prior to Carías's rule would have understood it to be a kind of Promised Land.[9] Most travelers found the country's natural environment extremely favorable for good and easy living. One of the first descriptions of Honduras by a US American came from Ephraim George Squier, an official representative of the US government seeking to secure a transisthmian railroad through Honduras. Squier described Honduras as a paradise filled with riches, but also as a land possessing an unspoiled, primitive, and undeveloped quality. For Squier, Honduras had virginal attributes, not unlike the Biblical Eden. In the tone of an explorer setting eyes on a distant and exotic land for the first time, Squier wrote:

> Here grow immense forests of cedar, mahogany, ceiba, India-rubber, and other large and valuable trees, thickly interspersed with palms, whose plumes rise through every opening, and fringe the bases of all the hills. The smaller streams are arched over with verdure, and completely shut out from the sun, while the large rivers gleam like silver bands in fields of unbroken emerald. But even here, where the land is lowest, spread out broad, grassy meadows, the retreats of innumerable wild-fowl, and during the dry season, when the grass on the hills become sere and withered, offering abundant support for herds of cattle.[10]

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[8] The idea of applying the "recovery narrative" to Honduras was taken from Carolyn Merchant's essay "Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 137.

[9] "IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN: A WONDERFUL COUNTRY NEGLECTED BY THE UNITED STATES," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1887, p. 10.

[10] Ephraim George Squier, *Notes on Central America; particularly the states of Honduras and San*

Squire's numerous writings on Honduras and its neighbors helped set the tone and subject matter for future authors as lands filled with incredible riches, and were sure to excite any intrepid entrepreneur eager to make his or her mark on the world.

One of the people most responsible for bringing Honduras into the hearts and minds of US citizens was William Sydney Porter, pen name O. Henry. O. Henry's popular work of fiction, *Cabbages and Kings*, was written during his time spent in self-imposed exile in Honduras. Fleeing embezzlement charges, O. Henry sought refuge from Texas lawmen in Trujillo for several months in 1896. Although his love of pseudonyms shielded Honduras from direct scorn and mockery in the book, most people familiar with the author's history knew the book of short stories was written with Honduras in mind even though it was referred to by O. Henry as "Anchuria." O. Henry's work was so culturally powerful that his original labeling of the country as a "banana republic" has remained to the present.[11]

O. Henry arrived in Honduras during a period of tremendous change and relative stability. For O. Henry, Honduras was an Earthly heaven free of life's discomfort and placed in a particularly beautiful setting. In 1896, the Honduran political parties had ceased their incessant fighting, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala restrained their armies from invading Honduras, and the rivalry of the US owned banana companies kept the area around Trujillo economically vibrant. His description of the country shows a deep appreciation for its beauty and the lifestyle it afforded. Unfortunately for O. Henry, his time in Honduras abruptly came to an

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*Salvador: their geography, topography, climate, population, resources, productions, etc., etc., and the proposed Honduras inter-oceanic railway* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1855), pp. 152-153.

[11] A large number of articles and books have been written on O. Henry and his literary works. Some of the most informative and pertinent to his time in Honduras include: Harold Bloom, *O. Henry* (Broomall, Pennsylvania: Chelsea House Publ., 1999); Hyder E. Rollins, "O. Henry," *The Sewanee Review* vol. 22 no. 2 (April 1914): pp. 213-232; and Guillermo Yuscarán, *Gringos in Honduras: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (Tegucigalpa: Nuevo Sol Publicaciones, 1995), pp. 41-54.

end when he learned that his wife was dying. Upon hearing the news he left for the United States and was shortly thereafter arrested, tried, and imprisoned for his crimes.

In describing the fictitious town of "Coralio," which most commentators agree was modeled on his time spent in the Honduran coastal town of Trujillo, O. Henry presented his readers with a quintessential description of tropical bliss. He wrote:

> Coralio reclined, in the mid-day heat, like some vacuous beauty lounging in a guarded harem. The town lay at the sea's edge on a strip of alluvial coast. It was set like a little pearl in an emerald band. Behind it, and seeming almost to topple, imminent, above it, rose the sea-following range of the Cordilleras…The waves swished along the smooth beach; the parrots screamed in the orange and ceiba-trees; the palms waved their limber fronds foolishly like an awkward chorus at the prima donna's cue to enter.[12]

After reading these lines, it is possible to see how O. Henry's Honduras could easily find itself as part of his reader's daydreams. The natural environment seems to be everything people of more temperate zones often can only hope for.

For US Americans who found themselves lucky enough to call "Coralio" home O. Henry describes their lives as something similar to nirvana. One of O. Henry's main fictitious characters, US Consul Willard Geddie, lived the easy life in Honduras. O. Henry wrote:

> He was happy and content in this land of perpetual afternoon. Those old days of life in the States seemed like an irritating dream. He hoped Ida would be as happy as he was. The climate was balmy as that of distant Avalon; the fetterless, idyllic round of enchanted days; the life among this indolent, romantic people—a life full of music, flowers, and low laughter; the influence of the imminent sea and mountains, and the many shapes of love and magic and beauty that bloomed in the white tropic nights—with all he was more than content.[13]

While O. Henry's version of Honduras may have been true for a few expatriate US Americans and Europeans, the vast majority of the inhabitants of La Ceiba, Tela, Omoa, and Trujillo found themselves toiling under the hot sun for long hours and little pay. However, O. Henry's readers

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[12] O. Henry, *Cabbages and Kings* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904), p. 11.

[13] O. Henry, pp. 11-34.

must have found the realities of the average banana worker possible to ignore due to his focus on the idyllic life of foreigners.

The news media was also responsible for portraying Honduras as an Edenic paradise. Samuel Cooper of the *New Orleans Times-Democrat* called the Honduran island of Roatan "A Lazy Man's Paradise" arguing that any plant could be grown there with only minimal effort. According to Cooper, a Honduran coconut farmer need not even harvest his crop, because the nuts simply fall from the tree when they are ripe. He also claimed, "Theft and other crimes" were "unknown" in this "paradise" where "doors" were "never locked" and only 3,000 "lazy" natives resided.[14] The *Los Angeles Times* was even less subtle in its praise for Honduras's potential running an article about Honduras entitled, "THE GARDEN OF EDEN…." The unnamed author held the country in high esteem because he felt agricultural investments could be completely recuperated within one year of the original outlay and the costs of land and taxes were next to nothing. The author was so enamored with the department of Olancho he said it was possible "Adam and Eve" may have "farmed" there.[15]

The idea of Honduras as an untouched paradise is an important part of the United States' understanding of the country. There was something purifying and regenerative about this

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[14] Samuel Cooper, "A Lazy Man's Paradise," *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, reprinted in *Current Literature* vol. 27 no. 3 (March 1900): p. 251.

[15] "THE GARDEN OF EDEN…," *Los Angeles Times*, January 28, 1888, p. 5. For other US texts portraying Honduras's natural environment in idyllic terms see: Albert Morlan, *A Hoosier in Honduras,* (Indianapolis: El Dorado, 1897), pp. 56-57 and 88-89.Richard G. Huston, *Journey in Honduras and Jottings by the Way: Inter-oceanic Railway* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co, 1875), pp. 10-13, 17, and 23; Harry Alverson Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras Being the Random Notes of an Incurable Vagabond* (New York: The Century Co., 1916), pp. 304-305; Frank Vincent, *In and Out of Central America: And Other Sketches and Studies of Travel* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1890), pp. 67-68; Frederick Palmer, *Central America and Its Problems; an Account of a Journey from the Rio Grande to Panama* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1910), p. 104; Frederick A. Mitchell-Hedges, *Land of Wonder and Fear* (New York: Duckworth, 1931), p. 175; Maria Soltera, *A Lady's Ride Across Spanish Honduras; by Maria Soltera* [Pseud.] (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & sons, 1884), pp. 1-4, 131, and 164; and Richard Harding Davis and Charles Belmont Davis, *Adventures and Letters of Richard Harding Davis* (New York: Scribner's, 1917), pp. 143 and 145-146.

portrayal of Honduras, it infused readers with a feeling of excitement their everyday lives in the United States lacked. Descriptions of the mysterious bounty of Honduras encouraged audiences to dream of its infinite possibilities, and think of it in utopian terms. It was what the United States was not, undeveloped, pure, simple, and empty. With such an idea in their minds, Honduras offered an escape to those in the United States who felt cramped by civilization's yoke.[16] To someone reading about an unoccupied "GARDEN OF EDEN," a person's future in this land of plenty must have seemed quite bright.

Although none of the works surveyed for this study called for the outright annexation of Honduras, its portrayal as a virginal oasis appealed to those who sought to benefit from it economically and to fulfill the United States' Manifest Destiny. As US Americans marched toward the Pacific Ocean, they believed it was their mission to use and improve the natural resources they found. Spreading civilization was more than a desire; it was a goal and responsibility. Just as the US West was portrayed as an undeveloped land full of barbarous heathens, Honduras was seen as an uncivilized country inhabited by people who failed to make use of the resources all around them. In other words, according to this narrative paradise was wasted on the Hondurans just as the bountiful US West was squandered on the Native Americans.[17]

## Tropical But Not Too Tropical

Historical geographers such as Stephen Frenkel and David N. Livingstone have demonstrated environmental determinism was a popular academic and laymen philosophy during

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[16] David C. Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp In Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 122-123. According to Coleman the idea Latin America was void of productive activity and essentially an empty land of possibilities was a common narrative of early twentieth century US literature (Coleman, *Historical Narratives*, pp. 86-105).

[17] For an excellent discussion of how US Americans considered Native Americans in the same category as Latin Americans see: Pike, pp. 86-112.

the first few decades of the 20th century, and that although it lost much of its appeal to academics during the 1920s its "commonsensical nature" allowed it to remain influential amongst the general public for decades. Using Panama as a case study, Frenkel argues the country provided evidence for environmental determinism due to its quintessential tropical characteristics, and that those who traveled there seemed to confirm or prove the pseudoscientific theory through the hardships they experienced while traveling there.[18] For adherents of environmental determinism Honduras would seem to be another prime example of nature's potentially depleting capacity. After all, Honduras like Panama is full of tropical plants and animals, disease, intense heat, and people that were seemingly less developed than their US counterparts. Yet unlike Panama, which had seen the deaths of tens of thousands of workers (both white and non-white) building the Panama Canal, a situation that seemed to provide evidence to support environmental determinism, Honduras never provided US Americans with much self-incrimination beyond common hardships for travelers and its general "backwardness."

Even with the pervasiveness of environmental determinism in the United States and the reputation of other nearby tropical countries as being detrimental to one's physical, mental, and moral health, Honduras by the early twentieth century was generally viewed as possessing a suitable climate for US Americans. This positive perspective of the Honduran natural environment allowed US Americans to consider Honduras as a potential residence for doing business or raising crops, and as we shall see, it also contributed to the idea that Hondurans were not taking advantage of the resources all around them. In sum, Honduras's climate was portrayed to be safe for US Americans and underutilized by the Hondurans.

[18] Stephen Frenkel, "Geography, Empire, and Environmental Determinism," *Geographical Review* vol. 82 no. 2 (April 1992): pp. 143-153; and David N. Livingstone, "The moral discourse of climate: historical considerations of race, place and virtue," *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 17 no. 4 (1991): pp. 413-434. For more on environmental determinism and perceptions of tropical environments see: Susan E. Place, *Tropical Rainforests: Latin American Nature and Society in Transition* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001).

Admittedly, in the mid to late nineteenth century a number of commentators maintained Honduras had an injurious and foreboding climate. Most of these pessimistic authors pointed out the country was filled with "impenetrable" jungles teeming with life forms that made civilization difficult if not impossible, and the tropical heat was unbearable and detrimental to one's health. However, while fear of the Honduran environment was present it was not nearly motivating enough to prevent Honduras from falling under the yoke of the US banana companies, or to stop commentators from dreaming about its potential for wealth generation.[19]

Most US Americans who found their way to Honduras commented on its terrific capacity for creating riches, and this made audiences more willing to view the Honduran climate in a positive light. Most assuredly, not all US Americans shed their views of Honduras as a tropical quagmire, but there were certainly two narratives available for them to consider. With their environmental superstitions being partially put aside due to the United States' increased role in the Caribbean, Honduras with its high mountains and cool ocean breezes for many became a "healthy" destination.

The mountains of Honduras were particularly attractive to most US Americans and allegedly gave the country more temperate qualities. Self-proclaimed authority on Honduras and US American traveler, Frederick Palmer believed it had "a splendid climate—a splendid climate!"[20] In 1884, the *New York Times* reported that Honduras was "not nearly as hot as one

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[19] For sources arguing Honduras had an unhealthy environment see: Arthur Morelet, *Travels in Central America, including accounts of some regions unexplored since the conquest* (New York: Leypoldt, Holt & Williams, 1871), p. xii; Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico,* pp. 284-287; Helen Josephine Sanborn, *A winter in Central America and Mexico* (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1886), p. 193; Francis C. Nicholas, *Around the Caribbean and Across* (Boston: H.M. Caldwell company, 1903), pp. 21-22 and 27-31; Harding Davis, *Three Gringos in Venezuela and Central America* (New York: Harper, 1896), pp. 60-61, 75-76, and 92; William Richard Harris, *Days and Nights in the Tropics* (Toronto: Morang & Co., Limited, 1905), pp. 2-4 and 154; and Soltera, p. 8.

[20] Palmer, p. 129.

would expect" and that its islands were "all delightfully cool during the Summer months."[21] Writing for *Travel* magazine in 1915, E.W. Perry even maintained the climate of the highland capital Tegucigalpa was so cool it was even less than pleasant. Perry wrote, "during the day the place warms up enough to take the frost out and make it endurable."[22]

Honduras expert Alfred K. Moe believed the mountain elevations provided Hondurans with immunity from tropical detriments. He wrote, "It is a land exceptionally free from those physiographic disadvantages that paralyze both primitive and inchoate peoples." He maintained that because of the mountains the southern regions of the country enjoyed widespread "prevailing atmospheric states that promote activity, comfort, and health."[23] Businessman and traveler to Honduras, Thomas R. Lombard worked hard to correct what he saw as an erroneous view of the Honduran climate. Seeking investors for his Central American investment company, Lombard disseminated favorable information regarding Honduras on a large scale. He argued Honduras was far from filled with humid and debilitating jungle. Instead, he maintained, "the vegetation partakes rather of the orderly character of the growths of the temperate zones than of the rank of noxious jungle barely penetrable by the rays of the sun."[24]

In her essay "Amazonia as Edenic Narrative," Candace Slater explains how for over a century commentators describing the Amazon Basin as a "wilderness" have made it seem like a

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[21] "Central American Life…," *New York Times*, June 28, 1884, p. 2.

[22] E.W. Perry, "Into Little-Known Honduras," *Travel* vol. 26 no. 2 (December 1915): pp. 25-28 and 56.

[23] Alfred K. Moe, editor, *Honduras: Geographical Sketch, Natural Resources, Laws, Economic Conditions, Actual Development, Prospects of Future Growth*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), pp. 7-5 and 201-222. See also: "HONDURAS AND ITS RESOURCES," *Scientific American* vol. 9 no. 1 (July 4, 1863): p. 7.

[24] Thomas R. Lombard, *The New Honduras: Its Situation, Resources, Opportunities and Prospects, Concisely Stated from Recent Personal Observations* (Chicago: Brentano's, 1887), pp. 7-11 and 26-31. For more sources arguing that Honduras's climate was healthy if not healthier than the United States' see: Morlan, pp. 50-52 and 62-63; and Jacob Ridgway Wright, *A Honduras Trip* (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania: Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, 1899), pp. 1-9. A more pragmatic and measured opinion of Honduras's climate during the period can be found in Ralph Hancock, *The Rainbow Republics; Central America* (New York, Coward, 1947), p. 30.

land full of adventure and possessing "a fitting stage for either contemplation or heroic action." Unlike the word "jungle," which is often "off-putting" and associated with all that is wrong with tropical zones, Slater maintains the word "wilderness" provides audiences with a sense of boundless possibilities and a chance to prove oneself. However, she also shows "jungles" can be seen positively in the sense that they reveal the unknown and possess "forbidden pleasures."[25]

While Slater sees descriptions of the Amazon's wilderness and jungle as providing the region with a positive narrative the same could be said of Honduras. Rare was the travel writer who described Honduras without mentioning its vast wilderness or jungles in positive or at least exciting terms. Many of the authors examined viewed the country's forests and more sparsely inhabited regions as both a place of hardship and a chance to prove oneself; rather than portraying Honduras's climate in a negative light these writers made it all the more appealing. Consider travel writer Arthur Morelet's description of Hernando Cortés's trek through Honduras. Morelet wrote, "he struggled among its deep morasses and almost impassable rivers, through its untracked wildernesses and over its high and desert mountains, with almost superhuman courage and endurance."[26] For Morelet, Honduras's "wildernesses" were obstacles necessary for the creation of Cortés's greatness, and thus contributed to the idea that Honduras's natural environment although different than the United States still provided US citizens with unmistakable opportunities for advancement.

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[25] Candace Slater, "Amazonia as Edenic Narrative," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature,* ed. Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1996), pp. 114-131. For more on the idea and meaning of "wildness" see Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 150-182.

[26] Morelet, p. xii. For more authors describing Honduras's wilderness and jungles see: Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, *Jungle in the Clouds* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1940), pp. 25-184; Harding Davis, *Three Gringos*, pp. 60-61; Soltera, p. 131; and Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico*, pp. 284-287.

## Ambrosia, Barbeque, and Furniture

To complete the US American understanding of Honduras as a tropical Eden its supposedly tremendous natural wealth must also be considered. US popular media portrayed Honduras as a land abounding in agricultural products. *Scientific American* reported Honduras's natural products "would perhaps pay as well, if not better" than its mines.[27] The mountainous regions were described as capable of supporting temperate crops; the coastal plain as one of the most fertile tracts in the entire world, and a proven ground for a smorgasbord of valuable tropical fruits. The "untouched" Honduran savannahs were presented as filled with lush grasses, which grew quickly under the tropical sun, and were perfect for providing year round nourishment for countless cattle. The forests were full of precious hardwoods such as mahogany, teak, and rare oaks. All of this was supposedly untouched, unnoticed, and undeveloped by the Hondurans. It was all there ready for the taking, and a significant source of US American sympathy for a stable Honduran government of whatever stripe.

Stressing the possibilities for a variety of valuable crops Lombard believed that depending on the region the land was suitable for both temperate and tropical plants. Admiringly he wrote, "Those who live in Honduras maintain that it is the garden spot of the world; while those who visit it bring back reports tinted in glowing colors." He stretched the facts with his enthusiasm for Honduras when he claimed nearly any plant can be grown there and "sugar does not require to be replanted as in other countries." Encouraging US Americans to take advantage of the Honduran bounty he claimed:

> Few countries of the world possess natural advantages of climate and soil equal to those of Honduras. Comparatively little labor is needed to produce any of the crops of the torrid or temperate zones. The harvest which rewards the industrious cultivation will yield a rich income to the agriculturalist.

[27] "HONDURAS AND ITS RESOURCES," *Scientific American* vol. 9 no. 1 (July 4, 1863): p. 7.

The agricultural assertions of Lombard, and other like him, spoke to the US American farming tradition, and encouraged those who were so inclined to stop struggling in the temperate zone and seek the Honduran land of plenty.[28]

Besides agricultural products, US popular cultural sources addressing Honduras also stressed the tremendous wealth to be gained from the country's wilderness. Up until several decades ago, much of Honduras was covered by a variety of precious hardwoods, and US Americans traveling there took notice of their presence. According to educational author Roger Ward Babson, there were many trees of great value in Honduras but no one available to harvest them and transport them to markets.[29] In his travel guide to several countries in the Caribbean Basin, Henry R. Blaney pauses from his helpful instruction to describe the enormous amounts of money to be made in the timber industry of Honduras. In 1900, Blaney estimated 3000 mahogany trees were exported from Puerto Cortés each month and was excited about the possibility this amount was but a trickle of the forest's wealth.[30]

In addition to its plant crops and valuable timber, Honduras's natural bounty also was allegedly sufficient to meet the needs of an extensive cattle industry, and make rich those wise enough to invest in it. In an encyclopedia entry for Honduras the unknown author wrote, "There

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[28] Lombard, *The New Honduras*, pp. 8-10, 14-16, and 37-38. For more examples praising Honduras's fertility see: Morlan, pp. 50-52 and 108-109; Wallace Thompson, *Rainbow Countries of Central America* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1924), pp. 66-86; "HONDURAS AND ITS RESOURCES," *Scientific American* vol. 9 no. 1 (July 4, 1863): p. 7; James M. Taylor, *On Muleback through Central America* (Knoxville, Tennessee: J.M. Taylor, 1912), p. 93; Roger Ward Babson, *A Central American Journey* (Yonkers, New York: World Book Co, 1921), pp. 153-154; and "Resources of Honduras," *Popular Science* vol. 39 no. 30 (August 1891): p. 586.

[29] Babson, p. 146.

[30] Henry R. Blaney, *The Golden Caribbean; A winter Visit to the Republics of Colombia, Costa Rica, Spanish Honduras, Belize and the Spanish Main via Boston and New Orleans* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1900), pp. 87-98.

is no country more suitably situated for raising cattle than is Honduras."[31] Moe was astonished by the potential for beef production, he wrote "In nearly every part of Honduras the land is suitable for the raising of cattle…Cattle are to be found grazing in the fertile valleys as well as on the sterile slopes of the mountain ranges."[32]

Fredrick B. Pike has written extensively on how US Americans have viewed nature and their perceived responsibility to subdue and improve upon it. He finds US citizens often consider undeveloped environments repugnant and something needing enrichment. According to Pike, people that inhabit these supposedly underutilized lands are seen as living in a "state of nature." He further develops this argument by asserting that many US Americans have a distinct feeling "conquering" and "exploiting" nature provides "uplift" for not only themselves but also those who previously inhabited the land.[33] Those US citizens who described Honduras as an Eden and possessing incredible natural wealth yearned for its development and exploitation at the hands of their fellow US Americans. However, while modern audiences may view this as an "imperial" desire, Said and Rowe argue many of those that espoused it did not. Instead, Said and Rowe

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[31] "Honduras," *Exporters' Encyclopedia* (New York: Dun and Bradstreet Publications Corp, 1904), pp. 452-454.

[32] Moe, pp. 84-90. For more popular sources praising the Honduran cattle industry see: "Honduras," *Chambers's Encyclopedia: A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge* vol. 5 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1890), p. 760; "Honduras," *The Encyclopedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature* (New York: H.G. Allen, 1888), pp. 129-132; "Live Stock in Honduras," *Tropical and Subtropical America* vol. 1 no. 1 (January 1908): p. 87; "Honduran Cattlemen to Ship Stock to United States," *The Field Illustrated* vol. 26 pt. 2 (June 1916): pp. 527-528; Edward A. Lever, *Central America; Or, The Land of the Quiches and Chontales* (New Orleans: E.A. Brandao & Co, 1885), p. 161; "Resources of Honduras," *Popular Science* vol. 39 no. 30 (August 1891): p. 586; S. S. Cornell, *Cornell's Grammar-School Geography: Forming a Part of a Systematic Series of School Geographies, Embracing an Extended Course and Adapted to Pupils of the Higher Classes in Public and Private Schools* (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1863), p. 68; *The Cultivator & Country Gentleman* vol. 53 (1888): p. 859; and New York and Honduras Company, *The New York and Honduras Company. Incorporated Under the Laws of Connecticut* (New York: Beadle & Brown, 1879), pp. 1-17; and Lombard, *The New Honduras*, p. 14. For more sources on Honduras's supposedly vast untapped natural wealth see: R. Fritzgaertner and Próspero Vidaurreta, *The Republic of Honduras and Its Natural Resources* (New Orleans: E.A. Brandao & Co, 1885); and Wright, pp. 1-9. An excellent example of a newspaper article praising the agricultural, timber, mining, and other resources of the republic can be found in: "DOWN IN HONDURAS: COMMERCIAL HOPES THAT LIE BEFORE THE LITTLE REPUBLIC," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 31, 1892, p. 33.

[33] Pike, p. 43.

believe the urge to control foreign lands was often the result of duty rather than covetousness or a desire to govern; financial gain was viewed as a happy byproduct of such munificent efforts.[34] In sum, the more US American perceived Honduras as a rich nation the more they felt obligated to assistant in its betterment.

**Bananas, Bananas, Bananas**

Special attention must be given to Honduras's renowned reputation as the "Banana Republic." The Honduran export banana industry had humble origins that belie its later importance to the country. During the nineteenth century, a handful of Italian steamships, returning from making deliveries in South America, filled their hulls with bananas purchased from small independent farmers on the North Coast of Honduras. These Italian ships then proceeded to sell their cargos in the coastal ports of the United States.[35] As the economic might of the United States grew in the second half of the nineteenth century so too did its appetite for bananas and other tropical products. By the early 1890s, regular shipping and trading schedules were established to facilitate the United States' increasing appetite for Honduran commodities. In 1892, bananas made up roughly 12% of Honduran exports, but it was not until US American capital arrived in Honduras that the nascent industry exploded to its infamous prominence.[36] Due to plantation style agriculture funded by US investments, bananas made up 42% of the country's exports in 1903. By 1913, bananas made up 66% of all Honduran exports, and by 1929 an incredible 84%.[37]

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[34] Rowe, pp. ix-xi; and Said, pp. xiii-51.

[35] Charles David Kepner, Jr., *Social Aspects of the Banana Industry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 53.

[36] James A. Morris, *Honduras: Caudillo Politics and Military Rulers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), p. 5.

[37] Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundolff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central*

As foreign capital began pouring into Honduras from US investors the culture and economics of banana growing quickly changed. Three US American owned corporations—the Vaccaro Fruit Company, the Cuyamel Fruit Company, and the United Fruit Company—came to control not only the majority of the banana market but also the North Coast and the country's politicians. Leasing thousands of acres, these companies invested in every aspect of banana production including steamship transportation, land improvements, railroads, plant cultivation, roads, electricity generation, ports, banks, staple foods, and even hospitals and schools for their employees. Unable to compete, small independent producers were quickly squeezed out of the industry. By the 1920s, the banana companies employed over twenty thousand Hondurans, most of whom made less than $2 per day.[38] To encourage further foreign investment, the Honduran government granted a steady stream of generous concessions to the banana interests. Between 1900 and 1930, fifty-seven concessions were given to the foreign owned companies. These included the right to import machinery duty free, control of ports, land grants, lower taxes, and the rights to use public infrastructure.[39]

As a result of demand and the favorable business policies of the Honduran government, the banana companies and their US investors made enormous amounts of wealth. Within a few decades of working in Honduras, the owner of the Cuyamel Fruit Company, Samuel Zemurray, was able to amass a fortune of over $32 million largely based on his profits made in Honduras. In 1920 alone, the United Fruit Company made over $44.6 million in profits, a large amount of

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*America* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1994), p. 9.

[38] Kepner, pp. 126-127.

[39] Darío A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 6-7.

which can be accredited to its Honduran operations.[40] With such great fortunes to be made it is unsurprising that the US government started expanding its role in Honduras and US citizens would begin to take notice of it.

By the 1920s, if US Americans knew anything about Honduras it was probably that it was where their bananas came from. For decades, the country was repeatedly portrayed as a land where bananas grew and fortunes were made. Even as early as the 1880s, the news media reported banana plantations thrived on the country's North Coast, and that even the smallest investment would quickly yield exorbitant profits.[41] By the 1940s, Honduras's association with bananas was taken for granted. Anticipating its readers assumptions of there being bananas in Honduras, one 1940 headline reads, "Yes, They Have Some Bananas—by the Boatload."[42]

Even in the late nineteenth century, US observers could tell the country was going the way of the banana. In 1891, Baltimore's *Sun* reported that US citizens were quickly moving to Honduras and making the land fertile with tropical fruits using their advanced agricultural knowledge. They were supposedly bringing innovations and practices previously unseen to Honduran agriculture, and thus making it immensely profitable.[43] By 1904, the same newspaper declared there were "Banana King[s]" being made on the North Coast. Documenting the success of one "banana king," Howard S. Reed, the periodical stated that in Honduras "Thirty-three

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[40] Acker, p. 65.

[41] "IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN: A WONDERFUL COUNTRY NEGLECTED BY THE UNITED STATES," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1887, p. 10.

[42] Frederic Babcock, "THE TRIBUNE TRAVELERS' GUIDE: Yes They Have Some Bananas—by the Boatload," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 23, 1940, p. G4.

[43] "AGRICULTURE IN HONDURAS: Land $5 an Acre, Corn $1 a Bushel, Dried Bananas 20 Cents," *The Sun*, June 15, 1891, p. 1.

pounds of wheat and ninety-eight pounds of potatoes require the same space for growth that will produce 4,000 pounds of bananas" in Honduras.[44]

In the first half of the twentieth century, hardly a newspaper article addressing Honduras failed to reference bananas in some fashion. In 1901, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article entitled, "Big Honduras Bananas," and stated in Honduras bananas are "grown almost everywhere." Surveying some of the more impressive sizes and numbers of Honduran banana plants the article claimed some of the country's banana bunches grew to be over 100 pounds and could have as many as 242 bananas on a single tree.[45]

Twentieth century travelers to Honduras often played the imperial tourist and visited US banana company operations on the North Coast. What they found in the banana fields and the thoroughly Americanized banana towns impressed them. According to these traveler writers, Honduras's fertility and climate could indeed support US Americans and provide huge profits to those enterprising enough to exploit it. In *Blue Blaze*… Jane Harvey Houlson, an English adventure seeker and secretary of explorer and writer Frederick A. Mitchell-Hedges, described the banana towns and US banana operations of the country's North Coast and Bay Islands. Her extremely poor opinion of the Hondurans as "bloodthirsty," "lazy," "cutthroat," and "ignorant" leaves no doubt of her belief that any progress the country made was due to the prevalence and robust nature of the banana plantations. According to Houlson, bananas fueled the Honduran economy and blessed it with its only hope of achieving prosperity for its "savage" people.[46]

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[44] "IS NOW A BANANA KING," *The Sun*, May 9, 1904, p. 14.

[45] "Big Honduras Bananas," *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 1901, p. A9.

[46] Jane Harvey Houlson, *Blue Blaze; Danger and Delight in Strange Islands of Honduras* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1934), pp. 16, 20, 30-31, 54,65-100, and 254. See also Lewis R. Freeman, *Afloat and Aflight in the Caribbean* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1932), pp. 27-65.

Although a fictitious account of "Anchuria," O. Henry's *Cabbages and Kings* also portrays the banana as a major source of affluence for Honduras. In this book, bananas define the essence of Anchurian politics and are the sole reason why US citizens call it their home (if only temporarily). Banana profits corrupt Anchurian politicians to the point where they are completely controlled by their US banana company sponsors. Fighting over the right to grant concessions and tax the fruit's exportation, aspiring Anchurian politicians squabble amongst one another in a humorous and immature fashion. Bananas dot the book's landscape, and shade its characters from the warm tropical sun. The golden fruit is the impetus behind almost all international trade and contact with the rest of the world. In short, Honduras's association with Anchuria made it appear to any reader of *Cabbages and Kings* they should think of the country as the original "Banana Republic."[47]

For those US Americans who believed the United States possessed uniquely enlightened characteristics and capacities for development, the Honduran banana boom proved their perceptions and strengthened their identities as agents of prosperity. For US observers, the lack of Honduran contributions to the development of their country's banana industry showed the superiority of Yankee ingenuity and culture, and the inability of Hondurans to improve their situation. Furthermore, enormous banana profits demonstrated the necessity and potential inherent in providing US businesses in Honduras with a favorable business climate. The success of the Honduran banana strengthened the US American perception that Honduras was an agriculturalist's dream, and reinforced the idea the country needed special guidance. Because Hondurans were seen as incapable of providing their country with stability or the economic

[47] O. Henry, p. 132.

development many in the US thought they needed, people in the United States were more likely to welcome Carías's stabilizing presence.

**"The New El Dorado"**[48]

Honduras also developed a reputation as a miner's paradise. For many it was so promising it was considered on par with the legendary "El Dorado." Already attaining the status of an agricultural dreamland, it was only fitting after the Californian gold rush of the 1840s and 1850s the mountainous and less developed Honduras would receive the attention of US citizens consumed with gold fever. With Manifest Destiny sweeping the United States the weak and politically immature Honduras appeared an easy prize even if the US marines left the country unmolested. Honduras embraced its reputation as a land brimming with precious metals and encouraged their exploitation, a prospect US Americans were more than happy to accomplish.

Hampered by instability, rugged mountain ranges, the absence of navigable rivers, and an intense localism, Honduras partook in little international trade in the nineteenth century. Unlike its neighbors who enjoyed the benefits of an impressive coffee export industry, Honduras did not experience a coffee boom until the *Cariato*. It was only in the 1880s that the country made a concerted effort to engage the rest of the world and develop its economy. Under the patronage of Presidents Marco Aurelio Soto and Luis Bográn, Honduras introduced much needed economic reform with support being given to foreign investment and public lands opened up for private development. Driven by liberal economic ideals, Soto and his government modernized the economy by writing a new constitution, which regulated commerce, tax collection, and limited the power of the Catholic Church.[49]

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[48] Joseph B. Daniel, *The New El Dorado; A Short Sketch of Honduras, C.A. Its People, Climate, Natural Resources, and Vast Mineral Wealth* (Philadelphia: Dunlap and Clark, 1888).

[49] Morris, pp. 2-3. A short but informative essay on the Liberal attempt to modernize Honduras can be

In attempting to modernize its society the Honduran government developed policies that pursued development through export led growth. Under Spanish colonial rule Honduras benefitted from a prosperous precious metal mining industry, but after gaining independence Spanish technology, capital, and mining experience were in short supply, and the industry collapsed. In the early 1880s, President Soto envisioned a revitalized mining industry that would catapult the country into a new era of progress and prosperity. Giving foreign miners generous business and tax concessions, Honduras attracted hundreds of US American miners eager to turn a profit in the country's rugged mountains. Enough gold and silver poured out of the country's mines that mining quickly became the largest sector of the Honduran economy. Honduran speculators sold hundreds of mining properties to foreign investors who quickly formed over one hundred different mining companies. Failing to turn a profit most of these foreign owned companies closed shop within a few months or years.[50] Although the Liberals failed to provide the lasting change they so desperately desired, they provided the catalyst for the first major US-Honduran interaction.

From the 1850s and throughout the *Cariato*, official US government and popular texts portrayed Honduras as a land rich in precious metals and other valuable mining products. Honduras was often synonymous with "wealth," and seen as a profitable destination for those brave enough to explore the country's mountainous terrain. In 1857, the US explorer and author

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found in Antonio Murga Frassinetti's "The Liberal Reform," *Honduras: Portrait of a Captive Nation*, eds. Nancy Peckenham and Annie Street (New York: Praeger, 1985), pp. 29-33.

[50] An excellent discussion of the Honduran mining renaissance of the late nineteenth century can be found in Kenneth V. Finney's, *In Quest of El Dorado: Precious Metal Mining and the Modernization of Honduras, 1880-1900* (New York: Garland Pub, 1987). Finney argues the mining boom negatively impacted Honduran politics. Finney believes in their efforts to support their own development Honduran leaders gave every possible concession to foreign investors. Mining companies began to feel entitled to tax free status and special attention by local authorities. Finney asserts a culture of Honduran subordination to foreign interests developed during this period. See also: Finney, "Our Man in Honduras: Washington S. Valentine," in *Dependency Unbends: Case Studies in Inter-American Relations* no. 17 (West Georgia College, 1978), pp. 13-20.

William V. Wells was one of the first travel authors to note the gold wealth of the country. He maintained with the correct machinery a substantial amount of gold could be extracted from the streams of Olancho. According to Wells, because the locals lacked the knowledge of how to build complex machines and were too poor to purchase the requisite elements of production, they were unable to find gold in the quantities that a US citizen could. Nonetheless, washerwomen panned for gold along the riverbanks and were well rewarded for their efforts.[51]

Even during the 1920s and Carías's reign gold was still a major fixture of news reporting of Honduras. "Chance" discoveries of "diamond, gold, and silver" were reported taking place on the island of Utila in 1927.[52] In 1930, the *New York Times* related the story of a Honduran merchant paying his bill to a US company in gold dust, and compared the exchange to that of the "Days of '49" giving the impression in Honduras the gold rush was still alive and well.[53] When gold and silver prices increased in the mid-1930s, Honduran gold mines were again in the US popular presses as an excellent investment. The increased use of airplanes to reach remote mining camps was also reportedly increasing Honduran precious metal profits.[54] Travel writer Morley Roberts reported in *The Living Age* magazine "the country should have an astounding future before it" because of its soil's fertility and the fact its "mountains are full of minerals, of

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[51] William V. Wells, *Explorations and Adventures in Honduras: Comprising Sketches of Travel in the Gold Regions of Olancho, and a Review of the History and General Resources of Central America; with Maps and Numerous Illustrations* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1857), pp. 280-290. Adding to the popularity of Honduras a number of informative reviews were published of Wells's book, the best of which are "Honduras: Explorations and Adventures in Honduras…," *New York Daily Times*, August 1, 1857, p. 2; and "Explorations and Adventures in Honduras…," *National Era* vol. 11 no. 549 (July 9, 1857): p. 110.

[52] "CHANCE DISCOVERY OF RICH MINE: DIAMOND, GOLD, AND SILVER DEPOSITS ARE ACCIDENTLY REVEALED," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1927, p. M5. The tiny island of Utila is one of the most unlikely locations for such precious mining products due to its geological makeup of volcanic rock, dead coral, and mangrove swamps. The article serves as a prime example of the kind of hysteria surrounding Honduras's potential mining wealth and the unreliability of reports of the country.

[53] "Gold Dust Sent by Merchant in Honduras to Pay Bill Here," *New York Times*, May 23, 1930, p. 44.

[54] "REVIVAL DESCRIBED IN HONDURAS MINING…," *New York Times*, November 6, 1935, p. 23.

gold, silver, copper," and several other precious commodities.[55] The 1909 investment pamphlet, *The New Eldorado* claimed Honduran gold deposits alone were supposedly "nearly as large as the present Gold holdings of India, Japan, Canada, and Brazil combined."[56]

The most popular topic of US news articles relating to Honduras's gold from the period was the immensely profitably of the New York & Honduras Rosario Mining Company. During the 1920s and 1930s, the *Wall Street Journal* regularly reported on Rosario's incredible profits and precious metal findings.[57] While almost all other US owned mines failed to generate

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[55] Morely Roberts, "Musings in Honduras," *The Living Age* vol. 321 no. 4167 (May 17, 1924): p. 946.

[56] L.S. Scott, *Honduras: The New Eldorado* (New Orleans: J.B. Hauber, 1909), pp. 3-24. Professional mining magazines also paid attention to the Honduran gold rush of the 1880s. In the mining journal *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, mining expert Thomas H. Legget attempted to approach Honduran precious metal production with a measure of scientific objectivity but his enthusiasm over the size, quality, and profits of the Rosario gold vein is hard to miss ("Notes on the Rosario Mine at San Juancito, Honduras, C.A.," *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers* vol. 17 [May 1888 to February 1889]: pp. 432-449). In the article, "Mining in Honduras," W.A. Thacher wrote, "Without doubt, there is more mineral wealth in Honduras than in any other country of the same size in the world" ("Mining in Honduras," *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers* vol. 20 [June 1891 to October 1891]: pp. 394-409). For more on Honduras's wealth see: Lever, pp. 115 and 128-173; Lombard, *The Yuscarán Mining Company of New York* (New York: P.F. McBreen, 1883), pp. 1-18; Lombard, *The New Honduras*, p. 11; Daniel, pp. 1-15; Cecil Charles, *Honduras: the Land of Great Depths* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & co, 1890), pp. 53-90; "Resources of Honduras," *Popular Science* vol. 39 no. 30 (August 1891): p. 586; "DOWN IN HONDURAS: COMMERCIAL HOPES THAT LIE BEFORE THE LITTLE REPUBLIC," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 31, 1892, p. 33; "Resources of Honduras," *Popular Science* vol. 39 no. 30 (August 1891): p. 586; C. Reginald Enock, *The Republics of Central and South America, Their Resources, Industries, Sociology and Future* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1922), pp. 456-458; Agnes Rothery and Kurt Wiese, *Central American Roundabout* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1944), pp. 85-99; "HONDURAS AND ITS RESOURCES," *Scientific American* vol. 9 no. 1 (July 4, 1863): p. 7; "The Future of Honduras: And Its Present Primitive Condition," *New York Times*, March 24, 1889, p. 14; George Fitch, "Honduras," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 31, 1914, p. 6; "Interesting from Honduras," *New York Daily Times*, December 17, 1856, p. 2; "Olancho, the Lazy Town...," *New York Times*, April 29, 1889, p. 5; "GOING TO HONDURAS: THE LOUISIANA LOTTERY COMPANY BUYS A VALUABLE CONCESSION," *New York Times*, January 18, 1893, p. 1; "Honduras' Silver Mines," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 21, 1890, p. 8; "'Honduras: The Land of Great Depths,'" *The Critic: a Weekly Review of the Literature and the Arts* vol. 15 no. 380 (April 11, 1891): p. 192; "Mining in Honduras…," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1885, p. 3; A.J. Miller, "IN OLANCHO: THE GREAT GOLD REGION OF HONDURAS," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1889, p. 9; "A Gold Find in Honduras…," *New York Times*, January 27, 1886, p. 3; and J.N. Ditmars, "Trials and Adventures of a Gold Hunter in Honduras," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* vol. 71 no. 3 (March 1918): p. 231.

[57] For examples of the New York & Rosario Mining Company's coverage in the US news media from the 1920s through the 1940s see: "New York & Honduras Rosario," *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 1923, p. 5; "New York & Honduras Rosario," *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 1924, p. 15; "PRECIOUS METAL RECOVEREIS $1,477,710…," *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 1930, p. 19; "N.Y. & HONDURAS OUTPUT AT HIGH: 1933 Production of Gold and Silver Set Record Figure-Reserves Increased," *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 1934, p. 2; "N.Y. & Honduras Nets $887,004 in 1937," *Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 1938, p. 3; and "N.Y. & Honduras Mining," *Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 1943, p. 13.

significant earnings for more than a few years, the Rosario mine made up the difference. For decades, the mining company produced millions of dollars annually. The reliability of the mine's revenues and its need to operate under favorable business and political conditions would have provided the United States with yet another reason to value the stability and predictability that Carías offered. Although Honduras's gold holdings turned out to be grossly exaggerated, the high exposure and lucrative operations of the Rosario mine helped to perpetuate Honduras's reputation as a potentially rich nation and a place that needed special supervision to help it realize its full potential.

Besides gold, Honduras was also portrayed as a land flush with a plethora of valuable minerals, metals, and stones. In an extensive summary of Honduran natural resources, Moe also reinforced the idea of immense mineral wealth writing, "The whole area of the Republic of Honduras, except that of the alluvial districts, may be said to contain mineral deposits of various natures."[58] The *Rotarian* magazine published an article entitled, "Honduras-Rich in Resources," which described how Honduras and the United States both benefitted from the exploitation of Honduras's natural wealth. Besides the usual description of precious metals, the magazine included the assertion "rich coal, iron, copper, zinc, and lead" were also found in abundance.[59] In a similarly titled article "RICH IN RESOURCES: A Field for Enterprise Presented in the Little Republic of Honduras," the Baltimore *Sun* reported mineral mines were "in plenty" and that the country was "vastly rich in mineral and vegetable products" but the "native population" was "too indolent to develop" it.[60]

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[58] Moe, p. 99.

[59] "Honduras-Rich in Resources," *The Rotarian* vol. 62 no. 6 (June 1943): p. 4.

[60] "RICH IN RESOURCES: A Field for Enterprise Presented in the Little Republic of Honduras," *The Sun*, April 21, 1897, p. 10. For more sources focusing on Honduras's mining wealth see: "Honduras Manganese Deposits," *Wall Street Journal*, July 25, 1918, p. 6; "Extensive Asphalt Beds in Honduras," *Popular Mechanics* vol.

## The Unflattering Narrative

Aside from politically focused literature on Honduras, almost all sources of information about the country, both before and during Carías's dictatorship, portrayed it as fabulously rich. In regards to US-Honduran relations during the Carías administration, Honduras's perceived wealth made the United States much more tolerant and at times more likely to support the undemocratic ruler. Honduras may have had the flattering reputation of being the richest nation of its size in the entire world, but it also was considered one of the most impossible to govern. This dichotomous understanding of Honduras helped lead those in Washington to see Carías as a reasonable alternative to its seemingly ubiquitous revolutions, coups, violence, and otherwise poor business environment.

## Land of Adventure

The possibilities for adventure and valuable discoveries in Honduras went beyond the natural world and mysterious ruins buried in its jungles. According to a number of magazine articles, the Honduran coasts and rivers were filled with pirates who preyed on white explorers looking for its many treasures. Those white people brave enough to seek out the "numerous Indian and Spanish treasures" faced "impassable" jungles, "convicts," and untrustworthy and murderous Indians.[61] Even the popular traveler writer and explorer Mitchell-Hedges considered it one of the most "fascinating" and "hair-raising" places he had ever been. His secretary Jane

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25 no. 2 (February 1916): p. 22; "Honduras Manganese Deposits," *Wall Street Journal*, July 25, 1918, p. 6; Taylor, p. 93; von Hagen, p. 25; J. Francis LeBaron, *Spanish Honduras, Its Rivers, Lagoons, Savannas, Mountains, Minerals, Forests, Fish, Game, Agricultural Products, Fruits, Transportation, and Native* (New York: W.R. Gillespie, 1906), pp. 98-106; Babson, pp. 153-154; and Franck, *Mexico and Central America: A Geographical Reader* (Dansville, New York: F.A. Owen Publishing Company, 1927), pp. 200-208.

[61] William La Varre, "Lost City of the Rain God," *Boys' Life* vol. 30 no. 5 (May 1940): pp. 10-11 and 34-38; and Harold T. Wilkins, "Adventures of Treasure Hunters," *Popular Mechanics* vol. 53 no. 4 (April 1930): pp. 546-551.

Harvey Houlson wrote the winds around Honduras were "breathing of adventure."[62] While these themes fail to support the idea of Honduras as an Eden, they still make it an appealing and romantic destination for those eager for adventure, the possibility of quick wealth, and the opportunity to prove their abilities in the face of adversity.

Contributing to the idea of Honduras as a land of adventure was the mystery surrounding the country. US travelers also found the seemingly impossible and the mysterious abounding there as well. It seems in this "Eden" anything could happen and a person should always be prepared to be astonished. Some understood parts of the country as "terra incognita," and "as completely unknown as the interior of Africa."[63] As late as 1931, *Popular Science* was publishing articles on exotic flora and fauna being discovered in the Honduran jungles. One such article entitled, "Honduras Moth Nine Inches Across Wings" explained how a "rare" moth of "great size" and unheard of proportions was found by a scientific expedition.[64] For photographer and scientist Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, Honduras was also the best place to photograph and capture the holy grail of ornithologists, the quetzal. It was reportedly so blessed with the birds that dozens of quetzals could be found on a single tree![65]

Another major source of the mystery associated with Honduras were the Mayan ruins of Copan. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a significant amount of debate surrounding the ruins. Some thought the ruins to be the last remains of an extinct civilization as advanced as the ancient Chinese. Other commentators considered the builders of

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[62] Houlson, pp. 14 and 29.

[63] "TOUCHING THAT 'TERRA INCOGNITA.,'" *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1889, p. 4.

[64] "Honduras Moth Nine Inches Across Wings," *Popular Science* vol. 118 no. 4 (April 1931): p. 47. See also: "Resources of Honduras," *Popular Science* vol. 39 no. 30 (August 1891): p. 586.

[65] Von Hagen, pp. ix-5. See also Nicholas, p. 10.

Copan to be "scarcely superior to that of the wild tribes." Unable to decipher the Mayan petroglyphs, North American explorers and travelers marveled at the source of the Mayan sophistication and the reason for their demise. Scholar of antiquities, Stephen D. Peet, describes the ruins as "strange," "grotesque," and largely unexplainable since their "barbaric magnificence" was "perfectly surprising when we think of the distance of these cities from any known civilization." Peet alludes to the fame, fortune, and quests still available to would be adventurers when he states that there were still other ruined cities to be discovered in Honduras.[66] Journalist John S. Newberry further stoked the fire when he argued Copan was just the tip of the iceberg, "In the almost impenetrable forests of Honduras…there still remain more extensive and interesting ruins than any yet brought to light."[67]

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[66] Stephen D. Peet, *Ancient Monuments and Ruined Cities; or, The Beginnings of Architecture* (Chicago: Office American Antiquarian, 1904), pp. 419-450. Another article on the ruins of Honduras by Peet can be found in "Ruined Cities in Honduras," *The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal* vol. 25 no. 5 (September/October 1903): pp. 287-302.

[67] John S. Newberry, "The Ancient Civilizations of America," *Popular Science* vol. 41 no. 13 (June 1892): pp. 187-200. For more on Mayan ruins and their potential for adventure in US literature see: Gregory Mason, "EVEN THE MAYAS LOVED GOLD," *Los Angeles Times*, September 15, 1935, p. G9; and "Rains in Honduras Bare Objects in Ancient Caves," *New York Times*, May 22, 1936, p. 11. Honduras's reputation as an adventurous and exciting destination inspired numerous US citizens to give up their lives in the United States and venture to Honduras in search of fame, fortune, and excitement. For examples of those US citizens who did so see: "LED BY 'WANDER LUST,'" *Washington Post*, December 1, 1912, p. 10; "Gone to Honduras," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 8, 1885, p. 2; and "Mining in Honduras…," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1885, p. 3; "IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN: A WONDERFUL COUNTRY NEGLECTED BY THE UNITED STATES," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1887, p. 10; "HONDURAN JUNGLES YIELD INDIAN DATA: Explorer, Back After 5-Month Trip…," *New York Times*, August 2, 1940, p. 17; and "Chiriqui Images," *Maine Farmer* vol. 33 no. 21 (May 4, 1865): p. 2. Besides authentic tales of excitement, danger, and treasure hunting for US citizens in Honduras, there were also a significant number of fictional articles and books that added to the country's mystique as a haven for adventure. It was not uncommon for magazines and newspapers to run short fictitious stories that took place there. For fictional examples see: John R. Williams, "The Brothers of the Coast: OR, THE BUCCANEERS OF THE ANTILLES. A WILD STORY OF THE TROPICS…," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing – Room Companion* vol. 13 no. 7 (August 15, 1857): p. 98; La Varre, pp. 10-11 and 34-38; Wilkins, pp. 546-551; Frank Gee Patchin, *The Battleship Boys in the Tropics; Or, Upholding the American Flag in a Honduras Revolution* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1912), pp. 99, 164-170, and 176-181; Victor Appleton, *Tom Swift in the Land of Wonders: Or, The Underground Search for the Idol of Gold* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1917), pp. 60-146. For authentic and fictional sources of Honduran fauna and flora creating adventurous situations for US citizens see: Appleton, pp. 60-146; Dr. J. Hobart Egbert, "The Sportsman Tourist: Notes from Central America…," *Forest and Stream* vol. 60 no. 6 (February 7, 1903): p. 102; and Archer [pseudonym], "A Hog-Hunt in Honduras," *Ballou's Monthly Magazine* vol. 49 no. 5 (May 1879), p. 472.

A number of US celebrities and folk heroes found fame and fortune in Honduras. These larger than life figures contributed to the idea that it was a land dripping with adventure and possibilities for young men to live as their childhood heroes had. The exploits of William Walker, Richard Harding Davis, Lee Christmas, Guy "Machine Gun" Maloney, and O. Henry were widely available in popular media and sources of inspiration for aspiring travelers.

Besides the filibusterer William Walker, Lee Christmas was one of the most famous and influential US Americans to spend a significant amount of time in Honduras. During his lifetime Christmas was a larger than life celebrity and the archetypal "gringo" in Honduras. An ostentatious mercenary who became directly involved in Honduran politics from 1897-1914, Christmas thrived in the turbulent political environment flush with newly supplied banana wealth. Working as a railroad engineer in Puerto Cortés in the spring of 1897, Christmas was by chance swept up in a revolutionary battle and found himself shooting at government troops after having been handed a rifle by rebel forces.[68]

After defeating the government troops in a manner that made him famous in military circles throughout Honduras, Christmas became a living legend. Killing those sent to assassinate him, Christmas developed a serious reputation for violence and was even rumored to have carried out assassinations in Guatemala for paying Honduran politicians. Eventually being named the chief of the Honduran National Police, Christmas became one of the most powerful members of Tegucigalpan society. A womanizer and leader of Honduran police, he continued to climb the political ladder until he was made the Minister of War. Although Christmas

[68] Hermann B. Deutsch, *The Incredible Yanqui; The Career of Lee Christmas* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1931), pp. 3-26.

accumulated a long list of exploits probably his most famous were the two revolts he led in the employment of banana baron Samuel Zemurray.[69]

Christmas's adventures were closely scrutinized and widely appreciated in the US media. During his lifetime hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles circulated his exploits in Honduras, and kept the US public updated of his fortunes. He became a kind of folk hero, representing the kind of manly virtues the ideal US American man was supposed to possess. He was a self-made man. When faced with adversity he made the most of his situation through hard work and sheer grit. Using his talents and US ingenuity he quickly rose to the highest ranks of Honduran society. In many ways he became the personification of US power in the Caribbean, but especially in Honduras. The US media often portrayed Christmas as singlehandedly responsible for manipulating the Honduran political scene. His celebrity popularized the idea Honduras was an adventurous destination where competent white males could change the course of history and make a name for themselves in the process.

From the 1910s through the 1930s, "Lee Christmas" was synonymous with the word "adventure" in the popular press. He was glamorized in the books of popular novelist and travel writer Richard Harding Davis. With great reverence, Davis portrayed him as a man capable of toppling governments with only minimal effort and the smallest of whims.[70] It was not uncommon for newspapers to run articles with titles that stressed his adventurism. Some of the titles that circulated in popular newspapers read, "LEE CHRISTMAS, ADVENTURER," "Lee

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[69] Deutsch, pp. 25-190; and Yuscarán, pp. 69-86. For context on what the banana business and Honduran politics were like during Christmas's lifetime see: Thomas L. Karnes, *Tropical Enterprise: Standard Fruit and Steamship Company* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1978).

[70] There are a number of works by Harding Davis that either deal directly with Christmas and Honduras or deal with the subjects circuitously. Some of the best examples are: *Real Soldiers of Fortune* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912); *Soldiers of Fortune* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916); and *Stories for Boys* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916).

Christmas, Adventurer, Dies in New Orleans," and "NO MORE REVOLUTIONS FOR GEN. CHRISTMAS: Veteran Adventurer, Recovering From Fever…"[71] His exploits were renowned and well respected. In 1911, the *New York Times* called Christmas "the most spectacular figure in Central America to-day" and "A Dumas Hero in Real Life."[72] Setting sail from US ports laden with war making material, clandestine meetings with dignitaries, tales of courage and daring in battle, a typical US American wielding power over "native" peoples, and his story from rags-to-riches made his undertakings seem too good to be true.[73] Even his most complete biography published in 1931 is entitled, *The Incredible Yanqui: The Career of Lee Christmas*.[74] While it is appropriate to conclude Christmas experienced enough excitement to last several lifetimes, the fact that most of his interesting achievements took place in Honduras made it a real land of adventure in the hearts and minds of those that appreciated him.

Christmas's fame in the United States helped make Honduras a place of endless possibilities for adventure and excitement. His example served as proof that there were still places in the world where a man could win fame and fortune with enough courage, intelligence, and a bit of luck, but he also contributed to the notion that Honduras was an uncivilized, violent,

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[71] *The Sun*, January 25, 1911, p. 2; *The Sun*, January 22, 1924; and *New York Times*, July 25, 1923, p. 36. See also: "All Soldiers of Misfortune: Central and South American Countries Taking the Measure of Adventure Seekers," *Washington Post*, August 28, 1910, p. M1.

[72] "Gen. Lee Christmas, A Dumas hero in Real Life…," *New York Times*, January 15, 1911, p. SM5.

[73] These tales were all readily available in the US popular press. For examples see: "Financing Rebellions," *New York Times*, January 28, 1911, p. 10; "Off to Lead Rebels," *Washington Post*, December 27, 1910, p. 4; "Christmas at War Again," *New York Times*, December 30, 1910, p. 10; "Soldier of Fortune," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 27, 1924, p. B2; "Human Torpedo Boat Sinks…" *Atlanta Constitution*, April 20, 1924, p. 14; "In War For What's In It…" *The Sun*, August 14, 1910, p. 12; and "Was Lese Majeste: Hornet Operated Contrary to Wishes of J.P. Morgan," *Times Democrat* [New Orleans], January 25, 1911, available in Deutsch, pp. 229-230.

[74] Deutsch, *The Incredible Yanqui*…. For an excellent short biography of Christmas see: Carl L. Cannon, "Lee Christmas, Soldier of Fortune: A First Biography of the Picturesque Adventurer Whose Exploits Made History in the Central American Republics," *New York Times*, March 15, 1931, p. 63. See also: Herman Archer, "Famous Soldiers of Fortune: Lee Christmas…," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 31, 1927, pp. N1 and 4; and Lee Christmas Emerges," *New York Times*, November 23, 1912, p. 14.

and unstable land. For adventure to be a possibility a certain level of unpredictability, danger, and bravery is implied. Labeling Honduras as an adventurous destination made people in the United States view Honduras as a place where anything could happen. Pirates, snakes, jaguars, bandits, revolutions, ancient ruins, and corrupt politicians were an ever-present reality in the US media's portrayal of Honduras and undoubtedly provided proof for many that the country was rife with adventurous possibilities.

Having the reputation as an exciting and dangerous land may appear desirable and romantic at first glance, but when one considers how US policymakers were influenced by such conceptions the appeal begins to fade. Danger and unpredictability are not characteristics US policymakers sought in Central America during the first half of the twentieth century. With national security and economic interests as motivating factors the US State and War Departments gave Honduras an impressive amount of attention in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Between 1903 and 1925, Honduras hosted US troops on its soil a total of 7 times.[75] Stability was important to the United States not only to exploit potential resources, but also to protect proven US mining concessions and banana wealth. Historian Thomas M. Leonard argues US policymakers during the 1930s and 1940s were motivated to constrain the very forces that supposedly made Honduras an adventurous place. Leonard demonstrates that over the course of

[75] In 1903, "U.S. forces protected the American consulate and the steamship wharf at Puerto Cortés during a period of revolutionary activity." In 1907, American soldiers occupied Trujillo, La Ceiba, Puerto Cortés, San Pedro Sula, Laguna, and Choloma for three months during a war between Honduras and Nicaragua. In 1911, US forces were present in Honduras "to protect American lives and interests" during a Civil War. In 1912, US troops found themselves in Honduras again, this time in Puerto Cortés guarding against the Honduran seizure of US property. In 1919, US troops created a "neutral zone" to protect US citizens and property from civil unrest. In 1924, US troops were sent to Honduras to protect US citizens and property from civil strife. In 1925, US troops were sent to La Ceiba to protect US citizens and property during yet another period of social unrest (Richard F. Grimmett, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2009," January 27, 2010, Congressional Research Service. CRS Report for Congress 7-5700, RL32170, pp. 7-10). An informative firsthand account of the landing of US marines in Honduras in 1903 can be found in Smedley Butler's *War Is a Racket* (New York: Round table press, inc, 1935). An excellent reading companion to Butler's book is Hans Schmidt's *Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1987).

this period the United States reliably sought to establish stability in its relationship with the region. At times this meant edging out foreign competitors, the landing of troops, or the United States' acquiescence to dictatorial rule.[76] In other words, the US perspective of Honduras as a land filled with adventure made policymakers more likely to acquiesce to Carías's rule because he was seen as a cure to many of the "undesirable" characteristics that made the country exciting.

## A Degenerate Race

As any student of US-Latin American history knows, even before the United States gained its independence Latin Americans have generally been portrayed in the harshest of terms in US media. Hondurans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were no exception to the rule. In a vast majority of sources the Honduran people only appeared in a negative light. Harsher critics depicted them in the worst of terms. Lazy, "bloodthirsty," and conniving were just a few of the ways that Hondurans were represented. In some circumstances they were described less than maliciously, but nonetheless disparagingly as kind, humble, and ignorant savages. Taken as a whole these negative attributes formed a simple understanding of the Hondurans as a degenerate race incapable of utilizing the resources all around them and needing special guidance.

## A Nation of Violent Revolutionaries

If the US media's attention was drawn to any Honduran issue besides mining or agricultural wealth, it was probably the routine revolutionary activity of the republic. Since its creation as an independent state in 1821 Honduras has endured a surprisingly high level of violence and political intrigue. By 1915, Honduras had reportedly endured more than one

[76] Thomas M. Leonard, *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991).

hundred different presidents even though the country itself was less than a century old.[77] For the United States, Honduras's political instability posed both negative and positive outcomes. For US businessmen attempting to operate in Honduras the relentless number of revolutions made business difficult since hostilities disrupted supply chains and destroyed property. The US government also saw political violence as a source of worry and frustration because an unstable Honduras threatened to destabilize the region and encouraged foreign influence. However, others such as filibusters, adherents of Manifest Destiny, and banana baron Samuel Zemurray saw opportunity in Honduras's weak political system. Whatever the case, by the time Carías came to power in 1933, to those in the United States violence and revolutionary activity were seen as the natural state of Honduran life.

One of the people most responsible for helping the United States to associate Honduras with violence was William Walker. Born in 1824, William Walker led a charmed life of international travel, elite education, and business success. However, after the death of his beloved Ellen Martin in 1849, Walker became restless and moved to San Francisco, California where he quickly got caught up in the city's energy and search for riches. Encouraged by the US annexation of Texas and the filibustering of Venezuelan-born Narcisco López in Cuba, Walker sought his own fame and fortune in Sonora and Baja California by invading and claiming their independence. The Mexican episode was short-lived and ended in his capture by US authorities who tried him for breaking international neutrality law. He was declared not guilty by a jury of his peers, but proved his guilt a year later when he led yet another expedition to take control of Nicaragua. Commanding roughly 100 US citizens and nearly 200 Nicaraguans, Walker captured Granada in October 1855. Like his Mexican venture, Nicaragua proved a failure within a short

[77] Perry, pp. 25-28 and 56.

time. After alienating the Nicaraguan populace, US investors, and possible allies in neighboring Central American republics, Walker was ousted from power in early 1857.[78]

Although Walker failed to achieve his goal of bringing Nicaragua into the Union as a slave state, he was treated as a hero in the United States. Still dreaming of power and adding more slave states to the United States, Walker attracted yet another following of filibusters and landed in Trujillo, Honduras in July 1860 with the aim of unifying the isthmus into a single nation. With 200 men Walker took the city and hailed himself as a liberator. However, the Hondurans seemed to despise him and few came to his aid. Rather than conquering the country Walker found himself fleeing both British and Honduran forces. After putting up a fierce defense for nearly a fortnight, Walker finally surrendered to British forces. The annoyed British commander then turned Walker over to Honduran authorities that promptly executed him on September 12, 1860.[79]

Building on Walker's failed foray in Trujillo, Honduran political instability became a regular topic of the US news media. When "Honduras" appeared in any headline it was usually

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[78] Brady Harrison, *Agent of Empire: William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), pp. 1-26. A host of books have been written about the life and impact of US filibuster William Walker. Some of the best include Rudolph Wurlitzer and Albert H. Z. Carr, *Walker* (New York: Perennial Library, 1987); and Noel B. Gerson, *Sad Swashbuckler: The Life of William Walker* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1976).

[79] Harrison, pp. 1-26. For more on Walker from the period see: "Walker in Central America: Proclamation of the President of Nicaragua," *Chicago Press and Tribune*, September 5, 1860, p. O1; "Walker," *The Albion* vol. 38 no. 38 (September 22, 1860): p. 450; "British Honour not Compromised by Walker's Execution," *The Albion* vol. 38 no. 40 (October 6, 1860): p. 474; and "Items, Literary, Scientific, and Religious," *The Ladies' Repository* vol. 20 (November 1860): p. 697; "Walker Again," *New York Times*, August 22, 1860, p. 4; "Miscellaneous," *Chicago Tribune*, November 16, 1860, p. 2; General Walker's Movements," *New York Times*, August 27, 1860, p. 8; and "More Filibustering...," *New York Times*, July 26, 1860, p. 5. In the weeks and months after his execution, Walker continued to be a major source of news. For examples of Walker's lingering presence in the news media see: "THE CAPTURE OF WALKER," *New York Times*, September 29, 1860, p. 11; "Personal," *New York Observer and Chronicle* vol. 38 no. 52 (December 27, 1860), p. 415; and *Liberator* vol. 30 no. 38 (September 21, 1860): p. 151. For analytical and historiographic work on William Walker see: Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr. "William Walker and the History of Nicaragua in the Nineteenth Century," *Latin American Research Review* vol. 15 no. 1 (1980), pp. 237-240; and Víctor Hugo Acuña, *Filibusterismo y Destino Manifiesto en las Americas* (San José, Costa Rica: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2010).

near the words "Revolution" or "Revolt." Article titles like "REVOLTUION IN HONDURAS," "Honduras Often Beset By Revolt Movements," and "Revolt in Honduras" were commonplace for over a half century before Carías took power.[80] After decades of news coverage putting the words "Honduras" and "Revolution" side by side, newspapers and magazines began adding "Again" to the mix. US readers were cynically provided with article titles like: "REVOLT REPORTED AGAIN IN HONDURAS," "HONDURAS AGAIN IS SCENE OF REVOLT," and "HONDURAS AGAIN IN REVOLT'S GRIP."[81] News coverage of Honduras was marked by profound contrast; either it associated Honduras with fabulous wealth or horrible and habitual violence.[82]

Not only was the United States consistently reminded of Honduran revolutionary activity, but also how it paid for Honduran instability with the blood of its soldiers and citizens. As early as 1899, Hondurans were accused of killing US citizens during one of their civil wars.[83] During the first of several uprisings during 1924, the *New York Times* informed its readers the United States had sent warships to La Ceiba because a US citizen had been killed in the

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[80] "REVOLUTION IN HONDURAS," *The Sun*, February 4, 1903, p. 1; "Revolt in Honduras," *New York Times*, July 21, 1910, p. 4; and "Honduras Often Beset By Revolt Movements," *The Sun*, April 20, 1931, p. 2. See also: "REVOLTUIONS IN HONDURAS," *New York Times*, August 30, 1896, p. 17; "Revolt in Honduras," *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1931, p. A4; "REVOLT FLARES UP IN HONDURAS; 51 DIE IN BATTLE," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1932, p. 10; and "HONDURAS REVOLT WORSE," *The Sun*, March 14, 1903, p. 8.

[81] "HONDURAS AGAIN IS SCENE OF REVOLT," *Washington Post*, August 4, 1924, p. 1; See also: "New Revolt in Honduras Reported," *The Sun*, August 3, 1924, p. 2; and "HONDURAS AGAIN IN REVOLT'S GRIP," *Atlanta Constitution*, August 4, 1924, p. 1.

[82] For more news coverage of Honduras's revolutionary violence see: "More Revolutions," *Washington Post*, January 4, 1931, p. S1; "Intrigue and Revolt History of Honduras," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 22, 1931, p. 9; "THE HONDURAS REVOLTUION," *New York Times*, April 13, 1893, p. 12; "HONDURAS GETS WARNING," *New York Times*, July 19, 1924, p. 2; "HOT IN HONDURAS…," *Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 1904, p. 2; "CIVIL WAR IN HONDURAS," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 4, 1903, p. 3; "RIVALRY IN REVOLT: TWO REVOLUTIONARY ARMIES IN THE FIELD IN HONDURAS," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1893, p. 5; and "Revolution Again in Central America," *Outlook* vol. 138 no. 2 (September 10, 1924), p. 38.

[83] "HONDURAS TO MAKE AMENDS," *Washington Post*, February 12, 1899, p. 11.

revolutionary violence there.[84] A few months later, during a separate revolt, the *Los Angeles Times* reported US Americans were being killed and their property destroyed near Tegucigalpa.[85] Less than a year later, the *New York Times* explained 165 US soldiers were sent to protect US citizens and their interests due to yet another revolt in La Ceiba.[86]

Those US citizens fortunate enough to travel to Honduras often found themselves either caught up in a revolution or bearing witness to their effects on the local populace.[87] Their emotional and detailed accounts gave their readers the inescapable impression Hondurans were a naturally fierce and dangerous people. In addition to reinforcing the United States' belief in its own superiority, Honduras's political instability contributed to the idea the country needed US assistance to achieve peace and prosperity. According to many commentators, Honduras remained impoverished and undeveloped due to its chronic revolts. Although its people lived in one of the richest nations on Earth, perhaps even the Garden of Eden, they were unable to make use of the natural resources all around them because of their chronic political chaos.

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[84] "ANOTHER WARSHIP SENT TO HONDURAS," *New York Times*, March 2, 1924, p. 1.

[85] "AMERICANS KILLED DURING BATTLE IN HONDURAS REVOLT," *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1924, p. 1.

[86] "Navy Lands 165 Men at Ceiba, Honduras, To Protect Americans as Revolt Spreads," *New York Times*, April 21, 1925, p. 1. Often inaccurate, news coverage of Honduran revolutionary activity also reported the death of Lee Christmas several years before it actually occurred. For examples of the erroneous coverage of his supposed death see: "GENERAL CHRISTMAS SLAIN," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1907, p. 1; and "AMERICAN KILLED IN FIGHT," *Washington Post*, June 11, 1906, p. 1. Other US Americans were reported as killed in random acts violence as well. See: "TWO AMERICANS SLAIN," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1899, p. 1; "AMERICAN KILLED IN HONDURAS," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 24, 1899, p. 4; and "AMERICAN AVIATGOR KILLED IN HONDURAS," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 31, 1934, p. 4. Harding Davis's fictional memoir *Captain Macklin* (New York: Scribner, 1917), describes a situation when US lives and interests were threatened by the actions of a Honduran president. One of the books characters comments on the crisis and states, "'it certainly isn't right that American interests in…Honduras, should be jeopardized…by an ignorant half-breed like this President…It must be stopped'" (p. 46).

[87] An excellent example of a US American witnessing a Honduran revolution unfold is Harry Latourette Foster, *A Gringo in Mañana-Land* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1925), pp. 250-285.

For those people exposed to the media's portrayal of Honduran political activity and supposedly violent culture, the country appeared a constant menace to not only US citizens and their interests but also to Hondurans themselves. The reports of Honduran casualties in the country's civil wars were even more routine than those of US citizens.[88] According to some sources, revolutionary violence was such a prevalent part of the culture that adults and children were consumed by it. In Frank Gee Patchin's novel *The Battleship Boys in the Tropics* revolutions are portrayed as a constant happening in Honduras and something that politicians and other elites took part in on a consistent basis. He wrote, "there isn't a prominent man in Honduras who hasn't been to jail, at one time or another, for refusing to contribute to some revolutionary cause."[89] According to travel writer Harry Latourette Foster, Honduras was "a cruel country" best suited for "warfare and revolution" as evidenced by its "principal product…revolution." Foster maintained revolution could arise at any time in the republic and simply assumed Honduran children were "future revolutionists."[90]

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[88] Several examples of Honduran deaths in the US media can be found in: "40 DEAD IN HONDURAS RIOT…," *New York Times*, March 22, 1911, p. 4; INSURGENTS CUT OFF NORTHERN HONDURAS; 31 DEAD IN BATTLES…," *New York Times*, April 23, 1931, p. 1; and "PERPETUAL HONDURAS REBEL KILLED IN LATEST UPRISING…," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 9, 1912, p. 2.

[89] Patchin, pp. 164-170, and 176-181.

[90] Foster, pp. 251-258. Other examples of the US media portraying violence as a natural state of affairs in Honduras can be found in Houlson, pp. 30-31 and 48-49; José Mário Barone, *Heart and will power; twenty thousand miles through the three Americas* (New York: S.T.I., 1930), pp. 346-347; Mitchell-Hedges, pp. 180-190; A.R. W. Mackreth, "What the World is Doing," *Boys's Life* vol. 15 (May 1924): p. 18; Harding Davis, *Three Gringos*, p. 143; Keenagh, pp. 20-40; Palmer, pp. ix-x and 128; Alfred Batson, *Vagabond's Paradise* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1927), pp. 33-58; and Thompson, p. 78. For more articles addressing the United States' concern with bananas in Honduras see: "BIG EXPORT TAX PUT ON BANANAS: Honduras Wanted to Collect 3 Cents on Every Bunch, BUT THE PEOPLE RESISTED," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 30, 1907, p. 3; "NO BANANAS FOR A WHILE," *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1910, p. 11; "DESTORYERS PROVE GOOD BANANA SHIPS," *New York Times*, December 26, 1931, p. 23; "Banana Grove Dreams Fade as Law Acts: Clever Artist Asks $27.50 to Stake a Claim in Honduras," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 8, 1925, p. 1; and "ANOTHER BANANA COMPANY: This One Will Take Fruit From The Honduran Syndicate," *The Sun*, April 23, 1905, p. 7.

The Honduran reputation for violence in the United States was one of the more condemning and injurious characteristics attributed to the country. Rather than praising Latin American revolutions as they have their own, US Americans have historically denounced the region's political violence as evidence of their Latin inferiority and impudence. Pike argues people in the US were "Satisfied that rebellions to the south [Latin America] had little in common with their own Revolution," and that they were evidence of "Old World contamination" and civilization's "decay."[91] In other words, Honduras's numerous revolutions were not seen as justifiable in the eyes of most US Americans. This meant Honduran revolutions provided no chance for improving the country's future, and instead were completely destructive.

Honduran revolutionary violence also provides an excellent example of Said's contention that Western cultural sources provide "codes of intellectual and moral behavior" that overlook and undermine those of the non-Western world.[92] By labeling Honduran political upheaval as unjustifiable, and instead attributing it to hot blood and Latin unpredictability, US sources reinforced ideas about the superiority of the Western world. Why Hondurans were rebelling or fighting one another was almost never covered in any depth by either the US news media, travel literature, or academic writings. Rather than contemplating the Honduran point of view or considering the role US Americans had in events, US citizens used their own assumptions to interpret and explain Honduran political instability. From the United States' perspective, Hondurans had no legitimate reason to rebel, and this interpretation contributed to the idea they were simply incapable of managing their own affairs. O. Henry summed up the US perspective of Honduran revolutions when one of his rebellious characters put it this way, "I enlisted in the

[91] Pike, pp. 66-68.

[92] Said, p. 8.

revolutionary army of this dark country in good faith to fight for its liberty, honours and silver candlesticks; instead…I am set to amputatin' its scenery and grubbin' its roots. 'Tis the general man will have to pay for it."[93]

**A Lazy and Ignorant People**

Laziness was one of the most common characteristics attributed to the Hondurans by the US popular media. Their villages were "lazy" places where people milled about, unmotivated to change their position. Franck believed it never occurred to the Hondurans improve themselves "even to the extent of putting in a board floor." He maintained the town of Santa Rosa had "a delightful, lazy, satisfied-with-life-just-as-it-is air that partly makes up for the ignorance, disease, and unmorality."[94] Morlan found the Hondurans lazy as well, writing, "The people can bear the loss of time, money, wife or child, with a heroic fortitude that is touching, but the thought of labor wasted breaks their hearts."[95]

Besides being lazy the Hondurans were also depicted as being shockingly ignorant. The typical US traveler, able to afford to play the role of explorer and adventurer for months or even years at a time and who eventually published their journals and observations, obviously was among the most fortunate of US Americans. It never occurred to these privileged US citizens the people they met dozens of miles from the nearest town or village had no access to even elementary education. It apparently never crossed their minds that even if a school was within walking distance a family still may not have been able to afford to send their children to school.

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[93] O. Henry, p. 175.

[94] Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico*, pp. 304-306 and 315.

[95] Morlan, pp. 50-52 and 108-109. For more on the supposed laziness of Hondurans see: Keenagh, pp. 17-18 and 53; Franck, *Mexico and Central America*, pp. 200-208 and 224; Harding Davis, *Three Gringos*, pp. 65, 92, and 140; and "THE LAND OF THE BANANA: GLIMPSES AT VILLAGE LIFE IN HONDURAS, INDIANS WHO MANAGE TO EXIST AND ENTERPRISING FOREIGNERS WHO REAP A RICH HARVEST FROM THE SOIL," *New York Times*, November 30, 1884, p. 14.

Instead, travel authors recorded in great detail and even mocked the Hondurans for their assumed ignorance.

Franck made some of the most insensitive observations about a man he met in the heart of the Honduran central mountains. Although the Honduran man was literate and read everything available, Franck still ridiculed him for believing that Paris was the capital of the United States and "the population of that country 700,000." He grew aggravated and bored of speaking to those he met in the country, because he felt even men of forty possessed the intellect of "an eight-year-old." He wrote the people were "incapable of grasping any real thought" and stared at him "with the open-mouthed naïveté of a child." When he finally came across a schoolhouse he claimed the pupils were "illiterate" and "very few of them had even reached the stage of desiring to learn."[96]

**An Immoral Race**

Of the many themes surrounding Hondurans' portrayal as a degenerate people, one of the most common was their supposed untrustworthiness. Accusations of their deceitfulness typically surfaced in traveler accounts, and were usually the product of cultural dissonance rather than theft or other forms of maliciousness. However, this did not stop travel writers from contributing to the idea that Hondurans were an inferior childlike people who needed extra guidance in all but especially political matters. According to most authors, Hondurans were incapable of conducting simple business transactions let alone avoiding corruption in political circles.

When speaking of all "Latins," travel writer and Protestant minister Gulian Lansing Morrill felt they lied constantly, "to themselves, to each other…to your face and behind your

[96] Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico,* pp. 304-306 and 343. For more examples of the US media portraying the Hondurans as an ignorant people see: Vincent, p. 72; Gertrude G. Aguirre, "COUNTRY LIFE IN HONDURAS," *The Cosmopolitan* vol. 11 no. 3 (July 1891): p. 341; Taylor, pp. 13 and 78-80; O. Henry, p. 56; La Varre, pp. 10-11 and 34-38; and Soltera, pp. 116-118.

back." However, Hondurans were particularly "unreliable" according to Morrill, because besides from being "smelly," "swarthy," and "stagnant," their "idle brains" prevented them from following through on their agreed upon responsibilities and seeing the benefits of planning for "mañana."[97]

One of the most common ways Hondurans were portrayed as offending the moral sensitivities of US Americans was in their reported sexual deprivation. To many US observers steeped in prudish Victorian culture, Honduran dance, music, and liberal alcohol consumption was viewed as immoral behavior and contributed to the idea that the country was made up of a degenerate people. However, Honduran sexual behavior was viewed in particularly negative light and was evidence to many in the United States that the country needed special guidance. One of the more morally outraged commentators was Houlson, who in *Blue Blaze* went on at great length about the prostitution taking place in the port town of Puerto Cortés. She wrote there was "A stream of men" that found their way to the cheap and rickety brothels that lined the streets and back alleys of the city. She paid particular attention to the affairs of a fair skinned blonde woman who "was certainly in demand." According to Houlson, this blonde woman was helpless to improve her situation amongst the Hondurans and "was clothed for convenience and speed—I observed the scarlet gown was her only garment." "Mesmerized" by the immorality of the local population she wrote the blonde prostitute "took five different men to the room above during the time I stood watching." After only one night in the port city, Houlson considered it a

[97] Gulian Lansing Morrill, *Rotten Republics: A Tropical Tramp in Central America* (Chicago: M.A. Donohue & Co., 1916), pp. 119-134. Morrill is the most vehement racist of all the US travelers who made their way to Honduras. For more examples of US writers portraying the Honduras as untrustworthy see: Patchin, pp. 99-181; and Harding Davis, *Three Gringos*, pp. 81 and 139-143.

"horrible place" and finished her description of the town with the choice adjectives: "Dirty, unhealthy, unappetizing."[98]

Franck also found reason to criticize Honduran sexual and marriage habits. He was aghast to discover "The entire region" surrounding Santa Rosa was "given over to free love." Both the poor and wealthy had supposedly given upon the practice of marriage, and "all but two families of the town acknowledged illegitimate children." He demonstrates utter contempt and disgust when he wrote of meeting one man who "boasted of being the father of eighty children" and did not even attempt to hide his indiscretions from others. He maintained there was "indeed little notion that there might be anything reprehensible in such customs. Everyone did it, why shouldn't any one?"[99]

**Backward**

One of the most common characteristics of Honduras the US media provided the United States with was the idea that it was backward and needed special assistance in order to progress. Depending on the author and what time the source was written that assistance may have needed to come from the United States or from some Honduran strongman capable of leading the nation towards prosperity. "Backward" is still a term that is often associated with Honduras, and it first received that debilitating and difficult to lose reputation in the United States through the popular press. There are many reasons why US travelers found the Hondurans backward, and usually it was more than just one experience or observation that induced the authors to portray them this way. The less malevolent may have written about of the Hondurans' religious superstitions, or

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[98] Houlson, pp. 34-36.

[99] Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico*, pp. 313-315. One source arguing Hondurans were a moral people during the period can be found in: Policarpo Bonilla, "Honduras: Marriage and Divorce in Honduras," In *World's Christian Citizenship Conference. The World's Moral Problems: Addresses at the Third World's Christian Citizenship Conference Held in Pittsburgh, Pa, U.S.A. November 9-16, 1919*, (Pittsburgh: The National Reform Association, 1920), pp. 410-412.

the fact that even by the 1920s many of them may not have seen a doctor in their entire lives.[100] Others thought they were backward because they had not developed the custom of sleeping in elevated beds or knew what cameras were.[101] Still, others found the idea some people carried loads on their backs rather than on a mule, cart, or truck archaic.[102] The more negative and hateful authors found other characteristics to comment on including the country's "half-breed" racial makeup.[103] Many were of the opinion the country would never improve, even if those in the United States and Honduras wanted it to.[104] Whatever the case, by the time of Carías's presidency Honduras was largely considered to be "The Most Backward Country" in the "most backward region outside of Central Asia."[105]

The most common complaint about the lack of modern infrastructure, and another source of the perception of Honduras as an underdeveloped country, was the near absence of satisfactory roads in the mountainous interior. Grumbles about Honduran roads are present in

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[100] Taylor, pp. 13 and 78-132; and Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico*, pp. 208-224.

[101] Soltera, pp. 158-163.

[102] Thompson, pp. 66-86.

[103] A number of sources attribute Honduras's problems to its racial makeup including: O. Henry, p. 73; Harding Davis, *Captain Macklin*, p. 46; and "THE LAND OF THE BANANA: GLIMPSES AT VILLAGE LIFE IN HONDURAS, INDIANS WHO MANAGE TO EXIST AND ENTERPRISING FOREIGNERS WHO REAP A RICH HARVEST FROM THE SOIL" *New York Times*, November 30, 1884, p. 14.

[104] Morrill, p. 126.

[105] Palmer, pp. ix-x and 134. It could even be said African Americans felt Honduras was backward for an example see: "No Blacks for Honduras," *The Crisis* vol. 41 no. 5 (November 1911): p. 136. Other sources drawing attention or contributing to the perception of Honduras's lack of development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be found in: Charles, pp. 13-44; Keenagh, pp. 20-40; O. Henry, p. 73; *Popular Mechanics* vol. 25 no. 2 (February 1916): p. 22; *The Rotarian* vol. 38 no. 5 (May 1931): p. 55; Enock, pp. 456-458; Vincent, pp. 74-75; Rothery and Wiese, pp. 77-85; La Varre, pp. 10-11 and 34-38; Wilkins, pp. 546-551; "Fish Caught by Blackjacking with Heavy Stones," *Popular Mechanics* vol. 59 no. 3 (March 1933): p. 132; Herbert Spencer, "Evolution of Ceremonial Government," *Popular Science Monthly* (April 1878): pp. 641-662; Harry Latourette Foster, *The Caribbean Cruise* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1928), p. 327; *The Rotarian* vol. 38 no. 5 (May 1931): p. 55; Morlan, pp. 62-63; Richard J. Beamish, "Amapala-L'Union…Our First Port," in *President-elect Herbert Hoover's good will cruise to Central and South America, this being a log of the trip aboard the U.S.S. Maryland,* ed. Harry W. Hill (San Francisco: Book Press, 1929), pp. 27-30; and Marian M. George, *A Little Journey to Mexico and Central America* (Chicago: A. Flanagan Company, 1929), pp. 32-35 and 37.

almost every traveler's account and many other sources. Those travelers who failed to comment on the quality of the roads—or the lack thereof—usually never left the relatively developed and flatter North Coast. Most petulant travelers detailed the roads' shortcomings, dangers, and poor maintenance, but others took their complaints a step further and blamed the nation's lack of prosperity on their poor condition and small number.[106]

The backwardness of Honduras seemed to inspire a theme of "hopelessness." The jungle was just too thick, the mountains too steep, the people too degenerate. The country seemed to swallow up and destroy all that was good. Davis relates the story of a widowed US American woman he met in San Pedro Sula. After visiting with the woman he learned that she was stuck in the country and desperately trying save up enough money to leave and return to the United States. Davis makes it seem as if Honduras was responsible for the death of her husband and that her pointless "fight against dirt and insects" was an inevitable reality for all those who called it home.[107] Canadian travel writer William Richard Harris was so convinced of the futility of anything good coming from Honduras that he wrote that even after centuries of white occupation the "earth breeds poison" and the "waters exhale fever."[108] According to these authors, even with the help of US Americans Honduras's future was bleak.

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[106] During Carías's reign the country's transportation infrastructure reputation improved thereby supposedly proving the benefits of having a dictator rule the Hondurans. For an example see: "Honduras-Rich in Resources," *The Rotarian* vol. 62 no. 6 (June 1943): p. 4. For other authors who wrote disparaging remarks about Honduras's roads see: Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico…*, pp. 284-287; Franck, *Mexico and Central America…*, pp. 209-224. The traveler malcontents who comment on Honduras's road are legion. See: Enock, pp. 456-458; Keenagh, pp. 6-10; Moe, p. 56; Harris, pp. 166-167; George, pp. 32-35; Carpenter, pp. 104-109; and Soltera, pp. 1-4.

[107] John Seelye, *War Games: Richard Harding Davis and the New Imperialism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2003), pp. 171-174; and Harding Davis, *Three Gringos*, pp. 65-66.

[108] Harris, p. 154.

## Complete Incompetence

As authors developed the theme of Honduran backwardness their thoughts often evolved into more complex complaints about the incompetence and general ineptitude of the Hondurans to do anything properly. If the United States was civilized and where things were done correctly then Hondurans was the opposite, uncivilized and inept.

Franck found fault in almost everything in Honduras, but one of the things that bothered him most was his opinion the Hondurans could not properly boil an egg. He claimed that the Hondurans had a "superstition" about an egg not cooking unless water touched the inside of it. He tried to pay the cooks more not to put a hole in the uncooked shell of the egg, but he wrote the eggs founds ways of "breaking themselves."[109] Describing Hotel Morazan of Amapala in 1910, Palmer described it as the "worst" hotel in Central America. Giving his reasoning he says that an entire "row of rooms" faced the hotel's kitchen and pigsty, which were directly adjacent to one another. He was further troubled by the cook's "liberal use of garlic in every dish," because he felt it was used to conceal the smell and taste of pig manure in the food. Between the bad food, filth, and the "lunatic" that kept him up during the night he felt he lacked the words to describe his disappointment of Amapala. .[110]

## US Paternalism and the Mongrel Race

As can be expected, many US interpreters of Honduras during the period were attentive to the "inferiority" of the country's genetic makeup. As a result of the mixing of Spanish blood with Native Americans and blacks the majority of the population was considered "half-breed"

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[109] Franck, *Tramping Through Mexico*, pp. 207-208. For more examples of alleged Honduran incompetence see: "Steel Patches Mend Rusted Pipe Line," *Popular Science* (November 1922): p. 49; and Harding Davis, *Three Gringos*, pp. 59-79.

[110] Palmer, p. 106. For other humorous and strong critiques of Honduras by US travelers see: Hancock, p. 29; Morrill, p. 119; Charles, pp. 11-13; and George Palmer Putnam, *The southland of North America: Rambles and Observations in Central America During the Year* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1913), pp. 405-406.

and "mongrel." The remaining populace was commonly described as being made up of pure "blacks" and "Indians." For those in the United States, Honduras's racial milieu allowed many to consider the country part of the white man's burden and was easily adopted into US paternalistic philosophy.[111] With the prevalence of racism, eugenics, and paternalism, many in the United States expected Honduras to be backward, violent, and ignorant. When travelers, academics, and the US news media described the country in similar terms it only confirmed and reinforced these previously held belief systems.

Believing the Hondurans were unable to help themselves and doomed to perpetual political chaos and poverty, a number of US authors attempted to justify further US involvement there.[112] After all, Honduras was supposedly a fabulously wealthy place, so many in the US assumed all that it needed was a little guidance from a more mature and developed power. This understanding of the nature of both countries made US policy not only merited but also honorable. By advocating Honduran economic development and cultural uplift, writers focused on duty and US sacrifice in addition to US profits. In the minds of most commentators taking US capitalism to the country was the equivalent of injecting it with a shot of civilization. Not bringing US business to Honduras would have been understood as a selfish act. This philosophy and national identity allowed the United States to view its exploitation of Honduras not as colonialism but rather a missionary enterprise, and provided subjugation without empire.[113]

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[111] For more on US paternalism in the Caribbean Basin during the early twentieth century see: Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 54-55 and 92.

[112] For more on the United States' belief it was helping Latin America see Mark T. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 36.

[113] Seelye, pp. xii and 9-10. For more on US economic domination of Latin America see: Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). For a gendered interpretation of the United States' desire to engage and uplift the third world see: Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

A number of authors came to the conclusion that because Honduras was so backward, possessed so much wealth, but still seemed to fail at nearly endeavor they partook the country needed special attention. Many authors believed the best hope for Honduran development and prosperity would come from the United States. Purveyors of this argument maintained Hondurans needed US or foreign capital, ingenuity, and political babysitting in order for infrastructure and competent political leadership to be established. Others felt the Hondurans themselves should be responsible for their own advancement, but that it could only be done with less than democratic methods. Both of these positions created an atmosphere in the United States that made the country more amendable to dictatorship in Honduras.

In Babson's educational children's book, the main character, Mr. Carroll is asked by one of his children about Honduras's future and the chances of it changing its then present circumstances as a poor and backward country. Mr. Carroll's response is to praise the potential of the country and list its many potential agricultural and mining products, but he also notes its difficulties. He tells his child "the conditions are such that it would take a great deal of capital to make a living there," and that it "must be opened up by men with money." The capital that Honduras needed would supply it with "machinery, labor, transportation, and making connections with the market."[114]

Pleasure traveler and author Albert Morlan cataloged a number of Honduran success stories and argued when outside capital and ingenuity were imported they provided marvelous profits and changed the country for the better. He encouraged his countrymen to aid in developing Honduras, and argued it needed "only two things" to prosper. The first was a government that foreigners could have faith in, and the second was enough capital to build a

[114] Babson, pp. 143-144.

railroad from the coast to the interior. If these things could be accomplished, Morlan believed a host of emigrants would go to Honduras as "pioneers" and would help the country evolve.[115]

Rather than focusing on the development of the Honduran economy and the chances of its financial success, schoolteacher and travel writer Maria Soltera took a different approach and made several observations about Honduran morality and ethics. She found the youths of Honduras rude, crude, uncivilized, and generally unproductive members of society. They "smoked and spat" and bothered her on multiple levels and occasions. She felt they needed to be exterminated by a foreigner, because the local populace obviously was in capable of doing so. She wrote, "I believe an earnest hope is daily avowed, that somebody coming in may effectually clear away impediments by treading the life out of some of these human pests."[116]

Even though there was an understanding Honduras required outside assistance in order to prosper and for its resources to be exploited, this did not mean that there was a consensus in the United States as to how it should be done. Because most commentators were under the impression that Honduras was stagnant if not self-destructive, they believed the country would benefit through almost any association with the United States, but European style colonialism was far from the only option. [117] Reginald Horsman argues the belief in Anglo-Saxon racial

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[115] Morlan, pp. 129-130.

[116] Soltera, pp. 91-92. Additional authors who felt Honduras's best hope of advancement was the assistance from the United States or other foreigners can be found in: Patchin, p. 164; "IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN: WONDERFUL COUNTRY NEGLECTED BY THE UNITED STATES," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1887, p. 10; "DEVELOPMENT OF HONDURAS: Valuable Concessions Granted to a Syndicate of American Capitalists," *The Sun*, August 24, 1897, p. 2; "ON THE BORDER OF PARADISE…," *The Sun*, April 21, 1904, p. 2; "Honduras Needs an American Bank," *Bankers' Magazine* vol. 80 no. 6 (June 1910): p. 953; Taylor, pp. 78-79. Taylor took a different approach than most and argued that US Americans had a religious responsibility to aid Honduras in their alleged search for the gospel. Harding Davis wrote in order for nature to become useful in Honduras that "some other man than a native-born Central-American" will have to take up the project (*Three Gringos*, p. 148).

[117] For a discussion on the Eurocentric belief that association with the West can only uplift non-Western societies see: J.M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusion and Eurocentric History* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993), pp. 1-2.

superiority was commonly employed as a deterrent to imperial expansion due to the risk of racial "contamination" by "inferior" peoples.[118] This fear of miscegenation and the ultimate diluting of the Anglo-Saxon race provided yet another argument in favor of supporting Carías instead of democracy in Honduras. After all, the persistence of Carías as dictator allowed the United States to develop the country in accordance with its own identity as an uplifting power and assure that its racial superiority remained unthreatened.

In 1913, traveler George Palmer Putnam published his experiences and opinions of Central America. His writings represent a thoroughly pessimistic view of the Honduran capacity for modernity and the possibility of "success" there. His conclusions of Honduras are particularly discouraging, but his work is a good example of an author willing to abandon democracy in favor of strongman rule. He called Honduras "a sad sight" with its "half a million Indians and half-breeds." He was annoyed by the fact that Honduras refused to sincerely deal with its $125,000,000 debt or its tradition of "governmental blood-sucking." In order to change the situation he provided an autocratic remedy. Desirous to keep the United States out of Honduras but simultaneously convinced of the need of undemocratic leadership he wrote:

> The pitiful part of it is that there seems to be no cure for it all—no medicine other than the application of a very big stick, and even that remedy is temporary unless some sort of permanent policeman's work is undertaken; and Heaven knows what a pest we should inherit if through any diplomatic contortions we found ourselves the guardian.[119]

## Conclusion

Before Carías became president, the United States perceived Honduras as an incredibly rich and potentially fruitful land inhabited by a degenerate race who made no attempt to make use of the resources all around them. Besides being lazy and untrustworthy, most US media

[118] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 232-250.

[119] Putnam, pp. 405-406.

sources portrayed Hondurans as a violent and ignorant people who took "two steps backward for every one forward."[120] These assumptions of Honduras led many US commentators to believe the country needed the assistance of the United States in order to progress, and others to dread US involvement for fear of involving the country in another never ending quagmire such as Haiti, Nicaragua, or Cuba. When one considers the economic and geopolitical environment of the mid-1930s, when Carías instituted his *continuismo*, it is little wonder the United States refrained from condemning the dictator and was willing to work with his authoritarian administration. Dictatorship was far from the United States' first choice for Honduras's government, but in 1936 it certainly saw few viable alternatives. After decades of trying to bring a healthy democracy to Honduras, US policymakers were pessimistic about it ever achieving the goal. The common cultural perceptions of Honduras as infested with revolutionaries that impeded business and development made Carías an attractive option.

[120] Morrill, p. 131. Interestingly, much of the US American belief in the natural abundance of Honduras was abandoned not long after Carías's rule. See: Vincent Checchi, *Honduras; A Problem in Economic Development* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1959), pp. 1-3.

# CHAPTER 2

## WHEN DEMOCRACY FAILS

"I am convinced that a revolution in Honduras is imminent in the very near future."[1]

-US Minister to Honduras Franklin E. Morales writing to Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes in mid-1923.

From February 1923 to February 1924, the Honduran political scene was consumed with choosing the country's next president. President Rafael López Gutiérrez's term was set to expire on February 1, 1924, but for a year prior to his presidency's termination it looked as if revolution would yet again return to Honduras. A split in the Liberal Party all but destroyed any Liberal candidate's chances of fairly winning the elections planned for October 28, 1923, and the corrupt administration of López Gutiérrez appeared unwilling and unable to deliver free and fair elections that would allow Carías to assume the presidency. It was a well-known fact throughout Honduras and the US foreign policy and military establishments if Carías was to become president he would have to fight for it.

Washington's primary goal in Honduras during this tumultuous election season was to keep the country stable. Members of the State Department were well aware instability, revolutionary violence, and political intrigues impeded the Honduran economy. A financially strapped Honduran government would find it difficult to repay US and other foreign loans, a situation that would stall business, invite the meddling of US competitors, and in the minds of paranoid policymakers jeopardize the Panama Canal. For these reasons US officials did their best

[1] Franklin E. Morales to Charles Evans Hughes, August 27, 1923, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1923*, (hereafter *FRUS*, with appropriate year, volume, and page numbers) vol. 2, p. 437. For more on Hughes see: Merlo J. Pusey, *Charles Evans Hughes* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951); and Betty Glad, *Charles Evans Hughes and the Illusions of Innocence: A Study in American Diplomacy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966).

to keep an explosive political scene from developing into civil war. In the end, US policy proved impotent to control events in Honduras and the country erupted into violence. During the same period, Carías had his own goals in mind, and he did his best to achieve them even when they differed from those of the United States. In the process of pursuing his career, Carías defied, threatened, and manipulated the US government. His main goal was becoming president. To accomplish this he refused to compromise with his fellow presidential candidates, continuously threatened revolution, and lobbied the US government to promote personally advantageous policies.

This chapter argues during the Honduran election crisis of 1923 and 1924 the United States and Carías had a turbulent and difficult relationship. Far from favoring Carías as a stabilizing force in Honduran affairs, members of the US government viewed Carías originally with impartiality and indifference, but as events during the twelve-month period in question unfolded Carías gradually became the greatest opponent to US policy in Honduras and therefore the US government's adversary.

## A Brief History of US-Honduran Relations Prior to the Honduran Elections of 1923

The United States' relationship with Central America during the nineteenth century was sporadic and distracted, and Honduras, more than any of its neighbors, experienced a kind of mildly ominous neglect from the United States throughout most of the period. This is not to say the United States and Honduras did not interact, but their exchanges were far from the fiery and developed relationship they would develop into during the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, the two countries' interaction during the century would have a decidedly imperialistic tone that would further develop in the succeeding decades.

The first major interaction between the two countries took place in the late 1840s amidst the clamor of Manifest Destiny and the expansion of the United States through North America. Many in the United States called for the isthmus's annexation alongside that of Mexico, but no significant changes to the US-Honduran relationship took place until Great Britain appropriated La Mosquitia region of Nicaragua. Fearing the augmenting power of Great Britain in the Americas, the Polk Administration attempted to unite the Central American republics into a single stronger nation that could withstand the pressures of the United States' rival. Unsurprisingly, the Polk Administration's efforts ultimately failed, but the United States and Honduras did sign a treaty of friendship as a result of negotiations and the threatening geopolitical environment.[2]

After the discovery of gold in California and the expansion of the United States from coast to coast, the United States again turned its attention to Honduras, but this time as a possible location for a transisthmian railroad route. In the early 1850s, US Chargé d'Affaires Ephraim George Squier proposed linking the Caribbean Sea to the Pacific Ocean by a roughly 150-mile railroad across the country. Although the project eventually fizzled without a single mile of track ever being laid, the Honduran Congress agreed to the project, and the United States provided $20,000 for its construction.[3]

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[2] Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), pp. 28-29.

[3] Instead of building the railroad, the Honduran Congress used the US money to finance a war with Guatemala. The best discussion of Squier's attempt to build a trans-Honduran railroad can be found in Charles L. Stansifer, "E. George Squier and the Honduras Interoceanic Railroad Project," *Hispanic American Historical Review* vol. 46 no. 1 (1966): pp. 1-27. Unfortunately for Honduras, the government attempted to complete the railroad and contracted the project out to a British firm. In order to finance the massive endeavor the British investors loaned Honduras six million pounds. After much swindling and thievery even that sum fell short, and the railroad was abandoned after having laid only a few miles of track. However, the interest on this debt continued to compound and plagued Honduras well into the twentieth century and is addressed in chapter five of this dissertation.

During the 1850s, Honduras was again on the United States' radar. In 1852, the United States sided with Honduras in its sovereignty dispute with Great Britain over ownership of the Bay Islands, which eventually helped put the islands back under the control of Tegucigalpa.[4] A few years later, Honduras drew the attention of the US filibusters who saw it as a possible colony and eventual slave state. The exploits of William Walker in his failed attempt to conquer the country demanded the attention of the United States for months, but it was not until the 1880s that the two countries' governments had any significant exchanges. For the remainder of the century, the US-Honduran relationship began to intensify as a result of both parties seeking a potentially lucrative and beneficial association. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Honduran Liberal Party's desire to bring development to the country through export-led growth through the mining industry, and the explosion of the banana on the US food market created a new economic environment for the US and Honduran governments to interact in. Now that the United States was profiting from these two industries, the US government took a much keener interest in Honduran political affairs.

Having defeated the Spanish in 1898 and begun construction of the Panama Canal in 1904, the United States found itself a major power in the Caribbean Basin. From 1901 to 1933, US troops landed in Caribbean nations a total of thirty-two times. Extended US occupations took place in Cuba, Panama, Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic.[5] Economic domination was encouraged by the State Department, which began a concerted effort to replace European loans in the region with loans from US banks, a process commonly called "Dollar Diplomacy." US policy in the region was characterized by the desire to encourage stability in order to keep

[4] Thomas M. Leonard, "Central America: The Search for Economic Development," in *United States-Latin American Relations, 1850-1903*, ed. Leonard (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), pp. 81-106.

[5] Richard F. Grimmett, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2009," January 27, 2010, Congressional Research Service. CRS Report for Congress 7-5700, RL32170, pp. 7-10.

foreign competitors out of the region and provide US business with a climate conducive to profits. With national security, stability, and economic interests as motivating factors the US State and War Departments gave Honduras an impressive amount of attention in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Between 1903 and 1925, Honduras hosted US troops on its soil a total of seven times. [6] Plagued by chronic political instability Honduras's frequent coups, revolutions, and social unrest gave the United States numerous excuses to intervene in its affairs.

In 1907, Nicaraguan President José Santos Zelaya invaded Honduras for the purpose of overthrowing President Manuel Bonilla. Fearing Zelaya's ambitions to control Central America would destabilize the region and jeopardize US business interests, the United States reacted by sending US marines to guard its interests in Puerto Cortés and send a strong message to Zelaya to cease his aggression.[7] In March of 1907, the Nicaraguan Army together with several hundred Honduran dissidents occupied the capital city of Tegucigalpa, and sent President Bonilla into exile aboard a US gunship off the Honduran coast. Alarmed by the situation, the United States together with Mexico called for a conference and an agreement that would restore order amongst the Central American nations. The fighting quickly came to an end, and official representatives to the ensuing Central American Peace Conference of 1907 did their best to make sure violence would not return. The Conference was held in the final months of 1907 in Washington D.C. and resulted in the General Treaty of Peace and Amity. In the treaty the five Central American republics agreed to settle their disputes in a Central American Court of Justice, and decided Honduras would remain neutral in affairs of the isthmus. Additionally, the countries agreed not to allow foreign political exiles to use their territories as bases for revolutionary movements, or

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[6] Leonard, *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), pp. 1-3.

[7] Tim Merrill, *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1995), pp. 20-21.

to recognize any government that came to power as a result of a coup or revolution unless legally elected representatives of the citizenry agreed to constitutionally restructure the country. These promises were made with the hope their adoption would discourage revolution and warfare between signatories.[8] The United States took a particular interest in Honduran involvement and neutrality in the treaty, because it was anxious to see stability a fixture of Honduran society.

Not long after the General Treaty of Peace and Amity was signed, the United States attempted to directly intervene in Honduran financial affairs for the avowed purpose of providing the country with economic and political stability. The Taft Administration was alarmed by the massive $120 million debt Honduras had accumulated chiefly from British banks. Therefore, Washington attempted to arrange for a customs receivership to be employed along with a US refinancing of the British owed debt. It was hoped that by issuing new bonds at 5% interest Honduras could repay its loans and ensure that British meddling in the country would be kept to a minimum.[9] The proposal was met with significant opposition in the Honduran Congress, because it would have made any Honduran appointment to the customs receivership subject to US approval and provided the United States with the ability to regulate Honduran tariffs.[10]

In 1911, the greatest threat to the Taft Administration's dollar diplomacy plan in Honduras was not the Honduran Congress, which voted against it 32 to 4, but rather US citizen and banana baron Samuel Zemurray. Zemurray opposed the customs receivership because it would have prevented him from importing machinery and other materials needed for the

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[8] Raymond L. Buell, "The United States and Central American Stability," *Foreign Policy Reports* vol. 7 no. 9 (July 8, 1931): pp. 165-167.

[9] Dana G. Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 117-142; and Merrill, pp. 21-22. For an excellent discussion of the diplomatic career of Murno see: Mark T. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 36-38.

[10] Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 10.

production and transportation of bananas duty-free. Rather than see his business aspirations struggle against regularly imposed tariffs, Zemurray decided to overthrow President Miguel Davila's government and install one more agreeable to his goals. Although most of the evidence is circumstantial, almost all commentators are confident Zemurray provided Bonilla with sufficient funds to hire US American mercenaries and war supplies from throughout the Western Caribbean. The now famous story of Guy "Machine Gun" Malony and Lee Christmas setting sail from New Orleans in a private yacht laden with war supplies is common fodder for those who see Honduras as the archetypal "banana republic" and victim of US imperialism. President Davila vigorously protested the ensuing conflict, but despite his constant complaints the United States decided to support Zemurray's rebels when Davila proved unable to garner sufficient domestic support.[11]

Besides failing to prevent the illegal overthrow of President Davila, the United States landed soldiers at Puerto Cortés, thus giving the rebels a significant beachhead and denying the Honduran government much needed revenue. The US commander claimed he gave the order to protect US American lives and property, but in reality neither were in any danger. President Davila sued for peace and agreed to allow US representatives to choose the interim-President

[11] Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean 1900-1921* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 225-230; and Thomas L. Karnes, *Tropical Enterprise: The Standard Fruit and Steamship Company in Latin America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), pp. 42-47. Karnes's work is also an excellent study of the Vaccaro brothers early business dealings in Honduras. For more on Guy "Machine Gun" Malony, Lee Christmas, and other thugs like them see Lester D. Langley and Thomas D. Schoonover, *The Banana Men: American Mercenaries and Entrepreneurs in Central America, 1880-1930* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995); Hermann Bacher Deutsch, *The Incredible Yanqui: The Career of Lee Christmas* (New York: Longmans, 1931); and Guillermo Yuscarán, *Gringos in Honduras: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (Tegucigalpa: Nuevo Sol Publicaciones, 1995). A good popular history of Lee Christmas's career in Honduras and his impact on its history is Lucius Shepard's, *With Christmas in Honduras: Men, Myths, and Miscreants in Modern Central America* (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2007).

until elections could be held. When Bonilla was elected president a few months later, he promptly provided the Zemurray's Cuyamel Fruit Company with lavish concessions.[12]

The next major episode in which the United States found itself deeply involved in the affairs of Honduras took place in 1917. For several years, Cuyamel Fruit Company had been laying railroad track to service its ever-augmenting banana fields. Although many of Cuyamel's railroad permits were acquired through bribery or intimidation, problems were avoided because the Honduran government was allied with the company against United Fruit and its ally Guatemala. Difficulty only arose when Cuyamel began constructing railroad track in frontier territory disputed by the Hondurans and Guatemalans. Encouraged by their respective US banana companies, Honduras and Guatemala faced off in an episode that appeared would end in war, but when both countries sent troops into the disputed territory the United States pressured them to mediate their differences. Hostilities were avoided due to the United States' intervention, but the disagreement was unresolved until the United States pressured the quarreling parties to reach an agreement in 1930. US minister to Honduras John Ewing claimed the entire affair was the result of a jealous rivalry between Cuyamel and the United Fruit Company, and neither Guatemala nor Honduras ever wanted to go to war over the issue.[13]

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[12] William Krehm, *Democracies and Tyrannies of the Caribbean* (Westport, Conn: Lawrence Hill & Co, 1984), pp. 81-82.

[13] Paul J. Dosal, *Doing Business with the Dictators: A Political History of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899-1944* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1993), pp. 75-90; and Mario R. Argueta, *Bananos y Politica: Samuel Zemurray y la Cuyamel Fruit Company en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: EDITORIAL UNIVERSITARIA, 1989), pp. 145-170. For more information regarding the United Fruit Company and Zemurray's exploitation of Honduras see Charles David Kepner and Jay Henry Soothill, *The Banana Empire; A Case Study of Economic Imperialism* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1935). A well-written overview of Honduran economic development can be found in: Douglas A. Kincaid, "Dynamic Dependence: An Interpretation of Political and Economic Change in Contemporary Honduras" (Masters Thesis: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1979). An interesting history of the banana industry shortly after the tenure of Carías's presidency can be found in: Robert MacCameron, *Bananas, Labor, and Politics in Honduras, 1954-1963* (Syracuse, New York: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1983).

Only two years later in 1919, the United States again intervened in Honduran domestic affairs when it opposed Honduran President Francisco Bertrand's efforts to rig the country's presidential election. When El Salvador sided with Bertrand against Honduran General López Gutiérrez and his allies in Guatemala and Nicaragua, the United States decided it needed to intervene in order to avoid a major war on the isthmus. The United States gave Bertrand the distinct impression direct intervention by US forces was a possibility should he not step down and allow elections to take place. After a disgraced Bertrand fled the country, the United States led negotiations for creating an interim government while free elections were arranged. Although the elections that followed were rigged and brought General López Gutiérrez to the presidency, the United States was satisfied violence was avoided and the new government had the appearance of legitimacy.[14]

The next few years in Honduras proved to be extremely politically unstable and instrumental in laying the foundation for US-Carías relations. Between 1920 and 1923, "seventeen uprisings or attempted coups" took place, which created a situation that Washington felt it could no longer remain uninvolved in.[15] In 1922, many in the State Department believed exiled political factions working in states adjacent to their country of origin used their relative security as émigrés to launch attacks against their rivals back home. When Nicaraguan officials suggested their country and Honduras enter into talks to deal with the border issues, the US government was more than happy to encourage their efforts. Under the patronage of the United States, the presidents of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras agreed to meet aboard the USS

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[14] Buell, "The United States and Central American Stability," pp. 184-185. It is interesting to note that rather than siding with the established government of President Bertrand, the United States supported the revolutionary forces thus showing its commitment to the democratic process in Honduras.

[15] Victor Bulmer-Thomas, "Honduras since 1930," *The Cambridge History of Latin America* vol. VII, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 283-316; and Merrill, pp. 24-26.

*Tacoma* off the Pacific coast of Honduras.[16] As a result of the conference aboard the *Tacoma,* representatives of the three nations agreed that the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1907 remained in effect despite years of all parties generally ignoring it, and that a new treaty should be written during meetings in Washington later that year.

At the beginning of the Washington conference, Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes delivered an opening speech to representatives of the attending governments that outlined the position of the United States in Central American affairs. It was Hughes's desire the Central Americans realize the United States sought no policy other than "to promote the interests of peace and to assist you, in such manner as you may welcome, to solve your problems to your own advantage."[17] While Hughes's comments did little to assuage the fears of the Central American delegates, his words and the existence of the conference helped to reinforce the idea the United States' main goal in its relationship in Central America was the promotion of stability.

After serious political wrangling and numerous distractions from the main purpose of redrafting the 1907 treaty, in February of 1923, a new General Treaty of Peace and Amity was signed. The new treaty called for the continuation of the main 1907 treaty's clauses, but additionally included an agreement that no secret arrangements could be made between signatories. More importantly, the representatives agreed that no government under any circumstances would be recognized should it come to power as a result of a coup, revolution, or extralegal means.[18]

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[16] John E. Ramer to Secretary of State, July 25, 1922, *FRUS*, *1922*, vol. 1, pp. 417-418. It should be noted representatives of Honduras and Nicaragua requested the conference be held on neutral ground and "requested permission" to hold it aboard a US ship.

[17] Quoted in "Nations Confer to Assure Peace," *Boys' Life* vol. 13 no. 3 (March 1923): p. 25.

[18] Buell, "The United States and Central American Revolutions," *Foreign Policy Reports* vol. 7 no. 10 (July 22, 1931), pp. 190-197; and Karnes, pp. 89-105.

The Honduran reaction to the 1923 treaty was extremely negative and representative of a people resentful of US interference in their affairs. This is not to say the Hondurans were completely and wholeheartedly critical of the United States. Some Hondurans were willing to defend the United States' presence in Caribbean affairs. For example, Dr. Salvador Córdova, a Honduran delegate to the 1922-1923 Central American conference, defended the Monroe Doctrine for protecting his country against foreigners, arguing that if the Doctrine did not exist then his country would have been "dismembered."[19] Still, the treaty evoked strong emotions in other Hondurans. Perhaps the most vocal Honduran to speak out against the treaty was the intellectual Froylán Turcios. Turcios criticized the treaty for what he saw as direct US intervention in his country's affairs.[20] In his well-researched master's thesis, Daniel James Jonathan Ross argues the treaty invoked Honduran resentment based on "the assumption by the United States of a 'moral duty' to interfere in their affairs."[21] The treaty was apparently so unpopular the Honduran Congress failed to act on the treaty until 1924, and then only after a revolution and the landing of US marines.[22]

US reaction to the treaty was extremely positive and optimistic, and demonstrated the general US desire for peace and stability to reign in Central America. *The Youth's Companion* called the treaty "A Diplomatic Achievement" for the "hot-blooded little countries" of Central

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[19] Salvador Córdova, "The Meaning of the Monroe Doctrine to Honduras," in *The Centenary of the Monroe Doctrine...: Addresses Delivered at the Sessions Commemorative of the Centenary of the Monroe Doctrine, Philadelphia, Pa. November 30th and December 1st 1923* (Philadelphia: the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1924), pp. 32-33.

[20] Buell, "The United States and Central American Revolutions," p. 192.

[21] Daniel James Jonathan Ross, "The Honduran Revolution of 1924 and American Intervention" (Master's Thesis, University of Florida, 1969), p. 74.

[22] Buell, "The United States and Central American Revolutions," p. 193.

America, and maintained it would establish a "real peace" in the region.[23] The *Outlook* stated "Revolutions have been relegated to the past in Central America," and praised Washington for leading the way toward regional stability.[24] There was a real sense if only the Central Americans, and particularly the Hondurans, could abide by the rule of law the region could finally see peace and begin to prosper.

**The Election Season of 1923**

As the merits of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 were debated, the treaty was tested later that same year. The Honduran elections of 1923 were a significant source of optimism for the Honduran people and members of the State Department who saw them as an opportunity to finally establish a legitimate and working democracy in the country. The presidency of López Gutiérrez was set to terminate on February 1, 1924, and the election planned for October 28, 1923 was supposed to represent a new era of peace and stability as promised by the recently signed treaty. In early 1923, the hopes of all were quickly dashed when the Honduran Liberal Party split into three factions respectively led by Dr. Juan Angel Arias, Dr. Vicente Mejía Colindres, and Dr. Policarpo Bonilla. Each factional leader decided to run for president creating a division in the Liberal Party's presidential votes. This situation made Carías, the head of the National Party, the presidential favorite, but it also created a political crisis where no candidate garnered enough support to successfully control the country or win the presidential election with the required majority of votes. The ensuing power struggle lasted into 1924 and

[23] "A Diplomatic Achievement," *The Youth's Companion* vol. 97 no. 13 (March 29, 1923): p. 192.

[24] "Central America Forbids Revolutions," *Outlook*, March 7, 1923, p. 431. For other examples of US praise for the 1923 treaty see: "Central American Peace Pact Signed," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 8, 1923, p. 5; William Hard, "Charles Evans Hughes; A Pan-American Statesman," *The Review of Reviews* vol. 77 no. 1 (January 1928): pp. 36-48; "Central American Peace," *Washington Post*, February 8, 1923, p. 6; "Central Americans Write New Chapter In Their Histories," *The Sun*, February 8, 1923, p. 9; and "Central Americans Adopt Arms Limit," *New York Times*, February 8, 1923, p. 4.

eventually led to Carías starting the bloodiest conflict in Honduran history.[25]

As early as February 1923, there were strong fears the October elections would be fraudulent and rumors abounded revolution could break out at any time. President López Gutiérrez was considered a spineless pawn of Carlos Lagos, the brother-in-law of the President and onetime Military Chief of the North Coast, and Angel Zúñiga Huete, the Minister of Government. The Honduran political establishment, the State Department, and the US military feared Lagos and Zúñiga Huete would try to maintain their stranglehold on the Honduran Executive by either forcing a candidate on the electorate or manipulating the ballot box. The State Department believed Carías was the "people's choice" and would easily win a fair election if it could be secured, but few had faith it could be produced.[26]

All parties, including the United States, were troubled by the presence of so many strong presidential candidates, because in order for a candidate to win office an absolute majority of votes was needed. Months before the election even took place, observers were well aware of the likelihood no candidate would receive the necessary majority. If such an event took place many Hondurans and members of the State Department believed the presidential hopefuls would seek the office through violence. Assistant Chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs Dana G. Munro feared the Honduran situation could easily spin out of control and "create a situation very

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[25] For an extremely biased yet informative account of the 1923 Honduran presidential campaign and 1924 Honduran civil war see: Lucas Paredes, *Biografía del dr. y gral. Tiburcio Carías Andino* (Tegucigalpa: Tipo-litografía Ariston, 1938), pp. 79-101. Paredes's book lacks analysis and is a hagiographic record of Carías's rule, but his work offers many details and claims difficult to locate elsewhere. A decent overview of the state of political affairs in Central American and a very brief overview of the Honduras 1923 election season from the period can be found in: Herman G. James, "Latin America in 1923," *The American Political Science Review* vol. 18 no. 3 (August 1924): pp. 541-552.

[26] Morales to Secretary of State, February 22, 1923, 815.00/2545, RG 59, NA; Stanley L. Wilkinson to Secretary of State, February 13, 1923, 815.00/2542, RG 59, NA; Alexander K. Sloan to Secretary of State, March 8, 1923, 815.00/2548, RG 59, NA; Sloan to Secretary of State, March 20, 1923, 815.00/2552, RG 59, NA; and Military Intelligence Division (MID) 2657-P-95, July 6, 1923, "Resume of Political Situation in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

embarrassing to the [State] Department." In order to maintain peace and stability in the region and safeguard the recently signed General Treaty of Peace and Amity, Munro suggested to his colleagues in a divisional memorandum that by holding free elections the threat of revolution "would greatly diminish," but he later added "I have very little doubt that serious trouble will start."[27]

For both US and Honduran observers, the possibility of free elections was a distant one, because the antagonizing actions of the Lagos faction encouraged Carías to revolt.[28] By early 1923, it was a well-known fact Nationalist Party members were regularly harassed, beaten, and even murdered by members of the Liberal Party loyal to Lagos and Zúñiga Huete.[29] Nationalist Party presses were shut down, and their publishers imprisoned by government officials.[30] The Lagos faction had nothing to gain by free elections because it knew it could not field a candidate that could legitimately defeat Carías, so in order to prevent one from taking place Lagos's followers tried to provoke Carías and the Nationalist Party to revolt through violence and harassment.

While US policymakers feared the meddling of the Lagos family and Zúñiga Huete, they were more concerned about Carías. Carías openly discussed his willingness to use revolution as an option to secure the presidency. In March, Carías sent Franklin E. Morales a letter informing the US Legation of the intimidation and mistreatment his supporters endured throughout the

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[27] Munro to Francis M. White, February 19, 1923, 815.00/2529, RG 59, NA, cited in Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "A Case Study of United States Support of Free Elections in Central America," p. 218; and Munro to White, Memorandum, April 4, 1923, 815.00/2553, RG 59, NA. See also: Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933*, p. 127.

[28] Munro to White, Memorandum, March 27, 1923, 815.00/2550, RG 59, NA.

[29] Morales to Secretary of State, March 8, 1923, 815.00/2550, RG 59, NA.

[30] *El Debate*, June14, 1923, p. 1; and "What Happened to Mark the Last Issue of 'El Debate,'" *El Debate*, June 21, 1923, pp. 1-2.

country, and warned if such acts continued "an armed conflict between the Government forces and the National Party" might result. Carías stated he made the Department aware of his position in order "to be excused of all responsibility" should a revolution break out.[31] Morales never considered Carías's threats as merely bluffs; instead, Morales anticipated and regularly warned Washington Carías might lead a revolution at any moment.[32]

Evidence suggests Carías was not the United States' favored presidential candidate. Carías was made head of the Nationalist Party not by a mandate of the United States or US fruit company, but rather the 1921 chance death of former National Party leader Alberto Membreño and his own personal political prowess. In June of 1922, high-ranking members of the Nationalist Party gathered in Comayagüela and decided Carías and Dr. Miguel Paz Baraona would represent the Party in the upcoming 1923 elections.[33] Both Carías and his running mate Paz Baraona were known to be popular in the rural hinterlands and accepted by the Army. Additionally, Carías was considered to be a fierce Honduran patriot and someone who opposed foreign meddling in his country's affairs. A longtime revolutionary, lawyer, mathematics professor, and onetime Governor of the Department of Cortés, Carías lacked any significant political experience, but his chances for reaching the presidency were high due to the Liberal Party's split and his support in the extensive Honduran countryside.[34]

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[31] Carías Andino to Morales, n.d., 1923, enclosed in Morales to Secretary of State, March 31, 1923, 815.00/2556, RG 59, NA. It is worth noting several respected US histories of Honduras inaccurately refer to Franklin E. Morales' name as "Frank T. Morales."

[32] Morales to Secretary of State, March 15, 1923, 815.00/2553, RG 59, NA.

[33] Paredes, p. 45; and Ross, p. 89.

[34] Charles W. Hackett, "The Background of the Revolution in Honduras," *Review of* Reviews vol. 69 no. 4 (1924): pp. 390-396. Professor Hackett of the University of Texas called Carías a man of "no marked ability," "uncouth," and "noted for his stubbornness" (p. 392). See also: MID 2657-P-96, "Events leading to present political conditions in Honduras," July 6, 1923, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

One of Carías's accomplished biographers, Thomas J. Dodd, agrees with the idea Carías enjoyed popular support throughout the country, and that his political power came predominantly from the masses rather than the US fruit companies or government. In his short and analytically reserved first chapter, Dodd explores the sources of Carías's political might and gives numerous examples of Carías's early political career that made him appealing to the common man. Dodd demonstrates from an early age Carías revealed a concern for the laboring class when he wrote a master's thesis dealing with how mechanization contributed to unemployment. Dodd also associates Carías with the agricultural masses by describing his family's connection to the soil rather than the elite political class of Tegucigalpa. When Carías entered politics, Dodd feels he behaved in a respectable manner by thinking nationally instead of locally. In Dodd's interpretation, Carías was a competent patriot and government official who did his best to defend his country against foreign powers and provide for its citizens.[35]

In the 1923 Honduran presidential crisis, the United States maintained a clear and consistent position of neutrality amongst the presidential candidates, and plainly pursued a policy of peace and stability for both Honduras and the Central American region. Even the "anti-American" periodical *Los Sucesos* argued the United States acted without preference and showed "no special or vehement interest" in any particular candidate.[36] The last thing members of the US State Department wanted was for Honduras to descend into a civil war that would threaten to draw in its neighbors and contribute to an already chronic tradition of chaos and instability. The US Minister in Honduras, Franklin E. Morales, was instructed by Hughes not to "become involved in any way in negotiations or intrigues among the various presidential candidates," but

[35] Thomas J. Dodd, *Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), pp. 9-22.

[36] "Distorted Viewpoints," *Los Sucesos*, May 31, 1923, p. 2. For more on the United States' neutrality see: Argueta, *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1989), p. 28.

also that the State Department had "no objection" to Morales "exerting a proper influence in a very impartial manner to dissuading the various factions from seeking a solution of the electoral situation by force instead of by constitutional methods."[37] Encouraging the candidates to seek a path towards peaceful settlement would prove a difficult task.

The United States' emphasis on neutrality and its behavior throughout 1923 and early 1924 in Honduras provides evidence for those scholars who maintain the country's policy toward the Caribbean Basin was undergoing a revision during the early 1920s. According to these scholars, by the inauguration of the Coolidge Administration the United States recognized aggressive Wilsonian interventionism was not only costly but also contributed to significant anti-Americanism throughout the hemisphere.[38] Historian Joseph Smith asserts the Republican administrations of the 1920s "pursued a less forceful policy towards Latin America" than their forerunners, and that to these officials sending in the marines at any sign of trouble seemed unwarranted. Smith calls this the United States' "conciliatory policy" even though it "was not intended to signal an abandonment of American national interests."[39] Martin Needler supports this notion and contends, "The more extreme manifestations of U.S. intervention were gradually dismantled and abandoned during the twenties and early thirties."[40] In sum, while the United

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[37] Hughes to Morales, October 26, 1923, *FRUS, 1923*, vol. 2, p. 448. For more on the neutrality of the United States and the presidential candidates in the 1923 Honduran election campaign see: William Phillips, Memorandum of Conversation with Córdova, May 12, 1923, 815.00/2582, RG 59, NA; and Phillips, Memorandum of Conversation with Córdova, May 15, 1923, 815.00/2580, RG 59, NA. According to Munro, Morales was a political appointee from Atlantic City, New Jersey with no credentials (Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics*, p. 127).

[38] Leonard, *Central America and the United States,* p. 79.

[39] Joseph Smith, *The United States and Latin America: A History of American Diplomacy, 1776-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 85.

[40] Martin C. Needler, *The United States and the Latin American Revolution* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972), p. 18. For more on the Republican administrations of the 1920s see: Kenneth J. Grieb, *The Latin American policy of Warren G. Harding* (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1976); and Joseph S. Tulchin, *The Aftermath of War after World War I and US Policy toward Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 1971).

States moved towards better relations with its southerly neighbors by interfering less frequently, it still had not abandoned influencing their domestic affairs to its own benefit. Although these changes are often overshadowed by the landing and stationing of marines and the State Department's meddling throughout the Caribbean, they nonetheless foreshadow the impulses that would go on to provide support for the Good Neighbor policy.[41]

The State Department's first major disagreement with Carías took place in April and May of 1923, and was a forewarning of how the relationship would develop for nearly two years. Originally uncertain about the best course of action to alleviate the crisis and facilitate a peaceful transference of power, State Department officials were open to several policy options. After originally backing open elections in Honduras, Munro then suggested whatever the Department decided upon that it should offer its "good offices to bring about a settlement between the various factions."[42] By April, Munro finally began to develop the opinion the best way to avoid violence in Honduras was through "a free election or a compromise which will result in a constitutional transfer of the Government." In other words, Munro was uncertain about what to do, but open to a compromise government that included the approval of all parties as long as the agreement could be considered legal.[43] Theodore P. Wright, Jr. points out that five years prior to this Munro had already advocated "establishing an administration which fairly represents the best elements in the community," and that it was only reasonable he would advocate it again in

[41] For more on early-Good Neighborism see: Bryce Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

[42] Munro to White, Memorandum, March 27, 1923, 815.00/2550, RG 59, NA.

[43] Munro to White, Memorandum, April 4, 1923, 815.00/2553, RG 59, NA.

Honduras.[44] However, Munro's indecision in early 1923 shows US policy in Honduras was far from predetermined, and is better described as unsystematic.

Recognizing the then current structure of the Honduran political environment would lead to war if elections were held, the United States moved toward supporting a compromise candidate that would be supported by all of the candidates in the upcoming elections. Hughes instructed Morales he "should make it perfectly clear to all concerned that your interest is simply in bringing about an arrangement satisfactory to all parties and calculated to assist in the maintenance of peace." To this end, Hughes thought "it might be helpful should all of the presidential candidates reach an agreement which would diminish the danger of revolution."[45]

Throughout April and early May several meetings were held involving the Honduran government, the US Legation, and the presidential candidates to try and find a compromise candidate, but negotiations were continuously thwarted by Carías's desire to seek the presidency through elections. US military attaché Harry M. Gwynn was so pessimistic about how the candidates were conducting themselves at the conferences he called them "a waste of time" because he thought they only provided the politicians "an opportunity to appear altruistic."[46] Morales did his best to appeal to the patriotic sentiments of the parties by reminding the delegates if an agreement was not reached violence would doubtlessly return to Honduras.[47] A number of times the delegates came agonizingly close to reaching an accord, but time and again

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[44] Munro, *The Five Republics of Central America: Their Political and Economic Development and their Relation with the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), p. 310; and Wright, pp. 212-223.

[45] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 28, 1923, 815.00/2561, RG 59, NA. See also: Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), May 4, 1923, 815.00/2569.

[46] MID 2657-P-96, "Events leading to present political conditions in Honduras," July 6, 1923, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[47] Morales to Secretary of State, May 1, 1923, 815.00/2566, RG 59, NA.

Carías thwarted the proposed plan by claiming the suggested compromise candidate was unacceptable. After one assembly, Morales let his frustrations show when he informed Hughes "Absolutely nothing was accomplished."[48] On May 5, Morales reported back to Washington there was no chance of Carías ever withdrawing from the race unless it was in favor of one of his "partisans."[49] Carías knew he stood the best chance of winning in the planned October elections, and if he settled on a compromise candidate his Nationalist Party supporters would continuously be harassed and mistreated by members of the Liberal Party, and he would not be president. If he failed to defend his party's interest he stood to lose their support and then would never reach his career aspirations.

Even in the unpredictable political confusion of April and early May 1923, Munro's plan for a government representative of all parties nearly came to fruition. After serving as a mediator between the four candidates and trying to arrange an agreement based on Munro's plan, Morales was convinced Carías was "the only one holding out."[50] Concerned the best opportunity to salvage the situation was slipping away due to Carías's personal ambitions, Hughes instructed Morales "to inform Carias [*sic*] informally and orally that the Government of the United States…would be gratified if it were possible for the various political factions…to reach an agreement."[51] However, Carías did not bend to US pressure; instead, it strengthened his resolve, and he made it clear to Morales that under no conditions would he withdraw his candidacy.[52] Morales reported to Hughes that Carías was "well aware of his strength [and] it would be next to

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[48] Morales to Secretary of State, May 3, 1923, 815.00/2576, RG 59, NA.

[49] Hughes to American Legation, May 4, 1923, 815.00/2569, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, May 5, 1923, 815.00/2570, RG 59, NA.

[50] Morales to Secretary of State, April 7, 1923, 815.00/2561, RG 59, NA.

[51] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 28, 1923, 815.00/2561, RG 59, NA.

[52] Morales to Secretary of State, May 30, 1923, 815.00/2588, RG 59, NA.

impossible to have him withdraw from the campaign."[53] Carías evidently knew his domestic power and was therefore unafraid of defying the United States' designs.

Due to Carías's objections to a compromise candidate, Morales decided to overstep his mandate from the Department and focused on a second and less appealing plan to unify the Liberal Party to oppose Carías. US officials knew the possibility of unifying the Liberal candidates was unlikely, but it would also "diminish the danger of a revolution."[54] Eager to avoid hostilities, Morales and the Chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs Francis M. White felt the idea of unifying the Liberals would help level the playing field and thus encourage the development of the democratic process. These men knew that encouraging the candidates to withdraw from the race voluntarily would be problematic, but also splitting the election four ways would be even more difficult to solve amicably. Even with their lack of faith in the possibility of a unity Liberal candidate, Morales and White encouraged the Honduran politicians to put aside their differences because they believed "The longer the intervals between bloodshed the better will be the economic condition of the country," and that eventually the Hondurans would come to the conclusion that "insurrection" and violence were not in their best interests.[55] Morales and White must have known if the Liberals adopted their plan Carías might lose the election. The fact they proposed and backed the plan anyway shows their lack of affinity for Carías.

On May 7, Morales hosted another conference for members of the Liberal Party to try and find a candidate that could unify the party to oppose Carías. Morales reported back to

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[53] Morales to Secretary of State, May 10, 1923, 815.00/2581, RG 59, NA.

[54] Munro to White, Memorandum, April 24, 1923, 815.00/2629, RG 59, NA.

[55] White to Phillips, April 26, 1923, 815.00/2630, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Hughes, May 13, 1923, *FRUS*, *1923*, vol. 2, p. 429. Further discussion on the State Department's plans to defuse the situation can be found in Wright, pp. 212-223.

Hughes it was "Impossible to agree on a compromise candidate," and that the contenders preferred "to go to the polls" if they were able to "obtain a guarantee of free elections from the President, which he said he would give." However, none of the delegates believed free elections were possible because they felt President López Gutiérrez was under the control of the Lagos family. It was generally believed the Lagos family would force López Gutiérrez to field a candidate of their choice and in the process rig the elections so their candidate would be victorious. Even Morales believed the President's promises for legitimate elections were meaningless. Morales wrote Hughes, "The President is like an infant influenced by the Lagos family," and does whatever his wife tells him to do, which was to do the bidding of the Lagos faction.[56]

Upon learning Morales had attempted to unify the Liberal Party under one candidate, Hughes became irritated and drafted a blunt telegram informing Morales he had overstepped his instructions and endangered the neutrality of the United States. Although Morales and White showed themselves to be in favor of unifying the Liberal Party against Carías for the purposes of supporting democracy, Hughes issued no order to pursue such a course. Hughes informed Morales:

> the Department desires to avoid creating the impression that the United States is taking part in negotiations having as their object the unification of the Liberal party or the selection of one candidate to oppose Carias [*sic*]. The interest of this Government is simply in bringing about an agreement satisfactory to all parties and calculated to assist in the maintenance of peace, and it is willing to use its good offices and to have you very

[56] Morales to Secretary of State, May 8, 1923, 815.00/2571, RG 59, NA. Faith that López Gutiérrez was capable of delivering free elections remained elusive throughout the remainder of 1923. For more on this see: Morales to Secretary of State, August 30, 1923, 815.00/2686, RG 59, NA. Harry M. Gwynn agreed with Morales and called López Gutiérrez "a good-intentioned, old man, almost senile whose domestic and official life is dominated completely by his wife, Doña Añita" (MID 2657-P-95, July 6, 1923, "Resume of Political Situation in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA).

> discreetly use yours, without making any commitment of any nature, to assist in bringing about an agreement among all parties and all candidates for the presidency.[57]

While Hughes wanted peace in Honduras, he was not yet willing to jeopardize US neutrality in Honduran political affairs. This shows evidence of a split in State Department thinking, because although Morales and White were prepared to see Carías lose the election in the interests of peace, Hughes and Munro were less inclined to do so if such an action showed a positive bias toward the Liberal Party. This divide in the Department's policymakers demonstrates some officials were exhibiting a desire to promote a policy of noninterference. It was these kinds of new and less intrusive ideas that would serve as the foundation for the Good Neighbor policy, and that were already coming into conflict with a more antiquated willingness to interfere in the affairs of Central America. Whatever the case, Carías's welfare was far from US officials minds; it was stability they were after, not seeing any particular candidate win the presidency.

On May 26, claiming he desired peace for his country, Dr. Colindres withdrew from the presidential race thereby strengthening Carías's position and forcing the United States to restructure its approach to reach a negotiated settlement amongst the candidates. Upon learning of Colindres's departure from the race, Carías quickly sensed an opportunity to increase his chances of achieving a victory in the October elections. Carías made known to the delegates he would not follow Colindres's lead and withdraw, and instead suggested Bonilla and Arias should come to an arrangement where only one of them would oppose him at the polls.[58] Carías realized if he could convince the United States to support free elections he stood an excellent chance of winning, and he did his best to force the United States into a corner so it would do so. In a straightforward letter to Morales, Carías tried to persuade US officials to abandon their policy of

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[57] Hughes to American Legation, May 15, 1923, 815.00/2574, RG 59, NA.

[58] Morales to Secretary of State, May 30, 1923, 815.00/2588, RG 59, NA.

supporting a compromise candidate that would then be legitimized by elections. Instead, Carías argued free elections independent of a power sharing agreement were the best way to assure the confidence of the general public in the next administration, and the best course of action available to prevent a revolution from taking place. He further warned the United States if it did not back free elections "fraud would give rise to civil war."[59] Morales called this Carías's "ultimatum," and advised the Department to give into his demands.[60] Carías's blackmailing tactics in this case show an astonishing willingness to defy the United States, but also an attempt to control its policy.

The United States' insistence that a compromise candidate be found rather than holding free and open elections demonstrates the lack of commitment Washington already had for supporting democracy in Latin America. The policy of promoting a negotiated settlement indicates a belief Hondurans simply were not capable of making democracy work, and that rather than being a source of stability, open democracy in Honduras would lead to disorder. Although it would be more than a decade for democracy to be completely scrapped in Honduras, it appears the US government was already willing to entertain the possibility it was not feasible anyway, and that Honduras needed special guidance if peace was ever going to take root there.

During the negotiations of early 1923 to bring about either a candidate acceptable to all or Morales's rogue operation for a unity Liberal candidate, Carías's propaganda machine was working hard to drum up support for legitimate elections and popularize what Carías had made clear behind closed doors to the US Legation. *El Cronista*, the Nationalist Party newspaper in Tegucigalpa, ran a number of editorials aimed at promoting Carías's point of view that "Free

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[59] Carías to Morales, May 28, 1923, enclosed in Morales to Secretary of State, May 31, 1923, 815.00/2596, RG 59, NA.

[60] Morales to Secretary of State, May 31, 1923, 815.00/2596, RG 59, NA.

suffrage…remains the only possible solution, both legal and satisfactory." The paper also took a stand against the "fusion of candidates" because it argued it would mean "very serious difficulties and does not respond to the exigencies of the republican institutions." The paper warned its readers that should free elections not take place "The responsibility for any disorder will fall upon the Government of the Republic."[61] Carías's paper was also not above flattery, and attempted to curry favor with the US Legation and promote pro-US sentiment amongst its followers by praising Washington's actions. One article reported that Washington's policies were "Sound and advantageous," because all the US wanted was "peace, electoral liberty" and the "elimination of all frauds."[62] A Nationalist pamphlet circulated in San Pedro Sula in June of 1923 echoed Carías's call for elections, and urged its readers not to rebel and to conduct themselves "always within the limits of the law and await the outcome with a peaceful conscience."[63]

The US government's understanding of Carías in the presidential campaign of 1923 was far from flattering, and certainly did not induce policymakers to view him as a potentially stabilizing force or an ally of US business interests. Although most commentators described him as a man of "integrity," he was also considered a simpleton.[64] One report described Carías as "an Indian of very little education" and a "simple minded fellow and is not the kind who would hesitate to risk his skin in getting what he goes after."[65] Gwynn described Carías as a violent man who had "fought in many Central American wars" and was "of no special ability."[66]

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[61] *El Cronista*, May 8, 1923, p. 2.

[62] *El Cronista*, June 13, 1923, p. 2.

[63] "Rumors of a Tempest," pamphlet circulated in San Pedro Sula, June 9, 1923, enclosed in George P. Shaw to Secretary of State June 21, 1923, 815.00/2615, RG 59, NA.

[64] Shaw to Secretary of State, June 21, 1923, 815.00/2615, RG 59, NA.

[65] Montgomery Schuyler to Secretary of State, enclosed Memorandum, October 13, 1923, 815.00/2722, RG

Besides having a reputation as a dullard, Carías was also considered the candidate of the common man, and not the friend of US business interests. US American Vice-Consul de Carrière in Charge in Puerto Cortés George P. Shaw called Carías "the workingman's favorite."[67] Alexander K. Sloan, US consul in La Ceiba, described Carías's supporters as coming "from the working classes and from the ranks of all the small businessmen…but [who possess] little political standing among them." Sloan favored Fausto Davila's candidacy writing his "followers…are drawn from the better class of politicians who seem to be interested in the future good of the country." He also reported Carías was generally believed to be free of the influence of the banana companies, writing the working people thought him independent of the "capitalistic forces of the north coast."[68]

Throughout the first half of 1923, it was a well-known fact amongst US observers members of the Nationalist Party supporting Carías were planning a revolt. In a report to Washington, Morales wrote a vast majority of Carías's constituency was "of the laboring class," and "it would not require a great deal of coaxing on their part to start a revolutionary movement." Morales was aware Carías's political propaganda portrayed him as a peaceful candidate, but he was convinced "this attribute would be quickly changed by him and his

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59, NA.

[66] MID 2657-P-96, "Events leading to present political conditions in Honduras," July 6, 1923, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[67] Shaw to Secretary of State, June 21, 1923, 815.00/2615, RG 59, NA.

[68] Sloan to Secretary of State, May 10, 1923, 815.00/2578, RG 59, NA; Sloan to Secretary of State, March 20, 1923, 815.00/2552, RG 59, NA; and Sloan to Secretary of State, September 6, 1923, 815.00/2689, RG 59, NA. Although Carías would eventually lose his reputation as being aloof to the manipulations of US business interests during his regime, he remained the favorite of much of the poor throughout his tenure in office. For an example of how Rafael Trujillo catered to the needs and cultural predispositions of the Dominican Republic's peasantry see: Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

followers at the [opportune] psychological moment."[69] Reports from US officials on the North Coast commonly reminded Washington "there is a wide-spread conspiracy among the Cariistas to start trouble."[70] Shaw supposed when the revolution "everyone believes…is coming" came the "losses of foreigners" would "directly depend upon the policy adopted by the United States."[71]

The Navy Department was also aware of the political situation in Honduras. In a detailed report from the Commander of the Special Service Squadron William Carey Cole informed his superiors US families living in the country were already being sent to safe locations and that should hostilities break out it was likely US naval forces would be called upon to protect US citizens.[72] Foreshadowing the landing of US soldiers in the months to come, Morales was so convinced violence would erupt he requested the presence of a warship off the coast of Puerto Cortés.[73] Although the State Department chided Morales for his excitement and eagerness to employ the US military in Honduran affairs, his appeal demonstrates the seriousness of the situation, and his opinion Carías would start a revolt.

On June 30, worried and frustrated the Honduran political establishment seemed so willing to plunge the nation into warfare, the State Department issued a stern warning to all those involved to try and salvage the situation. Hughes wrote Morales "The Department is…constantly receiving from other sources reports of impending revolution in Honduras, and regrets that

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[69] Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, May 17, 1923, 815.00/2591, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, June 29, 1923, 815.00/2614, RG 59, NA.

[70] Sloan to Secretary of State, June 19, 1923, 815.00/2610, RG 59, NA.

[71] Shaw to Secretary of State, June 21, 1923, 815.00/2615, RG 59, NA. See also: Sloan to Secretary of State, September 26, 1923, 815.00/2697, RG 59, NA; and Sloan to Secretary of State, September 24, 1923, 815.00/2696, RG 59, NA.

[72] William Carey Cole to The Chief of Naval Operations, "Conditions in Honduras – Possible Disturbances," June 22, 1923, enclosed in Edwin Denby to Secretary of State, October 7, 1923, SC-117-19:1, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

[73] Morales to Secretary of State, June 29, 1923, 815.00/2614, RG 59, NA.

efforts to effect an agreement between opposing candidates have as yet been unsuccessful." Using the economic health of their country as encouragement for the Hondurans to choose peace, Hughes ordered Morales to circulate the following statement with the "widest publicity:"

> The Government of the United States repeatedly having counseled, but without avail, that an agreement should be reached between all the Honduran presidential candidates that would avert revolution and its resultant disruption, desires once more to emphasize the grave situation in which Honduras will be placed if some satisfactory settlement to this end is not reached. The economic condition of the country, already serious, will be rendered even more precarious…the credit of Honduras, which is already low, cannot be further depressed should revolutionary disturbances occur; there would appear slight possibility of arranging either the settlement of the outstanding debt or for loans for economic development of which the country is in great need; commerce would be brought to a standstill…any government, either present or future, would find it difficult if not impossible to maintain itself in office.

Hughes unmistakably made his position clear when he went on to write that Washington's goal in Central America was to bring about "a more stable and prosperous condition."[74]

Munro argues in *The United States and the Caribbean Area* the United States' diplomacy in Central America was "predominantly concerned with political questions," and that "Commercial questions have been unimportant" in directing US policy there. Munro saw the United States as being driven by the quest for the region's stability rather than the United States' financial gain.[75] It is evident from the above quotation Hughes was dedicated to peace in Honduras because he wanted the country to be on a sound economic footing. It stands to reason Hughes wanted "a more stable and prosperous" Honduras for a number of purposes including: strengthening national security by protecting the nearby Panama Canal, and sheltering US

[74] Hughes to American Legation, June 30, 1923, 815.00/2609, RG 59, NA. Gwynn reported that Hughes's letter to the Honduran politicians was widely circulated throughout neighboring republics. See: MID 2657-P-95, "Political Situation in Honduras," July 12, 1923, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[75] Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Area* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1934), p. 216

business interests by keeping competitors out and providing markets for US goods.[76] Contrary to Munro's contention that "Commercial questions" were "unimportant," Munro's supervisor, Secretary of State Hughes on several occasions informed the US citizenry they were. Although Munro is correct in his opinion the US was devoted to "political questions," Hughes stressed economic issues with the benefit of the United States in mind. In a press release on the United States' relationship with Latin America just two weeks prior to the Honduran elections of October 1923 Hughes stated:

> We have labored with the utmost diligence and with a keen appreciation of difficulties to bring about the condition of stability in the Central American Republics by which their independence, security and prosperity could be assured…we cherish no imperialistic purposes, that we are seeking no pretext for interference with their aspirations as free peoples, and that we are sincere and single-minded in the desire to promote the interests of peace and to secure the opportunities of mutually beneficial intercourse between independent and prosperous states.[77]

Hughes's June 30 telegram also signaled a shift in official US policy towards the Honduran presidential crisis. Rather than focusing on avoiding violence through a negotiated settlement between presidential candidates, Hughes informed the Legation and the Honduran politicos the Department now sought "free and fair elections." Hughes writes, "The Government of the United States…is ready to afford cooperation, assistance and support to any government elected as the expression of the will of the Honduran electorate through the medium of free and

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[76] Langley, *The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1982), pp. 95-100; Leonard, *Central America and the United States*, pp. 1-3; and Leonard, *The History of Honduras* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2011), pp. 98 and 189. For a case study of Hughes's stabilizing efforts in Central America see: Virginia Leonard Greer, "Charles Evans Hughes and Nicaragua, 1921-1925" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of New Mexico, 1954), pp. 166-173.

[77] Hughes, State Department Press Release, October 13, 1923, Francis M. White Papers, Special Collections Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, MS 194, Box 8. For more on Hughes's stated economic goals in Central America see Hughes, Speech at Amherst College, June 18, 1924, Francis M. White Papers, Special Collections Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, MS 194, Box 8; Hughes, State Department Press Release, February 7, 1923, Charles Evans Hughes Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C., Reel 138; James William Park, *Latin American Underdevelopment: A History of Perspectives in the United States, 1870-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), pp. 100-101; and Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Area,* pp. 530-531.

fair elections." Quoting the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923, the Secretary then took the matter a step further and warned the Hondurans the United States would "not recognize any other Government which may come into power in any of the five Republics through a coup d'état or a revolution against a recognized Government, so long as [they are] freely elected."[78]

Although Hughes reminded the Hondurans the United States had "no preference between parties or candidates," Carías and his followers welcomed the shift in US policy toward supporting free and open elections.[79] In his report to Washington Morales stated, "General Carias [*sic*] was very pleased and went so far as to state that 'it was a God send for the country.'" Morales was so impressed with Carías's response to the United States' policy shift he prematurely divulged he was of the "firm opinion that the threat of revolution…has been prevented by the action of the Department."[80] Only a few days after Hughes's June 30 telegram was sent to the US Legation in Tegucigalpa, *El Cronista* attempted to garner support for the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 which called for free elections by reproducing the treaty's entire second article. The article's author displayed his pleasure with the alteration to US policy by proclaiming that it was "Well and good!" and that this policy was soundly in line with the "principle[s]" of the Republic.[81]

It did not take long for either country's optimism to wear off. Within a few weeks the political situation was again tense, and there was little hope the candidates would change their

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[78] Hughes to American Legation, June 30, 1923, 815.00/2609, RG 59, NA.

[79] Hughes to American Legation, June 30, 1923, 815.00/2609, RG 59, NA. For more on the neutrality of the United States in June of 1923 see: Hughes to American Legation (San Salvador), June 20, 1923, 815.00/2599, RG 59, NA.

[80] Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, July 5, 1923, 815.00/2632, RG 59, NA. For more on Washington's optimism that elections would be fair and peace could be maintained see: Munro to White, Memorandum, July 17, 1923, 815.00/2635, RG 59, NA.

[81] "Topic of the Moment," *El Cronista*, July 6, 1923, p. 2.

previous positions or tactics. US officials could sense that while the Honduran politicos made promises to the Legation and each other, the mood of the country remained heated. One of the best ways US Americans and Hondurans measured the sentiments of the situation was through the ubiquitous political propaganda circulating throughout the country. Personal attacks and accusations from political opponents were not only frequent but surprisingly base and offensive and only helped to stoke the flames of revolution. In a pamphlet entitled "The False Accusations of the Followers of Arias and Carías," the supporters of Bonilla accused their opponents of being liars, selling the country to foreigners, and being drunk and disorderly.[82] In one poster circulated in La Ceiba, Carías's supporters charged Arias and his followers of being dishonorable and causing trouble that threatened to plunge the country into violence.[83] One of the best examples of mudslinging is found in a pamphlet entitled, "Honduras Free Untamed Proud" written by the Arista Committee. The pamphlet's authors call Arias's detractors "buffoons" and "cannibal sons of the Hyrcanian tiger." They go on to write that those who oppose Arias are "Perverse gnomes of bestiality, incapable of respecting the principals of the highest Democracy, because you lack honor; they will spit upon you in disgust."[84] This kind of political discourse only polarized an already dire situation, and added to the notion Honduras was not capable of conducting its own affairs in a peaceful fashion.

Less than a month after it appeared that the United States' policy shift had brought peace to the crisis, commentators feared Honduras was again on the precipice of revolution. American

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[82] "The False Accusations of the Followers of Arias and Carias," written by the supporters of Bonilla and circulated in La Ceiba, n.d. [August?], 1923, enclosed in Sloan to Secretary of State, August 16, 1923, 815.00/2668, RG 59, NA.

[83] "Broken Pacts," written by the Cariistas and circulated in La Ceiba July 12, 1923, enclosed in Sloan to Secretary of State, July 13, 1923, 815.00/2634, RG 59, NA.

[84] "Honduras Free Untamed Proud," written by the Arista Committee and circulated in La Ceiba, August 8, 1923, enclosed in Sloan to Secretary of State, August 16, 1923, 815.00/2668, RG 59, NA.

Vice-Consul in Charge in Tela Robert C. Purdy was confident even if elections took place that whoever lost would revolt.[85] In late July, there were reports Lee Christmas was organizing a force in Guatemala and would shortly invade the country.[86] In August, Morales warned Hughes hostilities in Honduras appeared "imminent."[87] By September, events had deteriorated to the point Morales was again calling for a US naval presence to be established off the coast of Honduras.[88] This request was refused, but the State Department, sensing the potential such displays of force had on the Honduran political factions, made sure that inadvertent demonstrations of force were not made by the US Navy. In late August, Under Secretary of State William Phillips asked the Navy Department to reschedule the movements of the USS *Rochester* to ports outside of Honduras during October to avoid unintentionally influencing the elections.[89]

A vast majority of the State Department's anxiety about revolution in Honduras focused on Carías. Far from viewing the United States as a sponsor or ally, Carías was under the distinct impression the United States was adverse to his presidency. Carías was so troubled by how he thought the United States viewed him he brought the matter up with Morales. The US Minister quickly quelled Carías's fears by informing him the United States had no favorites amongst the Honduran political factions, but this did little to improve the US-Carías relationship. In Morales's opinion, Carías was still the biggest potential threat to Honduran peace and was the

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[85] Robert C. Purdy to Secretary of State, n.d. [July?], 1923, 815.00/2639, RG 59, NA.

[86] Morales to Secretary of State, July 25, 1923, 815.00/2640, RG 59, NA.

[87] Morales to Hughes, August 27, 1923, *FRUS, 1923*, vol. 2, p. 437.

[88] Morales to Hughes, September 24, 1923, *FRUS, 1923*, vol. 2, p. 438. "Rebels of Honduras Capture 3 Towns: Second American Cruiser is Ordered to Annapolo to Be on Watch," *Washington Post*, February 10, 1924, p. 15.

[89] Phillips to Acting Secretary of the Navy, August 31, 1923, SC-117-20:2, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

person most likely to instigate a civil war.[90] Word of Carías's potential for violence even reached the ears of US officials in San Salvador: Montgomery Schuyler summed up the unstable situation when he called matters "sufficiently grave."[91]

Morales had good reason to see Carías as the greatest threat to the US American goals of peace and stability. On the morning of July 29, 1923, Carías announced to the US Legation in Honduras "that he would be compelled to start the revolution if the [Honduran] Government persisted in harassing him and his partisans." He stated he was losing support amongst his followers because of the Honduran government's habit of "continually insult[ing] him." Carías was known to have been in contact with Fausto Davila, a Nationalist Party member in exile in San Salvador. Carías sent word to Davila to travel to New Orleans in case he took part in a revolt and thus made himself no longer eligible for the presidency (according to the 1923 treaty). Having Davila in New Orleans meant Carías could call upon him to become the Nationalist Party president with short notice, and therefore assure Nationalist Party dominance for himself even if he was not president. According to Morales, Carías's supporters desired revolution, and Carías doubted his ability to control them for much longer.[92] From Morales's perspective these were not idle threats, because besides his domestic supporters Carías was reported to have 500 men "ready to invade Honduras" just over the Nicaraguan border, and Carías had stated to him he was

[90] Morales to Hughes, May 26, 1923, *FRUS, 1923*, vol. 2, p. 431.

[91] Schuyler to Secretary of State, September 26, 1923, 815.00/2695, RG 59, NA.

[92] Morales to Hughes, July 29, 1923, *FRUS, 1923*, vol. 2, p. 436. For more on the possibility that Fausto Davila would become president through an alliance with Carías see: MID 2657-P-97, September 5, 1923, "Pre-election activities in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

willing to forfeit the presidency in order to rid the country of its "despotic" rule.[93] It is little wonder that amongst US officials Carías was known for his "schemes."[94]

Shortly after informing the Legation that he might "be compelled to start the revolution," Carías drafted a letter to Morales attempting to gauge the United States' willingness to support free elections and a hypothetical government, which might come to power through violence against a dictatorship. After explaining how his supporters throughout the country were being mistreated and forced to support other candidates, Carías bluntly stated these questions:

1. Would the Government of Washington recognize a Government of Honduras that arises from electoral [fraud]?

2. Would the Party, who support an independent candidate, obliged thereby through the public power, on account of persecutions and maltreatment, can they arise in arms against impositions or frauds? Would a Government arising from such a revolution provoked by the above conditions merit recognition from the American Government?[95]

When he drafted this letter, Carías must have been extremely close to revolting, and only hesitated from doing so because he feared non-recognition from the United States. Nonrecognition for his government, or any unrecognized Central American government of the period, would have meant more difficulty in seeking foreign financial assistance and more favorable trade agreements, and "encouraged opposition groups to unseat the new

[93] Morales to Hughes, July 29, 1923, FRUS, 1923, vol. 2, p. 436; Hughes to American Legation (Managua), July 31, 1923, 815.00/2642, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, August 2, 1923, 815.00/2660, RG 59, NA.

[94] MID 2657-P-97, September 5, 1923, "Pre-election activities in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[95] Carías to Morales, July 31, 1923, enclosed in Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, August 2, 1923, 815.00/2660, RG 59, NA.

government."[96] Under these conditions Carías may have seized the government, but he almost assuredly would have been unable to defend it against his domestic rivals for long.

Hughes's response to Carías's July 31 letter was purposefully nebulous and skillfully neutral. Hughes made known to Morales the Department's position had not changed, and it would continue to "be consonant with the provisions of Article II of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity." Hughes then denied Carías an answer to his question of whether the United States would recognize a government, which perpetuated itself through "government-controlled elections." Hughes simply stated the issue of recognition would be considered if and when the occasion presented itself, and "The formulation of any hard and fast policy" on this matter would be "impracticable and unwise."[97] Through his lack of a clear stance on the issue, Hughes prevented Carías from feeling he had the United States' blessing to proceed with a revolution, but he also allowed the United States some leeway in dealing with a theoretical regime that might have risen to power having revolted against a dictatorship.

While the State Department did what it could to remain neutral and discourage revolution in favor of democracy, it should be noted there were elements within the US military establishment that felt if the United States continued down its path of noninterference Honduras would in all likelihood "become chaotic." Gwynn felt because Lagos controlled so much of the Honduran government and López Gutiérrez was incompetent it was "hardly conceivable that anything but a revolution" would take place. Gwynn argued many in Honduras would welcome the United States playing a stronger role in resolving the crisis if it were to force the country to hold free elections and therefore avoid revolution. He felt this could be done "with or without a

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[96] Leonard, *The Decline of the Recognition Policy in United States-Central American Relations, 1933-1949* (Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center Florida International University, 1985), p. 1.

[97] Hughes to American Legation, August 4, 1923, 815.00/2609, RG 59, NA.

display of force" and that it could be done without being accused of acting on "imperialistic grounds." In his recommendations to the War Department Gwynn argued if the United States imposed a candidate of its choice all problems could be solved. He even endorsed a possible candidate for the United States. He believed General Ramon Morales would be an excellent choice for the United States because he was "very pro-American… and would probably remain so" and had indicated his willingness to run for the Honduran presidency if only Washington gave the go ahead.[98] Thankfully for the reputation of the United States, Washington withheld any endorsement of a Honduran candidate. The State Department's dedication to neutrality and improving US-Latin American relations undoubtedly helped it restrain such highhanded impulses although those in other branches of the US government felt otherwise.

**Carías Threatens the United States**

In the two months before the October 28 elections, Carías demonstrated an impressive tolerance for violence and provocation against his supporters. Having made known it supported free elections and maintained a staunchly neutral stance amongst the Honduran politicians, the United States could do little more than wait until the election took place. As the State Department hoped for the best and did little to influence events, Carías and his followers were almost continuously harassed and antagonized by elements of the Honduran government loyal to the Lagos family and Zúñiga Huete. Both the United States and Carías were under the impression the Lagos faction was attempting to incite Carías to revolt and thereby give the Lagosistas an excuse to remain in power.[99]

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[98] MID 2657-P-95, July 6, 1923, "Resume of Political Situation in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[99] Davila to American Legation, "Memorandum," October 4, 1923, 815.00/2703, RG 59, NA; Sloan to Secretary of State, September 24, 1923, 815.00/2696, RG 59, NA; Wilkinson to Secretary of State, October 30, 1923, 815.00/2731, RG 59, NA; and Sloan to Secretary of State, September 24, 1923, 815.00/2696, RG 59, NA.

Carías's detractors often focus on the brutal tactics he employed during his presidency, but overlook the nature of the Honduran political environment in the years preceding it. There is no excuse for the crimes he committed during his rule, but students of Honduran history will note that ruthlessness was an ever-present reality in Honduran politics in the first half of the twentieth century. Before he became president, Carías and his followers were the victims rather than perpetrators of violence. During the three days voting took place in October, twenty-two people were killed in Tegucigalpa by government forces, and another fifteen were killed throughout the republic.[100] The Cariistas endured government repression that was not only persistent and bloody but also widespread and seemingly without recourse besides revolution.

One of the most notorious acts of brutality committed against the Nationals before the elections was the stifling of *El Cronista* by the Honduran government. On September 12, *El Cronista* published an article entitled, "What He Learned in Office," which was full of disparaging remarks about President López Gutiérrez. These statements about the president were not necessarily abnormal for Honduran political propaganda for the period, but they touched a nerve with the president. The article called him "worthless," his administration a "disaster," and accused him of not being able to "govern the country."[101] After reading the article the president was reportedly so upset that he grabbed his pistol and headed out the door to take revenge for his defamation, and was only restrained by his staff at the last moment.[102] López Gutiérrez then ordered the press shut down and its editor, Paulino Valladares, imprisoned. When the police tried to take him into custody and raided the press a child was killed and others were hurt.[103]

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[100] Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics*, pp. 129-130.

[101] "What He Learned in Office," *El Cronista*, September 12, 1923, p. 2.

[102] Ross, p. 103.

[103] Morales to Secretary of State, September 14, 1923, 815.00/2688, RG 50, NA. The *New York Times*

A number of presses called the president's actions tyrannical, and Carías pressed closer than ever towards revolution. The newspaper *Las Nuevas Ideas* proclaimed not only were free elections now in jeopardy but also Honduran "free society," and that something had to be done.[104] Within days of the closing of *El Cronista*, Morales reported Carías's followers had begun moving to Nicaragua presumably in anticipation of violence, and there were National Party demonstrations in several Honduran cities rumored to be catalysts for the revolution.[105] The followers of Carías began saying the revolution was now "inevitable," and Morales believed the Nationals were trying to get Carías to finally "start a revolution."[106] Realizing the storm his actions had unleashed, López Gutiérrez requested a US naval vessel be sent to the Honduran coast to help calm the situation.[107] The US turned down López Gutiérrez's appeal, because Hughes wanted to refrain from showing any "moral support" to the government of Honduras, but it demonstrated just how serious the situation had become.[108] Even though the closing of *El Cronista* hurt Carías's campaign for the presidency and went against the spirit of democracy, the United States did not meaningfully respond to its suppression, and demonstrated yet again its dedication to neutrality in Honduran affairs.[109]

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reported "two small girls and an old woman" were killed when the offices were raided ("Fear Revolt in Honduras," *New York Times*, October 2, 1923, p. 6).

[104] "The Death of the Cronista," *Las Nuevas Ideas*, September 20, 1923, p. 1. For more examples of government brutality against Cariistas see: Sloan to Secretary of State, September 6, 1923, 815.00/2689, RG 59, NA; and Davila to American Legation, "Memorandum," October 4, 1923, 815.00/2703, RG 59, NA.

[105] Morales to Secretary of State, September 24, 1923, 815.00/2693, RG 59, NA.

[106] Morales to Secretary of State, September 14, 1923, 815.00/2688, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, September 13, 1923, 815.00/2694, RG 59, NA.

[107] Morales to Secretary of State, September 24, 1923, 815.00/2693, RG 59, NA.

[108] Hughes to American Legation, September 28, 1923, 815.00/2693, RG 59, NA.

[109] MID 2657-P-104, September 27, 1923, "Suppression of newspaper 'El Cronista' of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Political [8610] Pre-election activities," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

In the last few days before the elections, both the United States and Carías were concerned that while López Gutiérrez was the president and well intentioned he would not be able to deliver an honest election. Morales's reservations about López Gutiérrez's mental and physical health did nothing to relieve anxious State Department officials. Both the United States and Carías were concerned fraud would take place, but both were hampered from taking any recourse besides waiting: the United States because it wanted to maintain strict neutrality in Honduran affairs, and Carías because if he revolted his presidency would quickly crumble without recognition from Washington. When Morales was asked by López Gutiérrez's private secretary to help convince the president of the seriousness of the destabilizing actions of the Lagos faction, Hughes responded with a one sentence telegram: "You will of course refuse to comply with the private secretary's request."[110]

It was a well-known fact in the unlikely event the elections were free of fraud and irregularities Carías would win in a landslide victory, but the United States was not prepared to exercise its power to assure they took place. In the days during and after the elections, US officials in Honduras did little more than keep Washington informed of events.[111] A few days before the elections took place Carías made a last ditch effort to influence US policy and coerce the United States to put pressure on the Honduran government to provide free elections. In a letter to Morales, Carías reminded him of the treacherous activities of Lagos and Zúñiga Huete, and again stated his ultimatum that should he be robbed of the electoral victory, revolution would result. Carías wrote if "coercion is continued serious disturbances in this city with lamentable

[110] Morales to Secretary of State, October 5, 1923, 815.00/2701, RG 59, NA; and Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 6, 1923, 815.00/2702, RG 59, NA. See also: Morales to Secretary of State, October 11, 1923, 815.00/2710, RG 59, NA.

[111] Wilkinson to Secretary of State, October 28, 1923, 815.00/2729, RG 59, NA.

consequences are imminent."[112] Besides Morales, Carías also pleaded his case to a US military attaché "that Carlos Lagos had declared…the Government would do everything within its power to prevent Carias from receiving a majority at the forthcoming elections and if it were necessary…would cause his arrest under the pretense of inciting to revolt."[113]

The US government was informed the Nationals endured tremendous mistreatment at the polls throughout Honduras, and were even murdered in the streets of Tegucigalpa. One particularly horrific episode saw the slaughter of several of Carías's followers at the hands of Lagosista henchmen who fired directly into a crowd of "defenseless" people during the elections.[114] Members of the State Department believed these impositions were still more attempts by Carlos Lagos and Zúñiga Huete to prevent Carías from getting elected and induce him to revolt. Morales reported back to Washington "Carias would have secured an absolute majority of at least 30,000 votes had his partisans been permitted to vote…Coercion was practiced in practically every town of any importance throughout the Republic." Even with the government's efforts to rig the election Carías received the most votes and a near majority. Morales reported on November 12 that Carías received 49,591 votes, Bonilla 34,855, and Arias 20,718.[115]

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[112] Carías to Morales, October 27, 1923, enclosed in Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, November 1, 1923, 815.00/2752, RG 59, NA.

[113] MID 2657-P-112, October 19, 1923, "Honduras. [3610] Pre-election activities," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[114] Wilkinson to Secretary of State, October 30, 1923, 815.00/2731, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, October 30, 1923, 815.00/2730, RG 59, NA. The Nationals were not the only group that claimed they were mistreated at the polls and by other factions. For an example see the pamphlet: "Hondurans and Central Americans That Love this Land As your Adopted Mother: THE TRUTH IN ITS PLACE," November 5, 1923, enclosed in Purdy to Secretary of State, November 5, 1923, 815.00/2755, RG 59, NA.

[115] Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, November 1, 1923, 815.00/2752, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, November 8, 1923, 815.00/2759, RG 59, NA.

Knowing Carías had been "cheated" of victory, threatened revolution, and his followers beaten, robbed, harassed, and murdered; the United States still maintained a strict adherence to its policy of neutrality. Because none of the candidates had received the required majority of votes to become president, the election was then supposed to be decided by the Honduran Congress.[116] The Honduran Congress had until February 1, 1924 to make a decision, but getting the body to function properly was an impossible task. After the elections, a number of plans for peace were proposed by the various Honduran factions, which all involved some kind of power sharing arrangements. Representatives of the Honduran government in Washington, suggested one of these plans to the State Department but the only way it could be completed was if the US government pressured Bonilla to back Carías's presidency. US officials were hesitant to back such a deal because they wanted the next president to be constitutionally elected, and did not want to intervene in Honduran affairs. White wrote, "there would appear to be no justification for the Department to take any action looking to any other decision than that provided constitutionally. Furthermore the Department has announced that it will not recognize governments coming into office through certain unconstitutional means."[117]

As the countdown to February 1, 1924 loomed, Carías was still reluctant to accept the United States' neutrality and attempted to induce the US government to back his presidency. In a maneuver that would later become common for isthmian leaders during the late 1920s and 1930s, Carías began pleading his case to US Legations outside of Honduras. Through

[116] MID 2657-P-117, November 2, 1923, "Honduras. Presidential elections. [3610]," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA; and USS *Cleveland* to Commanding Officer Managua, Nicaragua, November 3, 1923, SC-117-19:1, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

[117] White to Secretary and Under Secretary, Memorandum, November 6, 1923, 815.00/2738, RG 59, NA; Munro to White, Memorandum, November 5, 1923, 815.00/2751, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, November 22, 1923, 815.00/2768, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, November 8, 1923, 815.00/2759, RG 59, NA.

intermediaries he informed Schuyler in El Salvador he had won the election but criminal officials had taken the victory from him. Schuyler stated Carías's representative then "called on me for the purpose of urging the Department of State to issue some notice or to send some congratulatory telegram to Mr. Carias on his success in the recent election."[118]

Carías's representative in Washington, Fausto Davila also made an effort to influence and gauge US policy. After listing numerous reasons why the elections had been a "farce," and how the Nationalist Party had been mistreated by the government, Davila claimed the Honduran government had "violated the constitution and the electoral law, and had failed to comply with its promise to the Department of State." Davila then told US officials that only the United States could "adopt means best calculated to rescue, as it has before, Honduras from the brink of destruction to which it has been dragged."[119] Although Davila did not directly request the United States to pronounce Carías as the winner of the election, he evidently tried to persuade it to do so. Having not received the change in US policy he so ardently desired, Davila drafted yet another letter to the State Department a few weeks later this time warning if the United States failed to act Carías would be forced to revolt. After making his case, Davila then stated if these transgressions were allowed to stand the people of Honduras would have no choice but "to resort to the inalienable right to employ force to insure obedience to their sovereign will."[120]

In early November, anticipating its services would be called upon in short order, the Department of the Navy sent a reconnaissance team to Tegucigalpa to better understand what was taking place in Honduras. The Navy's final report revealed it too had little affection for

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[118] Carías to Presentación Quesada, "Memorandum," n.d. [November?] 1923, enclosed in Schuyler to Secretary and Under Secretary, November 30, 1923, 815.00/2783, RG 59, NA.

[119] Davila to [State Department?], "Memorandum," November 7, 1923, 815.00/2740, RG 59, NA.

[120] Davila to [State Department?], "Memorandum," November 21, 1923, 815.00/2772, RG 59, NA.

Carías, but also recognized him as the most powerful player on the political scene. The report described Carías as "a man about 50…a dirt farmer," of "little education" and no travel. It also noted he had "five or six children" out of wedlock. However, the Navy also recognized him as "extremely popular with the masses" and considered him to be the "national idol." These US observations are consistent with those of earlier in 1923 near the beginning of the campaign season, but what had changed was that the Navy felt Carías was also the fruit companies' favorite. The report stated the fruit companies "are pronouncedly in favor of Carías."[121] Evidently, the Navy's reconnaissance team failed in their due diligence to explore the possibility the US banana companies supported candidates besides Carías, and whether some of the banana companies actually opposed him. In a matter of months, it would become a matter of common knowledge Carías was supported by the United Fruit Company, and his political rivals by the Cuyamel Fruit Company.

Events finally began to spin out of control in mid-December when Carías appeared to have given up on trying to win the presidency through legal channels or by some sort of a power sharing agreement. Morales reported Carías was preparing for war and he was under the erroneous impression Washington sanctioned his revolutionary efforts. Morales received word Carías was proceeding with the revolution because Davila had informed him he could arrange for Washington to recognize his administration.[122] From Davila's record in Washington, it is possible to see he was indeed trying to secure Washington's favor for Carías's revolution, but whether he received it or not is of little consequence. By this time, Carías had nothing to lose by revolting with or without Washington's blessing. He knew his coalition in the Honduran

[121] Commanding Officer (William B. Wells) to Commander Special Service Squadron, November 10, 1923, enclosed in Denby to Secretary of State, n.d. [December 4, 1923?], 815.00/2769, RG 59, NA.

[122] Morales to Secretary of State, December 14, 1923, 815.00/2778, RG 59, NA.

Congress was powerless to vote him the presidency, and his best chance of securing it was by overthrowing the Lagos-controlled government. Winning the revolution and waiting to see if Washington would recognize his government was the best course of action he had for achieving his goal.

After receiving word Carías believed he enjoyed the sympathies of Washington, Morales quickly dispelled any erroneous information and informed Carías the State Department had not changed its position on the recognition of governments that came to power as a result of revolution.[123] Having nothing to gain by listening to Morales's statement, Carías sent word to the US Minister and told him his followers were still being harassed and he declined responsibility for "any action that may be undertaken against the peace of Honduras owing to such persecutions."[124]

After López Gutiérrez declared martial law on December 18, the State Department began to realize the main flaw of its beloved General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923.[125] It appears Carías's efforts to convince Washington he had been cheated out of an electoral victory, and his followers had suffered horribly under government persecution had finally been successful. After reflecting on Carías's position and what he had endured over the course of the previous year, Munro warned White the US government's policy of nonrecognition towards revolutionary

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[123] Morales to Secretary of State, December 20, 1923, 815.00/2806, RG 59, NA.

[124] Carías to Morales, December 17, 1923, enclosed in Morales to Secretary of State, December 20, 1923, 815.00/2806, RG 59, NA. In December 1923, US officials throughout Central America reported to Washington that Carías's war machine was beginning to prepare for war. For evidence see: Morales to Secretary of State, December 1, 1923, 815.00/2763, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, December 11, 1923, 815.00/2773, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, December 14, 1923, 815.00/2778, RG 59, NA; Sloan to Secretary of State, December 22, 1923, 815.00/2802, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, December 29, 1923, 815.00/2811½, RG 59, NA; and Wilkinson to Secretary of State, January 4, 1924, 815.00/2822, RG 59, NA.

[125] MID 2657-P-127, December 21, 1923, "Honduras – Political Presidential elections by Congress," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

governments "will do more harm than good if it operates to permit an administration in power to win an election by force and fraud while preventing armed opposition to the Government on the part of its opponents." Munro finally realized a government in power could just as easily defy the constitution and the principles of peace as those of a revolutionary force, and that sometimes revolutionaries have legitimate claims to revolt.[126]

Renowned scholar of US-Central American history Lester D. Langley argues in two of his books "Carías's opponents…had the counsel of the United States minister." Although his analysis of the electoral crisis and subsequent civil war is brief, it is nonetheless misleading. Offering no evidence, Langley claims Morales advised López Gutiérrez to remain "firm" in dealing with Carías and that the "president responded by cracking down on Carías's exuberant supporters" and declaring martial law. He goes on to write Washington chastised Morales for his diplomatic bias and was "Genuinely embarrassed by its minister's gaucheries."[127] Langley is absolutely correct when he asserts that Washington had its misgivings about Morales, but Morales's performance taken as a whole throughout the months prior to the outbreak of civil war was impartial.[128] It is true he exceeded his mandate in May when he attempted to unite the Liberal Party under one candidate, but the idea that Morales advised the Honduran president to

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[126] Munro to White, December 21, 1923, 815.00/2810, RG 59, NA. See also: Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Area* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1934), p. 213.

[127] Langley, *The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 95-100; and Langley, *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898-1934* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), pp. 178-179.

[128] For an example of the State Department's displeasure and lack of confidence in Morales see the following series of documents dealing with the possibility he accidently leaked confidential material to Honduran politicians: Hughes to American Legation, December 5, 1923, 815.00/2769, RG 59, NA; Hughes to Secretary of the Navy, December 29, 1923, 815.00/2769, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, December 12, 1923, 815.00/2776, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, December 13, 1923, 815.00/2796, RG 59, NA; Wells to Chief of Naval Operations, January 22, 1924, SC-117-19:1, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA; and Wells to Commander Special Service Squadron, November 10, 1923, enclosed in Denby to Secretary of State, n.d. [December 1923?], SC-117-19:1, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

deal harshly with Carías and his followers is misrepresentative of events. Morales was of the opinion "A declaration of martial law" in mid-December "may precipitate the revolution as the action of the Government will be interpreted by Carias as hostile to him and his party," and obviously revolution was something Morales was working hard to avoid.[129]

There was nothing neutral about the United States' position in 1923 and early 1924. While the United States consistently claimed neutrality and honestly did its best to refrain from interfering to the detriment or benefit of either side, it could not help but do so due to its traditional role in the region and its stubborn adherence to the principle of nonrecognition. All the effort the various Honduran factions put into securing the United States' favor shows the country maintained its reputation, as a power willing and able to force its political will on smaller, weaker nations. When its reputation was combined with its refusal to recognize any revolutionary government the United States inadvertently supported Carías's opponents. By asserting that a revolutionary government would be denied loans and not be given recognition it blocked Carías from moving against the Lagos faction. This situation unintentionally encouraged the powers behind the López Gutiérrez regime to maintain their power.

Munro's epiphany may have revealed one of the flaws of US policy, but it had no effect on its implementation. The United States still maintained its ostensible neutrality, and although it understood Carías's point of view it did nothing to alter the status quo. Evidence for this can be found in the bucolic rumor that Carías planned to seek refuge at the US Legation if he ever was endangered. Morales reported that Carías had for some time been living in a house adjacent to the US Legation, and that he had learned from multiple sources that if Carías ever felt threatened he planned on "climbing over the roofs" to reach safety at the US mission. Morales was then

[129] Morales to Secretary of State, December 17, 1923, 815.00/2782, RG 59, NA.

forced in the interests of neutrality to notify Carías that the US would not grant him asylum because "that would tend to show favoritism to a revolutionist [and] would be the means of destroying our neutral attitude which had been maintained up until the present time and would be continued until the end."[130]

**Carías Influences US Policy**

In the first few days of January 1924, the Honduran Congress met in order to decide who would become the next president, but due to the actions of the Lagos faction and months of harassment and murder the congressmen were unable to reach an accord. Shortly after the Congress convened Zúñiga Huete sent in the police to intimidate the body into electing Arias. Although López Gutiérrez quickly sent in the military to remove the police and stationed a guard outside the congressional chambers the damage had been done. Carías felt the last chance for reconciliation and being legally elected to the presidency had come to nothing. In a last ditch effort Morales suggested to his superiors it should again "call the three candidates together for the purpose of arriving at a solution whereby a coalition government can be established…the conference would be impartial and in the interest of peace." Morales warned if nothing was done "Carias will be at war within the next week."[131] Hughes gave Morales the go ahead for the conference, but had little faith in its ability to reach a satisfactory conclusion.[132]

What happened next not only demonstrates the respect Carías demanded in Honduran affairs, but also the power he exercised to influence his relationship with the United States. Shortly after Morales proposed a conference for the purpose of forming a coalition government,

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[130] Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, December 13, 1923, 815.00/2797, RG 59, NA.

[131] Morales to Secretary of State, January 3, 1924, 815.00/2804, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, January 4, 1924, 815.00/2805, RG 59, NA.

[132] Hughes to American Legation, January 5, 1924, 815.00/2804, RG 59, NA.

Carías requested the United States "serve as arbitrator in selecting a designate to the presidency." Carías wanted the other candidates to "submit three names from their parties [factions] and for the Department to select one out of the nine" to serve as president "until new elections" could be provided.[133] Hughes responded to Carías's request by stating the United States would not feel comfortable with selecting a "designado," and that the Hondurans should decide the matter, but that the State Department "believes that the idea of appointing one to hold new elections would be a satisfactory solution." In the event the election of a president by the Congress seemed "impossible" Morales was then "authorized to use your good offices to bring about an agreement for the selection of a designado of sufficient ability and impartiality."[134]

Carías gave the United States the idea of a designado, the State Department liked it, and made securing one its policy toward Honduras. Carías had much to gain through the appointment of a designado whose sole purpose was providing another presidential election. By securing the United States' support for his plan he would be able to show his opponents the Northern Colossus favored new elections—and therefore him—over the continuation of López Gutiérrez's regime. George Navarrete also points out in his 1964 dissertation Carías's request demonstrated "a trust in the impartial judgment of the United States" therefore adding to the claim that the United States was unwavering in its policy of neutrality.[135] Most importantly, the United States' adoption of the designado policy showed it took Carías's threats of revolting with his massive

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[133] Morales to Secretary of State, Jan 12, 1924, 815.00/2816, RG 59, NA.

[134] Hughes to American Legation, January 18, 1924, 815.00/2816, RG 59, NA. Munro also mentions that Carías sent a letter to the State Department requesting it select a designado, but he fails to give him any credit for changing US policy, and instead stresses that the State Department disagreed with Carías on the designado's selection (Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics*, p. 131).

[135] George Navarrete, "The Latin American Policy of Charles Evans Hughes, 1921-1925" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1964), p. 74

following seriously. By going along with Carías the United States must have felt it was preventing him from having an excuse to revolt.

Unfortunately for Carías, Morales was unable to find common ground amongst the various factions for determining a suitable designado for all parties, so the United States had to settle on what it felt was the next best thing: the promise of the López Gutiérrez regime to remain in power only long enough to offer new elections. This was ultimately a poor decision that finally forced Carías to revolt. Hughes instructed Morales to find out from López Gutiérrez whether he would stay in government beyond his constitutional limit for selfish purposes or for the purposes of holding new elections. Unsurprisingly, the Honduran president said he would remain in the presidency to serve the country through offering new elections. Hughes also told Morales to warn Carías if he resorted to arms before the planned elections that it would lead to a "very bad impression."[136] Carías must have been dumbfounded by the State Department's actions; if López Gutiérrez failed to provide free and fair elections in October of 1923, what made Washington think that he could do so in the 1924? Needless to say, Carías made known to Morales that whatever López Gutiérrez promised was inconsequential because the real power behind his throne—the Lagos faction—had no more interest in providing free elections in 1924 than it did in 1923.[137]

In all fairness to the State Department, it had no real tools at its disposal to resolve the crisis at this point. With its dedication to neutrality, sending in the marines or arbitrarily forcing the Lagosistas to allow the Honduran president to provide free elections were simply not options. The State Department was working in good faith the Hondurans should resolve their own

[136] Hughes to American Legation, January 26, 1924, 815.00/2832, RG 59, NA.

[137] Morales to Secretary of State, January 28, 1924, 815.00/2836, RG 59, NA.

political difficulties. Under these constraints the State Department was powerless to prevent the civil war everyone believed was coming. Regrettably, when it decided to back the López Gutiérrez regime to give the democratic process another chance at working, it forced Carías into the compromising position of choosing to defend his constituents and the demonstrated will of the people against government impositions, or losing his political following and giving into tyranny.

## Conclusion

During the crisis of Honduran presidential succession in 1923 and 1924, the United States' main policy goal was the maintenance of peace. The United States attempted to achieve this objective first through a compromise candidate representing the interests of all the presidential candidates and later through fair and open elections. During this period the US government demonstrated a strong dedication to neutrality amongst the Honduran presidential hopefuls. Members of the US State Department did not care who became president as long as he reached office through legal means. Far from being the favorite of the US, Carías did his best to thwart the United States' attempts to form a coalition government. Instead, Carías mobilized his political allies and propaganda machine to encourage free elections both in Honduras and the United States. When elections did take place in late October 1923 their fraudulence was no secret.

Having lost the election due to manipulations of the Lagos faction and the chronic harassment and murder of his followers, Carías prepared to revolt. Sensing its goal of the peaceful transference of power was jeopardized, the United States tried to refrain from intervention while simultaneously encouraging a nonviolent agreement between potential belligerents. Making one last-ditch effort to reach the presidency through legal means, Carías

moved to influence US policy by asking the State Department to choose a temporary president for the purpose of providing a new election. Desperate to alleviate the situation, the United States partially accepted Carías's plan and attempted to seek a designado acceptable to all sides. Although only a small political victory that proved useless in the long run, this episode demonstrates Carías's ability to affect his relationship with the United States, his domestic power, and his autonomy in the face of US distrust and the narrow political space available in López Gutiérrez's Honduras.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE HORRORS OF WAR

"Savage fighting and looting…has again driven Americans and natives out of their houses, and kept them prisoners for days and nights of terror, their lives guarded by American Marines and bluejackets powerless to interfere without violating the wishes of the State Department, and by that act bringing armed intervention into being."[1]

-US American Consul George P. Waller describing the horrors of civil war unleashed on the people of La Ceiba in March 1924.

The War of Revindication finally began on January 30, 1924, when Carías and 300 of his followers left Tegucigalpa under the cover of darkness and proceeded to attack the towns of San Juancito and Cantarranas. There they seized government stores of guns and ammunition and then traveled to the Nicaraguan border to rendezvous with Carías's allies and receive Nicaraguan military aid. Within a matter of hours, violence quickly spread to Yuscarán, Siguatepeque, Comayagua, and the North Coast. By February 1, Carías had declared himself President of Honduras and fanned the flames of bloodshed and disorder throughout the entire country. Carías's decision to rebel encouraged other disenchanted strongmen to do the same, and within a few days generals and political aspirants Gregorio Ferrera, Vicente Tosta, and Francisco Martínez Funes began taking control of the republic. Due to the severing of telegraph lines, US officials were largely cut off from what was taking place outside their respective cities of residence, but reports indicated the United States' worst fears had been realized; Honduran violence threatened US investments, the lives of US Americans, and the much acclaimed Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923.[2]

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[1] George P. Waller to Secretary of State, March 15, 1924, 815.00/3049, RG 59, NA.

[2] Franklin E. Morales to Secretary of State, January 31, 1924, 815.00/2843, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, February 3, 1924, 815.00/3145, RG 59, NA. For more on Nicaraguan aid to Carías, and the United States' efforts to try and stop it see: Commanding Officer Marine Detachment Managua to

The War of Revindication came as no surprise to the United States nor anyone in Honduras, but the fact the war took place at all and developed as it did despite the frantic efforts of the US government shows just how limited the United States' power was to shape Carías's behavior and direct Honduran affairs. The war and its diplomatic aftermath demonstrate Carías's domestic power and forthright willingness to resist the interference of the United States. Furthermore, the violence Carías unleashed upon Honduras would later contribute to the United States' satisfaction with his dictatorial but stabilizing regime. After having witnessed the nightmarish violence and destruction of much of the country, the US government believed with certainty Honduran stability could only be established by a radical reorganizing of the Honduran military establishment and economy. The US government also thought it was responsible for helping to bring the war to a successful conclusion under the direction of presidential envoy Sumner Welles. The assumption that Welles had brought peace to the country and not the victorious Honduran rebels is clear evidence US Americans not only failed to control events, but also failed to comprehend what was really taking place. Although the war did not give Carías the presidency in 1924, the war and his aborted presidential campaign later that year would prove to be invaluable experiences for Carías, and persuaded him to reevaluate his habit of brazenly defying the United States. Carías may have started the war against the expressed warnings of the United States and thus in the short run hurt his relationship with the meddling behemoth, but his actions would ultimately contribute to the United States' idea that Honduras needed a strong authoritarian regime more than it needed a healthy democracy.

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SECNAV, March 5, 1924, 815.00/2979, RG 59, NA; Arthur H. Geissler to Secretary of State, March 5, 1924, 815.00/2961, RG 59, NA; John E. Ramer to Secretary of State, February 5, 1924, 815.00/2855, RG 59, NA; and William Phillips to Secretary of the Navy, February 5, 1924, 815.00/2855a, RG 59, NA.

## Early Peace Negotiations and the Weakness of US Policy

The State Department scrambled to prevent Carías from rebelling, but now that he had, it redoubled its efforts to try and bring the revolution to a swift conclusion. Less than twenty-four hours after Carías chose the path of war, US Minister Franklin E. Morales, under orders from Washington, was still organizing conferences between the 1923 presidential candidates Dr. Juan Angel Arias, Dr. Policarpo Bonilla, and Carías factions to try and find some sort of a power sharing agreement that might bring about an end to hostilities. However, just as he thwarted coalition government proposals in the past, "Carias refused to accept the arrangement[s] proposed" by the Department. Morales, realizing Carías was past the point of negotiations, informed an embarrassed and frustrated Hughes, "It is a foregone conclusion that Carias will not accept…terms and the revolution will continue."[3]

After several days of trying to arrange a settlement in Tegucigalpa with Carías's representatives, Arias, Bonilla, and the Honduran government, President López Gutiérrez informed Morales Carías was planning to attack the capital and that something drastic needed to be done in order to avoid a horrible bloodbath. To avert this López Gutiérrez convinced Morales he should depart the safety of Tegucigalpa and head into the mountains in search of Carías to plead the case for peace. With few other options available to him, Morales traveled for several hours on the rough and dangerous mountain roads searching for Carías's military camp. Although rumors indicated Carías was nearby, Morales was forced to abandon his search and

[3] Morales to Secretary of State, January 31, 1924, 815.00/2843, RG 59, NA.

return home for the night.[4] Although a commission of peace-minded Honduran citizens traveled on to meet Carías and implore him to lay down his arms, they came back empty handed.[5]

Carías had no incentive to agree to negotiations, even those proposed by the United States. It was a well-known fact he enjoyed the support of the majority of Hondurans, and that the people were angry their sovereign will had been undermined by the López Gutiérrez administration.[6] Even traditional Liberals and powerful generals such as Ferrera, Funes, and Tosta found themselves rebelling against the unpopular López Gutiérrez regime, not necessarily because they supported Carías, but due to their patriotic zeal and the political benefit they would derive from overthrowing someone most Hondurans saw as a dictator.[7] Not only did Carías know most Hondurans were behind him, but he also knew that López Gutiérrez was still powerless to provide free and honest elections. Even Washington was aware López Gutiérrez would be unable to provide the elections it desired and that he had promised. US Central American military attaché Harry M. Gwynn thought Washington's policy of backing López Gutiérrez for the purpose of offering new elections was pointless, because "If Carías could not obtain a plurality before it is hardly probable that in the new election he could…It would merely be a repetition of the previous election with the same futile gestures towards a peaceful settlement."[8]

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[4] Morales to Secretary of State, February 11, 1924, 815.00/2876, RG 59, NA.

[5] Morales to Secretary of State, February 20, 1924, 815.00/2904, RG 59, NA.

[6] Morales to Secretary of State, January 28, 1924, 815.00/2836, RG 59, NA.

[7] Morales to Secretary of State, February 7, 1924, 815.00/2860, RG 59, NA.

[8] MID 2657-Pa-134, February 8, 1924, "Present Situation in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA; and Phillips and Salvador Cordova, Memorandum of Conversation, January 31, 1924, 815.00/2857, RG 59, NA.

The State Department had steered itself into a diplomatic conundrum. Because of the Treaty of Peace and Amity and Hughes telegram of June 30, 1923, the Department was unable to recognize Carías's legitimate grievances against the López Gutiérrez administration, and therefore any potential government Carías might establish through revolution. According to the telegram, which Hughes ordered Morales to distribute with the "widest publicity," the United States would not recognize any government that came to power through extralegal means.[9] Additionally, the Department also realized its mistake in supporting the continuation of the López Gutiérrez regime, because it quickly became evident that the Honduran president was impotent to provide the necessary changes to his administration to counteract the Lagosistas.[10] In fact, within forty-eight hours of Carías's first military action, the United States pulled its diplomatic recognition of the Honduran government, and only conducted business with it "informally."[11] Once again, it was Dana G. Munro who realized not recognizing any Honduran government was more than problematic, because it could only perpetuate Honduran bloodshed and the possibility that the violence would spread to neighboring countries. Munro informed his colleagues if the US government was unable to recognize any Honduran administration it would be counterproductive and ultimately impede the United States' goal of Honduran stability.[12]

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[9] Charles Evans Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), June 30, 1923, 815.00/2609, RG 59, NA.

[10] Morales to Secretary of State, February 11, 1924, 815.00/2876, RG 59, NA; Phillips and Cordova, Memorandum of Conversation, January 31, 1924, 815.00/2857, RG 59, NA; and MID 2657-Pa-134, February 8, 1924, "Present Situation in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[11] Hughes to American Legation (La Ceiba), February 15, 1924, 815.00/2875, RG 59, NA; and Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), February 15, 1924, 815.00/2881, RG 59, NA. It should be noted the State Department was so conflicted and uncertain about its recognition policy in Honduras, even two weeks after it had pulled recognition of the López Gutiérrez regime US officials in Honduras and commanding officers in the US military had no idea it had been done. See: Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), February 18, 1924, 815.00/2887, RG 59, NA; Hughes to American Legation (Managua), February 15, 1924, 815.00/2881, RG 59, NA; and Waller to Secretary of State, February 15, 1924, 815.00/2906, RG 59, NA.

[12] Dana G. Munro to Francis M. White, Memorandum, January 26, 1924, 815.00/2848, RG 59, NA.

While the prevailing US perspectives of the Hondurans in the United States at this time were far from flattering and undoubtedly influenced the policymaking of US Americans in both Washington and Honduras, the views of US officials regarding Carías made recognizing his presidency even less palatable. In early 1924, US officials' observations and descriptions of Carías made him out to be one of the least desirable Hondurans to lead the country. Besides his reputation for being stubborn and difficult to work with due to his "holding out" on potential deals to reach a power sharing agreement over the course of the previous year, he was disliked on a personal level.[13] Internal State Department memoranda, US Legation reports, and US military attachés were disdainful of Carías for a variety of reasons. First and foremost were his humble origins. Carías did not come from the wealthy merchant classes of the North Coast or Tegucigalpa, and therefore was never able to afford an elite education or be welcomed by those who could. Although Carías's father was a businessman and could be considered a member of the petit-bourgeois in Tegucigalpa, this did not elevate him to the "better class" in the minds of US observers.[14] For all intents and purposes, according to US government officials, Carías was a man of the soil, and was by no means wealthy enough to be considered aristocratic by even the most generous US standard. He grew up in a modestly privileged family that owned 150 hectares of agricultural land.[15] The family's position enabled him to attain a relatively respectable domestic education at the Universidad Central and for him to become a lawyer, but his US contemporaries were simply unimpressed with his accomplishments.

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[13] Morales to Secretary of State, April 7, 1923, 815.00/2561, RG 59, NA.

[14] Alexander K. Sloan to Secretary of State, May 10, 1923, 815.00/2578, RG 59, NA.

[15] The most accurate and complete description of Carías's family and early life can be found in Thomas J. Dodd, *Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), pp. 15-20. According to Dodd, Carías enjoyed a much more privileged status than most Hondurans. I agree with this conclusion, but in the eyes of US observers he was still little more than a poor farmer.

Like the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, who a few years later was spurned by members of the State Department for his "lower-class social status and that of his followers," Carías had the unflattering reputation of being a "dirt farmer."[16] In early 1924, a US intelligence officer described Carías "like what he is reported to be, a farmer coming from the plainer classes…He is not well educated, and so far as is known has not been out of Central America." Although US officials in Honduras were not above making disparaging remarks about any Honduran during this time, in comparison to his fellow politicians and military leaders Carías was considered better than few of his peers. For instance, Arias was well-liked and described as "smooth shaven," a man of peace, educated, and perhaps most importantly to some observers of white ancestry.[17] To the wealthy and white members of the State Department and higher echelons of the US military brass, Carías was eerily distasteful and reminded US Americans of their racial prejudices they developed at home. To these US elites, Carías was a reactionary from the lower classes, a dark skinned person who felt he deserved something beyond his station in life. The fact that those in Washington saw Carías as feeling entitled to the presidency and morally justified in fighting to claim it was not only problematic but aggravated their racial and class sensibilities.[18]

Another influence in the creation and implementation of US policy towards Carías, Honduras in general, and a source of Carías's power to pursue his goals less impeded was the United States international reputation as an imperialist nation. It is no secret that during this time

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[16] Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 43-44; and Commanding Officer (William B. Wells) to Commander Special Service Squadron, November 10, 1923, enclosed in Edwin Denby to Secretary of State, n.d. [December 4, 1923?], 815.00/2769, RG 59, NA.

[17] "Personalities, Honduras," January 7, 1924, C-9-E-16741, Records of the Naval Intelligence Division, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-*1939*, Box 449, RG 38, NA.

[18] Division of Latin-American Affairs Memorandum, "Political Events in Honduras," February 8, 1924, 815.00/3226, RG 59, NA.

Latin Americans, and in particular the people of the Caribbean Basin, viewed the United States as a self-interested and arbitrarily authoritarian power.[19] The widespread resentment of the United States made diplomacy more difficult and encouraged the region's inhabitants to seek partnerships with other countries besides the US. These developments were partially responsible for the reluctance of the Republican administrations of the 1920s to land troops in Latin America, and encouraged them to publicize their supposed neutrality in the domestic affairs of their neighbors.[20] In the case of Honduras, the United States' negative repute not only discouraged and restrained the landing of US marines in Honduras in 1924, but also limited the US's ability to seek a peaceful end to Carías's revolution.

Eager to avoid further ill-repute but also desperate to try and find some way of ending the conflict, US officials stumbled to find a policy that would quickly meet their goals but avoid giving the impression they was interfering in the domestic affairs of Honduras. Both the State Department and US military presented a number of different possible policy options. Francis M. White advised Hughes to negotiate with the Honduran powers for peace unilaterally without the input of the Central American republics, because he felt they could not "agree among themselves on any plan of joint action," and because they would only try to "assist their own friends among the contending factions." Speed was crucial in White's estimation because each day that past allowed the rebels to attain a firmer grip on Honduras and therefore less incentive to negotiate. He was convinced the United States would be criticized no matter what it did, so

[19] For an excellent book on Latin American perspectives of the United States see: John T. Reid, *Spanish American Images of the United States, 1790-1960* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1977).

[20] David Green, *The Containment of Latin America; A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 37-50.

forcing something binding on the Hondurans without the presence of other regional stakeholders was seen as permissible.[21]

Gwynn originally supported a scheme for peace that involved the United States "offer[ing] its good offices" to host a conference of the three Honduran presidential candidates and their chosen "alternate candidates." Under Gwynn's plan the "American Mission" then would choose Honduras's next president from the pool of "substitutes." Gwynn felt this plan would avoid "any accusation of either indifference to the welfare of Central America or of infringement upon the sovereignty of Latin Republics."[22] Although Gwynn's plan showed a limited understanding of what constituted intervention in the minds of the United States' southerly neighbors and was originally seen as a non-option by the State Department, the United States would eventually unilaterally choose who could and could not participate in the 1924 elections.

This fumbling of US policy played right into the hands of Carías who needed time to consolidate his military gains and finish conquering the rest of Honduras. The Cariistas claimed they were not only open but "desire[d] mediation by the United States in any manner," but provided such impossible terms the United States could never possibly provide them. A US-hosted conference was welcomed by the Cariistas as long as it secured the deportation or abolition of the power of López Gutiérrez, Angel Zúñiga Huete, and the Lagos family.[23] This

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[21] White to Secretary of State, Memorandum, April 9, 1924, 815.00/3083, RG 59, NA. For more on potential criticism of the United States in negotiating a peace in the War of Revindication see: MID 2657-P-134-11, April 17, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[22] MID 2657-Pa-134, February 8, 1924, "Present Situation in Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[23] MID 2657-P-134 (2), February 22, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

requirement was both a stalling tactic and a subtle attempt to influence the United States. There was no possible way the United States, short of military intervention, which Carías knew it wanted to avoid, could secure the removal of the López Gutiérrez regime or the dictatorship of the Council of Ministers that came to power after his death.[24] Demanding the elimination of the "Lopez-Gutierrez-Lagos family group [*sic*]" as a prerequisite to any peace conference bought Carías time to pursue his goal of controlling Honduras. Furthermore, it was also a way for Carías to present himself to the United States as a patriot waging a justifiable campaign against tyrannical rule, and as a champion of the will of the people.

Convincing the United States he had just cause to rebel against a dictatorship and was the rightful and popularly chosen president of Honduras remained Carías's best chance of realizing his goal. Carías was well aware of the stipulations for recognition in the Treaty of Peace and Amity, and the United States' economic leverage over him. Besides the United States broadly stating it would not recognize a government that came to power in Honduras through extralegal means, it also unofficially warned Carías and his allies it would not recognize him if he rebelled. In a last ditch effort to try and stop Carías from rebelling, members of the Latin American desk at the State Department met with Carías's advocate in Washington Dr. Fausto Davila. Munro and White informed Davila that if a revolution took place under Carías's leadership "the economic progress made by Honduras in recent years would be totally lost," and that because of this the United States would therefore not feel comfortable with recognizing his regime or providing his government the loans necessary to secure itself in office. Besides invasion, these US officials

[24] Charles L. Stansifer argues in "Application of the Tobar Doctrine to Central America," *The Americas* vol. 23 no. 3 (January 1967): pp. 251-272, Carías forced López Gutiérrez "into exile," and that Carías "marched on Tegucigalpa in April, but US and Honduran sources all indicate these contentions are both erroneous.

were using their strongest card against Carías by threatening not to provide him with the money he would almost certainly need to pay for salaries and the other costs of government.[25]

**"The State of Anarchy Now Existing"[26]**

The rebellion Carías started touched off a series of events that can only be described as the United States' worst nightmare for Honduras. Besides common banditry and the usual disruption to business war causes, the war was responsible for the loss and destruction of over $20 million (1924 US currency).[27] Reports sent to Washington from US Legations throughout the country described in horrific detail the chilling scenes of burning cities, US American women and children huddled in concrete buildings scared for their lives, and rains of bullets that strafed US citizens. Many US Americans were so traumatized by their experiences during the war, they lost all faith in the ability of the Hondurans to run their own affairs. First hand accounts reveal US opinions of the Hondurans reached a new nadir, and for some brought into question whether the Hondurans were capable of higher civilization at all.[28]

By early February, Carías's rebellion had engulfed much of the country in civil war, and the banana towns of the North Coast promised to be hotbeds of violence and the location of some of the conflict's worst atrocities. As the headquarters and shipping hubs of the US banana companies the cities of the region contained the country's most significant concentrations of

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[25] White, Memorandum of Conversation with Munro and Fausto Davila,, January 30, 1924, 815.00/2937, RG 59, NA.

[26] Sumner Welles to Secretary of State, April 21, 1924, 815.00/3112, RG 59, NA.

[27] Mario Ribas, *Diario de la guerra de Honduras: 30 de enero-30 de abril, 1924* (Tegucigalpa: Edicult, 2004), p. 107. Ribas offers one of the few available accounts of the siege of Tegucigalpa. Other Honduran authors from the period who address the War of Revindication are Miguel Angel Ramos, *Divulgaciones militares* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografia nacional, 1929), pp. 205-206; and Aro Sanso, *Policarpo Bonilla: Algunos apuntes biográficos* (Mexico City: Impr. Mundial, 1936).

[28] George W. Baker Jr. found evidence that even the idealistic President Woodrow Wilson began to drift toward realism after his policies were frustrated in Honduras. See Baker, "Ideas and Realities in the Wilson Administration's Relations with Honduras," *Americas* vol. 21 (July 1964): pp. 3-19.

wealth, and were essential to any Honduran power player waging war. The depths of the diplomatic debacle facing Washington were made all the more clear when reports began trickling in the Honduran government was coercing US citizens to pay forced loans in numerous cities. Forced loans thrust on US Americans varied in size and frequency, but private citizens, small businesses, and the massive banana companies were all subjected to them.[29] Not wanting to set a precedent and desirous to limit the war's fallout, the State Department ordered its representatives to instruct US citizens not to give into the demands of the exploiters.[30] Eager to retain their property and not suffer insult at the hands of the Hondurans, many foreigners refused to give any support to either the Honduran de facto government or the rebels. This resulted in the beating, imprisonment, and intimidation of US expatriates.[31] Hughes was apparently so concerned about the cavalier attitude the Hondurans were taking towards US citizens he asked the US Navy be on standby, and be ready to intervene to protect US American property and lives.[32] Only two days after making this original demand, an obviously anxious Hughes requested the USS *Milwaukee* be dispatched to Honduran waters.[33]

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[29] Waller to Secretary of State, February 4, 1924, 815.00/2851, RG 59, NA; George P. Shaw to Secretary of State, February 17, 1924, 815.00/2900, RG 59, NA; Shaw to Secretary of State, February 15, 1924, 815.00/2892, RG 59, NA; Robert C. Purdy to Secretary of State, February 6, 1924, 815.00/2897, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, February 5, 1924, 815.00/2852, RG 59, NA; and Willard L. Beaulac to Secretary of State, March 6, 1924, 815.00/3011, RG 59, NA.

[30] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), February 28, 1924, 815.00/2921; Purdy to Secretary of State, February 24, 1924, 815.00/2945, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, February 25, 1924, 815.00/2921, RG 59, NA.

[31] Shaw to Secretary of State, February 17, 1924, 815.00/2900, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, February 6, 1924, 815.002/70, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 24, RG 59, NA; Hughes to American Consul (La Ceiba), February 8, 1924, 815.00/2851, RG 59, NA; and Waller to Secretary of State, February 4, 1924, 815.00/2851, RG 59, NA.

[32] Hughes to Secretary of the Navy, February 5, 1924, 815.00/2851, RG 59, NA.

[33] Hughes to Secretary of Navy, February 8, 1924, 815.00/2860, RG 59, NA.

As US officials did what they could to protect US citizens in Honduras from forced loans, events began to spiral out of everyone's control when the actual fighting started on the North Coast. Within two weeks of the first hostilities, businesses in the region began closing or curtailing hours, and fire and looting insurance became impossible to obtain.[34] However, it was not until the rebel armies were spotted within a few miles of the port cities the true brutality and economic disruption of the war was experienced. At the battle for Puerto Cortés, 400 Hondurans were killed and civilians of all nationalities feared the nearby city of San Pedro Sula would be "looted which ever [*sic*] side won."[35] Anxious heads of US Legations began informing Washington the presence of gunships might be necessary to protect US lives and property "shortly."[36] Evidently excited and scared, Morales wrote Hughes "disaster is imminent unless effective measures are resorted to immediately."[37]

Although fighting, looting, banditry, forced loans, and general mayhem prevailed throughout almost all of the banana towns, the most concerning events for US policymakers took place in La Ceiba. By late February, George P. Waller, American Consul in La Ceiba, had for nearly a month been warning the Department a storm was brewing and he feared the worst would befall his city of residence, and neither the diplomatic corps nor the US Navy took this matter lightly. The USS *Denver* was dispatched and impatiently waited off the coast for commands to protect US lives and property. When the battle appeared imminent the US Navy, in consultation

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[34] Shaw to Secretary of State, February 15, 1924, 815.00/2892, RG 59, NA; and Waller to Secretary of State, February 8, 1924, 815.00/2891, RG 59, NA.

[35] Shaw to Secretary of State, February 21, 1924, 815.00/2916, RG 59, NA.

[36] Shaw to Secretary of State, February 8, 1924, 815.00/2861, RG 59, NA.

[37] Morales to Secretary of State, February 7, 1924, 815.00/2860, RG 59, NA. Harry M. Gwynn informed his superiors the entire economy of Central America was being dramatically shaken due to the civil war: MID 2657-P-134 (4), February 29, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

with Antonio Lagos, the Honduran government's military commander of La Ceiba, and revolutionary leaders, decided that it would establish a neutral zone to protect the lives and property of US Americans at the headquarters of the Standard Fruit and Steamship Company.[38]

On February 28, the *Denver* landed a sixty-marine detachment to enforce the neutral zone under the command of Major Edward W. Sturdevant, an action that came none too soon for the foreigners who lived in La Ceiba. Sturdevant quickly took charge of the situation establishing a patrolled perimeter, a mess hall complete with line cooks and a ration system, and orders "no firearms other than those carried by the Landing Forces would be allowed in the neutral zone." In the spirit of friendship and a dedication to peace and neutrality, Sturdevant offered protection to "all persons irrespective of nationality" as long as they were willing to be relieved of their firearms. Like an action scene from a Hollywood movie, at the last minute US Americans on the outskirts of the city were rounded up in a private automobile just barely escaping the horrors of war. Within three hours of the marines' landing, the first battle for La Ceiba began and lasted for almost two days.[39]

What took place during the two-day battle for La Ceiba can only be described as a tragedy and a prime example of the revolutionary upheaval Carías unleashed upon his country. Neither foreigners nor Hondurans were spared from hardship. Waller's subject line for his report to Washington reads, "Looting, Rape, Murder, and Flame Characterize Ceiba Horror."[40] Chaos reigned with "Little distinction possible between bandit revolutionists and government forces

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[38] Summaries of events in La Ceiba from both the US diplomatic and military perspectives can be found in Waller to Secretary of State, March 15, 1924, 815.00/3049, RG 59, NA; and

Commander Special Service Squadron (Rear Admiral J. H. Dayton) to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Curtis D. Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA.

[39] Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA.

[40] Waller to Secretary of State, March 6, 1924, 815.00/3030, RG 59, NA.

neither of them under control."[41] As the battle raged, women and children were sent to a "cement warehouse" to seek protection from stray shells and bullets that were exploding in and around the neutral zone.[42] Several people were injured within the compound and one US citizen, Andrew Fernandez, a "negro," was killed from the "rain of bullets penetrating" the safety perimeter.[43] The lucky among the wounded of the Honduran belligerents began pouring into the Vicente D'Antoni Memorial Hospital owned by the Vaccaro brothers, where they found help at the hands of US doctors and staff. The unlucky fighters "bled to death or were killed by drunken friends or enemies" as they lay in the streets. Almost the entire town was looted and burned to the ground.[44]

When the fighting had died down enough for Waller to leave the neutral zone and try to take stock of the battle, he was astonished by what he saw. He wrote, "at the Governor's office, all was confusion; drunken brawls were going on between armed men in the entry…We made our way there through the smouldering ashes of what had yesterday been an important part of the city." He quickly realized "there was no government of any kind in the city." As he made his way to try and find someone of authority he saw children "playing with rifles" in the streets, dynamite being dangerously misused, and rioting everywhere. According to Waller and the US Navy, when the fighting finally stopped, it was the US American inhabitants of La Ceiba who put out the remaining fires and tended to the Honduran wounded, and thus further contributed to

[41] Waller to Secretary of State, February 29, 1924, 815.00/2932, RG 59, NA.

[42] Waller to Secretary of State, March 9, 1924, 815.00/2987, RG 59, NA.

[43] Waller to Secretary of State, February 28, 1924, 815.00/2931, RG 59, NA. For more on Andrew Fernandez and the first battle for La Ceiba see: Waller to Secretary of State, March 5, 1924, 815.00/2954, RG 59, NA.

[44] Waller to Secretary of State, March 6, 1924, 815.00/3030, RG 59, NA.

the idea the Hondurans needed US Americans to help safely lift them out of the quagmire they had supposedly created for themselves.[45]

Once the revolutionists took the town and the fighting subsided, it was again momentarily declared safe for US Americans, but what was left for them and the Hondurans was little more than charred rubble. At least $1 million in damage had been done to the city.[46] The first battle for La Ceiba took fifty-two lives and injured over 100 more. Lacking a reason to stay and protect US, citizens the marines returned to the *Denver* and sailed to Tela, where Vice-Consul Robert C. Purdy had requested protection from Honduran government forces who were "looting and burning" their way to the city from San Pedro Sula.[47] However, only a few days later the marines would once again be called to La Ceiba to protect them from yet another horrific battle.

On March 6, an estimated 500 well-armed Honduran government troops legally but intimidatingly hired the United Fruit Company steamer *Ellis* to transport them to La Ceiba for a counterattack. Upon learning the information, Waller requested the presence of yet another US gunship; he received two, the USS *Lardner* and the USS *Billingsley*. On the morning of March 8, the *Billingsley*, *Lardner*, and *Ellis* arrived at La Ceiba at about the same time. In a race against time, the US warships disembarked a contingent of fifty-one marines and seventy-nine bluejackets to set up another neutral zone to protect the people of La Ceiba, and the *Ellis*

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[45] Waller to Secretary of State, March 6, 1924, 815.00/3030, RG 59, NA; and Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA.

[46] COMSPECRON to OPNAV, March 2, 1924, 815.00/2977, RG 59, NA.

[47] Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA. See also: COMPECRON to OPNAV, March 4, 1924, 815.00/2966, RG 59, NA.

anchored a few miles from town and began ferrying its troops to shore. Fearing the worst yet again, almost the "entire population of [La] Ceiba took refuge in the neutral zone."[48]

Carnage again revisited La Ceiba when the rebel forces under Tosta engaged Cisneros's troops. With much of the population of the city "huddled inside a cement warehouse" in the US enforced neutral zone, what was left of it was again subjected to another round of burning and looting. Those in the neutral zone were again traumatized by the "many bullets" that went astray during the fighting and some were even injured by the loose rounds. Lt. Colonel William H. Walsh of the Medical Reserve Corps tried to help the battle's wounded but was unable to do so due to his automobile being "peppered with bullets." Tosta's rebel forces eventually won permanent control of La Ceiba, but not until a total of $2 million of damage was wrought.[49]

For US policymakers, what took place in La Ceiba and elsewhere on the North Coast was not just another round of what many viewed as routine Honduran instability, it was much worse, and something that warranted a serious change to US policy. As the reports from Waller, Purdy, and Navy officers were read by top officials in Washington, a massive peacekeeping effort by US forces was contemplated. Commander of the Special Service Squadron, Rear Admiral J. H. Dayton, witnessed firsthand the destruction of the Honduran coastal towns and the real danger posed to US Americans, other expatriates, and the Honduran people. On March 1, while the first battle for La Ceiba unfolded, Dayton advised his commanding officers the situation in Honduras was so dire that no Honduran leaders controlled the situation. He made known that throughout

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[48] Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA.

[49] Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA; and Waller to Secretary of State, March 15, 1924, 815.00/3049, RG 59, NA. For more on Lt. Colonel William H. Walsh see: Wilbur to Secretary of War, April 10, 1924, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

the North Coast a state of "banditry" existed and there was "no means of suppressing it." According to Dayton, US Americans in the region were in "great danger" of losing their lives and property to indiscriminate "arson and looting." Dayton felt the "only solution" to the prevailing conditions was for an "expeditionary force of two thousand marines be sent immediately to occupy North Coast towns Tegucigalpa, San Lorenzo, Amapala and San Pedro, Sula [*sic*]."[50]


Figure 1. Avenida San Isidro of La Ceiba Just Before the Horrors of the War of Revindication were Released Upon the Once Picturesque City. MID 2657-P-134 (17), May 2, 1924, "Photographs of La Ceiba, Honduras," *Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41*, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[50] COMSPERCON to Cpnav, March 1, 1924, 815.00/2965, RG 59, NA. See also: COMSPECRON to OPNAV, March 2, 1924, 815.00/2976, RG 59, NA.

Figure 2. La Ceiba Shortly After the Carnage of War. MID 2657-P-134 (17), May 2, 1924, "Photographs of La Ceiba, Honduras," *Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41*, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

Figure 3. Avenida La Republica of La Ceiba After Soldiers of the Rebellion Seized It. MID 2657-P-134 (17), May 2, 1924, "Photographs of La Ceiba, Honduras," *Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41*, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

Figure 4. Burning the Dead After the Battle for La Ceiba. MID 2657-P-134 (17), May 2, 1924, "Photographs of La Ceiba, Honduras," *Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41*, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

Private US citizens also did their best to influence US foreign policy towards Honduras, and like Dayton, promoted a prolonged US military occupation of Honduras in the interests of peace and the rule of law. Cecil R. Mahaffey, a US businessman living in California, wrote the State Department demanding the US government protect US investments. Mahaffey was extremely upset about what was taking place in Honduras, and he felt the US should have moved to curb the selfish actions of the "cheap politicians, who appoint themselves saviors of the 'patria.'" Unconcerned about potential diplomatic blowback from subjugating the Hondurans to an invasion force, Mahaffey wrote, "If the people of Honduras are incapable of governing themselves I might suggest that the United States take steps to oversee that country, as Nicaragua is at present."[51]

The State Department did not completely disagree with Dayton's or other civilians' advice, but after a year of diligently working to remain neutral in Honduran affairs, the

[51] Cecil R. Mahaffey to Hughes, February 4, 1924, 815.00/2870, RG 59, NA.

Department decided it best to continue with its policy of supposed neutrality rather than occupying the whole of Honduras. This did not mean it would refrain from protecting US citizens and their property during the chaotic period. White understood Dayton's reports about the anarchic conditions on the North Coast were true, and that Honduran government troops had "joined with the bandits in looting and burning," but he was not willing to commit 2000 US troops to pacify the country. Instead, White recommended US Americans be protected where they were concentrated most, and not by a protracted expeditionary force. The one place White did feel a semi-permanent neutral zone would be useful was in the remote and agonizingly difficultly reached city of Tegucigalpa. In White's opinion, it was still possible to remain neutral in Honduran affairs while simultaneously landing troops throughout the country.[52] Fortunately, the United States ended up pursuing the lesser of two evils and adopted White's position over Dayton's. By the end of the War of Revindication, the United States still ended up landing troops in La Ceiba, Puerto Cortés, Tela, Amapala, and Tegucigalpa. US officials were evidently willing to deal with some international and domestic criticism in order to protect US lives and property.

**"Conditions are deplorable"[53]**

By early March 1924, most of the fighting on the North Coast was finished, and only a few pockets of Honduran government resistance could be found still holding out against the rebels, but the US military's involvement in protecting US citizens was far from over.[54] From the beginning of the conflict US officials in Honduras feared the danger the civil war would bring.

[52] White to Phillips, Memorandum, March 1, 1924, 815.00/2949, RG 59, NA; and White to Secretary of State, Memorandum, March 1, 1924, 815.00/2967, RG 59, NA.

[53] Morales to Secretary of State, April 7, 1924, 815.00/3073, RG 59, NA.

[54] Choluteca was one of the last cities outside of Tegucigalpa the revolutionists conquered, and it was yet another location where the US government was deeply concerned about the safety of its citizens. For information on the protection of US Americans in Choluteca see: USS Milwaukee to Opnav, March 25, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

Within days of Carías departing Tegucigalpa, Morales was "openly threatened" with death and the US Legation was warned it would be bombed.[55] However, it was not until the rebel leaders besieged Tegucigalpa that US citizens in the capital were in any real danger. Having endured seemingly countless revolutions, revolts, coups, and periods of anarchy it could be said many Hondurans were familiar with volatility and insecurity, but the assault Carías and his allies led on Tegucigalpa was unprecedented in Honduran history. For roughly six weeks the inhabitants of Tegucigalpa experienced the evils war, and were forced to suffer the inability of their politicians to solve the presidential succession crisis, and Carías's decision to turn to bloodshed.[56]

The battle for Tegucigalpa began on March 13 when de facto Government forces then in control of the capital attacked Ferrera's army just outside of town, but by this time the nature of the revolution had changed considerably. López Gutiérrez died of complications with diabetes and pneumonia on March 10, and now the Honduran government was in the hands of the Council of Ministers, who were largely controlled by Zúñiga Huete and members of the Arias faction. There were also multiple revolutionary forces complicating the situation. The rebellious generals Carías, Ferrera, Tosta, and Funes all controlled independent armies who only tolerated one another for the sake of bringing down the Council of Ministers.[57] In accordance to Honduran military tradition, no one person, junta, party, or government controlled Honduras. Power was localized and largely dependent on the loyalties of a region's citizens to a particular politician or general rather than a political party or government. This military fragmentation made

[55] Morales to Secretary of State, February 7, 1924, 815.00/2860, RG 59, NA.

[56] For an interesting first hand description of Tegucigalpa just before the outbreak of hostilities see: Harry Latourette Foster, *A Gringo in Mañana-Land* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1924), pp. 254-280.

[57] Morales to Secretary of State, March 25, 1924, 815.00/3047, RG 59, NA.

countrywide solidarity difficult if not impossible.[58] Although Carías claimed the support of most Hondurans, he did not hold any authority over his fellow revolutionary generals who also had their own private armies and political clients. In this fractured environment negotiating a peace or coordinating military operations was next to impossible.

With the end of the Council of Ministers in sight, the situation within Tegucigalpa began to spiral out of control and created conditions that were not only dangerous for US Americans but everyone who called the city home. A few days before the siege of Tegucigalpa started, a bomb was thrown at the house of Dr. Policarpo Bonilla that detonated harmlessly on his roof, but the act of terror set off an hour's worth of street fighting that was only a taste of what was to come.[59] Once Carías began his assault on the city the defenders lost control of their forces and chaos prevailed. As government soldiers robbed one another and the residents of Tegucigalpa, they left their victims dead behind them lying in the streets. Drunken government soldiers destroyed property, shot at the US Legation, and were responsible for shooting "many innocent persons."[60] High officials of the Honduran government were forced to take to the streets to try and regain control of their soldiers, which they did, but only after entire markets and many shops were pillaged. People began to go hungry as the cost of basic staples skyrocketed to four to eight times their regular prices. Those who could afford to pay for necessities had difficulty finding willing sellers because there was little hope of resupply anytime soon.[61] Even the Presidential

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[58] Steve C. Ropp, "The Honduran Army in the Sociopolitical Evolution of the Honduran State," *The Americas* vol. 30 no. 4 (April 1974): pp. 504-528.

[59] "HONDURAN PARTISANS TRY TO KILL BONILLA…," *New York Times*, March 13, 1924, p. 15.

[60] "Rebels Capture Honduran Capital; Marines on Way," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1924, p. 1.

[61] Ribas, pp. 49-52. According to Ribas, severe measures were taken by the Council of Ministers to assure order prevailed throughout their soldiers' ranks. The death penalty was enforced for a number of offenses including stealing government arms and making alcohol. In San Pedro Sula private citizens were forced to take up arms to defend themselves against the violence committed against them ("Honduras Soldiers Loot and Burn San Pedro," *The Sun*, March 31, 1924, p. 5).

Palace was not spared from looting and war damage.[62] Within a week of the beginning of the siege, Tegucigalpa had incurred an estimated $400,000 in property loss and become a dangerous place for Hondurans and foreigners alike.[63]

The revolution Carías and his supporters had begun now threatened the lives and property of US citizens, and the US government was displeased with how events were unfolding. Noting the loss of life, property, and disturbances to US businesses, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* called the revolution "the most serious of any [Honduran revolution] in the last half century."[64] On March 17, Morales requested US forces be stationed in the capital to help alleviate the "wild disorder" taking place there.[65] Morales wrote his superiors:

> Looting continued all day yesterday. The loss is estimated at $400,000. Principal stores are property of Chinese and British protected subjects. Two American stores also among those looted. Many innocent people killed in streets by looters and drunken soldiers. American Legation and Consulate fired at. Due to the fact that government has control over forces and American lives in imminent danger. I have requested landing force from U.S.S. MILWAUKEE.[66]

Answering the plight of the US minister, the USS *Milwaukee*, then stationed off the coast of Amapala, dispatched 176 troops to deal with the situation.[67] Upon arrival to the city the US force set up a "neutral zone" around the US embassy and patrolled the streets around it to provide

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[62] "Visit to the Presidential House," *Reconciliación*, June 17, 1924, p. 3.

[63] "Rebels Capture Honduran Capital; Marines on Way," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1924, p. 1. See also Morales to Secretary of State, March 15, 1924, 815.00/3028, RG 59, NA.

[64] "REBELS PUT NEW HONDURAN RULE TO WILD FLIGHT," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* March 20, 1924, p. 13.

[65] "Rebels Capture Honduran Capital; Marines on Way," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1924, p. 1; and Morales to Secretary of State, May 16, 1924, 815.00/3178, RG 59, NA. For more on what was taking place in Tegucigalpa see: Morales to Secretary of State, March 17, 1924, 815.00/3031, RG 59, NA; Stanley L. Wilkinson to Secretary of State, March 18, 1924, 815.00/302, RG 59, NA; and MID 2657-P-134 (10), April 3, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[66] Morales to Secretary of State, March 18, 1924, 815.00/3033, RG 59, NA.

[67] "Rebels Capture Honduran Capital; Marines on Way," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1924, p. 1.

"American citizens and other foreigners" with protection.[68] According to the US forces on the ground, a "state of anarchy, murder, looting, and general disorders were prevalent everywhere," but once they arrived the "situation quieted down" quickly.[69]

The siege of Tegucigalpa was surprisingly well covered by the US media and helped further the United States' concern over the Honduran civil war. Most of the US press focused on wanton violence, anarchy, and most importantly the danger posed to US Americans by the war. According to these sources many of the victims of the war were "innocent" and the perpetrators "drunken." The reasons for why the war was taking place were secondary and sometimes completely overlooked.[70] According to these sources the "Fighting" was "incessant," and the conditions so dire for the US Americans even getting news of what was happening out of the capital was a dire task.[71] When reports circulated Honduran soldiers and looters were firing upon US Americans, politicians in Washington could hardly afford not to act.[72] From the US perspective, the United States' power and character were at stake, not taking action would not only have endangered US American lives but also allowed the country's honor to be undefended.

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[68] "Honduran Capital Expects A Battle," *New York Times*, March 25, 1924, p. 4; "ORDER IS RESTORED IN HONDURAN CAPITAL," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 22, 1924, p. 2; and "American Bluejackets Sent In," March 20, 1924, p. 1. For more on the conditions in Tegucigalpa and the threat to US citizens and their property see: USS Milwaukee to Opnav, March 17, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

[69] USS *Milwaukee* to Opnav, March 23, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA. For more on the landing of US forces in Tegucigalpa see: Morales to Secretary of State, March 19, 1924, 815.00/3041, RG 59, NA.

[70] "U.S. Force Rushed to Tegucigalpa," *The Sun*, March 20, 1924, p. 9.

[71] Two Rebel Forces Begin Attack on Tegucigalpa," *The Sun*, March 19, 1924, p. 9.

[72] "AMERICANS FIRED ON BY HONDURANS," *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1924, p. 1; "HONDURANS FIRE ON U.S. LEGATION," *Atlanta Constitution,* March 20, 1924, p. 14; "HONDURAN TROOPS FIRE ON OUR MEN," *New York Times*, March 21, 1924, p. 12; "MARINES, FIRED ON, WARNED TO DEPART, STILL IN HONDURAS," *Washington Post*, March 21, 1924, p. 3; and "HONDURAN REBELS UNITE," *New York Times*, March 19, 1924, p. 16.

In March 1924, the Carías-led Conservative revolution was so unpopular in Washington Hughes and President Coolidge moved to abrogate its lifeblood by prohibiting the sale of all arms and ammunition from the United States to Honduras. In a determined March 22 letter to Coolidge, Hughes informed the President the Honduran revolutionaries were purchasing tens of thousands of dollars worth of war material from US companies. Hughes advised the President that due to the "chaotic conditions existing in Honduras" he should issue a proclamation preventing the sale of arms to the country.[73] That same day Coolidge declared the sale of arms and ammunition to Honduras as illegal. Coolidge wrote such a measure was necessary because "there exist in Honduras such conditions of domestic violence which are or may be promoted by the use of arms or munitions"[74] In his master's thesis, Daniel James Jonathan Ross makes the point that Hughes and Coolidge's move to stop the flow of arms was largely a move against the rebellious Nationalist forces "since only the rebels had access to American munitions[s] markets."[75] However, the real impetus behind the embargo was to curb all Honduran violence and not necessarily to curb the success of the revolutionists as their victory was almost assured.

Even with all of the disorders taking place and the improbable alliance of Carías and Ferrera's forces, the Council of Ministers stubbornly refused to negotiate, thus making the

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[73] Hughes to Calvin Coolidge, March 22, 1924, *FRUS 1924*, (hereafter *FRUS*, with appropriate year, volume, and page numbers) vol. 2, pp. 321-322.

[74] Coolidge, *Proclamation No. 1689, March 22,* 1924*, Prohibiting Exportation of Arms and Munitions of war to Honduras*, *FRUS*, *1924*, vol. 2, p. 322. For news coverage surrounding the US's decision to ban arms shipments to Honduras see: "COOLIDGE CUTS OFF ARMS FOR HONDURAS," *New York Times*, March 23, 1924, p. 8; "Shipping Arms to Honduras Prohibited by the President," *Washington Post*, March 23, 1924, p. 6; "COOLIDGE EMBARGOES ARMS FOR HONDURAS," *The Sun*, March 23, 1924, p. 11; "ARMS SHIPSMENTS TO HONDURAS ARE BARRED BY U.S.," March 23, 1924, p. A7; and "COOLIDGE CLAMPS LID ON SHIPMENTS OF MUNITIONS FROM AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS TO HONDURAS," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 23, 1924, p. 9.

[75] Daniel James Jonathan Ross, "The Honduran Revolution of 1924 and American Intervention" (Master's Thesis, University of Florida, 1969), p. 184.

United States' efforts at providing mediation and an embargo ineffectual.[76] By early April, Tegucigalpa resembled a medieval city under siege. Morales's words demonstrate the seriousness of the situation. He writes:

> Conditions are deplorable, typhoid and dysentery epidemic, dead bodies strewn on outskirts of the city with no attempt being made to inter or cremate them, odor throughout the city nauseating, food supply becoming short and prices for canned goods exorbitant, natives actually dying from squalor, situation liable to continue for some time due to attitude of authorities.[77]

Even the presence of the US marines could not completely protect US lives and property from the effects of war. Besides the "intense" anti-Americanism brewing all around them, which failed to produce any ruinous consequences for the US Americans, the US enforced neutral zone was under threat from Carías's Air Force. For the first time in the history of Central American warfare, airplanes were used in combat, and this time to bomb the Honduran capital. In the modern age of daisy cutter bombs, thermonuclear weapons, and unmanned Predator drones, one airplane operated by a flight crew of two US American pilots dropping homemade bombs over a small city seems less than extraordinary, but to the inhabitants of Tegucigalpa in 1924 it was terrifying. After a bombing raid killed two people, the Council of Ministers began arresting and threatening Carías's followers within the city in an attempt to stop the new military technology from being used.[78] When Carías's Air Force began bombing targets uncomfortably close to the US marines' barracks and killed women and children, even the US military attaché in Guatemala felt there was "hopelessness…from a military and diplomatic point of view."[79]

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[76] Morales to Secretary of State, April 1, 1924, 815.00/3059, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, March 24, 1924, 815.00/3045, RG 59, NA.

[77] Morales to Secretary of State, April 7, 1924, 815.00/3073, RG 59, NA.

[78] Morales to Secretary of State, April 9, 1924, 815.00/3081, RG 59, NA.

[79] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 9, 1924, 815.00/3078a, RG 59, NA; MID 2657-P-134 (#?), April 17, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA. See also: Morales to

## Sumner Welles and the Pact of Amapala

By early April, the situation in Honduras looked as though a stalemate had developed and the outlook seemed dire. Revolutionary forces were dug in around Tegucigalpa unable to penetrate its defenses and unwilling to negotiate with the Council of Ministers in a constructive way. The Council of Ministers refused to face their predicament and relinquish power and instead hoped time would somehow improve their situation. There was simply no end in sight to the conflict, and Morales appeared unable to move beyond the impasse, so Hughes used the last available diplomatic weapon in his arsenal and sent Sumner Welles to Honduras as the "President's Personal Representative" to mediate an end to hostilities.[80] Welles's experience in Honduras provides an excellent opportunity to examine the United States' long-term goals in Honduras and how they would affect Carías's relationship with the United States.

Before Welles could broker a peace deal that was satisfactory to the Hondurans, Central Americans, and the United States, he first had to make the dangerous journey overland to Tegucigalpa. This perilous trip, which was well-documented and known throughout the State Department, helped confirm Honduras as a land rife with violence and lawlessness, and Welles himself called the country "utterly destitute" and in a state of near anarchy.[81] When he first arrived in Puerto Cortés, Welles had difficulty finding any transportation to Tegucigalpa. An airplane was out of the question, because there was none available since the rebels bombing the

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Secretary of State, April 7, 1924, 815.00/3073, RG 59, NA; and Commander Special Service Squadron to Opnav, April 10, 1924, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA. For information on the unfortunate conditions prevailing in Tegucigalpa before the siege see: Morales to Secretary of State, February 27, 1924, 815.00/2922, RG 59, NA; and Comspecron to Opnav, April 28, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

[80] Hughes to the Commissioner in the Dominican Republic (Welles), April 8, 1924, 815.00/3077a, RG 59, NA.

[81] Welles to Secretary of State, April 14, 1924, 815.00/3098, RG 59, NA.

capital were using them. Taking a car to Tegucigalpa would not only be uncomfortable due to the bumpy roads, but also extremely dangerous since there were "several roving groups of bandits" that had recently killed people who attempted to travel the same way. After much discussion and worry, Welles finally decided a car provided by the revolutionists would take him to the city.[82] Much to his chagrin, he was shot at several times and forced to wait in Comayagua due to the road being "infested with groups of bandits." Even the revolutionists he traveled with were not immune to the banditry, and were fired upon on their way to meet Welles in Comayagua.[83]

Before Welles entered Tegucigalpa, he met with Carías and Tosta at the town of Toncontín to discuss terms and demands for ending the conflict. After expressing the State Department's position and considering the details of a potential ceasefire, Carías and Tosta "favorably impressed" Welles with their "attitude." Instead of suggesting an immediate ceasefire to the revolutionary leaders, which he had originally planned to do, Welles thought it best "to refrain from proposing an armistice until some definite agreement in principle" could be "reached between the contending factions."[84] It appears Welles was significantly influenced by his time spent with Carías and Tosta, because a ceasefire not only would have contributed to Welles's overall goal of ending the civil war and protected lives and property, but also enhanced his personal safety. Welles informed Hughes he did not call for a ceasefire because "Upon two previous occasions when an armistice was declared the revolutionary forces were attacked."[85] In all probability Carías and his allies convinced Welles to put off calling for a truce, because it was

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[82] Morales to Secretary of State, April 9, 1924, 815.00/3079, RG 59, NA.

[83] Welles to Secretary of State, June 2, 1924, 815.00/3185, RG 59, NA.

[84] Welles to Hughes, April 14, 1924, *FRUS, 1924*, vol. 2, p. 305.

[85] Welles to Hughes, April 14, 1924, *FRUS, 1924*, vol. 2, p. 305.

in their best interest to continue fighting. On April 15, revolutionary forces conquered Choluteca, the last holdout of Liberal forces besides Tegucigalpa.[86] The longer Carías and his forces waged war the more their position at the bargaining table improved and the easier an agreement between all parties could be reached. The fact that Welles changed his mind about calling a ceasefire after spending only a short time with Carías and his fellow revolutionaries is significant evidence Carías possessed substantial powers of persuasion, and is a small but meaningful example of his ability to influence and manipulate US foreign policy.

Under fire, Welles finally made his way inside the city limits of Tegucigalpa where he met with the Council of Ministers and witnessed the appalling condition in the capital. Noting the Honduran de facto government had little to no control over the drunken soldiers roaming the streets, he was easily able to convince the Council of Ministers to meet with the rebels to discuss the selection of a Provisional President who would provide the country with elections. However, the possibility of a conference quickly evaporated due to the increasingly favorable position of strength the revolutionaries were able to create. After his recent victory at Choluteca, Ferrera informed Welles he found little reason to negotiate with the Council of Ministers since their days were numbered. Finally, after nearly a week of trying to bring both sides together, they agreed to meet aboard the USS *Milwaukee* off the coast of Amapala.[87]

The Amapala conference began on April 23 but did not yield meaningful results until the revolutionists took Tegucigalpa, because the Council of Ministers still did not believe only Tegucigalpa remained under their control.[88] On April 27, after encircling the city, the revolutionary forces cut off the city's water supply and began the fiercest battle for the capital

[86] Welles to Hughes, April 16, 1924, *FRUS, 1924*, vol. 2, pp. 306-308.

[87] Welles to Secretary of State, June 2, 1924, 815.00/3185, RG 59, NA.

[88] Welles to Secretary of State, April 25, 1924, 815.00/3121, RG 59, NA.

yet to date. By the next morning, the rebels finally controlled the city and the country in its entirety. At this point, the Council of Ministers aboard the USS *Milwaukee* had no more room to negotiate, so they agreed to elect Tosta as the country's Provisional President, and a few hours later to a preliminary pact that officially brought hostilities to an end and helped establish a government more to the United States' liking.[89] On April 30, with no reason to remain, the US forces stationed in Tegucigalpa left the capital and headed for the coast without having fired a shot.[90]

The ink had hardly dried on the preliminary Amapala pact when it appeared another revolution might break out between Tosta, Carías, and Ferrera. Carías and Tosta attempted to make Ferrera Minister of Hacienda while giving Carías the more powerful position as the Minister of Government, but Ferrera demanded nothing less than to be the Minister of War. On May 1, Ferrera ordered his troops to attack Tosta and Carías's forces. Only after a lengthy meeting with Morales was yet another civil war averted with Ferrera rescinding his orders for war and becoming the Minister of War.[91] On May 3, in concert with representatives from Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala, the Council of Ministers, and the Honduran revolutionaries, Welles was able to finalize the Amapala Pact. The most important elements of the new agreement were that Constituent Assembly elections were to be held within thirty days of its signing, and that a general amnesty was to be declared as soon as possible.[92] However, the situation remained tenuous due to Carías's insistence on becoming the country's next president and Ferrera's refusal to entertain this possibility.

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[89] Morales to Secretary of State, May 16, 1924, 815.00/3178, RG 59, NA.

[90] Morales to Secretary of State, April 30, 1924, 815.00/3149, RG 59, NA.

[91] Morales to Secretary of State, May 16, 1924, 815.00/3178, RG 59, NA.

[92] Welles to Secretary of State, June 2, 1924, 815.00/3185, RG 59, NA.

A number of then contemporary observers and subsequent US historians have credited Sumner Welles with resolving the War of Revindication, but his contribution to ending the conflict was superfluous, his only contribution being that he accelerated the signing of the Amapala Pact.[93] In reality, the revolution came to an end not because Welles used "adroit bargaining" and the presence of the US forces to manufacture peace as Lester Langley argues, but because the rebels won.[94] Welles began his mediation in mid-April, but the final pact was not signed until May 3, a week after the capital was taken. The roughly three weeks Welles was in Honduras desperately trying to end the conflict speaks to the fact that he failed to do so. As the President's Personal Representative in Honduras, Welles had more authority to negotiate a peace than Morales, but he had no more leverage over the Honduran belligerents than the US minister did. It must be remembered Carías, Tosta, Ferrera, and Funes were only willing to send representatives to a conference headed by Welles if the Council of Ministers agreed to surrender Tegucigalpa, and the revolutionaries only put down their arms when the war was finished. Gwynn put the matter best when he stated:

> With the fall of Tegucigalpa there is apparently little to mediate unless the alliance of the three revolutionary generals should be broken. The conference thus becomes a fiction which can only serve to assure a more prompt restoration of peace and the establishment of constitutional government with immediate recognition by the mediatory powers.[95]

The persistence of the belief that Welles was responsible for bringing the conflict to an end is indicative of a lack of understanding of Honduran history, and the erroneous belief the United

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[93] For sources on those who give Welles more credit than he deserves in ending the War of Revindication see: Hughes to American Commissioner (USS *Milwaukee*), May 1, 1924, 815.00/3139, RG 59, NA; Ross, p. 207; Thomas Leonard, *Central America and the United States Policies, 1820-1980s: A Guide to Issues and References* (Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1985), p. 52; and Paul J. Dosal, *Doing Business with the Dictators: A Political History of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899-1944* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1993), p. 152.

[94] Lester D. Langley, *The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1982), pp. 99-100.

[95] MID 2657-P-134 (16), May 2, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

States unilaterally controlled events in the so-called "Banana Republic." This conviction contributed to the idea Honduras needed the United States if it was ever going to be a peaceful country. In reality, the Hondurans themselves brought the war to an end while the United States scrambled to control events from the sidelines.

### What US Americans Learned from the War of Revindication

The Honduran civil war reinforced what US Americans already believed to be true, they were "doing God's work" and in two main respects; first, the United States was a progressive and unselfish power that brought peace and prosperity wherever it went, and second, the brutal and avoidable conflict was the fruit of a people who could produce little more than chaos and violence and that needed uplift.[96] These lessons, combined with the knowledge the presence of US forces in Honduras led to the United States' "disrepute throughout Latin America," would later lead to the United States' acceptance and later support of Carías's dictatorial regime.[97]

Revisionist historians of US-Latin American relations have argued the United States landed troops throughout the Caribbean Basin in order to protect the vast US investments in the region and to calm civil disorder, but this was only partially the case in Honduras during the War of Revindication.[98] After the conflict, both civilian and military officials believed it was possible to protect the lives and property of US citizens, while at the same time remaining aloof from Honduran affairs. In other words, many felt it was possible to land US troops in Honduras and

[96] Hugh R. Wilson to Unknown, n.d. [April 1924?], enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of War, April 10, 1924, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

[97] Welles to Secretary of State, April 19, 1924, 815.00/3105, RG 59, NA.

[98] Green, pp. 37-50.

establish neutral zones and not interfere in domestic politics.[99] This was no accident: Hughes and others in US government were well aware of the anti-Americanism throughout Latin America, which partially resulted from the United States' unilateral actions in controlling the affairs of its smaller neighbors.[100] Hughes knew sending in the marines to yet another Caribbean country would not go over well in Latin America. He therefore warned US officials in Honduras they should remember the Department's "wish that nothing be done which will assist either faction" and that the presence of the marines should be only as long as was necessary to protect US lives and property.[101] US officials in Honduras took Hughes's instructions seriously and were careful to explain to all factions in Honduras the landing of US troops was only to protect lives and property and not to be misconstrued as support for any side in the conflict. Even the US Navy was well versed on what its role in Honduras was to be, and they did their best to comply with the Department's wishes.[102]

In *The United States and Latin America: An Historical Analysis of Inter-American Relations* Gordon Connell-Smith claims many 1920s US officials were convinced the "best elements" of Latin America "welcomed United States intervention" due to their calming

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[99] For an example see Beaulac to Secretary of State, March 15, 1924, 815.00/3048, RG 59, NA.

[100] MID 2657-P-134 (#?), April 17, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[101] Hughes to American Legation (La Ceiba), March 1, 1924, 815.00/2932, RG 59, NA.

[102] COMSPECRON to Opnav, February 28, 1924, 815.00/2958, RG 59, NA; Denby to Secretary of State, February 7, 1924, 815.00/2869, RG 59, NA; Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), February 7, 1924, 815.00/2860, RG 59, NA; and Waller to Secretary of State, February 28, 1924, 815.00/2927, RG 59, NA. For more on the United States' eagerness to remain aloof from Honduran affairs while still landing US military forces there see: Comspecron to Opnav, April 28, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA; and Commander Special Service Squadron to Opnav, April 24, 1924, SC-117-19, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy 1919-1927, Reel 29, RG 80, NA.

influence.[103] This was certainly the case in Honduras where most US observers the opinion that landing US troops pacified local populations with their presence just through their "moral effect." After the battle for Tegucigalpa took place, Morales writes, "The moral influence of the presence of the sailors was very great in spite of the fact that they kept to their quarters during their entire stay in the capital, and no disorders as serious as the previous ones occurred after their arrival."[104] US Americans felt their military was so powerful and influential they believed that the mere thought of US military intervention had a tremendous effect on Hondurans' actions. As distasteful as it may seem, it appears US officials began to think the only way of pacifying the Hondurans was through force. This belief in the necessity of coercion for the mollification of the Hondurans would be the foundation of the United States' acquiesce to Carías's dictatorship.

US-Central American historian Thomas M. Leonard implies the United States landed troops in Honduras for the purpose of influencing the course of local events. He writes "the United States landed marines ostensibly to protect American lives and property."[105] The aforementioned evidence suggests there was nothing "ostensible" about the United States' motivation. US soldiers were landed with the express purpose of protecting US lives and property, and they were under strict orders not to interfere in local political outcomes. None of the Honduran factions were purposefully assisted materially or diplomatically in any way during the war. US policymakers were aware of the diplomatic risks and reputational fallout that resulted from such imperialistic military ventures and wanted as little to do with them as

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[103] Gordon Connell-Smith, *The United States and Latin America: An Historical Analysis of Inter-American Relations* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974), p. 147.

[104] Morales to Secretary of State, May 16, 1924, 815.00/3178, RG 59, NA.

[105] Leonard, p. 52.

possible. This argument supports Munro's later claim that "We also saw nothing wrong in sending a warship from time to time to prevent injury to Americans and other foreigners when a breakdown of law and order endangered their lives."[106] It could be argued the landing of US forces in Honduras was in no way neutral and inevitably aided US goals for the country, but the policymakers responsible left little evidence they sent in the forces for this reason.

The best example of what US Americans learned about their identity and the benefits of their foreign policy came from La Ceiba. Even before hostilities broke out, Waller reported the presence of the USS *Rochester* off the coast "had an excellent effect" on calming the anxieties of the city's population.[107] According to Waller, once violence consumed the city, the only thing that put a stop to the "Looting, Rape, Murder, and Flame" in La Ceiba was the presence of Admiral Dayton and his "bluejackets."[108] After the first battle for La Ceiba and the marines were called away to Puerto Cortés, Waller informed his superiors the people requested the US force to stay for fear their security would again evaporate once they left.[109] Dayton was impressed by the conduct of his troops who never fired "a single shot" while in La Ceiba. In his report he states there was "Good feeling on the part of the native inhabitants toward the personnel of the Landing Force…on all sides." He went as far as to say the "Landing Force was cheered by the people."[110]

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[106] Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 9.

[107] Waller to Secretary of State, February 11, 1924, 815.00/2875, RG 59, NA; Waller to Secretary of State, February 8, 1924, 815.00/2891, RG 59, NA; and Hughes to American Consul (Puerto Cortés), February 9, 1924, 815.00/2861, RG 59, NA.

[108] Waller to Secretary of State, March 6, 1924, 815.00/3030, RG 59, NA.

[109] Waller to Secretary of State, March 3, 1924, 815.00/2944, RG 59, NA.

[110] Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA.

Perhaps Waller summed it up best when he wrote that without the presence of the US forces "the story would, I fear, be a different one."[111]

Although the interference and purposefully destabilizing influences of the US owned banana companies in Honduran affairs such as financial and military hardware support to belligerents were understood then as they are now, this knowledge did not stop US Americans from losing even more faith in the capacity of the Hondurans. After having witnessed the disastrous events at La Ceiba and throughout the North Coast, Admiral Dayton let his personal opinions be known. He wrote:

> Latin Americans by training, tradition and temperament are not suited for a democratic form of government. The great majority of the people consist of ignorant Indians and mixed blood of African descent. The countries are ruled by a small minority, the so-called upper classes, who have the political morality of an old time Tammany Chieftain. They have no respect for life or property. Their only interest in life is politics and politics leading to revolution. While they call themselves liberals and conservatives these names mean nothing except 'Ins' and 'Outs.'…these people would rather fight than work. Life in these countries is drab and uninteresting, not many amusements—social life restricted and a Revolution brings a zest to life, gives them something to talk about before and after, and gives a chance for the successful ones to get rich quickly.[112]

Gwynn thought the only way to deal with the Hondurans was "the guiding hand of the United States," and that this was "still vital to the maintenance of peace and order." He went on to write any efforts to reason with them were "largely fiction."[113] Summing up recent events, Waller wrote Hughes Hondurans were becoming increasingly undisciplined and insubordinate to authority of any kind, and needed guidance in order to return the country to safe conditions. He

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[111] Waller to Secretary of State, April 9, 1924, 815.00/3101, RG 59, NA. For more on the benefits of the US marines in Honduras see: Beaulac to Secretary of State, March 15, 1924, 815.00/3048, RG 59, NA; Waller to Secretary of State, February 29, 1924, 815.00/2932, RG 59, NA; and Foster, pp. 279-281.

[112] Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, March 22, 1924, enclosed in Wilbur to Secretary of State, n.d. [April 1924?], 815.00/3103, RG 59, NA.

[113] MID 2657-P-134 (18), May 8, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

believed the Hondurans pursued their frequent revolutions because they "add pleasurable zest" to an otherwise dull life. Furthermore, Waller felt if left unchecked "indiscriminate shooting, plundering, and burning" of US citizens and their interests would only get worse.[114]

When the sentiments of these authors, and others like them, were combined with their belief that the strong hand of military force improved an otherwise degenerate people, US policymakers began to see the supposed benefits of abandoning democracy in Honduras. There was a distinct feeling of "hopelessness" amongst US Americans of Honduras ever reaching the goals the United States had set out for it.[115] For US officials in and outside of the country, something drastic had to be done if the country was ever going to be pacified.

### Carías's Interaction with the United States during the War of Revindication

During the war, Carías made several attempts to influence the United States and its foreign policy towards himself. He was successful in bringing many US policymakers to empathize with his belief the 1923 election had been stolen from him, and that he was fighting a reasonably justifiable war against a tyrannical regime. However, he failed to impress the US government he should become his nation's next president. What he learned from this experience was that what the United States valued most in its relationship with Honduras was protecting its citizens' life and property. During his presidency and later dictatorship, Carías would utilize this lesson by ceaselessly marketing himself as a stabilizing force for Honduras and as a guarantor of the safety of US citizens and their financial interests.

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[114] Waller to Secretary of State, July 31, 1924, 815.00/3243, RG 59, NA.

[115] MID 2657-P-134 (#?), April 17, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

One of the most blatant methods Carías used to influence the United States was by providing the US Legation with deprecating information about his political opponents. It was a well-known fact there was a consistent flow of "false propaganda spread by various factions…to create false impressions" in Honduras.[116] An example of the kind of misleading information passed by Carías to US officials occurred not long after Carías revolted. One of Carías's representatives in Guatemala provided Gwynn with information to sway his thinking. This unnamed informant provided Gwynn with a copy of the following telegraph supposedly written by Zúñiga Huete to his commanders throughout Honduras:

> Election returns show that Carías has over fifty per cent more votes than Arias and Bonilla combined. You will immediately take steps to favor the candidacy of Arias or Bonilla in order that the selection of a candidate will be referred to the Assembly. These instructions are given by virtue of my position and I assume all responsibility.[117]

The message obviously contains self-deprecating information that a politician desperately trying to maintain himself in power would not readily admit to his supporters. The likelihood Zúñiga Huete authored this document and readily admitted Carías's win after having helped commit election fraud is miniscule. In all probability the Carías camp authored this text and was attempting to convince as many US officials as possible Carías should be Honduras's next president.

Near the end of the conflict, when the rebels appeared on the verge of victory, Carías engaged in an elaborate series of endeavors designed to make himself the United States' pick for

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[116] MID 2657-P-134 (2), February 22, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA. See also: MID 2657-P-134 (8), March 19, 1924, "Honduras Revolution, interview with Carlos Lagos," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[117] MID 2657-P-134 (2), February 22, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

the Honduran presidency. Carías's actions over the three-day period of March 24 to March 26 can only be described as a mad scramble to try and find some way of becoming the Honduran president. In late March, Carías sent Morales a radiogram and bluntly requested he be recognized as the president of Honduras. Carías provided reasons for why the United States should support him. He informed Morales "practically the whole country was in favor of the revolution," and that he and his fellow revolutionary generals were the only leaders strong enough to provide the country with peace and "normal stability."[118] When the United States failed to recognize him, Carías tried a different tactic. The next day Carías, Ferrera, Tosta, Funes, and other leaders of the rebellion declared Dr. Fausto Davila as Provisional President of Honduras, and that elections would be held as soon as possible. Furthermore, these leaders took on the responsibility of providing order in respective zones of authority for the "purpose of maintaining order."[119] Not only did the fragile league of revolutionary leaders use the kind of key words such as "peace" and "order" it knew US policymakers wanted to hear, they also provided a workable solution to the United States to contemplate. Bypassing Morales, whom Carías believed to be working against him, Carías tried to convince the US Legation in Managua this was the best opportunity to "assure tranquility and peace."[120]

Carías and his fellow revolutionaries knew Davila's presidency was the best chance they had to retain their power over the country, but the United States wanted nothing to do with it, and instead sought a negotiated international settlement based on international law. This did not stop Carías from again changing tactics to something more agreeable to him. He then requested the United States set up a conference where a "neutral" president could be decided upon by the

[118] Morales to Secretary of State, March 24, 1924, 815.00/3046, RG 59, NA.

[119] Morales to Secretary of State, March 25, 1924, 815.00/3047, RG 59, NA.

[120] Ramer to Secretary of State, March 26, 1924, 815.00/3050, RG 59, NA.

revolutionists.[121] Carías had no desire to see his old political rivals Arias, Bonilla, or representatives of the Council of Ministers at the conference table, because he knew Davila was in his pocket since he advocated his presidency in Washington a few months earlier. Carías's actions over the three-day period of March 24 to March 26 can only be described as a desperate attempt to try and find some way of gaining the United States' support for becoming president, but when these labors failed he remained undeterred and continued to seek the presidency for the remainder of the year.

Despite Carías's best efforts, by the end of the War of Revindication he was one of the United States' least esteemed Honduran political contenders. Besides proving to be unwilling to compromise throughout 1923 and starting the revolution, the United States saw him as being responsible for some of the war's worst atrocities and the main reason why the war was so difficult to bring to a satisfactory conclusion. In mid-March, Hughes specifically warned the revolutionary leaders then camped outside of Tegucigalpa that any fighting "in and around" the city "would be looked upon with the gravest disfavor by the United States," and yet Carías went ahead with the siege anyway. The original copy of the telegram sent by Hughes to the US Legation in the city also contained further insight into Hughes's thinking, but it was not delivered to Morales in its entirety. Hughes's warning not to make Tegucigalpa into the besieged city that it would eventually become was the last straw for any hope of US recognition for Carías's presidency. Crossed out in the original telegram is Hughes's warning that any leader who preferred violence over a negotiated settlement would not enjoy the "confidence" of the

[121] Ramer to Secretary of State, March 26, 1924, 815.00/3050, RG 59, NA. It also seems that Hughes had a difficult time keeping up with all of Carías's attempts to position himself more prominently for the presidency. For an example see: Hughes to American Legation (Managua), March 29, 1924, 815.00/3050, RG 59, NA.

United States.[122] Although it is impossible to know for certain why Hughes decided to censure himself, in all probability he held off making a grand pronouncement on recognition because he realized his grip on the situation was tenuous, and that he might later be forced to deal with a Honduran leader who may have defied his overly ambitious warning. In reality, the United States had enough reason before the siege of Tegucigalpa not to recognize Carías's presidency, but when Carías helped turn the city into a battleground he went beyond the point of redemption in the eyes of US officials. Not heeding the wishes of the United States would later prove something Carías regretted and therefore a learning experience for how to deal with the United States.

## US News Coverage of Carías in 1923 and the War of Revindication

US news coverage of Carías during 1923 and the War of Revindication contributed directly to the negative impressions that US policymakers had for him, and add support to the contention the United States was impartial in Honduran politics during the period. If US Americans knew anything about the political situation in Honduras during 1923 and 1924, it was the political chaos and violence were simply business as usual. After decades of disparaging news reports and travelers' accounts the news coverage of the period must have seemed predictable if not expected. Rather than a favorite of the US press, Carías was portrayed as nothing more than a violent thug, little different from his fellow Honduran politicos. Far from the stabilizing force the US government so desperately wanted for the country, Carías was depicted as yet another self-serving Honduran strongman eager for more power.

One of the main themes from news coverage of Carías's activities during the period was that he was a troublemaker and "rebel." Because many news reports echo the sentiment both

[122] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), March 14, 1924, 815.00/3017, RG 59, NA.

Washington and US business interests sought stability in Honduras, Carías's association with the civil war made him more of a villain than patriotic revolutionary. While it is true some sources considered Carías the legitimate victor in the 1923 elections and treated him with favoritism, most did not and considered him a sore loser and typical rebellious Honduran.[123] A number of articles list Carías's name amongst the "unsuccessful Presidential aspirants" who turned "rebel" to press their claims.[124] As a "rebel" Carías was fighting López Gutiérrez 's dictatorship, but as appealing as this might seem to US Americans who so often claimed to love liberty and justice, the primary concern of those reporting on the situation was how Carías's rebellious activities jeopardized US lives and interests. Besides placing US citizens indirectly at risk due to his insistence on fighting, he was even associated with those rebellious forces that coerced US Americans to pay a "levy" to support their cause.[125] According to the news reports Carías's destabilizing actions forced the United States to react by issuing special diplomatic warnings to all hostile factions in Honduras, and then send US warships and eventually soldiers to the country.[126]

As yet another sore loser of the corrupt Honduran political machine, Carías was portrayed as not only defiant of Honduran law, but also the wishes and warnings of the United States. The *New York Times* reported Carías and other Honduran politicos ignored Hughes's warning and led

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[123] Two articles that portray Carías in a positive light are "Democracy Implies Good Losers," *Outlook*, January 9, 1924, p. 50; and Francis F. Birnbaumer, "The Managua Expedition," *Leatherneck* vol. 7 no. 33 (August 9, 1924): p. 3.

[124] "Honduras Is On Verge Of Civil War Outbreak: Congress Fails To Elect President," *The Sun*, February 2, 1924, p. 9.

[125] "HONDURANS THREATEN AMERICAN LEGATION," *New York Times*, February 29, 1924, p. 3.

[126] "REBELS OF HONDURAS CAPTURE 3 TOWNS," *Washington Post*, February 10, 1924, p. 15; "Honduras Is Placed Under Martial Law," *Washington Post*, December 19, 1923, p. 1; and "REBELS AT TEGUCIGALPA…," *New York Times*, February 28, 1924, p. 23; "Rebels Capture Honduran Capital; Marines on Way…," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1924, p. 1; "U.S. AIR SQUADRON GOING TO HONDURAS," *Washington Post*, January 2, 1924, p. 3; and "HONDURANS THREATEN AMERICAN LEGATION," *New York Times*, February 29, 1924, p. 3.

the country into civil war for no other reason than having lost the election.[127] The *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* even implied Carías might have dragged Honduras's neighbors into the country's troubles by raiding Nicaragua and encouraging Guatemala to recognize the López Gutiérrez regime.[128] The Baltimore *Sun* described Carías's actions as one of the reasons why the country was unstable and why the United States broke off relations with the country.[129] One dramatic article even associated Carías with two thousand Nationalist "Indians" who stormed the cathedral of Comayagua while brandishing "hatchets" and "machetes."[130]

In a surprisingly lengthy and informed article in *Review of Reviews* Professor Charles W. Hackett of the University of Texas called Carías a man of "no marked ability," "uncouth," and "noted for his stubbornness." Furthermore, he presented Carías as a corrupt and deceitful man willing to do anything to attain power, even if his ambitions dragged the country into civil war and chaos. Stressing Honduras's need for rule of law and the difficulties US citizens and businesses faced as a result of the revolutionary disorder, Hackett placed Carías in the unflattering category of those who disturb US financial interests.[131]

Although no source described Carías as the sole instigator of Honduran turmoil and violence, he was almost always at the center of any explanation of why the country descended into disorder. From the viewpoint of those reading the US popular press, Carías was not only a

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[127] "HONDURAN REBELS TO FIGHT DICTATOR," *New York Times*, February 5, 1924, p. 14; and No Title, *New York Times*, February 3, 1924, p. 19.

[128] "HONDURAN REVOLT DRAWS U.S. CRUISER," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 9, 1924, p. 6; and "WARSHIP SENT BY U.S. TO HONDURAS AS WAR LOOMS," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 30, 1923, p. 11

[129] "Washington Ends Relations With Honduran Republic," *The Sun*, February 14, 1924, p. 11.

[130] "Courier, Risking Life, Brings Story of Honduran Civil War," *The Sun*, March 22, 1924, p. 1.

[131] Charles W. Hackett, "The Background of the Revolution in Honduras," *Review of* Reviews vol. 69 no. 4 (1924): pp. 390-396.

hindrance to his own country by dragging it into civil war, but also to the United States for disrupting the banana and mining industries. Holding the label of "rebel" and his association with any explanation for why the United States sent its military to the region certainly did not win Carías any favor amongst US policymakers.[132]

## Conclusion

The United States and Carías had decidedly different goals during the War of Revindication that helped move the pair from a relationship of mutual apathy to one of an adversarial nature. While the United States tried a variety of tactics to end the conflict and begrudgingly landed troops to protect its citizens and their property against the horrors of war, Carías started the violence, helped it spread throughout the country, and stalled the peace process until he was placed in a more favorable position to take over the presidency. The war US officials blamed Carías for starting was by no measure comparable to that of the then recent conflicts the United States had taken part in such as World War I, the Philippine Insurrection, or the Spanish-American War, but it was a significant catalyst in changing US-Honduran relations. By causing millions of dollars worth of damage, striking terror and horror into the hearts of US Americans, and convincing US officials and private citizens the Hondurans were incapable of higher civilization or a peaceful existence at all the war made authoritarianism in Honduras more appealing. Although the war failed to persuade Carías to stop defying the United States, it helped him hone his diplomatic skills with the Northern Colossus. Most importantly, the events of early 1924 demonstrate the United States was not able to dictate terms to Carías or the Honduran

[132] For more on US news coverage of Carías in 1923 and 1924 see: "Orders Honduras Under Martial Law…" *New York Times*, December 24, 1923, p. 1; "HONDURAS AGAIN TORN BY INTERNAL STRIFE," *The Sun*, August 31, 1924, p. 9; "Two Rebel Forces Begin Attack on Tegucigalpa," *The Sun*, March 19, 1924, p. 9; "Hughes Urges Hondurans to Hold Election at Once," *The Sun*, February 7, 1924, p. 11; "3 'Presidents' In Honduras," *New York Times*, February 21, 1924; "ADDITIONAL FORCE LANDS AT CEIBA AS AMERICAN IS SLAIN," *Washington Post*, March 2, 1924, p. 2; and "ELECTION STIRS HONDURAN FRAY," *Los Angeles Times*, p. IV11.

people. During the war, the Hondurans did as they pleased while the US government struggled to keep up. This is a prime example of the United States reacting to a weaker neighbor rather than dominating it.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE STRUGGLE FOR THE HONDURAN PRESIDENCY

"I confirm my statement not to use my name nor permit it to be used as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic…since it is my wish to proceed in complete harmony with the wishes expressed by the Government of Your Excellency on various occasions."[1]

-Carías promising the US government he would not seek the Honduran presidency, but it would be another three months after he made this statement before he officially withdrew his candidacy to the United States' satisfaction.

Even before the Amapala Pact was signed, US officials in Honduras knew any peace agreement could be easily undone if Carías continued to pursue his goal of becoming president, so the State Department did its best to prevent him from doing so. Over the course of the war, General Gregorio Ferrera and Carías had become mortal enemies and opposed one another's political aspirations. If either man found himself the subordinate of the other violence was sure to break out. The simple remedy to the feud would be to prevent both revolutionary leaders from becoming president, but since Carías insisted he run in the upcoming 1924 elections the United States found itself opposing him in an effort to promote peace through the rule of law.[2] Over the seven-month period between the end of the War of Revindication and the December elections, the diplomatic and political maneuverings of the United States and Carías demonstrate Carías's refusal to be intimidated by the United States and the limits of US power in the affairs of Honduras. Although the United States was eventually able to thwart Carías's presidential bid, it was never certain it would be able to do so, and the diplomatic price it paid in the process was

[1] Carías to Charge d'Affaires of the American Government (Stokely W. Morgan), August 23, 1924, enclosed in Morgan to Secretary of State, August 24, 1924, 815.00/3373, RG 59, NA.

[2] For more on the United States' desire for peace in Honduras see: Franklin E. Morales to Secretary of State, May 26, 1924, 815.00/3174, RG 59, NA.

exceptionally high.[3] The experience also taught Carías a valuable lesson about the merits of working with the United States rather than against it.

While the previous two chapters argued Carías and the United States were far from friends and worked towards opposite goals, this chapter chronicles the disintegration of an already tenuous relationship into an adversarial and antagonistic one. By the end of 1924, the United States and Carías were no longer competitors vying for the political future of Honduras; they were enemies. As Carías pursued the presidency at all costs, the United States worked towards what it believed was the long-term stability and prosperity of Honduras and Central America by directly opposing him. These disparate agendas were made all the more complicated by the persistent efforts of the US banana companies to control Honduran politics.[4] This chapter demonstrates Carías's relationship with the United Fruit Company (UFCO) not only met with disapproval from the State Department, but also resulted in the Department obstructing the Company's commercial operations in Honduras. This episode shows Washington was not always in harmony with the interests of Carías or the UFCO and challenges two conventional views of US-Latin American relations: one that depicts Central American elites as puppets of the United States, and another that sees US foreign policy as the captive of specific US business interests.[5]

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[3] Dana G. Munro argues Carías "withdrew" from the presidential race of 1924 because the United States promised to withhold its recognition of his government (Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Area* [Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1934], p. 214).

[4] My argument that Carías sought the presidency throughout 1924 and throughout Miguel Paz Baraona's presidency differs from the findings of Thomas M. Leonard who asserts after the civil war Carías "put his [presidential] aspirations aside until 1932" (Thomas M. Leonard, *Central America and the United States Policies, 1820s-1980s: A Guide to Issues and References* [Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1985], p. 52). This section also diverges from the claim in Anne W. Lommel's dissertation, "US Efforts to Foster Peace and Stability in Central America, 1923-1954," (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1967), that "Carías was not a candidate in the election because the United States would not have recognized a government led by him due to the Department of State' interpretation of the recognition provisions in the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923" (p. 59).

[5] For more on Carías's connection with the UFCO see: Mario Argueta, *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 2008), pp. 221-267.

## US Policy Objectives in Honduras in 1924

Although US policy apologists such as Whitney T. Perkins and Eduard Guerrant argue the United States never set out to dominate the economic interests of the Caribbean Basin, the evidence from Honduras indicates otherwise.[6] The State Department's main policy objective in Honduras in 1924 was still establishing a sustained peace in order to bring the country economically closer to the United States. With this goal in mind, the Department sought to implement a number of far reaching reforms in Honduras designed to discourage revolution and outside interference. On July 3, the Department's Office of the Economic Adviser circulated a memorandum that can only be described as an attempt to dominate Honduras for the economic benefit of the United States. The memorandum contained eight policy recommendations reminiscent of the US government's actions throughout the Caribbean in eliminating Great Power competition and creating better business conditions in unstable locations. For over two decades, the United States had applied a policy of training native forces to pacify populaces in countries such as the Philippines, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Haiti. Following what appears to be a formula based on the United States' experiences in these countries, the Department advocated Honduras reduce its military forces "very substantially," and that the US military recruit and train a Honduran military force to form something of a Guardia Nacional to assist in the "Restoration and Maintenance of Public Order." This was to be coupled with the settling of Honduras's foreign debt through US loans and US bankers overseeing but not administering the country's customs houses. Additional US private loans were to be provided so Honduras could build the infrastructure necessary for economic prosperity.[7] Historian Eric Paul Roorda calls this

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[6] Whitney T. Perkins, *Constraint of Empire: The United States and Caribbean Interventions* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. xiv.

[7] "Proposed Reforms in Honduras," Memorandum, Office of the Economic Adviser, Department of State,

"a kind of Progressive imperialism" because it was similar to the uplifting efforts of the progressives in the United States. What the United States was calling for was nothing less than a "restructuring" of Honduras's "social, economic, and military institutions."[8] In modern parlance this endeavor would be called "nation building," and would become the United States' focus after the crisis of Carías's presidential bid was over.

**The Problem With Carías**

It was no secret amongst US policymakers Carías would seek the presidency even before the end of the civil war, and that the United States would have little choice but to resist this development. The US Minister in Honduras, Franklin E. Morales, repeatedly warned his superiors in Washington Carías was "very desirous" of becoming president, and numerous National and Liberal Party politicians such as revolutionary General Vicente Tosta and Nationalist Party politico Paulino Valladares supported his bid. The only two powerful Honduran politicians diametrically opposed to his presidency were his onetime revolutionary allies Generals Francisco Martínez Funes and Gregorio Ferrera. Ferrera was said to be "very strongly opposed to Carias" and would "never agree to his candidacy."[9] This was no small matter because Ferrera and Funes were considered stronger militarily than Carías.[10] US observers were under the distinct impression if left unchecked, Carías's refusal to acknowledge the Treaty of Peace and

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July 3, 1924, 815.00/3479, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[8] Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 16-18. For more on "Progressive imperialism" see: Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 30-34.

[9] Morales to Secretary of State, May 16, 1924, 815.00/3178, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, May 20, 1924, 815.00/3172, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, June 28, 1924, 815.00/3216, RG 59, NA; and Arthur H. Geissler to Secretary of State, June 27, 1924, 815.00/3196, RG 59, NA.

[10] Morales to Secretary of State, May 21, 1924, 815.00/3180, RG 59, NA.

Amity of 1923 would lead to war, so they resolved to force the issue.[11] By late May, less than a month after the Amapala Pact was signed, Carías and Ferrera's forces were already engaging in "disorders," which resulted in several deaths.[12]

Although the State Department had no favorites in the elections of 1924, it was far from neutral and quickly moved to block Carías's presidency, but it did so in such a way that it allowed Carías to have a glimmer of hope his potential government might be recognized by the United States. Hughes never provided the US Legation in Honduras a concrete position on Carías. Undoubtedly, the Department wanted to avoid being put into a position where Carías was president, but it was unable to recognize his government because of a previously official position against him, a situation that may have led to even greater but unknown problems. With that said, it was no secret the United States firmly opposed Carías's presidency. In a May 23 telegram, Hughes instructed Morales to circulate informally the US government's position it would not recognize Carías because he "was the first revolutionary leader to take the field and who refused to accede to the suggestions which this Government made with a view to bringing about a peaceful solution of the difficulties." However, Morales was also told not to make this the official line of the Department just in case Carías became president and it was placed in an awkward position.[13]

There were two major problems the State Department faced because of its opposition to Carías. First, Carías could have become president anyway, and therefore demonstrated the

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[11] MID 2657-P-145, "Honduras Situation," May 23, 1924, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA; and MID 2657-P-145 (2), "Political Situation in Honduras," June 5, 1924, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[12] Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, May 31, 1924, 815.00/3191, RG 59, NA.

[13] Charles Evans Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), May 23, 1924, 815.00/3172, RG 59, NA. For a more direct but still unofficial US stance against Carías see: Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), July 5, 1924, 815.00/3203, RG 59, NA.

impotence of US policy; and second, there were no other viable Honduran presidential candidates. With the possible exceptions of Tosta and Ferrera, there were no politicians in Honduras that could withstand Carías's power if they were elected president. Additionally, almost the entire political establishment in and outside of Honduras participated in the civil war thus making them ineligible for office according to the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Even Fausto Davila, who was a satisfactory compromise candidate for the revolutionary leaders and who spent much of the war in the United States, was unacceptable to the US government, because he had participated in a diplomatic and intellectual capacity in support of the revolutionaries, and in particular Carías.[14] The lack of an acceptable substitute only encouraged Carías who stubbornly continued to seek the presidency.

**The Challenge of Choosing a Honduran President**

In early June, the State Department took a complicated and surprisingly difficult stance on the issue of the planned Honduran elections. While it opposed Carías, it also resisted anyone who had participated in the revolution, as well as Jose María Casco, an eligible compromise candidate chosen by Carías, Ferrera, Funes, and Tosta to avoid war. The Hondurans themselves orchestrated Casco's nomination and was similar to plans promoted by the Department in 1923, but Hughes found his nomination unacceptable because he desired the upcoming elections be completely open to all who wished to participate. Hughes informed Morales he was taking this position because he felt the only way stability could be assured in Honduras was through a

[14] Arthur H. Geissler to Secretary of State, June 5, 1924, 815.00/3188, RG 59, NA; Munro to Francis M. White, Memorandum, May 22, 1924, 815.01/12, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 25, RG 59, NA; MID 2657-P-134 (21), July 23, 1924, "Honduras-Present Political Situation," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA; Munro to Secretary of State, Memorandum, August 15, 1924, 815.00/3391, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Fausto Davila to Secretary of State, August 14, 1924, 815.00/3392, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

"Constitutional and popular government." Hughes wrote "free suffrage" would be a test whether the revolutionary leaders were really interested in the people's will.[15] Nevertheless, the State Department was convinced even if elections were held and neither Carías nor a compromise candidate ran, the elections would inevitably be a farce, so its insistence they take place had more to do with appearances than faith in the Hondurans to run their own government.[16]

Hughes's stance was blatantly hypocritical, because if he truly was interested in popular sovereignty in Honduras, he would not have opposed Carías, who was the obvious people's choice. However, if Hughes was only interested in stability, his opposition to Casco's candidacy did not make sense, because as a compromise candidate between Carías and Ferrera his presidency would mean peace between the two rivals. It appears Hughes's position was made in the belief the rule of law based on a foundation of democracy was the best chance of establishing a sustained peace in Honduras. Opposing Carías protected the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 and thus helped discourage future political instability, and supporting open elections with the strict exclusion of any candidate who had taken up arms or even any candidate who favored the right to run for election for former fighters, Hughes believed, would ultimately help legitimize the nation's next government both domestically and internationally. Having taken this position, it is evident the US government lacked confidence in Honduras's ability to solve its own problems and provide itself with peace. All in all, the US government may have felt it was

[15] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), June 7, 1924, 815.00/3182, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, June 12, 1924, 815.00/3192, RG 59, NA; and Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 2, 1924, 815.00/3387, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[16] Morgan to Secretary of State, September 29, 1924, 815.00/3387, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; Munro to White, Memorandum, September 30, 1924, 815.00/3357, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

neutral when it came to Honduras's affairs, but it was still comfortable with dictating the structure of its government.

**Carías Brings War to Honduras a Second Time**

US military attaché Harry M. Gwynn felt if enough "pressure" was exerted on Carías, he would eventually be forced to withdraw, but a number of factors combined in such a way as to encourage Carías to remain in the race. The prospect of the 1924 US elections fortified Carías because the longer he pursued the presidency, the more likely the United States was to acquiesce to his aspirations. Carías was betting the Coolidge Administration's desire for peace would allow it to support his presidency, so it could demonstrate to the US electorate it had a successful foreign policy.[17] Carías must have known if violence erupted in Honduras again, the Coolidge Administration would be eager to see it extinguished as quickly as possible, and would appease him by withdrawing the objection to his candidacy. Therefore it appears he did everything possible to antagonize Ferrera to revolt.

Carías's desire to become president placed Honduras in a precarious position. By early July, Morales informed the State Department there were rumors Carías was planning on attacking Ferrera.[18] Taking the bait, Ferrera declared publicly Honduras's fragile peace would be shattered if Carías continued to appoint his supporters to prominent military positions throughout the country and refused to renounce the presidency.[19] It was common knowledge Carías and Ferrera were mortal enemies. Even before the War of Revindication was over there were speculations civil war between Carías and Ferrera would break out, so both factions were restless

[17] MID 2657-P-134 (16), May 2, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[18] Morales to Secretary of State, July 5, 1924, 815.00/3203, RG 59, NA. See also: Morales to Secretary of State, July 7, 1924, 815.00/3205, RG 59, NA.

[19] Morales to Secretary of State, July 19, 1924, 815.00/3220, RG 59, NA.

and highly alert. One false report issued in mid-July Ferrera had moved towards war induced Carías to arm 800 of his followers and prepare them for battle.[20] By late July, there were reports Carías was planning to assassinate Ferrera to eliminate his last significant domestic political rival. Ferrera apparently took this hearsay seriously because he requested Morales travel with him to meetings with the Provisional Government for protection.[21] Honduras had yet again returned to the edge of violence, and it was evident to all political conditions since 1923 had not improved. According to US officials, this newly kindled trouble was almost entirely due to Carías's stubborn persistence on gaining the presidency.[22]

In early August, Ferrera finally had enough and revolted against Carías's refusal to withdraw from the presidential race and the constant antagonism Carías had perpetrated against his faction. This new revolutionary movement threatened to topple an already weak and unrecognized Provisional Government.[23] It was well known Ferrera had a significant arsenal leftover from the War of Revindication, and the Provisional Government possessed only a handful of guns and ammunition. This placed the United States in an awkward position, because the US arms embargo issued earlier that year in March prevented the Provisional Government from easily rearming itself. If the United States lifted the embargo it would be supplying an unrecognized government with weapons, contributing to Honduran revolutionary violence, and inadvertently strengthening Carías's military power. Morales supported the lifting of the US

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[20] Morales to Secretary of State, July 23, 1924, 815.00/3225, RG 59, NA.

[21] Morales to Secretary of State, July 31, 1924, 815.00/3257, RG 59, NA.

[22] For sources on US policymakers' opinions on General Gregorio Ferrera and Carías see: Morales to Secretary of State, July 12, 1924, 815.00/3224, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, July 12, 1924, 815.00/3213, RG 59, NA; and Ferrera to Carías, n.d. [September 1924?], 815.00/3383, RG 59, NA.

[23] MID 2657-P-134 (22), Cablegram, August 7, 1924, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA. See also: Ferrera to Carías, n.d. [September 1924?], 815.00/3383, RG 59, NA.

arms embargo on Honduras, but warned such action would inevitably strengthen Carías's position due to his alliance with Tosta.[24] After Tosta repeatedly begged Hughes and President Coolidge to lift the embargo to save his government, Hughes yet again clarified the reasons for its implementation in the first place and stated the threat of violence spreading and consuming the entire region was simply too great. Even when both Tosta and Carías promised the US Legation they would not seek the presidency through written statements, the State Department remained unswayed, because it simply did not believe them. [25] By restricting the supply of war material in Honduras, Hughes argued, the United States protected its assets by limiting the country's capacity for violence, reduced the possibility the war would spread to neighboring countries, constrained Carías's military might, and helped prevent Carías from eliminating his most powerful political rival.[26] The United States was not about to support a government it saw as dishonest and self-interested even if that support would have helped pacify Honduras.

By inducing Ferrera to revolt, Carías not only was able to appear as Honduras's redeemer, but also essentially eliminated Ferrera as a political rival. During Ferrera's revolution,

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[24] Morales to Secretary of State, August 8, 1924, 815.00/3248, RG 59, NA.

[25] For one of the best examples of Vicente Tosta's efforts to lift the US arms embargo on his country see: Tosta to President Calvin Coolidge, August 14, 1924, 815.113/95, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA; and Tosta to Coolidge, August 29, 1924, 815.00/3380, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA. For more on Honduran efforts to lift the embargo see: Salvador Aguirre to Hughes, August 14, 1924, 815.113/94, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA; and George P. Waller to Secretary of State, August 20, 1924, 815.113/108, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA. For Hughes's response to Tosta's requests see: Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), August 25, 1924, 815.113/95, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA. For more on the US response to Honduras's request to lift the embargo see: Joseph C. Grew to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), August 9, 1924, 815.00/3248, RG 59, NA; Morgan to Secretary of State, August 21, 1924, 815.113/97, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA. Tosta even employed the use of the government presses to unify Honduran opinion behind US policy in an effort to make his administration more appealing to the United States. For examples of this see: "The Presidential Message," *Reconciliación*, August 16, 1924, p. 2; and "Ferrera's Rebellion in Honduras is commented on in the United States," *Reconciliación*, November 8, 1924, p. 2.

[26] Hughes to American Legations (Central America), August 22, 1924, 815.00/3275a, RG 59, NA.

Carías's propaganda machine sprung into action and attempted to destroy Ferrera's popularity by accusing him of plunging the country into war and not having any patriotic sentiment. In contrast, Carías, and the Provisional Government he supported, were portrayed as the true defenders of Honduran prosperity and patriotism.[27] Although most of Honduras bought into this sentiment, the United States was unimpressed and refused to take sides in the conflict.

The US government's reaction to Ferrera's revolt mirrored its response to the War of Revindication. It called for peace conferences, maintained the embargo, remained neutral, and lost faith in the Hondurans' ability to resolve their own problems. In Gwynn's opinion, for peace to flourish in Honduras the United States needed to become involved in the daily affairs of the country.[28] In mid-September, when US marines were landed to protect US interests in La Ceiba against revolutionary violence, Waller had similar sentiments. "Instead of unrest, riots, one or more conflagrations, possible deaths of Americans, we now have peace and order for a week," wrote Waller, "American prestige has been elevated, and best of all, instant and perfect cooperation has been secured with local officials."[29] Thanks to Carías pushing Ferrera to revolt and his part in starting the War of Revindication earlier that year, it was evident to all US observers Honduras needed the United States' guiding hand if it was ever going to be peaceful.

There may have been a consensus in the US government that Honduras needed the United States' help if it were ever going to be prosperous, but how this was supposed to be accomplished was a matter of contention. Hughes's policies indicate he favored a nonpartisan

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[27] "Revolution without ideals nor flag," *Reconciliación,* August 25, 1924, p. 2.

[28] MID 2657-P-134 (25), "Honduras-Political Situation," August 22, 1924, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[29] Waller to Secretary of State, September 17, 1924, 815.00/3370, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

approach focused on improved governance through the rule of law. Enforcing the Treaty of 1923 was the focal point of Hughes's policy, but so too was his desire to see Honduras's military and financial sectors reformed, so the United States could keep its distance and not encroach upon Honduran sovereignty. As the US military attaché in Central America, it may come as no surprise Gwynn advocated a more authoritarian methodology for pacifying Honduras. Dictating terms to the Hondurans seemed like a more plausible and more fruitful system for Gwynn who believed Honduras's history had shown its citizens incapable of ruling themselves.

These two men's different tactics illustrate the evolving philosophies behind US policymaking. Gwynn represented the older generation of policymakers such as Woodrow Wilson who felt it was the United States' responsibility to instruct Latin America to embrace democracy. As a more original thinker, Hughes was less convinced the United States needed to prescribe how Hondurans and Latin Americans in general needed to act. However, at the same time he was not against sending in the marines if US interests were threatened despite the resentment he knew military action would generate in host countries.[30] As Carías's presidency drew closer, Gwynn's position was gradually abandoned, and Hughes's more hands off approach gained popularity. This is significant because US policymakers who favored Hughes's belief Hondurans should govern themselves through the rule of law and only intervene if US interests were endangered were more likely to favor Carías's dictatorship, because he fulfilled the United States' desire for stability and protection of US interests in the absence of direct intervention.

Just as suddenly as Ferrera's revolution had broken out it was effectively over. By mid-October, Tosta's Provisional Government Army soundly defeated Ferrera's forces in a decisive battle near Comayagua, thus removing almost all-noteworthy domestic opposition to Carías's

[30] Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 4-6.

presidency. Although Carías's efforts to secure the United States' support during the revolution had failed, the only impediment to his aspirations now was the United States. With that said, after defeating Ferrera, Tosta was much more popular amongst Hondurans than he had been in months past. He was lauded in one Honduran newspaper as "heroic" and the republic's most respected battlefield general.[31] Although Carías enjoyed Tosta's dedicated support throughout most of 1924, towards the end of the year Tosta was able to withdraw his endorsement of Carías's candidacy due to his newfound popularity, and was certainly part of the reason Carías withdrew from the presidential race in December 1924.

**Vying for the Presidency**

In the minds of US policymakers, Carías was an impediment to both short and long-term peace, not to mention its desired trajectory for Honduras, so the United States employed several methods to encourage Carías to relinquish his presidential bid. As previously noted, the strongest and most regularly used tool in opposing Carías's presidency was the unofficial but widely circulated threat of nonrecognition. The second most readily used and perhaps the most potent method were the US attempts to isolate Carías politically. For example, in order to break up the alliance of Tosta and Carías, Hughes attempted to ostracize the Honduran Provisional Government in Central America using Tosta's refusal to remove Carías from his cabinet as leverage. Tosta was hesitant to reassign the office of the Minister of Government because such an action would have been undeniably insulting to Carías and denied him a powerful position in the government. Hughes denied Tosta's government recognition and ordered the US Legations throughout the region to encourage their respective host countries to do the same, because

[31] "The Heroic General Vicente Tosta Retakes the Comayagua Square," *Reconciliación*, October 4, 1924, p. 2. See also: "The General Vicente Tosta and his columns find glory in the fields…," *Reconciliación*, October 6, 1924, p. 2.

according to the recently signed peace agreement Carías's position at the ministry was supposed to be limited to only ten days.[32]

While the United States' efforts to influence the affairs of Honduras were considerable, Carías's domestic support can only be described as equally formidable, and the source of strength which he employed to resist the dictates of Washington. Carías's supporters were numerous and fanatical. One estimate placed his supporters at 80% of the country.[33] Throughout 1924 there were regular proclamations of support for Carías in the government's semi-official newspaper *Reconciliación*. For instance, Cariistas in the city of Yuscarán declared, "We will always remain in accord with our commander in arms. We salute him."[34] In addition to having the 1923 election stolen from them by the Lagos faction, the Nationals were not about to forget why they fought the worst civil war in Honduran history. In order to see Carías become president, the Nationals had spilt much blood and razed a sizeable portion of their country. Many refused to believe the United States would fail to recognize his presidency, and others simply did not care if it did or not.[35] The United States' stance against Carías only steeled his supporters' resolve. It seems after decades of US interference in Honduran affairs, much of the population had had enough. Waller reported Carías and his followers exhibited an attitude of "defiance" toward the United States, and that his admirers publicly stated "'Carias is our choice, and will be overwhelmingly elected, whether the United States likes it or not, and we will have him for

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[32] Sumner Welles to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), May 7, 1924, 815.00/3154, RG 59, NA; and Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), June 30, 1924, 815.00/3197, RG 59, NA.

[33] Stanley L. Wilkinson to Secretary of State, August 9, 1924, 815.00/3250, RG 59, NA.

[34] "Vibrations of Patriotism of the National Party," *Reconciliación*, August 16, 1924, p. 4. See also: "Vibrations of Patriotism of the National Party…," *Reconciliación*, August 14, 1924, p. 4.

[35] Morales to Secretary of State, June 26, 1924, 815.00/3208, RG 59, NA.

President in spite of all the gringos can do.'"[36] Carías's followers were making a stand against what they saw as imperialism by supporting his presidency, and adopted the slogan "Honduras for the Hondurans."[37]

Support for Carías was so strong a number of US officials in Honduras feared what might take place if he did not become president. In La Ceiba, Waller warned there would be retaliation against US interests if "self determination" was ignored, and that many people felt the United States would be forced to recognize his government because if it failed to do so it would be guilty of turning its back on democracy.[38] In October, Grew even requested the Secretary of the Navy send a ship to the North Coast to counter anti-American sentiment stemming from the United States' anti-Carías position.[39] The US government was well aware of Carías's domestic support and the willingness of many Honduran military men to make a violent stand in his defense. One intercepted letter written by Nationalist General Jacobo P. Munguia to Carías stated the Hondurans were a "virile people" and they should and could stand up against the undemocratic actions of the United States. In another letter to the National Party Committee and Subcommittee, Munguia wrote if United States had its way in Honduras, "we would prefer openly to be slaves, and not merely half-slaves, claiming to be free. If we are to be humiliated and bled, it would be better to suspend all patriotic efforts."[40]

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[36] Waller to Secretary of State, July 31, 1924, 815.00/3243, RG 59, NA.

[37] Waller to Secretary of State, August 29, 1924, 815.00/3321, RG 59, NA; and Waller to Secretary of State, August 12, 1924, 815.00/3252, RG 59, NA.

[38] Waller to Secretary of State, October 21, 1924, 815.00/3436, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Munro to White, Memorandum, December 5, 1924, 815.00/3477, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[39] Grew to Secretary of the Navy, n.d. [October?] 1924, 815.00/3430, RG 59, NA.

[40] General Jacobo P. Munguia to Carías, October 24, 1924, enclosed in Waller to Secretary of State, October 30, 1924, 815.00/3453, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-

For the US government, Honduran resistance to the United States' opposition to Carías's presidency was seen not as evidence of the United States overstepping its neighborly boundaries, but rather the ineptitude of the people and their continued need for US guidance. Throughout 1924, Hondurans from all walks of life tried explaining to US officials they overwhelmingly supported Carías's presidency, and that the United States' opposition to their sovereign will antagonized them. Stokely W. Morgan, who took over as the head of the US Legation in Tegucigalpa in August, tried "again and again" to explain why the United States would not recognize a potential Carías government, but stated the issue was "entirely beyond the comprehension of the masses here." He was also frustrated with the "educated" Hondurans because they too rejected the notion the United States supported free and open elections while simultaneously denying certain candidates from running. In response, some of Carías's supporters did the only thing they could do; they threatened the United States with "Carias or chaos."[41]

Besides his legions of supporters who pressured US officials, Carías also employed a number of tactics designed to bring US policymakers around to his way of thinking. In all probability one of the first methods he used was a simple lie. In late May, Carías and his potential running mate Dr. Presentación Quesada visited Morales at the US Legation. At the meeting, Carías informed Morales Welles had assured him he would be eligible for the presidency. Morales told Carías he was obviously "mistaken," and that he was present at the

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1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Munguia to National Party Committees and Subcommittees, October 24, 1924, enclosed in Waller to Secretary of State, October 30, 1924, 815.00/3453, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[41] Morgan to Secretary of State, December [5?], 1924, 815.00/3497, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA. See also: Munro to White, Memorandum, December 5, 1924, 815.00/3477, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Morgan to Secretary of State, November 27, 1924, 815.00/3468, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

conversation with Welles Carías was referring to. Undeterred, yet evidently uncertain about what to do next having just been caught lying, Carías then left the meeting with Morales with the excuse of needing to consult with his advisors and President Tosta.[42]

For well over a year, Carías's interaction with Morales had been consistently negative, and this led Carías to think Morales was personally opposed to him and the reason behind his lack of support in the United States. Almost every communication the two men had since early 1923 dealt with one of two themes: either Carías asking Morales for the US government to change its policy, or Morales telling him what not to do. After Morales essentially called Carías a liar for telling him Welles said he would be eligible for the presidency, Carías no longer wanted to do business with him. Not long after the episode, Morales began writing Hughes about their personal difficulties, and Carías's belief only he, and not the US government, opposed his presidency.[43] Carías and his allies were convinced "the Department would gladly accept Carias if he were elected," but that Morales was personally scheming to prevent this from happening.[44] In June, Carías bypassed Morales and sent a letter directly to the State Department claiming he was not only the best candidate in Honduras to provide the country with peace, but also Morales's "deep animosity" towards him prevented this truth from being communicated to the Department. Adding weight to his claims and his displeasure with Morales, Carías also stated he was no longer welcomed at the US Legation.[45] Morales told Hughes these sentiments were nothing more than an example of the typical Honduran's incapacity to believe anyone could possibly be

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[42] Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, May 31, 1924, 815.00/3191, RG 59, NA.

[43] Morales to Secretary of State, June 30, 1924, 815.00/3197, RG 59, NA.

[44] Morales to Secretary of State, June 12, 1924, 815.00/3192, RG 59, NA.

[45] Morales to Secretary of State, June 12, 1924, 815.00/3192, RG 59, NA. Carías's political allies also directly sent the State Department letters supporting the notion Morales was personally opposed to Carías. For an example see: Presentación Quesada to Secretary of State, n.d. [July 1924?], quoted in Grew (Acting Secretary of State) to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), July 17, 1924, 815.00/3213, RG 59, NA.

neutral. According to Morales, "the psychology of the Honduran" was to see everyone as either simply "with him" or "against him."[46]

The State Department's response to the complaints lodged against Morales by Carías and his allies was originally to try explaining its position. Time and time again, the Department instructed Morales to elucidate the connection between Carías, the revolution he started, and the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923.[47] Carías must have certainly understood the Department's thinking. Rather than demonstrating his need for clarification or a refusal to deal with the truth, it is probable Carías was making a calculated maneuver to have the Department replace Morales with someone more amenable to his goals. If this was indeed the case, Carías got his wish when Morales suddenly resigned from his post in mid-August.[48]

Besides inducing the State Department to reassign its representatives more to his liking, Carías also attempted to appear willing to work with the United States in order to buy himself time in the hopes that it might change its opinion of him. Just prior to Morales's departure from Honduras, Carías, Ferrera, and Martínez Funes signed a pact promising none of them would run for president. This agreement was made at the request of the State Department and to be published in newspapers throughout the country, so there was no mistaking Carías's withdrawal. However, Carías blocked the publication of the document despite the efforts of both Ferrera and Morales. Additionally, Carías failed to read the declaration of his abstention at a National Party

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[46] Morales to Secretary of State, July 22, 1924, 815.00/3241, RG 59, NA.

[47] The best example of the State Department's frustration with Carías and his complaints against Morales can be found in: White to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), n.d. [July 1924?], quoted in Grew (Acting Secretary of State) to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), July 17, 1924, 815.00/3213, RG 59, NA.

[48] Munro to the Secretary of State, August 21, 1924, 815.00/3308, RG 59, NA; and Munro to Secretary of State, August 22, 1924, 815.00/3309, RG 59, NA. Although it is an extremely remote possibility, there were those in Honduras and El Salvador who felt Morales was "recalled" by Washington because he supported Ferrera's revolt. See: "What a North American says about Honduran issues," *Reconciliación*, October 9, 1924, p. 2.

convention despite his promises to do so.[49] Saying one thing to the US Legation and doing another was nothing new for Carías; earlier in July, Carías prevented the publication of the Department's June 30 telegram regarding its opinion anyone who participated in the revolution was not eligible for the presidency. Rather than accusing Carías as the culprit, the *Reconciliación*, the government's semi-official newspaper, stated the next day the "newsboys" responsible for delivering the paper were ill and were therefore not able to deliver the paper.[50] By late August, the three revolutionaries' renunciation of the presidency had yet to be published despite assurances it would be done, but Carías did send the Department a letter with a promise he would not run.[51]

From September to early December, Carías continuously guaranteed the US government he would not seek the presidency, but he failed to make the necessary public displays to confirm what he said in private. This shortcoming convinced US observers Carías was still seeking the presidency and exploring a variety of less than conventional methods to achieve it and the United States' recognition. Although Carías used the predictable diplomatic tactic of sending agents to Nicaragua and El Salvador to advocate his cause to friendly governments and other US delegations besides those in Honduras, he was simultaneously rumored to have a number of schemes designed to trick the United States into giving his potential government recognition.[52]

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[49] Morales to Secretary of State, July 28, 1924, 815.00/3232, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, August 11, 1924, 815.00/3251, RG 59, NA; and Munro to the Secretary of State, August 21, 1924, 815.00/3308, RG 59, NA. A copy of the declaration can be found enclosed in Morales to Secretary of State, July 31, 1924, 815.00/3257, RG 59, NA.

[50] Morales to Secretary of State, July 12, 1924, 815.00/3224, RG 59, NA.

[51] Carías to Morgan, August 23, 1924, enclosed in Morgan to Secretary of State, August 24, 1924, 815.00/3373, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[52] For sources on Carías's efforts to influence US Legations outside Honduras and neighboring governments see: Grew (Acting Secretary of State) to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), July 14, 1924, 815.00/3211, RG 59, NA; Montgomery Schuyler to Secretary of State, December 3, 1924, 815.51/555, RG 59, NA;

One of these conspiracies was presented to Morgan by President Tosta, and involved Dr. Miguel Paz Baraona running as Carías's vice presidential candidate. According to this plan, once the pair was elected Carías would step down thus making Paz Baraona president. Tosta argued that this plan would make the people happy and help avoid any disorder.[53] It is hard to believe Carías would have willingly stepped down after being elected; the proposed compromise with the United States was more likely designed to force the United States to allow Carías to run and give him recognition once elected.

Among the many schemes rumored to be employed by Carías, the most widely circulated was the claim Carías would publicly announce his withdrawal, but at the ballot box his followers would vote for him anyway. The people would then elect Carías with a "huge majority" to encourage the United States to interpret the results "as the undeniable will of the people," and therefore force it to recognize his presidency.[54] Similar reports stated Carías was planning for this and printed new ballots to be secretly distributed throughout the country.[55] These kinds of conspiracies were supported by the fact pro-Carías propaganda was still widely circulated in the Honduran press just days before he withdrew from the race. One December 4, an article stated although there were "powerful interests" that opposed his presidency, Carías enjoyed the sincere and loyal following of the "great majority of the inhabitants of Honduras as no one has ever had before, thus making his name a symbol of redemption." The author went on to give his readers

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Munro and Jose Antonio Tigerino, Memorandum of Conversation, December 1, 1924, 815.00/3475, RG 59, NA; and Morgan to Secretary of State, December 2, 1924, 815.00/3471, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[53] Morgan to Secretary of State, November 17, 1924, 1924, 815.00/3460, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[54] Morgan to Secretary of State, October 24, 1924, 815.00/3430, RG 59, NA.

[55] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 15, 1924, 815.00/3513, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

mixed messages by writing Hondurans must accept international treaties and accept Carías's resignation with "dignity," but also that "Carías's presidency is the only one that is viable and available."[56] Publications such as this heartened Hondurans to disregard their inhibitions and Party's dictates and vote for the person they really wanted regardless of his presidential eligibility.

In late November, with just a month to go before the much-anticipated election, Carías made one last ditch effort to seek election and the United States' recognition. Morgan reported Carías had "by no means given up hope of being President," and he was cautiously positioning himself to maintain the National Party's nomination despite withdrawing his candidacy. Morgan stated Carías "was not blind to the possibility that he might be elected even against his expressed wishes…[but] the people would follow his lead and do whatever he advised."[57] Just days before Carías was to make his withdrawal public at the National Party convention, Morgan read the speech Carías was planning to make and was greatly distressed at its message. Although the speech made clear Carías was renouncing his candidacy, it did not mention any other reason besides not wanting to run. According to Morgan, the speech was "eminently calculated to ensure his nomination while at the same time making it appear that he has kept his promise to withdraw."[58] Morgan chastised Carías for his deceptive efforts and coerced him to declare he was withdrawing his candidacy due to Article 2 of the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923, and to make clear to the Nationalist delegates he wished them to nominate someone else.[59] On

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[56] "The Presidential Problem," *Reconciliación*, December 4, 1924, p. 2.

[57] Morgan to Secretary of State, November 12, 1924, 815.00/3475½, RG 59, NA.

[58] Morgan to Secretary of State, November 19, 1924, 815.00/3463, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[59] Carías, Speech at Nationalist Party Convention, November 24, 1924, enclosed in Morgan to Secretary of State, December [5?], 1924, 815.00/3497, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras

November 28, the newspaper *Reconciliación* reported Carías had withdrawn his candidacy.[60] After all of this, the Nationalist Party announced it did not have the authority to accept Carías's withdrawal and stated he was still their choice for the presidency.[61]

Faced with Carías's stubborn defiance and his followers' unwillingness to accept his resignation, Morgan requested Hughes make "a final and categorical declaration…that no government headed by Carias will be recognized."[62] What he received from the Department left much to be desired and differed little from other statements discouraging Carías's presidency. Although Hughes circulated instructions to US Legations throughout Central America to inform regional governments the United States would not recognize Carías and it hoped they would do the same, he did not specifically instruct Morgan to refer to Carías by name when working in Honduras.[63] Hughes wrote the United States would "gladly recognize any constitutionally elected government in Honduras, provided that it can do so consistently with its general policy" but that it would "be unable to recognize any administration headed by one who is barred by the provisions of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity."[64] This refusal to specifically take an open stance against Carías shows the Department feared its efforts thus far might not have been enough to eliminate the possibility of his presidency. Luckily for Washington, Carías accepted the statement as a personal warning and "definitively" withdrew on December 9. Additionally,

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1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[60] "The Great Carías Renounces His Candidacy for President of the Republic Before the National Party Convention," *Reconciliación* , November 28, 1924, p. 1.

[61] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 2, 1924, 815.00/3470, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[62] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 4, 1924, 815.00/3473, RG 59, NA.

[63] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), December 9, 1924, 815.00/3477, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[64] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), December 6, 1924, 815.00/3473, RG 59, NA.

Carías agreed to publicly support Paz Baraona for president and Quesada as his Vice-President.[65] Although Carías claimed his withdrawal was for the good of the nation, Morgan felt he was only delaying his presidential bid to a later, more convenient date.[66]

Paz Baraona won the presidency virtually unchallenged in the December 1924 elections, but his victory was only a substitution for most Hondurans who felt their first choice had been denied to them by the United States.[67] Although Paz Baraona won 66,862 votes, Carías still amassed the respectable sum of 1,270 ballots even though he was no longer a candidate. The entire Department of Colón refused to accept the Paz Baraona and Quesada ticket, and instead put its support behind a Carías and Paz Baraona government. Additionally, many Nationals throughout the country declined to take part in the election because they could not vote for Carías. There was an unmistakable sense the Hondurans were unsatisfied with the results, but many people felt that Carías might still come to power through Paz Baraona's resignation.[68] Nor was such sentiment out of the question. When Carías traveled to the North Coast after publicly renouncing the presidency he was greeted in every city he visited by throngs of supporters. In San Pedro Sula 3000 people welcomed him to the city, a massive banquet was thrown in his honor, and he was credited with unselfishly abandoning the presidency for the public good.

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[65] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 10, 1924, 815.00/3481, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA. See also: MID 2657-P-177, "The Honduras Situation," December 12, 1924, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[66] Carías to Committees and Sub-Committees of the National Party, December 11, 1924, enclosed Morgan to Secretary of State, December 15, 1924, 815.00/3513, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Morgan to Secretary of State, December 16, 1924, 815.00/3516, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[67] "The men of the day: General Tiburcio Carías A.," *Reconciliación*, December 12, 1924, p. 2; and Morgan to Secretary of State, December 24, 1924, 815.00/3500, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[68] Morgan to Secretary of State, January 8, 1924, 815.00/3536, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

Everywhere Carías went there was an unmistakable feeling that he may have lost this round, but he would certainly win the next.[69]

In the end, the United States was able to deny Carías the presidency despite his overwhelming domestic popularity and wily efforts to win the United States' support. This fact is an obvious blow to the argument Carías controlled his own destiny, and the idea the country was something more than just an unofficial protectorate of the United States. However, there are a number of elements to this story that prove useful in helping to purge the idea that Carías was a mere puppet of the United States and that Hondurans were powerless to act in the face of US policy. The limits of US power are the most noticeable components of this claim, because while dependency theorists argue the United States virtually steamrolled its way through Honduran affairs with the help of local elites, the events of 1924 prove otherwise.[70] For over seven-months, Carías and his supporters in the National Party refused to give into Washington's demands that he withdraw from the presidential race. When this fact is considered alongside the United States' disapproval with the actions of the United Fruit Company and its support of Carías in 1924, it is possible to see the US government was far from the only actor on the Honduran political scene and ultimately only one of many influences on the fate of Carías and his country.

Answering the question of why Carías withdrew his candidacy is fraught with difficulties and ultimately impossible to support with conclusive evidence, but Central American historian

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[69] "Arrival of General Carías to San Pedro Sula," *Reconciliación*, December 15, 1924, p. 2. See also: "A reception has never been seen equal to Carías's in the North," *Reconciliación*, December 16, 1924, p. 2; and "The men of the day: General Tiburcio Carías A.," *Reconciliación*, December 12, 1924, p. 2.

[70] Two of the most dedicated dependency theorists who argue Honduras was little more than a colony of the United States during this period and Carías's presidency are Mario Posas and Rafael del Cid. They argue "It is unquestionable that during the political regime of general Carias the United Fruit Company and its subsidiaries" ruled the country (*La construcción del sector público y del Estado nacional en Honduras, 1876-1979* [San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1983], pp. 106-113. See also: Virgilio Carías and Víctor Meza, *Las compañías bananeras en Honduras: un poco de historia* (Tegucigalpa: Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales, UNAH, 1974). This book's cover depicts a Honduran campensino crucified on a banana cross while Uncle Sam leans against it with a hammer in his hands having just pounded the nails that killed the Honduran.

Kenneth J. Grieb suggests one of the most influential factors in the development and prolongation of regimes the United States was opposed to in Central America was its repudiation of military intervention. Grieb claims the United States was less than pleased about the ascendancy of Guatemalan dictator Jorge Ubico in 1930 and 1931 and the suspicious circumstances of Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez's climb to the presidency of El Salvador in December 1931. Grieb argues both of these actions were "possible only because the United States chose to refrain from exercising its preponderant military power, for reasons of broader policy," which allowed "a leader with sufficient determination and adequate domestic strength" to "effectively resist…American diplomatic pressure."[71] In 1924, the United States had not yet abandoned its policy of direct military intervention in the affairs of Honduras, and had repeatedly shown itself willing, if not eager, to land troops on its shores earlier that year. Faced with a hurdle he would almost certainly be unable to overcome, Carías must have considered the possibility Washington might have resorted to arms to deny him the presidency.

### Carías's Relationship with the United Fruit Company

Although there were suspicions the United Fruit Company was supporting Carías's presidential bid in 1923, it was not until the first few weeks of the War of Revindication that the US government became certain it really was.[72] Nevertheless, hard evidence linking Carías and the UFCO never surfaced in 1924, but this did not stop the State Department from acting to curb the US company's attempts to manipulate the Honduran political environment to its own benefit. US officials in both civilian and military sectors were confident Carías and his supporters were

[71] Kenneth J. Grieb, "American Involvement in the Rise of Jorge Ubico," *Caribbean Studies* vol. 10 no. 1 (April 1970): pp. 5-21; and Grieb, "The United States and the Rise of General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez," *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 3 no. 2 (November 1971): pp. 151-172.

[72] For a report the UFCO was aiding Carías in 1923 see: Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, December 13, 1923, 815.00/2797, RG 59, NA.

receiving money and arms shipments in large quantities from the company, and found it justifiable to punish it based on hearsay and circumstantial evidence. This small but meaningful example of discord between the US government and the UFCO illuminates the State Department's long-term goal of stability in Honduras. It also poses a significant problem for dependency theorists who often see the State Department working hand-in-hand with the UFCO to dominate Central America. While there is clear evidence at other times and places throughout the Caribbean Basin the US government worked to further the UFCO's interests, the history of US-Carías relations in 1924 shows this was not always the case. Both the US government and the UFCO were attempting to see their disparate visions for the Honduran government come to fruition, so the adjective "competitors" rather than "allies" would best describe their relationship in Honduras in 1923 and 1924.

It was no secret most if not all of the Honduran revolutionary leaders in 1924 had US business support. The long tradition of backing Honduran politicians provided the US fruit companies special dispensations in the event their particular candidate or party came to power. Doing so made good business sense, but obviously showed little regard for the welfare of the Honduran people who were forced to abide a turbulent political scene with revolutions often instigated and funded by US businessmen. However, this commercial interference in the political affairs of Honduras did not necessarily mean the banana companies completely controlled the country and its politicians. Honduras was a republic with lots of bananas, but it was home to politicians like Carías who made it more than just a "banana republic."

Not long after the War of Revindication, Morales was confident the major US fruit companies were attempting to manipulate Honduran affairs by backing particular candidates. Morales wrote the "company [UFCO] is very anxious to have Carias elected" and Cuyamel Fruit

Company was "advocating the candidacy of Dr. Fausto Davila."[73] For some time the State Department had been receiving reports that Carías's faction enjoyed the backing of a wealthy investment group. For instance, in February 1924, Special Agent in Charge Edward J. Brennan informed the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, William J. Burns, Carías's followers were receiving arms shipments from the United States from a "syndicate" that had over $450,000 at its disposal to assist the revolutionaries.[74] By October, there were rumors Carías had promised the UFCO significant concessions if it helped him reach the presidency.[75]

While Morales repeatedly informed the Department of information he came across regarding the banana companies' political activities, it was the well-respected Sumner Welles whose whistleblowing drew the attention of the Department. In his final report to Hughes on his efforts to bring peace to Honduras, Welles stated, "the disasters which have lately overwhelmed the Republic of Honduras can in large measure be attributed to the direct intervention of certain important American interests." Welles went on claiming "Arms and ammunition, including cannon and machine guns, were obtained from" US companies, and advised the Department to put a stop to such manipulations because such behavior eroded the "good faith" of the Hondurans in the US government. However, he also warned the Department it must first have

[73] Morales to Secretary of State, June 10, 1924, 815.00/3184, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, June 12, 1924, 815.00/3192, RG 59, NA.

[74] Edward J. Brennan Report to Director Federal Bureau of Investigation, MID 2657-P-134, February 21, 1924, "Honduras – Revolutionary activities," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA. See also: MID 2657-P-134 (3), February 25, 1924, "Alleged Honduranian [sic] Revolutionary Activities: Purchase of Arms and Ammunition," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[75] Munro to White, Memorandum, October 10, 1924, 815.00/3508, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

"most positive proof" and give "most careful consideration" before action could be taken on this information.[76]

After Welles's alarming claim the Department could no longer ignore the manipulations of the US fruit companies, and Washington began to move towards restraining their meddlesome ways. Faced with a plethora of circumstantial evidence and eager to see the UFCO prevented from stirring up trouble in Honduras in the future, Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew instructed Morales to find documentary proof the fruit companies were interfering in Honduran politics.[77] Despite the efforts of the FBI and State Department to find the proverbial "smoking gun" no concrete evidence condemning the UFCO ever materialized. In defense of his inability to meet the Department's demands, Morales wrote, "The Department must realize the utter impossibility of securing documentary evidence of the American fruit companies participation in the Honduran political situation. Deductions have been made from observations and information sent accordingly."[78]

One of the most significant reasons Carías refused to give into the State Department's demands and withdraw his presidential bid was the influence of his political advisors and the UFCO. It was well known in diplomatic circles Carías was closely associated with representatives of the UFCO, and that they had been urging him to seek the presidency. One of Carías's most important advisors was Dr. Quesada. Quesada was an attorney for the UFCO and was known to have been in the pay of the company for some time.[79] Quesada regularly accompanied Carías to meetings at the US Legation to try and bring the US government "around

[76] Welles to Secretary of State, June 2, 1924, 815.00/3185, RG 59, NA.

[77] Grew to Morales, n.d. [June 1924?], 815.00/3192, RG 59, NA.

[78] Morales to Secretary of State, July 18, 1924, 815.00/3235, RG 59, NA.

[79] Morales to Secretary of State, July 18, 1924, 815.00/3235, RG 59, NA.

to their way of thinking." Quesada also directly approached Washington by sending telegrams to try and change US policy on Carías, so that he would be eligible to run in the 1924 elections. According to this evidence, Carías and Quesada were politically united and of one accord, but this was not necessarily the case throughout 1924.[80]

The Carías-UFCO relationship was one based on mutual benefit, but some evidence suggests the relationship was much more nuanced than the simple buying of a Honduran politician by a major US company. Carías was known to be "inordinately conceited" and someone who surrounded himself with sycophants. It was not beyond him to cease his affiliations with those who failed to back his presidency or support his political needs.[81] Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Carías and Quesada's association broke down over the issue of his presidency. Morgan reported to Hughes that Quesada was "clever, intelligent and shrewd" and felt he could control Carías according to the wishes of the UFCO. However, Morgan was also confident Carías believed he could manipulate Quesada as "a willing tool" for his own ends. Although Morgan claimed Carías would be "disappointed" in thinking he could control Quesada, his description of the relationship demonstrates Carías was no simple puppet of the UFCO.[82] Carías apparently had his own agenda and was more than willing to risk losing the backing of his most important benefactor if it did not meet his needs.

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[80] Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, May 31, 1924, 815.00/3191, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, July 22, 1924, 815.00/3241, RG 59, NA. See also: Morales to Secretary of State, July 18, 1924, 815.00/3235, RG 59, NA; Morales to Secretary of State, July 12, 1924, 815.00/3224, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, July 5, 1924, 815.00/3203, RG 59, NA;

[81] Morgan to Secretary of State, December [?], 1924, 815.00/3497, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Morgan to Secretary of State, November 12, 1924, 815.00/3475½, RG 59, NA.

[82] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 15, 1924, 815.00/3513, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

Supporting this argument is a "breach" that took place between Carías and Quesada after Quesada traveled through El Salvador and Guatemala to gauge those countries' stances on Carías's presidency. According to Morgan, after visiting these countries Quesada was no longer convinced Carías enjoyed the good faith of Honduras's neighbors and could not be president. Furthermore, it appears Quesada himself wanted the office, because he resigned his post as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in November and endeavored to promote his own candidacy.[83] When Quesada told Carías he should withdraw his candidacy, Quesada "lost the confidence of the General [Carías] and was afterwards not even treated with common civility." Carías's anger over the loss of support from Quesada was apparently so great Quesada did not dare leave his house alone for fear of retaliation.[84]

This evidence suggests the UFCO changed its mind about supporting the presidency of Carías because the United States and Honduras's neighboring countries would not recognize him. Accepting Quesada could potentially be given Carías's endorsement and therefore win the election, the UFCO appears to have abandoned Carías in favor of Quesada, a loyal and legally eligible client. The "breach" between the two lasted at least three weeks, but must have healed when Carías realized if he wanted to become president at a future date, he would need an alliance with the UFCO in order to do so. Although Quesada would eventually run as vice president instead of president, by backing Quesada's career aspirations Carías abandoned his own bid for the presidency in 1924, but remained in the good graces of the UFCO. However, as previously noted Carías's renunciation of his candidacy and endorsement of the Paz Baraona and Quesada ticket was only done begrudgingly and at the last possible moment. Carías's defiant behavior is

[83] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 15, 1924, 815.00/3513, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

[84] Morgan to Secretary of State, November 12, 1924, 815.00/3475½, RG 59, NA.

not indicative of a proxy or someone who could be considered a lap dog of US business interests. Instead, it suggests the political maneuverings of a pragmatic and self-absorbed politician. At this point, Carías's relationship with the UFCO was mutually beneficial. The UFCO provided Carías with the money he needed to further his own personal career ambitions, and in return Carías was expected to offer special assistance to his benefactor. This was a common case of political expediency.

## US Fruit Companies' Attempts to Influence US Foreign Policy in Honduras

Throughout 1924 there were numerous attempts by the major US fruit companies operating in Honduras to try and change US policy towards the country more to their liking. Although most of the methods utilized by the fruit companies were subtle, professional, and sophisticated, they were unsuccessful in influencing the direction of US policy. Throughout 1923 and 1924, the United States refused to support the candidacy of any Honduran politician, and instead remained dedicated to its long-term goal of sustained peace in Honduras through the rule of law. The fact the State Department failed to react favorably to US commercial interests reflects the lack of cooperation then present between the two. While the banana companies were only interested in immediate profits, the US government instead focused on the broader picture and aimed to promote lasting peace and prosperity in Honduras for sustained economic benefit, national security, and better relations with its Latin American neighbors.

One of the numerous methods employed by the fruit companies to influence US policy towards Honduras was the lobbying of members of the State Department by high-ranking banana company executives. This petitioning of the State Department often took place when the interests of a company were particularly jeopardized or needed an external catalyst to secure some sort of critical gain. For instance, not long after the revolutionary leaders declared Davila Provisional

President in late March of 1924, the General Manager of Cuyamel Fruit Company, Hillyer V. Rolster, requested the US government recognize Davila's presidency. This was obviously a self-interested suggestion since as previously mentioned Davila was a recipient of Cuyamel funds. Using key words chosen to arouse concern in the hearts and minds of US officials, Rolston wrote the Department:

> We believe that to delay recognition [of Davila] constitutes practically a direct invitation to a continuance of guerilla warfare and of chaotic conditions tending towards anarchy, which if prolonged may result in an entire cessation of law and order, the stoppage of industry and the ultimate ruin of the American and other foreign interests within that country.

According to Rolston, Honduras needed stability above all else if the country was going to be economically prosperous. Rolston went on to plead his case for Davila as the savior of Honduras rather than blatantly selfishly seeking commercial gain. Knowing the State Department was largely concerned with stability through rule of law, Rolston's main argument was that Carías had suffered major military defeats during the revolution and supposedly no longer could offer the country stability as its president.[85]

A few days after President Coolidge declared the US arms embargo on Honduras, the State Department received pressure from Louisiana Representative James O'Connor from the district of New Orleans and Carías's supposed "accredited agent" to the United States, Santiago Nuila, to permit the exportation of arms to Honduras to aid the Carías faction. On March 25, O'Connor phoned Munro at the Department and inquired about the possibility that "rifles, shells and other sundry hardware, amounting to less than five tons" be permitted to be delivered to Carías's followers. O'Connor was asked to have the ban lifted on these items because they had been ordered prior to the implementation of the embargo. Although he was solicited to do so,

[85] Hillyer V. Rolston, Memorandum, April 4, 1924, enclosed in Frederick R. Gibbs to Joseph R. Baker, April 5, 1924, 815.00/3074, RG 59, NA.

O'Connor did not request an outright termination of the embargo; he asked whether something could be done in the interest of the "Company."[86] Knowing how anxious the US government was to protect its citizens and their financial interests, Nuila took the matter further and claimed the weapons were necessary for protecting US Americans and their property until a constitutional government could be established.[87] Hughes curtly rejected these petitions and simply stated the "proposed shipment of munitions cannot be granted."[88]

A few months later, when it appeared Carías might become the president of Honduras and the State Department's disapproval of US business meddling in Honduran affairs had reached their ears, Cuyamel representatives attempted to avert any potential fallout for their disruptive actions during the war. Knowing Welles held significant sway over high-ranking policymakers, Joseph W. Montgomery of Cuyamel contacted Welles and tried to expunge Cuyamel's culpability. A legal expert, Montgomery stated his company only provided money to rebels during the war to disperse them and to protect its holdings so they could remain open during the conflict. He admitted Cuyamel purchased $25,000 worth of guns for then General Tosta, but stated the company was not in violation of the US arms embargo because they were sent to Nicaragua instead of Honduras. He also confessed his company had given $50,000 to Ferrera after the conflict had ended, but only so Ferrera could pay off his troops so they would not cause any trouble. According to Montgomery, "The Cuyamel Fruit Company has not and

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[86] Munro to White, Memorandum, March 25, 1924, 815.113/54, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA; and Eugene S. Hayford to James O'Connor, n.d. [1924?], enclosed in Munro to White, Memorandum, March 25, 1924, 815.113/54, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

[87] Santiago Nuila to Hughes, March 24, 1924, 815.113/51, RG 59, NA; and Nuila to Department of State, March 28, 1924, 815.113/59, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

[88] Hughes to Hayford, March 25, 1924, 815.11/53, RG 59, NA.

never has had any candidate for the Presidency of Honduras," and all the company ever wanted was for a stable government to prevail.[89]

In late November, when Carías appeared on the verge of electoral victory despite the State Department's efforts, Cuyamel offered its services to the Department to make sure "a sound government" was established. In reality, Cuyamel was desperate to keep Carías from becoming president and wanted the Department to take action. It was common knowledge Cuyamel had funded Carías's political rivals and was in direct competition with Carías's benefactor the UFCO. If Carías was elected Cuyamel would inevitably lose important concessions and have its competitor benefit from its loss. To avoid this, Montgomery again appealed to Welles by arguing if Carías became president the country would be thrown into considerable chaos.[90]

While Cuyamel obviously was to blame for fanning the flames of revolution in Honduras, its actions did not receive a serious reaction from the State Department. The same could not be said of the destabilizing actions of the UFCO, which kept the Department occupied for nearly two years by supporting Carías's presidency and revolution. The revolution Carías started with backing from the UFCO resulted in over $20 million of damage, multiple landings of US forces, the death of a US citizen, disruption to Honduran and US industries, and significantly contributed to anti-Americanism in the country. Needless to say, when these considerations were coupled with UFCO support for Carías's presidency in 1924, the State Department was far from pleased with the company and refused to give into its petitions for temporarily lifting the Honduran arms embargo.

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[89] Joseph W. Montgomery to Welles, July 14, 1924, 815.00/3223, RG 59, NA.

[90] Montgomery to Welles, November 26, 1924, 815.00/3806, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

The UFCO and Cuyamel used similar tactics to influence the State Department to secure its desired Honduran political outcomes. With the Department strongly against Carías's presidency, the UFCO engaged in a sophisticated and multi-faceted approach to change US policy towards Carías. In February 1924, the company contacted the Department through its legal representation, Lansing and Woolsey, in a seemingly innocent letter. In a somewhat relaxed and naively inquisitive tone, the author of the letter informed the Department Cuyamel provided the López Gutiérrez regime with large sums of money to crush the rebellion. Not wanting to be treated harshly by the Honduran government in the event the rebellion failed, the writer asked the Department to respond to two questions: one, whether the Department approved of the Cuyamel loan to the Honduran government, and two, whether the Department would permit the UFCO to make a loan to the Honduran belligerents. Although the author claimed such an action was not the "policy" of the company, it felt it must take action.[91] Writing on behalf of Hughes, the Assistant Secretary of State Leland Harrison asserted the Department's position against meddling in Honduran political affairs and responded to the queries by stating, "this Department would not view with favor the granting of assistance, financial or otherwise, to any of the parties concerned."[92]

Members of the State Department were well aware the fruit companies were attempting to manipulate not only their policymaking but also events in Honduras, and they were upset about both. Munro believed the UFCO's February letter requesting permission to give the Honduran government a loan was a con. He wrote, "I doubt very much whether the United Fruit Company has the slightest intention of lending the Government money with which to defeat

[91] Lansing and Woolsey to Secretary of State, February 11, 1924, 815.51/548, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

[92] Leland Harrison to Lansing and Woolsey, n.d. [February 1924?], Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

Carias." Instead, he thought the company wished to know whether the Department knew about and permitted Cuyamel's support for the López Gutiérrez regime, and perhaps "obtain a statement from the Department which they can use as an excuse for refusing a loan to the Government."[93]

In early July, Lansing and Woolsey leaked a copy of a letter to the firm from the UFCO Manager working in Tela. The letter contained an extensive list of the "anarchic conditions prevailing" on the North Coast that made business difficult for the UFCO. The letter stated that general "lawlessness" had reached "undreamed of proportions without anything done by authorities." Mules were stolen, cows slaughtered in the pasture, gambling and drinking rampant, murders went unpunished, and US Americans were being singled out and blamed for killings they did supposedly only in self-defense. There are two things interesting about this letter. First, that it was delivered to the Department by Lansing and Woolsey despite instructions from the UFCO that this was not to be done.[94] It is highly unlikely that Lansing and Woolsey would deliberately ignore instructions from its client, and present the Department with the letter. More likely, the move was part of a plan to create sympathy for the UFCO in Washington. Secondly, that the letter was presented to the Department just as Luis Bográn began lobbying the Department in favor of Carías's presidency. Like Quesada, Bográn was known to be a close associate of Carías, and was now working in concert with the UFCO to secure Carías's presidency.[95] These efforts appear to have been choreographed to coincide with one another and part of a larger conspiracy to bring Carías to the presidency.

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[93] Munro to White, Memorandum, February 11, 1924, 815.51/549 Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

[94] United Fruit Company Manager (Tela) to Lansing and Woolsey, June 22, 1924, 815.00/3282, RG 59, NA.

[95] Luis Bográn to State Department, July n.d., 1924, 815.00/3283, RG 59, NA.

Bográn's skillful lobbying of the Department appealed to the US government's desire to save face and abide by the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Bográn argued that Carías's candidacy did not fall under the Treaty of 1923 because when he rebelled he did so against a dictatorship unrecognized by the United States. He wrote:

> The American Government on altruistic grounds is interested in securing public order and tranquility in Honduras, but such order and tranquility will more easily be obtained if the people are left at full liberty to elect as President of the Republic the citizen whom they favor, although he may have been one of the leaders of the recent revolution, <u>but that revolution was not against any recognized government.</u>

Taking the matter several steps further, he reminded the Department Carías enjoyed the support of a vast majority of the Honduran people, and that they considered his presidency a personification of their "absolute freedom." After Carías was robbed of the 1923 election, Bográn felt it unjust he should suffer the same setback in 1924. Since Hondurans had fought and died for Carías, Bográn warned that by not allowing Carías to run, the United States was "sowing the seeds of a possible disturbance."[96]

### The US Government's Reaction to UFCO Meddling in Honduran Affairs

After having worked so diligently throughout 1923 to avoid war, members of the State Department were considerably displeased with how the UFCO had conducted itself. The Latin Americanists at the Department blamed the company for instigating the revolution and were upset they had to clean up the mess they believed it created. Munro wrote the UFCO "appears to have given open support to Carias during the electoral campaign," and "If they get into trouble now…it will be largely their own fault." However, Munro also knew that regardless of who bore responsibility for the rebellion, the US government would "still be compelled to protect their

[96] Bográn to State Department (Washington, D.C.), July n.d., 1924, 815.00/3283, RG 59, NA.

[UFCO] property and their employees against actual violence."[97] With these thoughts in mind, White recommended the Department should try to prevent the UFCO from repeating its historically troublesome behavior, writing, "If the Department can possibly stop this practice I think it should do so."[98]

After multiple short-term landings of US forces on the North Coast to protect US American interests against revolutionary violence and banditry, the sustained partial US occupation of Tegucigalpa, and millions of dollars in damage to the Honduran and US economies in the War of Revindication and Ferrera's later 1924 revolution, the State Department's patience with the interference of the banana companies was wearing thin. US policymakers knew Carías's revolution would probably not have been possible or at least not nearly as destructive without his support from the UFCO, so in the absence of any irrefutable evidence condemning the company, they did what they could to punish it.

In the midst of Ferrera's revolution against Tosta's Provisional Government, the UFCO requested special permission from the State Department to bring in fifty cases of dynamite to Honduras purportedly to be used in the construction of a railroad, but the Department was in no mood to grant the company any special dispensations after what it had done. In an intra-Department memorandum, Munro requested special consideration be given to the UFCO's request. He warned his colleagues the dynamite could have found its way into the hands of the belligerents and then used for "destructive purposes," and also that the UFCO was guilty of bringing about the current troubled situation in Honduras and should not be treated sympathetically. Munro felt in all probability the explosives would be used for commercial

[97] Munro to White, Memorandum, February 5, 1924, 815.00/2859, RG 59, NA.

[98] White to Under Secretary of State, Memorandum, October 6, 1924, 815.00/3508, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

purposes, but because of the company's actions it should not "receive any consideration from the Department in handling this request."[99]

Munro's sentiments on the culpability of the UFCO and what should be done about its request for the dynamite were echoed throughout the Department. Harrison took Munro's recommendation and advised Hughes to deny permission for the shipment on the grounds "no chances" should be taken on the possibility the explosives might find their way to the belligerents even though there was "no fighting in the immediate vicinity of the railroad construction."[100] Even though the UFCO promised to keep the dynamite under guard and use it only for commercial purposes, the Department ignored the company's pleadings.[101] Hughes's response to the UFCO was characteristic of a polite but obviously stern diplomat, but it was short and offered no explanation of why he decided to deny its request. Hughes wrote, "Department does not deem it advisable to permit the exportation to Honduras at the present time of this consignment of dynamite."[102] Making sure the untrustworthy company did not go behind his back and ship the dynamite anyway, Hughes also sent word to the US Legation in La Ceiba informing them not to allow arms to be shipped to Honduras "under present conditions."[103]

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[99] Munro to Assistant Secretary of State, Memorandum, September 3, 1924, 815.113/[110?], Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA; and Walter L. Long to Secretary of State, September 8, 1924, 815.113/111, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

[100] Harrison to Secretary of State, September 4, 1924, enclosed in Long to Secretary of State, September 8, 1924, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

[101] Munro to Assistant Secretary, Memorandum, September 4, 1924, 815.113/150, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

[102] Hughes to Long, September 5, 1924, 815.113/111, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

[103] Hughes to American Consul (La Ceiba), September 5, 1924, 815.113/111, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

It is evident the Department singled out the UFCO for special reprimand. After the implementation of the March 1924 US arms embargo on Honduras, there were numerous requests from Honduran authorities and US American businesses to import guns and ammunition in large quantities. True to its original justification of limiting violence, the Department remained diligent in denying permission for war material to be exported to Honduras.[104] However, there were numerous exceptions when it came to certain items that were banned by the embargo but were necessary for commercial activities or for personal use. For instance, throughout 1924 the New York & Honduras Rosario Mining Company was allowed to import significant amounts of dynamite for its precious metal extraction. One request from the Rosario Mining Company was even made for 30,000 pounds of the explosive.[105]

The Department's motivation for denying the UFCO its request to import dynamite while at roughly the same time permitting others to do the same was based on several reasons. Munro wrote that fighting on the North Coast was much more likely to take place than near the operations of the Rosario Mining Company, and that the UFCO could still operate with or without its dynamite while Rosario could not. The final reason was that Rosario had not intervened in the War of Revindication while the UFCO and its subsidiary, the Tela Railroad

[104] For an example of a denied application to export large amounts of war material to Honduras see: Harrison to Remington Arms Company, n.d. [August 22, 1924?], 815.113/111a, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA. This request was obviously made with violent intent, because 115,000 rounds of ammunition and 10,000 primers could not reasonably be assumed to be for commercial or personal uses.

[105] William A. Prendergast to Hughes, September 19, 1924, 815.113/125, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA. For another example of contraband being allowed to be exported to Honduras by commercial interests see: Lansing and Woolsey to Grew, October 6, 1924, 815.113/146, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA.

Company, had. Munro felt this last reason could not be made public because the Department lacked concrete proof of the UFCO's actions, but he had "little doubt" it was true.[106]

## Conclusion

For seven months after the War of Revindication, the United States worked diligently to prevent Carías from becoming president of Honduras on the grounds he was ineligible for the office according to the 1923 Treaty of Peace and Amity. Carías's presidency would have negated the United States' attempts to discourage political instability in Central America through the treaty, and shown the United States to be powerless against the actions of a Honduran politician. The United States needed the country to be run on a system of internationally recognized law based firmly on a democratically elected government, so that it could implement its reorganization of its social, political, and military institutions. For his part, Carías did all he possibly could to change the United States' opinion of his planned presidency including blatantly lying to US officials, spreading false propaganda, employing lobbyists, and starting a revolution with Ferrera. These actions and others like them show Carías was a force to be reckoned with, and someone who did not accept being given orders lightly. Ferrera may have been Carías's most potent domestic opponent, but the United States was his most formidable enemy and one he was temporarily unable to defeat. This temporary setback taught Carías a valuable lesson about his relationship with the United States: it was better to make it a friend than have it as an enemy.

The 1923-1924 Honduran political environment was also further complicated by the efforts of the US owned banana companies to secure a voice in the Honduran government. US businesses supported their respective candidates and lobbied the US government to support their

[106] Munro to White, Memorandum September 20, 1924, 815.113/132, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 29, RG 59, NA. For another example of the State Department having difficulty with the United Fruit Company see: Paul J. Dosal, *Doing Business with the Dictators: A Political History of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899-1944* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1993), pp. 205-221.

various goals with an obsession for profits that completely overlooked the considerations of the Hondurans. However, their constant labors to influence US foreign policy towards Honduras demonstrates their lack of control over Honduran affairs, and their erroneous belief the US government might come to their aid. The US government was unresponsive to the requests of the banana companies, and instead ignored their petitions; and in the case of the UFCO, the State Department mildly disciplined the company for contributing to Honduran instability. While this chapter confirms Honduran historian Mario Argueta's finding Carías benefited from his association with the UFCO, it also demonstrates Carías did not always take his orders from the company.[107] When the UFCO appears to have pulled its support for his presidency in November 1924, Carías threatened the company's new candidate Quesada to the point that he feared for his life. Far from the behavior of a puppet, Carías showed himself to be an independent and powerful actor willing and able to stand up to both the United States and the UFCO.

[107] Argueta, pp. 221-267.

# CHAPTER 5

# THE UNEASY PEACE

"Tegucigalpa is a hotbed of intrigue."

-US Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Lawrence Dennis reporting to the Secretary of State from Honduras in 1925.[1]

Between 1925 and 1929, the US-Carías relationship began to take a new direction. During most of 1923 and 1924, the United States and Carías found themselves almost always at odds with one another, and the two worked diligently to thwart and modify the other's behavior and policies. These two years were certainly the low point of what would develop into a much more amicable relationship. Beginning in 1925, the troubled foes slowly began to change their opinion of each other, and by the end of 1928 mutually came to the conclusion working cooperatively but not warmly with one another best served their respective goals. This was by no means an easy transition, and both parties learned to respect one another's power only after years of trial and error.

As soon as President Paz Baraona came to power, the United States moved to secure and strengthen his presidency in order to solidify the stability that appeared was taking root in Honduras. Eager to protect US investments and deny British competitors an excuse to increase their role in Honduras, the United States attempted to reorganize Honduran finances by restructuring its massive $125 million British debt, and provide it with a multimillion dollar loan designed to bring the country even closer economically to the United States. The United States believed by improving Honduras's economic conditions, it could help provide it with prosperity

[1] Lawrence Dennis to Secretary of State, October 3, 1925, 815.00/3888, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

that would benefit both countries. These matters were made all the more urgent due to new developments in labor organization and the United States' belief international communism was making inroads amongst a supposedly vulnerable and impressionable Honduran people. Furthermore, the regular episodes of violent unrest and revolution continued to plague the country throughout the period, thus complicating the United States' balancing act of trying to promote peace, and its growing antipathy towards direct diplomatic and military intervention in the region. Faced with a seemingly incompetent, corrupt, and belligerent Honduran political system and the aforementioned troubles facing the country, the US government began to show signs it was willing to sacrifice its supposedly cherished ideal of democracy for something consistent and more capable of providing stability.

Throughout 1925-1929, Carías remained the most powerful Honduran political figure, and the person the United States knew it needed to do business with in order to achieve its goals. As he had since 1923, Carías continued to work towards becoming president of the republic, but this time Carías decided to achieve his goals differently. Instead of seeking the presidency through revolution in blatant defiance to the United States' nonrecognition policy, Carías engaged in a series of intrigues and diplomatic maneuvers designed to position himself to not only favorably impress the United States, but also outlast and defeat his strongest political rivals. Fully aware of the United States' goals for his country, Carías skillfully used the United States' desires to achieve domestic strength and maintain his position as the country's most influential politician. Besides trying to undermine and bring down the Paz Baraona Administration, Carías reinvented himself as someone the United States could turn to in times of need. In the process he learned valuable lessons about assuaging the United States' fear of ideological radicalism and foreign influence that would serve him well during his presidency. This is not to say Carías was

an ally or errand boy for the United States, but rather that he pursued his own goals while simultaneously seeking to portray himself as a friend of peace and capitalism. After realizing the United States would only endure his presidency if he achieved it legally, and that his political opponents needed to be dealt with before he could win the presidency unmolested, Carías patiently waited until he confidently had a position of legal and political strength.[2]

**The Sick Man of Central America**

When Miguel Paz Baraona was elected president in December 1924, the United States moved to strengthen his presidency so Honduras's cycle of revolutionary violence and coups d'état could finally be done away with. The first step the United States took to accomplish this was to quickly set in motion the resumption of recognition of the Honduran government, which had been absent since February 1924. On January 22, 1925, Hughes instructed the US Legation in Tegucigalpa to inform the Paz Baraona Administration the US government "contemplates with pleasure the resumption of formal relations with the Government of Honduras upon the inauguration on February 1st of the new constitutional authorities."[3] Showing the eagerness of the United States to strengthen Paz Baraona's presidency, regular diplomatic relations with Honduras were resumed less than a week after Hughes's message was sent.[4] Time was of the

[2] Thomas J. Dodd argues in *Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005) that "Carías found collaborating with Paz Baraona much to his liking," because he shared many "issues of special interest" with him. He goes on to claim that they collaborated on numerous aspects of governmental operation (pp. 37-40). This chapter maintains the opposite; it claims Carías and Miguel Paz Baraona were near mortal enemies that were prevented from fighting with one another because of the United States' quest for peace and Carías's inability to seize the government uncontested. In this regard, this chapter builds upon Mario Argueta's work in *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 2008), pp. 56-67. See also: Dana G. Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 142.

[3] Charles Evans Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 22, 1925, 815.00/3527, RG 59, NA.

[4] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 26, 1925, 815.00/3535, RG 59, NA.

essence, because all observers could tell that without immediate and significant US backing Paz Baraona's Administration would quickly fall.

Paz Baraona's government was weak and threatened to unravel almost as soon as it was inaugurated and for a number of reasons. Unlike Honduran politicos such as Carías, Gregorio Ferrera, Francisco Martínez Funes, and Vicente Tosta, Paz Baraona did not have a significant personal following. He did not come to power by his own merits, but because Carías reluctantly endorsed his candidacy. Without a strong political base the President lacked political leverage to accomplish his agenda, and was forced to try and lead a country that was only recently torn apart by civil war, bankrupt, and politically fractured. Besides his near political impotence Paz Baraona was also unhealthy and believed to be mentally unfit for the job. Seen as an idealist who was either unable or unwilling to play the kind of political hardball required of Honduran politics, the President was viewed with a combination of pity and frustration by US observers. He was said to have "a morbid sentimentalism," too friendly to be a real leader, and "Of all the Central American presidents…the most insignificant."[5] According to many of his fellow National Party members, he was inept to discharge his obligations and responsible for putting the country on the path toward destruction.[6]

Another reason for Paz Baraona's political feebleness was his government's almost complete deficiency of war making capacity. Sensing Paz Baraona's presidency needed a demonstration of US support and real military muscle to assert itself in bringing peace and stability to the country, the United States temporarily lifted its embargo on the country. In mid-

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[5] C-9-e-16741, "Personalities, Honduras," June 12, 1926, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 449, RG 38.

[6] Stokely W. Morgan, "Mr. Alfredo Schlesinger, Present Situation in Honduras," Memorandum, March 25, 1927, 815.00/4081, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

January, after a Honduran request for weapons was made, Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes permitted a surprisingly large amount of arms and ammunition to be sold to the Honduran government.[7] Although by mid-March the war material had yet to be received by Honduras, the new Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg hoped the weapons would "enable the [Honduran] Government to maintain order effectively." Kellogg was also keen to "impress upon the Government the desirability of handling the shipment in such a way that there will be no danger that the arms may fall into the hands of disaffected elements or potential disturbers of the peace."[8] Once the United States permitted the arms shipment to take place, the Honduran government was quick to publicize its desperately needed demonstration of US support.[9] Washington may have eased restrictions on the sale of arms to Honduras temporarily, but it later made efforts to limit their sourcing from international source as well.[10]

One of the most pressing issues facing the United States and the Honduran people, and one of the main reasons for Paz Baraona's weakness was the poor state of the Honduran economy. For some time US officials in Central America, and in particular Honduras, knew economic and political conditions were "closely intertwined," and to understand economics one needed to first grasp the political situation. It comes as no surprise many in the US government blamed Honduras's economic troubles on its unstable politics. George P. Waller, US Consular in La Ceiba, believed many businessmen hesitated to make investments until they were certain Paz Baraona received the recognition of the United States and their investments were safe against

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[7] Hughes to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 17, 1925, 815.24/15, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 31, RG 59, NA.

[8] Frank B. Kellogg to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), March 18, 1925, 815.00/3555, RG 59, NA.

[9] "Definitive consolidation of the peace of Honduras and cordial relations with the government of the United States," *Reconciliación*, February 27, 1925, p. 2.

[10] Kellogg to US Ambassador in Great Britain (Alanson B. Houghton), May 16, 1925, *FRUS, 1925*, (hereafter *FRUS*, with appropriate year, volume, and page numbers) vol. 2, p. 328.

revolutionary violence and banditry.[11] Waller informed Washington Ferrera's revolution had a "particularly bad effect upon business in this country" because of what had taken place during the first 1924 revolution and the burning of La Ceiba. Nevertheless, Waller believed the "greatest handicap" was the political crisis brought about by Carías's refusal to step down in the latter half of 1924.[12]

Even with all of these obstacles to Paz Baraona's rule, the paramount impediment to his presidency and the United States' dream of a stable Honduras was Carías. Within a few days of taking office, Paz Baraona was already rumored to be Carías's puppet. Lawrence Dennis, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, informed Washington "Carias is in full control," and he was "reliably informed that the President was not even allowed his choice of a private secretary."[13] By April 1925, the State Department was worried there was a growing and irreconcilable rift between the President and Carías. Trouble dangerously began to manifest when the government's newspaper *Reconciliación*, and the newspaper of Carías's main Nationalist enemy Paulino Valladares and his newspaper *El Cronista*, began failing to report on Carías's political accomplishments. When both of these newspapers refrained from reporting on a "mass meeting" of the National Party "attended by well over a thousand men" supporting Carías and his status as "official head" of the National Party, the situation grew tense. This of course bothered Carías, who was, according to some Hondurans, attempting to make Paz Baraona into a "figurehead" and position himself as the power behind the throne. It was no secret Carías possessed "the qualities of leadership and

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[11] George P. Waller to Department of State, February 9, 1925, 815.50/11, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 33, RG 59, NA.

[12] Waller to Secretary of State, January 31, 1925, 815.50/12, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 33, RG 59, NA.

[13] Dennis to Secretary of State, February 3, 1925, 815.002/1, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 24, RG 59, NA.

personality and the power of swaying the masses in a much higher degree then the President or any political characters," and that he enjoyed widespread support both in and outside Honduras. With all of this information to consider, Dennis reported "the future does not appear bright."[14]

As the weeks went by, the situation between Paz Baraona and Carías continued to escalate to a point where US officials were seriously worried about the disintegration of the Paz Baraona Administration. On April 29, Dennis reported to Washington it appeared Carías and his followers might force Paz Baraona to step down on the pretext of his inability to suppress "disorders," and that Vice-President Presentación Quesada would then take over as president only to enter "retirement" thus precipitating elections, which Carías would undoubtedly win.[15] It was Carías's "marked independence" and his powerful influence over the Honduran Congress that made the State Department take note of the dangerous situation beginning to unfold.[16]

By mid-May it looked as though Carías was positioning himself to completely eliminate Paz Baraona as a political force. Due to a number of Liberal and bandit raids on Honduran towns in the northern and western parts of the country, Carías assumed numerous military responsibilities. As "Lieutenant General" he was officially second in command of the Honduran military, and was vigorous in executing his office. Under Carías's commands, all those wishing to leave the city of Tegucigalpa were required to "obtain his personal visa," and all military

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[14] Dennis to Secretary of State, April 1, 1925, 815.00/3679, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA; and "The Distinguished Chief of the National Party, General don Tiburcio Carías, has received all of the Republics love and admiration…," *Reconciliación*, February 12, 1925, p. 1. Hondurans were also frustrated with their country's political system in 1925. See: "Useless party politics," *El Cronista*, April 23, 1925, p. 1.

[15] Dennis to Secretary of State, April 29, 1925, 815.00/3704, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

[16] Dennis to Secretary of State, April 11, 1925, 815.032/54, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 27, RG 59, NA.

orders were null if they did not go first through his command. It was evident to Dennis that Carías was pursuing his "own personal political ends" through his military post.[17]

**Fixing One Problem and Making Another Worse**

As Carías appeared poised to strangle the last gasps of life out of Paz Baraona's leadership, the United States showed its respect for Carías's power, and its willingness to promote peace and stability over democracy in Honduras. Besides the routine labor problems associated with the US banana industry on the North Coast, a new worrisome element began revealing itself. It seems communist ideology began taking a small but nonetheless troubling foothold in the region, and rather than turn to Paz Baraona for assistance in stamping it out, the State Department turned to Carías instead. Dennis specifically requested Carías to "use his influence" on the North Coast to help calm the labor disturbances and political tensions and deal with the "bolshevistic [*sic*] propaganda" being circulated.[18]

Anxious to appear a friend of the US government, Carías did as he was asked and visited the North Coast on a trip that lasted ten days. There he met with members of the National Party, many of whom were loyal to him, to encourage them to pursue a course of "energetic repression of any subversive or radical tendencies among the rank and file of the Party which might be hostile and unfair to foreign interests or which might lead to political or labor troubles." Waller reported to Washington Carías's visit had the favorable result of stopping the "seditious activities" of rival strongmen, ceasing the "constant brawls, quarrels, and all but fighting"

[17] Dennis to Secretary of State, May 22, 1925, 815.00/3740, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA. For more on the seriousness of the Liberal raids and "bandits" that operated on the Guatemalan border in 1925 see: Dennis to Secretary of State, August 5, 1925, 815.00/3866, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[18] Dennis to Secretary of State, April 29, 1925, 815.00/3704, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, May 22, 1925, 815.00/3740, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

between these local leaders, and restoring "public confidence." After Carías's US mission proved successful for US interests in repressing communism, labor unrest, and political tensions, US officials could not help but begin to think of Carías in more favorable terms.[19]

While communists were few in number in Honduras, and their impact in labor upheaval minor, the United States' fear of radical agitation disturbing both US business interests and the political stability of Honduras created a dilemma for US policymakers. In March 1925, US observers in Honduras were convinced that Scandinavian, Guatemalan, and Portuguese "agitators" had moved to Honduras for the purpose of inciting workers to strike. According to US officials, the problem with the Honduran government was that it was either unwilling or unable to do anything about the "communists" and "socialists."[20] By turning to Carías for assistance with the communists on the North Coast instead of Paz Baraona, US representatives must have known they were encouraging Carías at the expense of the President, but they were willing to do it anyway due to their fear of instability and radical labor ideology. Obviously aware of the United States' gratitude for his stabilizing work on the North Coast, Carías began to push even harder for the removal of Paz Baraona and his followers from the government. The United States helped solve the problem of labor unrest on the North Coast, but it had shown support to Carías who now felt he enjoyed more US backing. Furthermore, this small but meaningful episode taught Carías a valuable lesson about the United States' fear of radical ideology, and the opportunity this paranoia created for his political aspirations. When Carías

[19] Dennis to Secretary of State, May 31, 1925, 815.00/3746, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA; and Waller to Secretary of State, May 29, 1925, 815.00/3736, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

[20] C-10-j-11904-B, Waller to State Department, "Political and Economic Conditions Potentially Grave at La Ceiba…," March 1, 1925, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38. For more on labor upheaval on the North Coast in early 1925 see: Waller to Secretary of State, February 21, 1925, 815.50/4557, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 33, RG 59, NA.

eventually became president eight years later, he vigorously persecuted socialists and communists in part to impress the United States.

## Containing Carías

In early June, the Honduran government was in dire straits. It was near bankruptcy, menaced by political rivalries and violence on the North Coast, and faced numerous raids by dissident Liberals on the Guatemalan frontier. There was also a presidential cabinet crisis brewing between Carías and his political opponents inside and outside of the National Party. As a personal enemy of Carías, Valladares wanted to replace members of Paz Baraona's cabinet with ministers without loyalty to Carías. Valladares made no secret of his displeasure with Carías, and his efforts to eliminate him as a political and military figure. He justified his destabilizing behavior by arguing if Carías and his cronies left the government the disenfranchised Liberals throughout the country would cease their revolutionary activities. Despite warnings from Carías's followers that made it clear they wanted Valladares to stop his subversive campaign, he continued his anti-Carías crusade.[21]

Even though Carías had only recently shown himself to be a useful source of pacifying influence, Dennis and other US officials still had an uncomplimentary view of him and what he was capable of. Recognizing Carías's associates were "disreputable criminals," Dennis went even further in denouncing him. He wrote:

> My personal opinion on this question…is that the elimination of General Carias would be a happy step in the direction of peace, provided that it were brought about in conjunction with the elimination of General Ferrera, General Tosta, and all the other dominant military-political leaders.

[21] Dennis to Secretary of State, June 8, 1925, 815.00/3765, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, [June?], 1925, 815.00/3739, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

According to Dennis, Carías was no better and no worse than his political opponents, because they were all destabilizing and self-interested "caudillo[s]." However, he also recognized men like Ferrera, Tosta, and Carías helped to balance out one another's power, and that if one was removed another would quickly take his place. Dennis knew men like these would not hesitate to seize an opportunity if one was presented to them, and so he worried about Honduras's future on an almost constant basis.[22]

Knowing full well what Carías and his followers were capable of, Dennis moved to block them from taking matters into their own hands. In a speech made to the members of the Honduran government, Dennis stated the United States was happy to lend its "moral support" to the government of Paz Baraona, and that his government "strongly deprecates any move to alter the constitutional order by violent means and desires to see the present Government of Honduras continue during its constitutional term." He went on to beg those parties present who might have seditious activities in mind to "find it possible to subordinate personal political ambitions, preferences, and animosities to the larger interests of peace and to support loyally and effectively the existing constitutional government."[23] Dennis felt his comments "served a useful purpose" by showing the US Legation's neutrality in Honduran politics and "as a deterrent to the initiation of any overt act with the Government against the Constitutional order."[24]

Dennis's speech had the temporary effect of calming the situation down for a few months, but throughout June the United States closely watched Carías and the Paz Baraona

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[22] Dennis to Secretary of State, June 8, 1925, 815.00/3765, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

[23] Dennis, Speech to Members of the Constitutional Government of Honduras and Representatives of the Press, June 5, 1925, enclosed in Dennis to Secretary of State, June 8, 1925, 815.00/3765, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

[24] Dennis to Secretary of State, June 8, 1925, 815.00/3765, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

government for signs of discord. No rumor or remote possibility of instability was taken lightly by the State Department, but the US government refrained from significantly interfering in Honduran politics until Carías again looked like he might move to topple Paz Baraona. In the meantime, the State Department was reminded of the troubling conditions prevailing on the North Coast, and attempted to prompt an impossibly weak Paz Baraona to improve security there. Kellogg instructed Dennis to inform the Honduran government it would receive more support if it took "active and energetic steps to establish more orderly conditions, particularly in such districts as "[La] Ceiba, Tela, and Trumuillo [Trujillo]." Kellogg showed his preoccupation with the protection of US lives and property when he stated "the situation existing in the North Coast districts" was a "menace to the security of the very numerous Americans living there."[25] Evidently, the State Department still hoped Paz Baraona would be able to assist it in improving the security of the valuable US American investments of the region.

According to Dennis, the security and political situation in Honduras was still treacherously tenuous and bordering on anarchy. Even after Kellogg requested the Honduran government work towards a more secure North Coast, Dennis reported "murders and crimes" still occur on a "frequent occurrence," and "Conditions are [like] those of a pioneer community where every man carries a weapon and uses it whenever and however he thinks proper." The US fruit companies were faced with "communist missionaries and agitators to whose teaching and influence the laborers show a disquieting susceptibility." Additionally, Dennis asserted local politics remained fractured and unpredictable, because of the lack of loyalty to political parties and the rambunctious followers of Carías. Dennis went on to claim the Cariistas contributed to the tense situation because they were "generally young and middle-aged men without much

[25] Kellogg to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), June 22, 1925, 815.00/3743, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA.

education, sophistication or political experience but very energetic and determined. There are very few of them who may be classed as intellectuals." The current political environment in which these purportedly inferior men operated was clearly fragile and showed signs of further deterioration.[26]

**Weakening Democracy In the Interest of Stability**

By mid-July, Honduran domestic political tensions threatened to explode into war. "Persistent rumors" began circulating Paz Baraona and Valladares were moving to eliminate Carías's iron grip on the Administration by replacing executive ministers loyal to him with ones that could be controlled by the President. Dr. Salvador Aguirre, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Ramón Alcero Castro, Minister of Finance, and Dr. Antonio C. Rivera, Minister of Public Instruction were all said to be "intransigent Cariistas," and were an integral part of Carías's ability to direct Honduran policy. Without these allies, Carías would find it much more difficult to control the next round of presidential elections and distribute political favors to maintain political allegiances to him. Tegucigalpa was tense, because it was even said replacements for the pro-Carías ministers had been decided upon.[27]

The United States had again put itself in yet another no-win situation. Dennis felt one of the most likely courses of events would be for Paz Baraona to go ahead with his proposed cabinet changes, thus forcing Carías and his followers to rebel. However, whether Carías would succeed in a revolution depended largely on how Tosta and Martínez Funes decided to act.

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[26] Dennis to Secretary of State, July 14, 1925, 815.00/3815, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA. Between 1924 and 1931, General Gregorio Ferrera revolted or attempted to destabilize the Honduran government on a regular basis. For examples of how he contributed to Honduran instability see: Dennis to Secretary of State, November 20, 1925, 815.00/3913, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[27] Dennis to Secretary of State, July 17, 1925, 815.00/3816, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

Dennis knew they might side with the government if Carías attempted a coup, but in the case of a revolution they might not side with the government because it would mean a probable alliance with the Liberals who they had recently fought and killed so many of on the battlefield. The State Department was well aware any move to bridle Carías's power would result in great instability for Honduras and certainly undo all of the gains made over the course of the last few months. By placing his country in such a precarious situation, Dennis believed Paz Baraona demonstrated a "peculiar mental balance," and an insufficient "comprehension of the dark and devious ways of political leaders in his country." If the United States intervened it might prevent the disintegration of the Paz Baraona government, and therefore help secure its best chance of a prolonged peace, but in the process it would also be guilty of blatant interference in Honduran affairs.[28]

Realizing the delicate nature of the situation, Dennis recommended a surprisingly simple yet effective three-part plan of action to the State Department, which enabled the United States to appear to be unobtrusive yet effectual in dealing with the situation. First, he stated the US Legation should proceed by calling Carías, Tosta, and Martínez Funes to issue a "manifesto affirming their solidarity and adhesion to the Constitutional Government." Second, he advised the Department should make it known the Honduran Government had received the support of the US government partially based on the fact that these three leaders were a part of it. Finally, Dennis suggested the Department make it unofficially known throughout political circles the United States would appreciate it if these three leaders "would cooperate whole heartedly [*sic*]" with the President. Even if all of these proposals were carried out perfectly, Dennis still felt "The

[28] Dennis to Secretary of State, July 17, 1925, 815.00/3816, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

dangers of revolutionary attack from without and of division within are constant and must be met from day to day by appropriate action."[29]

Kellogg unreservedly agreed to Dennis's recommendations, but took the matter a step further by deciding to dictate terms to Paz Baraona. Kellogg instructed Dennis to "informally and discreetly" inform the President "any attempt to reorganize the cabinet at this time by eliminating the Cariista element might precipitate renewed disorders which would undo all that has been…accomplished," and the US government would appreciate it if the President "would continue to avail himself of their undoubted prestige and ability for the best interests of the country."[30] In other words, Kellogg told Paz Baraona to back off from offending Carías and his followers, because doing so might plunge the nation yet again into civil war.

By issuing such an order, Kellogg made it US policy to not only defend the Paz Baraona Administration from revolution, but also protect Carías's political career from the President. In doing so, Kellogg was discernibly choosing to support peace at the expense of Honduran constitutional authority. It seems as though US policymakers were beginning to abandon their calls for Honduran rule of law justified by democracy in favor of something stronger and more stable. Kellogg's decision to discourage Paz Baraona from making his desired cabinet changes also represents a major policy victory for Carías. While Carías still had yet to achieve his goal of ruling Honduras uncontested, he got what he needed in the short term by influencing the United States to work on his behalf. The United States may have been neutral in Honduran politics, but it was forced to choose sides due to Carías's threat of revolution.

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[29] Dennis to Secretary of State, July 17, 1925, 815.00/3816, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[30] Kellogg to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), July 31, 1925, 815.00/3816, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

The President, Carías, Martínez Funes, and Tosta were all agreeable to the United States' call for the need to maintain peace, so a series of actions were set in motion to make it appear all would be well. Paz Baraona promised Dennis he would not move against Carías or his followers by reorganizing his cabinet, and he applauded the United States' support for Carías, Martínez Funes, and Tosta signing a "manifesto of solidarity" with the government. On August 9, the three generals began meetings to discuss the manifesto and all seemed to be going according to plan until Carías began making certain stipulations. Carías told Dennis he was willing to sign a pledge of support for the Government, but he also wanted a secret agreement to be made by "the President to recognize the special rights of the party leaders and observe the general procedure in the case of a one party government." Tosta, on the other hand, complicated matters further because he wanted to pledge his allegiance only to the government and not necessarily to the National Party.[31]

On August 11, sensing the delicate political harmony might fall apart, Dennis invited the three Generals to a luncheon at the US Legation to encourage them to put aside their differences in favor of peace. The generals decided they wanted the President to behave as though the government was a single party, and once Paz Baraona agreed to this they would be happy to sign the manifesto. Evidently, according to the generals this meant Paz Baraona would refrain from reorganizing his cabinet, because Dennis reported, "The President insists on the right to dismiss venal officials and appoint honest and efficient men in their place regardless of party politics and without consulting party leaders." Although this seems to be a reasonable position for a president to take, Dennis let it be known the United States did not share his sentiments. Thinking that

[31] Dennis to Secretary of State, August 1, 1925, 815.00/3845, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, August 14, 1925, 815.00/3838, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

speaking in French with Paz Baraona would sound more diplomatic and therefore less offensive, Dennis stressed the need for peace in Honduras and told him that he should "give serious consideration to the adoption of the practicable basis of understanding and cooperation" to see that peace is pursued. Dennis believed the President was an "honest and sincere" man who wanted "to serve the best interests of the country," but he also knew Carías would not allow him to deprive him of any political spoils.[32] Once again, the State Department had moved to protect Carías against Paz Baraona not because it favored him but because it feared what he might do if it did not.

Three agreements eventually resulted from the US led efforts to reconcile the disparate parties. "The Manifesto to the Honduran People" was published in Honduran presses on August 17, and declared the President and the three generals were united in their support for the government, and that the three generals would not seek the presidency until constitutionally allowed. The manifesto also promised all "loyal" citizens who supported their government would be given all the rights they were entitled to, but warned disloyal Hondurans would not be given the same treatment.[33] Besides the public manifesto, there were two secret pacts also made, one between the Generals and Paz Baraona, and the other exclusively and privately made by the generals. The undisclosed agreement made by the President and the three generals stated many things, but most importantly that "Nominations for high posts shall be made by the President acting in accord with the herewithin [*sic*] mentioned Chiefs," that the President and chiefs would confer on matters of policy, and that debts acquired by Nationalists during the war of Revindication would be taken over by the government. Dennis was uncertain about the contents

[32] Dennis to Secretary of State, August 14, 1925, 815.00/3838, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[33] "Manifesto to the Honduran People," *Reconciliación*, August 17, 1925, p. 2.

of the accord made by Carías, Tosta, and Martínez Funes, but it appears the men agreed not to confirm any appointment of Paz Baraona's unless that person was a "member in good standing of the National Party."[34]

The United States' endorsement of "The Manifesto to the Honduran People" and at least complicity in the two secret agreements, speaks to the willingness of the United States to turn a blind eye toward democracy promotion when security and peace were threatened. Dennis condescendingly warned the signatories of the pacts of the dangers to republicanism that one party government posed, but he was instrumental in bringing them into an accord. While still a far cry from supporting dictatorship in Honduras, these actions exhibit an extreme lack of faith in Honduras's ability to solve its problems peacefully, and a desire to see the country overseen by strong politicians willing and able to exert their power to pacify the population. It seems the State Department was beginning to grow tired of sending the marines to Honduras's shores and repeatedly finding ways to have Hondurans settle internal disputes. Consider a note from Kellogg to Dennis:

> the problems of the Honduran Government should be solved by native statesmanship and not by American arms. The Department feels that no lasting improvement can be attained in Central America as long as all parties look to Washington for the last word. Unless there is responsibility among the people themselves for the conduct of their Government and a desire among the people themselves for improved conditions any efforts on the part of this Government would appear to be illusory. The Department desires, therefore, that you should make use of every opportunity to impress upon the members of the Government and others in Honduras that the responsibility for the Government rests upon them; that the center of Honduran political activities is in Honduras and not in Washington and that regeneration must come from within. You should give your encouragement to any individuals or groups of individuals who are seriously endeavoring to bring about better conditions in Honduras on the basis of the assumption of responsibility therefore by the Hondurans.[35]

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[34] Dennis to Secretary of State, August 21, 1925, 815.00/3862, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA. See also: Dennis to Secretary of State, September 1, 1925, 815.00/3878, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[35] Kellogg to Minister in Honduras (George T. Summerlin), December 22, 1925, *FRUS, 1925*, vol. 2, p.

With each passing crisis, Washington was proving itself more and more eager to wash its hands of Honduran troubles. Furthermore, the United States' actions showed Carías if he demonstrated a desire to revolt he might be rewarded with US support for his domestic goals against Paz Baraona. This encouraged Carías and his followers to continue to antagonize the Paz Baraona Administration for years to come.

Even with the public declaration of harmony and promises by the four signatories to come to a power sharing agreement, Honduras remained unacceptably unstable to US policymakers. It seemed as though everywhere US observers turned the country displayed signs of coming apart at the seams. After his personal victory in bringing the cabinet crisis temporarily to an end in August, Dennis stated although "peace, stability and prosperity" appeared "to be gaining ground," the Liberals were still "fomenting revolution."[36] A few weeks later, Dennis wrote a discouraging report to Washington describing the Honduran government's need for an improved national police force to put down machete wielding bandits in rural areas. The State Department knew everything it had worked for over the course of the previous year hung precariously above an abyss of "anarchy."[37]

**Status Quo**

With a semi-official newspaper entitled *Reconciliación*, it is easy to see the Paz Baraona Administration placed a high priority on reincorporating the Liberal Party into the Honduran political system and repairing his war-torn nation. Encouraging previously belligerent groups to

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[36] Dennis to Secretary of State, September 1, 1925, 815.00/3878, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[37] Dennis to Secretary of State, September 25, 1925, 815.00/3884, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

put aside their differences after having engaged in mortal combat is never simple, and neither were Paz Baraona's attempts to do so. Only weeks after "The Manifesto to the Honduran People" was published and Carías, Tosta, and Martínez Funes agreed to support the government, Honduras was faced with yet another political crisis. It seems that Paz Baraona again tried to assert his constitutionally granted power as president and gave pardons to several Liberal political prisoners convicted in a military court under Martínez Funes's jurisdiction. Martínez Funes took this as a personal insult and interpreted the President's action as an unwelcomed intrusion into his affairs. Martínez Funes was so upset over the incident that he informed Tegucigalpa he was going to withdraw from his military command of the North Coast.[38]

Martínez Funes's estrangement from the government was no ordinary matter, because his substantial political and military following was so large his actions alone could decide the fate of the Honduran government. Yet again, the State Department scrambled to contain the situation to avoid another revolution. Dennis turned to Carías for help in reconciling Martínez Funes and the President, but Carías was hesitant to oblige him due to his feeling the President was trying to form a "unity" government.[39] In this case "unity" meant a government that included both National and Liberal Party members. Dennis reported Carías and his followers felt they "had fairly won the right to hold by virtue of their triumph in three successive revolutions and one election of the past eighteen months" to certain governmental concessions.[40] Carías's supporters approached Dennis and stated Paz Baraona was behaving in an unacceptable manner, and asked

[38] Dennis to Secretary of State, September 9, 1925, 815.00/3873, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[39] Dennis to Secretary of State, September 10, 1925, 815.00/3875, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[40] Dennis to Secretary of State, October 3, 1925, 815.00/3888, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

him if he could help the President come around to their way of thinking. Knowing Carías and Martínez Funes had for some time been in league with one another, and Carías's followers would turn against the government if pushed, Dennis promised Carías's representatives that although he would not interfere in the internal policy of Honduras that he would tell the President he should act "in the maintenance of the Constitutional Government and the belief that this end would best be served by a close and loyal cooperation on the part of all connected with the Government."[41]

Far from attributing Honduras's limited stability and feeble government to Carías, Tosta, or Martínez Funes, Dennis blamed the President for the country's weakness. Annoyed by the President's actions, Dennis reported back to the Department that Paz Baraona was all but incompetent and was so overwhelmed by events he was bed ridden. Dennis claimed the President had not kept his word on the manifesto pact and continued to make demands of the Cariistas they could not abide. After all, Carías could not be expected to act like a "courtier" because he controlled so much of the populace and did so much to get Paz Baraona elected. According to Dennis, the only thing preventing Carías from rebelling was Article 2 of the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Beyond this Dennis felt there was "little that the Legation" could "do to avert a breach in the Government."[42] Taken as a whole, this episode shows the State Department resented Paz Baraona's attempts at reconciling the Honduran political parties into a functioning democratic government. It is also another example of the United States reacting to Carías's threats to destabilize the Honduran government in a matter beneficial to Carías.

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[41] Dennis to Secretary of State, September 10, 1925, 815.00/3875, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, September 25, 1925, 815.00/3884, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

[42] Dennis to Secretary of State, October 3, 1925, 815.00/3888, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, November 9, 1925, 815.00/3906, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

By early October, the month long debacle convinced Dennis Honduras was closer than ever to falling into yet another round of revolution and chaos. Besides the Liberal "bandits" menacing parts of Honduras and the "desperate" financial difficulties facing the government, Dennis learned Carías and Martínez Funes demanded Paz Baraona resign from the presidency. Dennis predicted three potential outcomes. One, the President would "voluntarily resign" thereby giving Carías and Martínez Funes control of government due to their alliance with Vice-President Quesada. Two, Paz Baraona would refuse to resign and there would be war that involved some sort of combination of the forces of Carías, Martínez Funes, Tosta, Honduran government troops loyal to Paz Baraona, and Liberal Party members. Three, the US Legation would be able to convince Carías to remain a part of the government through diplomacy. Dennis doubted his own abilities because he reported revolution "seems sure to follow in any event."[43]

**Carías Plays Politics with Honduras's Finances**

Between 1867 and 1870, Honduras incurred a series of loans from British investors amounting to roughly £5 million. This financing was supposed to go towards the building of a transisthmian railroad running from the Honduran North Coast to the Gulf of Fonseca. Unfortunately, almost all of the money found its way into the pockets of unethical bankers and politicians instead of going to the railroad's construction. Although a short section of the railroad was built between the Caribbean coast and San Pedro Sula, the railroad fell into disrepair and

[43] Dennis to Secretary of State, October 6, 1925, 815.00/3887, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, October 10, 1925, 815.00/3891, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA. For more on Liberal Party military efforts to destabilize the Nationalist government see: Dennis to Secretary of State, October 24, 1925, 815.00/3892, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA. By early 1925, Dennis was extremely pessimistic there would ever be peace in Honduras, and he wrote an article expressing his feelings and asked the State Department for permission for it to be published. The Department denied his request because there was a "great deal of dynamite" in it, which was felt would have caused problems for Washington. For more on this interesting self-censorship of the Department see: Dennis, Untitled Article, n.d., sent to State Department January 9, 1925, 123D421/42, RG 59, NA; Munro to Francis M. White, Memorandum, February 2, 1925, enclosed in White to The Under Secretary (Grew), February 3, 1925, 123D421/41, RG 59, NA; and White to The Under Secretary (Grew), February 3, 1925, 123D421/41, RG 59, NA.

failed to reach the Pacific. Within a few decades the interests on the Honduran bonds amounted to more than $125 million, thus giving Honduras "the highest per capita foreign debt the world had ever known." The Hondurans were forced to stop stalling on solutions to this massive debt when the British government began seriously pushing for a resolution in the early 1920s.[44]

Accomplished scholars such as Lars Schoultz and Cole Blasier have argued over the course of the last two centuries US policy towards Latin America has largely been based upon perceived threats to national security from world powers such as Great Britain, Germany, and later the Soviet Union. They maintain the United States generally opposed revolutionary movements and promoted stability, because insurrections often seized or destroyed private US property but more importantly provided opportunities for foreign powers to replace US interests.[45] Considering the period of this study (1923-1941), the contentions of those that see national security concerns driving US policy do not ring entirely true for US-Honduran relations until the years just prior to World War II. Instead, the evidence from Honduras suggests scholars such as Mark T. Gilderhus and William Everett Kane who argue the United States was motivated during the interwar period by economic concerns more than national security concerns more accurately describes US policy in the US-Honduran relationship. Gilderhus claims Washington exhibited a tendency to promote "economic incentives" rather than "force" to achieve its goals in Latin America, and that after World War I "the United States possessed greater power and influence than ever before" because of "the absence of a European threat."[46] However, the

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[44] Donald E. Schulz and Deborah Sundloff Schulz, *The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 8; and Munro, pp. 141-144.

[45] Cole Blasier, *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), pp. xv-xx; and Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 37.

[46] Mark T. Gilderhus, *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations Since 1889* (Wilmington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), pp. 59-65; and William Everett Kane, *Civil Strife in Latin America: A*

United States' enthusiasm to see the Honduran-British debt issue decided demonstrates US policy toward the country was partially motivated by enthusiasm to keep its European rivals out, and thus reinforces the merits of both the national security and economic theses.

From the early days of "dollar diplomacy" the US government was eager to see the Honduran foreign debt issue resolved, but each time the State Department tried to refinance the debt with US capital the deal fell through. Munro felt a settlement "would be advantageous from the point of view of the United States Government, because it would remove a serious obstacle to any attempt at financial reform in Honduras, and the ever-present possibility of European intervention in that country's affairs." It was not until 1926 that an arrangement was finally reached. Under guidance from the State Department and the request of the British government, the Honduran Congress finally agreed to pay thirty annual payments of £40 thousand to the British investors with a varying interest rate to redeem the British bonds at a fraction of their face value. To help assure the payments, the Honduran Congress passed a 3% stamp tax on consular goods shipped to Honduras. If one ignores the fact the loans were fraudulent in the first place, the 1926 restructuring of Honduras's foreign debt was "an excellent bargain;" but it was not until 1953 that the British loans were finally paid off.[47]

Throughout much of 1925 and 1926, one of the most pressing issues in US-Honduran relations was the Honduran foreign debt. Although the United Kingdom, United States, and Paz

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*Legal History of U.S. Involvement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), pp. 96-143.

[47] Munro to White, April 19, 1923, 815.51/519, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA; Schulz and Sundloff Schulz, p. 8; Munro, pp. 141-144; and "The external debt is definitively resolved," *Reconciliación*, March 11, 1926, p. 2. For more on why the United States promoted the debt deal see: [Arthur N. Young?], Memorandum, Office of the Economic Advisor, Department of State, December 19, 1925, 815.51/623, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA; and Arthur N. Young, "Memo on the State of Financial Reforms in Honduras," May 13, 1921, 815.51/428, RG 59, NA. For a brief but informed discussion on the State Department's thought process on this issue see: Emily S. Rosenberg and Norman L. Rosenberg, "From Colonialism to Professionalism: The Public-Private Dynamic in United States Foreign Financial Advising, 1898-1929," *Journal of American History* vol. 74 no. 1 (June 1987): pp. 59-82.

Baraona Administration were all eager to quickly and amicably resolve the debt issue as early as March 1925, Carías yet again made matters difficult. Paz Baraona's newspaper *Reconciliación* stated the country was "morally obligated to pay the debt," and for the country to progress it needed better credit for developing loans, which a debt deal would provide.[48] As has been seen, Carías was consistently at odds with Paz Baraona and eager to see him removed as an obstacle to his complete control of the country. Critics of the debt deal had many reasons why they opposed it, but the most important arguments were they felt it jeopardized the sovereignty of the country, and they often believed that acknowledging the debt at all would mean Honduras would have to pay the entire sum later on.[49] Aware of the United States' anxious desire to see the issue resolved, Carías attempted to use the debt deal to manipulate the US government into tightening his grip on Honduras.

Only little more than a month after Paz Baraona took office Great Britain and the United States began to pressure his government for a debt settlement. On March 8, 1925, Arthur H. King, Her Majesty's Consul in Tegucigalpa, requested the United States' aid in promoting a settlement.[50] Almost immediately upon receiving the appeal, the State Department moved to

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[48] "The matter of the Honduran external debt," *Reconciliación*, February 6, 1926, p. 2. For more on prominent Hondurans' opinion on the matter see: "The opinion of Dr. Policarpo Bonilla on the recent matter of our external debt," *Reconciliación*, February 16, 1926, p. 1.

[49] "The critics of the matter of the External Debt," *Reconciliación*, February 8, 1926, p. 2. For more on the domestic external debt debate see: "Agreement of the external debt of Honduras," *Reconciliación*, February 6, 1926, p. 2; "The critics of the matter of the External Debt," *Reconciliación*, February 9, 1926, p. 2; "The matter of the External Debt," *Reconciliación*, February 9, 1926, p. 2; "The National Congress, is in session…," *Reconciliación*, March 8, 1926, p. 2; and various articles in *El Cronista* and *La Tribuna* in February and March of 1926, especially "Yesterday's consideration," *El Cronista*, March 9, 1926, p. 2. There were also serious discussions on the "internal debt" of Honduras. See: "Our internal debt," *Reconciliación*, March 12, 1926, p. 2.

[50] Arthur H. King to Dennis, March 8, 1925, enclosed in Dennis to Secretary of State, March 12, 1925, 815.51/578, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, March 7, 1925, 815.51/566, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

support it.[51] On March 14, in the interest of improving Honduran credit and help securing international loans, Kellogg instructed the US Legation in Tegucigalpa to encourage a debt deal in Honduras but without dictating US goals to Paz Baraona's Administration.[52]

Originally, the international debt deal received no trouble from Carías, but it was well-known that in order for it to come to fruition it must first have his blessing. After being asked what he thought about it, Carías told Dennis that he would back "such an agreement if" it was "reasonable," and that he thought it would "be promptly ratified by Congress." Dennis knew Carías was essential to the Honduran Congress's acceptance of the settlement because he was "generally recognized to be the most influential political personality today in Honduras."[53] The State Department was pleased Carías had given his approval to the debt deal and worked quickly to finalize it.

By September 1925, Carías's support for the restructuring of Honduras's finances began to come into question. It was no secret Carías was supported by the United Fruit Company, and that the company benefited from having a weak Honduran government. Although Dennis was uncertain about how the US banana companies felt about the debt deal he knew that the corporations made immense profits despite the lack of stability. He writes:

> During the first half of this year…despite the prevalence of revolutionary activities in the Republic, the state of siege, partial interruption of business, and hard times, the companies attained a recorded exportation of over ten million stems of bananas, with a

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[51] Munro to White, March 9, 1925, 815.51/570, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA; and White to Secretary of State, March 12, 1925, 815.51/572, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA. For Honduran coverage of the United States' position on the Honduran economy see: "Washington's Department of State and Foreign Business," *El Cronista*, February 26, 1925, p. 2.

[52] Kellogg to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), March 14, 1925, 815.51/566, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

[53] Dennis to Secretary of State, March 24, 1925, 815.51/582, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

> net profit of well over one dollar and a total contribution by way of taxes to the State of less than two cents on each stem.

According to Dennis, the larger banana companies received lavish concessions from the government for simply giving it small loans, which the government desperately needed to sustain itself. Another reason for uncertainty regarding Carías's endorsement was that he was better served politically when Paz Baraona appeared inconsequential and incompetent. Whenever the President failed to deliver on significant political issues it made him look bad, and Carías knew this gave him more power and prestige. While Carías promised he would "do all in his power to bring about the loan," there was reason to doubt his sincerity.[54]

By early 1926, international observers agreed Carías opposed the debt deal, so both the United States and Great Britain were impelled to put their combined diplomatic might on Carías to make him change his mind. On January 16, 1926, George T. Summerlin, US minister in Tegucigalpa, informed the State Department Carías told him:

> He could not support the Government in any final loan negotiations as long as President Paz remained in office. General Carias stated that the National Party and he personally could not shoulder the responsibility for the administrative acts of President Paz and that while, in the interest of peace and harmony, they were disposed to sustain the Government as best they could, they did not see their way clear to support the President in any attempts he might make to carry out as important a measure as a loan. They felt that a loan was needed by the country and they would be most happy to see a loan obtained by a government in which the members of the National Party might have full confidence and over which they might exercise satisfactory control.[55]

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[54] Dennis to Secretary of State, September 5, 1925, 815.51/607, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA. For more on Carías's attempts to limit Paz Baraona's power in late 1925 and early 1926 see: Summerlin to Secretary of State, December 8, 1925, 815.00/3919, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA; Summerlin to Secretary of State, December 29, 1925, 815.00/3927, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA; and Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 11, 1926, 815.002/86, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 25, RG 59, NA.

[55] Summerlin to Secretary of State, January 16, 1926, 815.51/628, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

The above quotation shows Carías favored a restructuring of Honduras's foreign debt, but he opposed it because he did not want Paz Baraona to "exercise satisfactory control" over the deal. It appears Dennis was correct in his opinion Carías wanted the President to fail so that he could benefit politically from making the deal himself. Carías's insistence he would block the agreement "as long as President Paz remained in office" is clear evidence he was attempting to use Honduras's foreign debt as leverage against the United States for the purpose of trying to move the United States to support him over Paz Baraona.

Having made himself the obstacle to the policy goals of all three countries involved in the debt settlement, Carías found himself the object of much frustration. On January 18, 1926, the British Embassy in Washington contacted the US Legation in Tegucigalpa and explained "for political reasons" Carías "was opposing the ratifications by Congress of the Agreement regarding the Honduranian [*sic*] External Debt." This again prompted members of Her Majesty's foreign service to ask for the United States' help in pushing the debt agreement through Congress, but this time rather than appealing to Paz Baraona the United States was asked to deal with Carías directly. Her Majesty's government requested the representatives of the US government "approach General Carias and to leave no doubt in his mind that this attitude in this matter does not meet with the sympathy of the United States Government who desires to see the agreement ratified."[56] Kellogg agreed to the British request and instructed the US minister to "informally discuss" with Carías the United States' opinion that he should embrace the debt deal.[57]

With pressure from both the United States and Great Britain, Carías took a step back from his open hostility to the settlement to a more passive role. Not wanting to appear as an

[56] British Embassy (Washington, D.C.) to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 18, 1926, 815.51/626, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

[57] Kellogg to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 21, 1926, 815.51/626, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

enemy of the United States, Carías allowed Vice-President Quesada and the Honduran Congress to do his alienating work for him. In late January, the Honduran Congress voted to send the British debt issue to a "special committee of five" deputies who would have the power to negotiate with the British.[58] Shortly thereafter, Carías told Summerlin he was "not opposed to the ratification of the agreement nor in any way exercised his influence with members of the Congress for or against it. He added he had not given the agreement careful study and could not express an opinion thereon." Regardless of Carías's new stance, Summerlin felt the "special committee," which had "the power of attorney," was obviously a move to destroy the agreement because Carías and Quesada controlled the Congress. Besides the political benefits that would be gained from killing the deal, Summerlin also observed that Carías and Quesada might have been working for their financial sponsor, the United Fruit Company, which he also believed opposed the agreement.[59]

As previously stated, in 1926, the Honduran government eventually accepted the debt restructuring deal despite Carías's opposition to it; therefore, rather than demonstrating Carías's ability to control US policy the episode is another example of Carías's attempt to manipulate the United States. However, Carías's sudden hesitance to appear as the United States' enemy in Honduras, and instead his observable desire to pass himself off as "neutral" is a sign that Carías was prepared to play a longer political game.[60] Carías was attempting to craft the United States' opinion of him into something more favorable. He knew if he operated in the role as a continual

[58] Summerlin to Secretary of State, January 30, 1926, 815.51/627, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

[59] Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 1, 1926, 815.51/629, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA; and Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 22, 1926, 815.51/630, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

[60] Summerlin to Secretary of State, March 15, 1926, 815.51/635, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 34, RG 59, NA.

contrarian to US policy the United States would resent his power and might even repeat its hostility to his presidency. Though Carías would go on to antagonize the United States for several years to come, he was always careful not to take his efforts too far.

At the close of the British debt deal, the US government's opinion of Carías was as negative as it had been for the previous two years, but it also showed signs of improvement and even some small manifestations of respect. He was still viewed as "anti-American," a racial inferior, and an "unkempt" and "fat…man of no particular ability." However, he was also "known to be just and fearless and…extremely popular with the masses." Most importantly, he was also someone the United States thought "must be considered in all future political activities."[61]

**Legalizing a Coup**

In early 1927, another Carías-Paz Baraona crisis emerged that the United States felt warranted its attention. For months the respective presses of the various Honduran factions had slandered one another with reckless abandon. Tensions between the Cariistas and Paz Baraona's supporters were at a fever pitch, so when the President stood behind his Minister of Hacienda, Rafael Díaz Chávez, against the protests of Carías, the country was already ripe with inter-party resentment that again threatened revolution.[62] The Carías faction found Díaz Chávez objectionable because as Minister of Hacienda he had the power to influence the budgets of several key Cariista held ministries. When Díaz Chávez tried to reduce the budget of the

[61] C-9-e-16741, "Personalities, Honduras," June 12, 1926, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 449, RG 38. For other signs the United States' respect for Carías was growing see: Kellogg to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), June 22, 1925, 815.00/3743, RG 59, NA.

[62] Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 11, 1927, 815.00/4069, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA. For another example of Honduran politicians taking destabilizing actions with the President's cabinet see: Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 20, 1926, 815.00/3950, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

"strongly" pro-Carías Ministry of Government, Carías personally requested Paz Baraona remove Díaz Chávez from the cabinet. Paz Baraona promised Carías if Díaz Chávez could be shown to have committed a crime he would be dismissed. Carías then produced evidence Díaz Chávez had given Liberals government funds, but he failed to convince Paz Baraona of the allegations, so on February 26, Carías organized a congressional vote to "censure" Díaz Chávez. Once again the war clouds began to gather, and Honduras appeared to be on the verge of civil war.[63]

The United States was frustrated Carías and Paz Baraona had found another reason to risk the peace of Honduras and moved to calm matters, but before this could be done the situation went from bad to worse. Summerlin felt Carías was behaving like a tyrant because at Carías's orders Congress quickly "convicted" Díaz Chávez "without" him "being permitted to offer a word in his own defense." Besides Summerlin's concern over the lack of justice in the country, he was also worried Carías's move to "censure" Díaz Chávez had strengthened Ferrera's army who was again threatening revolution and only recently had "obtained some arms and ammunition in Mexico."[64] While these issues worried the State Department, it was not until Carías began efforts to use his sway over Congress to remove Paz Baraona from the presidency that the Department realized the gravity of the situation.[65]

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[63] Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 28, 1927, 815.00/4077, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA. In late 1926, relations were so poor between Paz Baraona and Carías that many Liberals worked to reconcile them for fear of revolution; see: Summerlin to Secretary of State, October 24, 1926, 815.00/4050, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA; and Summerlin to Secretary of State, November 10, 1926, 815.00/4040, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

[64] Summerlin to Secretary of State, February 28, 1927, 815.00/4077, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

[65] Summerlin to Secretary of State, March 3, 1927, 815.00/4080, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

In early March, it was apparent Carías was beginning to gather his followers to support a scheme to make pro-Carías Vice-President Quesada president of Honduras, but faced with such a predicament was slow to act. Summerlin did not take Carías's behavior as yet another political or diplomatic bluff, he was seriously concerned about how the situation was developing and requested guidance on how the State Department would react to a change of government in Honduras. Summerlin wanted to know if the Department would interpret Carías's use of the Congress to remove Paz Baraona as a violation of Article II of the Treaty of 1923, if Quesada would be recognized by the United States, and if the perpetrators of a "coup" would be permitted to run in the next presidential elections.[66]

Aware the United States was contemplating a response to his efforts to remove Paz Baraona from the presidency, Carías moved to influence US policy by dispatching his most potent political emissary, Alfredo Schlesinger, to Washington. Schlesinger was well known throughout Central America as a man of less than stellar reputation. He was referred to as the 'international spy' in Tegucigalpa, and thought to be a "political adventurer who makes his living seeking and carrying information from one political party or public official to others for a consideration."[67] When Summerlin learned Schlesinger was on his way to meet with US officials in Washington, he warned the Department that Schlesinger was "a henchman of General Tiburcio Carias," and a document had been discovered that was created by Carías and Schlesinger to induce the Department to support Carías's actions against Paz Baraona.[68]

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[66] Summerlin to Secretary of State, March 3, 1927, 815.00/4080, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

[67] MID 2657-P-119, Fred T. Cruse, February 17, 1928, "Alfredo Schlesinger," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[68] Summerlin to Secretary of State, March 21, 1927, 815.00/4084, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

Schlesinger's reputation was so bad when Summerlin learned the Department in Washington had received him he wrote he was "somewhat surprised that an adventurer of the character of Schlesinger should have been received and listened to by an official of the State Department."[69]

Schlesinger worked hard to convince the United States to support Carías's desire to remove Paz Baraona from power. Schlesinger claimed Paz Baraona was unfairly "showing a tendency to favor the Liberals," and that he opposed the patriotic efforts of the Cariistas. He added Paz Baraona did not have the support of the Honduran people, and reminded the Department the President had only been elected because Carías had endorsed his candidacy. However, Schlesinger made known Carías was hesitant to upset the Department and eager to become president in 1929, so he asked the Department if Carías would be considered a "persona non grata" if Paz Baraona was congressionally removed from office. State Department official in Washington Stokely W. Morgan told Schlesinger he felt Paz Baraona had not done enough to warrant an impeachment because he did oppose Ferrera who was a Liberal, and he did what he could to suppress "Liberal revolution." Morgan continued stating, "The State Department is absolutely against any attempt to change Governments either by revolution, by coup d'état or by any chicanery which might result in a transfer of power by illegal means," because such action only retarded the power of the government to serve Honduras. After some prodding from Schlesinger, Morgan then told him if Carías "did nothing between now and the next election which might be interpreted as a revolution or coup d'état that the Department would not be opposed to his election."[70]

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[69] Summerlin to Secretary of State, April 23, 1927, 815.00/4093, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

[70] Morgan, "Mr. Alfredo Schlesinger, Present Situation in Honduras," Memorandum, March 25, 1927, 815.00/4081, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA; and Carías to Morgan, February 22, 1927, enclosed in Morgan, "Mr. Alfredo Schlesinger, Present Situation in Honduras," Memorandum, March 25, 1927, 815.00/4081, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal

Despite Schlesinger and Carías's efforts to sway the State Department, US policymakers refused to back Carías's longing to remove Paz Baraona from the presidency. The crisis continued into May 1927, and for weeks Carías brought all kinds of accusations against Paz Baraona that Summerlin called "trumped up," but time was on both Paz Baraona and the United States' side.[71] Faced with contempt from the Cariistas and curtailed powers Díaz Chávez resigned as Minister of Hacienda, and therefore removed one of the Cariistas' main reasons for opposing Paz Baraona's presidency.[72] Additionally, presidential elections were planned for October 1928, thus making Paz Baraona's remaining tenure in office a little less than two years away. Although the remaining months of Paz Baraona's presidency were filled with controversy and intrigues emanating from the Cariistas, he finished his constitutionally allotted presidential term.[73] When these issues are considered alongside the United States' repeated statements demonstrating its desire for peace, and Carías's desire not to violate the 1923 Treaty and place himself in favorable standing with the United States that it is possible to see, despite incredible odds, why Paz Baraona's presidency was saved.

Carías was fully cognizant of the United States' power in his country, and its ability to influence his own political career, so portraying himself as pro-US American had by this time become a priority for Carías. Not taking destabilizing political matters too far was part of his

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Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA. For more on Schlesinger's long and interesting career see: Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 70 and 187.

[71] Summerlin to Secretary of State, April 28, 1927, 815.00/4101, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

[72] Morgan, "Mr. Alfredo Schlesinger, Present Situation in Honduras," Memorandum, March 25, 1927, 815.00/4081, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

[73] Summerlin to Secretary of State, April 16, 1927, 815.00/4087, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

public relations campaign with the United States. He also exhibited a keen understanding of the spotlight and the importance of the US press. In early January 1928, the world renowned US American pilot, Charles A. Lindbergh paid a three-day visit to Honduras, and provided Carías an excellent opportunity to show the United States he was someone who deserved its fondness. Although many Honduran politicians in both the Liberal and National Parties had similar ideas about courting the United States, Carías made sure he was front and center. Three days of festivities were planned for Lindbergh's visit, and government employees were paid two weeks in advance to assure their happiness and Tegucigalpa's general jubilation. The *New York Times* mockingly covered the Hondurans' excitement about the aviation hero's visit, and derisively described how Carías was planning to place a laurel wreath on Lindbergh's head.[74]

As President of Congress, Carías must have made sure Lindbergh enjoyed a serious amount of pomp and circumstance that was certain to be appreciated by the US journalists and diplomats following events—not to mention Lindbergh. When the time came for Lindbergh to visit Congress, Carías went out of his way to ingratiate himself to the pilot and therefore all that were watching. In a special session of Congress, Carías greeted the flier and welcomed him "in the name of the body of the people."[75] Sitting at Carías's left side and enjoying "US American hymns," Lindbergh "was given a hero's speech by Carías" exalting his wonderful virtues. If this failed to please, the laurel wreath Carías presented him with most assuredly did.[76] Evidently the strategy worked, because after numerous discourses extolling the friendship between the United

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[74] "GET PAY TO GREET LINDBERGH: Tegucigalpa Advances Salary Day to Assure Holiday Fun," *New York Times*, December 31, 1927, p. 2.

[75] IK Shuman, "HONDURANS HAIL LINDBERGH IN CONGRESS AND PALACE…," *New York Times*, January 5, 1928, p. 1.

[76] "THE ENTHUISATIC HOMAGE TO THE DISTRIGUISHED AVIATOR," *Reconciliación*, January 5, 1928, p. 2; and "Messages sent to the Press of the United States…," *Reconciliación*, January 6, 1928, p. 2; and numerous articles from *Reconciliación*, *La Tribuna, and El Cronista*, December 16, 1927 to January 7, 1928.

States and Honduras, girls fighting over a chance to shake his hand, and days of festivities, Lindbergh felt "everyone" in Honduras was "extremely hospitable." He even went as far as to say he "would have enjoyed living in this country."[77] Little did he know that just a few months earlier the generous orator and wreath presenter Carías had nearly thrown his country into another civil war.

The Lindbergh-Carías episode also points to Carías's understanding of the military and psychological power of the airplane. Eric Paul Roorda and Michael Sherry have addressed "The Cult of the Airplane" and the meaning the then new technology had on the hearts and minds of people around the world. Sherry convincingly argues the airplane was more than just a tool, it was also a "symbol" of modernity and altered "man's sense of time and place," and eventually became "a powerful metaphor for heavenly aspirations." Roorda demonstrates how Rafael Trujillo, later dictator of the Dominican Republic, made use of the plane to his own advantage militarily, diplomatically, and domestically to increase his power and influence both at home and abroad.[78] While Carías was still more than six years away from developing his own Air Force, he was still able to harness the airplane's unique influence by placing himself at the side of Lindbergh. Even without Lindbergh, Carías had proven himself as an innovator in his first ever use of the machine in Central American combat in 1924. Now, in the absence of revolution and his personal military, he exploited Lindbergh's celebrity, but also what he represented, the future. As an icon of flight and all the hopes and dreams that went along with it, Lindbergh's

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[77] Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, "Lindbergh Describes Day of Fetes in Which Hondurans Lionize Him…, *New York Times*, January 5, 1928, p. 3; and "HONDURAS SHUTS UP SHOP TO HONOR COL. LINDBERGH: Yankee Flyer…," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 5, 1928, p. 4.

[78] Michael Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 1-12; and Roorda, "The Cult of the Airplane in the Dominican Republic during the Marine Occupation and the Trujillo Regime, 1919-1961," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations,* eds. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 269-310.

presence represented a transformation taking place in the outside world that Hondurans dreamed of taking part in. By embracing Lindbergh Carías showed his countrymen he welcomed the future and all of the wondrous possibilities that went along with it.

Lindbergh's visit also presented Carías a prime opportunity to sure up his popularity and strengthen his chances of democratically becoming president. On a cold and rainy morning more than 10,000 people waited for Lindbergh's arrival at Toncontín airfield. When he landed he was given a military gun salute, the sirens of factories were blown, and the military was called in to stop the throngs of spectators from rushing the runway. Not only was Lindbergh given two golden keys to the city of Tegucigalpa, he was given a parade, a huge concert, a special triumphal arch, and the city streets were lined with pine needles and multi-colored paper for him to walk on. Surrounded by beautiful women, Honduras's elite, and special banquets given in his honor, Lindbergh could not have helped but feel as the "Air Conqueror" the Hondurans made him out to be. With such a reception, it is no surprise Carías attached himself as best he could to the pilot. Simply by association, Lindbergh's popularity must have rubbed off on Carías.[79]

**Fearing Democracy**

Not long after Carías's efforts to use the legislature to remove Paz Baraona from the presidency, Carías began his presidential campaign to legally and peacefully seek his longtime goal of becoming the head executive. Paz Baraona promised "free and honest elections" in late 1927, and "both of the political parties" publicly stated they favored this approach because both felt confident they could win in the next election. Carías's main Liberal opponent was Vicente Mejía Colindres, a respected and popular government official working on the Bay Islands'

[79] "Triumphal Arch, Decorations, Dances, Receptions, in National Congress…," *El Cronista*, January [2?], 1928, p. [3?]. See also: "Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh's Landing Troubles in Costa Rica," *El Cronista*, January 9, 1928, p. 2.

financial administration. Though there was no obvious reason to fear the prospect of "free and honest elections" taking place between these two candidates and their respective parties in October 1928, Honduras had previously shown itself to be a country destabilized by the democratic process. As a result, Summerlin found the political environment in Honduras, "which is normally bad" was "more complicated" than usual.[80]

Demonstrating the seriousness of the situation Honduran politicians began offering Carías, absent the prodding of the US government, several compromises designed to avoid another revolution. Showing his patriotism and eagerness to avoid civil war Mejía Colindres offered the Cariistas the opportunity to accept a coalition government. Mejía Colindres proposed the Liberal Party receive the vice presidency, three cabinet posts, fifty percent of "all other appointments, and the withdrawal of Carías from the elections. Obviously this was unacceptable to Carías who felt he could easily win the presidency and the proposition was quickly rejected.[81] Tosta offered the most important coalition government compromise to Carías, and although his offer was costly Carías would eventually regret not accepting it. In March 1928, after Carías, Tosta was the most powerful man in Honduras, but despite his prominence it was unknown whom Tosta was going to support for president. Because Tosta had a strong following his backing was critical to either party's campaign thus giving him significant leverage in negotiating terms for his endorsement. Tosta offered to throw in his lot with Carías, but at the cost of fifty percent of the presidential appointees, control of half the Congress, and the head of the National Party. This was a slightly better deal than the one offered by Mejía Colindres, but

[80] Summerlin to Secretary of State, November 10, 1927, 815.00/4162, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA.

[81] Summerlin to Secretary of State, March 16, 1928, 815.00/4190, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA.

Carías's power would then be limited in the same way that Paz Baraona's was.[82] Carías "promptly rejected" these terms, and in the process made Tosta an enemy rather than an ally. After being scorned by Carías, Tosta announced his own candidacy, thus further complicating the presidential race and making the political environment resemble the disastrous campaign of 1923 in which three strong candidates ran and no absolute majority was reached.[83]

By mid-1928, civil war in Honduras was on the minds of both the State Department and the Hondurans, but rather than attempt to alter the affairs of its southerly neighbor as it had in the past, the United States refrained from direct interference. In order to resolve the 1923 presidential crisis, Hughes first instructed the US Legation in Tegucigalpa to find a suitable compromise candidate to avoid war. Later that year, in a desperate attempt to prevent Carías from rebelling the State Department tried to form a coalition government. After the War of Revindication, when Carías emerged as the most powerful political personality in the country and was the nation's obvious choice for president, the United States again stepped in, this time as the main impediment to Carías's election in late 1924. However, by 1928 US-Latin American relations were at one of their lowest points in history, and the US government was earnestly seeking ways to improve its reputation in the region. Less than a year after President Coolidge attended the Sixth International Conference of American States in Havana, Cuba in an attempt to foster better relations in the hemisphere, elections in Honduras provided his Administration with an opportunity to prove the United States' growing reluctance to meddle in the affairs of Latin America.[84] In the elections of 1928, the Department elected to maintain a truly neutral course,

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[82] Summerlin to Secretary of State, March 31, 1928, 815.00 Presidential Campaign/7, RG 59, NA.

[83] Summerlin to Secretary of State, April 14, 1928, 815.00 Presidential Campaign 1928/8, RG 59, NA.

[84] Robert Sobel, *Coolidge: An American Enigma* (Regnery Publishing, 2000), p. 351; Benjamin D. Rhodes, *United States Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918-1941: The Golden Age of American Diplomatic and Military Complacency* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), p. 64; Joseph Smith, *The*

and did little more than show its appreciation to Paz Baraona for his promises to keep the October elections fair and honest.

In early June 1928, it appeared Tosta realized although he was a political and military heavyweight he did not possess the popularity necessary to beat Carías singlehandedly, so he slowly began to collude with the Liberals.[85] US military attaché Fred T. Cruse reported Tosta had plans to start a revolution against the Honduran government and Carías to bring about an intervention by the United States to prevent him from becoming president. Then Tosta would withdraw and give his support to another candidate who would then be Tosta's proxy and therefore do his bidding. By doing so, Cruse informed his superiors Carías would no longer be eligible for the presidency because he participated in the revolution, and that Tosta needed to first eliminate Carías as an opponent if he was ever going to win the presidency.[86] There is also evidence that suggests Tosta and his Liberal allies began receiving military aid from the Cuyamel Fruit Company who was trying to prevent the United Fruit Company from acquiring serious land concessions it had been granted by the Paz Baraona administration.[87] All signs again

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*United States and Latin America: A History of American Diplomacy, 1776-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 87; and Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 27. For an excellent discussion of Latin American resentment toward the United States for intervening in the region's affairs see: Gordon Connell-Smith, *The United States and Latin America: An Historical Analysis of Inter-American Relations* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974), pp. 146-186.

[85] Summerlin to Secretary of State, June 2, 1928, 815.00 Presidential Campaigns/10, RG 59, NA.

[86] Cruse, "TOSTA'S PLAN," June 4, 1928, 815.00/4200, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA.

[87] Summerlin to Secretary of State, June 16, 1928, 815.113/308, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 26, RG 59, NA; and Summerlin to Secretary of State, August 9, 1928, 815.113/323, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 26, RG 59, NA.

pointed towards war as rumors circulated that Tosta and Ferrera had entered an alliance, and Tosta, fearing for his life, traveled with an armed bodyguard of seventy men.[88]

In early October 1928, the political environment rearranged itself once again when Tosta and Mejía Colindres colluded with Tosta agreeing to support Mejía Colindres for president.[89] The country looked poised to erupt into civil war, and although there were a few political disturbances in Tela the elections were carried out with "self-restraint" and "good will" in a "bloodless culmination of the recent political struggle."[90] Because of his own popularity and his alliance with Tosta, Mejía Colindres received 62,319 votes to Carías's 47,745, giving Mejía Colindres a 14,574 vote win over Carías. The results were clear, Carías had lost the election, and for one of the rare occasions in Honduras's history "a peaceful and orderly presidential election has been held in this country."[91] According to Herschel V. Johnson, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, Carías knew it would be "stupid" not to declare Mejía Colindres president and therefore

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[88] T. Monroe Fisher to Secretary of State, September 8, 1928, 815.00/4240, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA.

[89] Summerlin to Secretary of State, October 13, 1928, 815.00 Presidential Campaigns 1928/40, RG 59, NA; C-10-j-11904-B, Commander Special Service Squadron to Chief of Naval Operations, "Report of USS *Denver* on visit to ports on Northern Coast of Honduras," January 26, 1929, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38; and Cruse, "Results of Congressional Elections in Honduras," December 4, 1930, 815.00 Elections/15, RG 59, NA. For the State Department's opinion that Carías and Vicente Tosta were both eligible for the Honduran presidency see: White to Summerlin, October 11, 1928, 815.00/4247½, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA.

[90] Winfield H. Scott to Secretary of State, November 3, 1928, 815.00/4290, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA; and Fisher to Secretary of State, October 20, 1928, 815.00/4281, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA. For examples of the National Party challenging the election results see: Fisher to Secretary of State, November 17, 1928, 815.00/4306, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA; Morgan to Secretary of State, November 9, 1928, 815.00/4300, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA; and Nelson R. Park to Secretary of State, December 31, 1928, 815.00/4339, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA.

[91] Herschel V. Johnson to Secretary of State, December 3, 1928, 815.00/4315, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA; and Johnson to Secretary of State, December 15, 1928, 815.00/4330, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA.

did not meaningfully oppose the confirmation of his presidency despite his control of the Honduran Congress.

While the United States largely remained aloof from the elections of 1928, and had relatively little interaction with Carías as compared to the previous five years, the election year served as a reminder instability in Honduras was an ever-present possibility if not reality. Carías may not have challenged the election's results, but his relationship with the United States was affected by the events of 1928 in two ways. First, it reinforced the United States' belief Honduras was a land riddled by intrigue and ready to burst into violent flame at any time. This was no insignificant matter because this negative view of the country contributed to the United States' belief that it needed the guidance of a firmer hand in order for it to be pacified. Second, Carías's reluctance to revolt despite losing the ballot demonstrated to the United States that he was a serious politician that could be counted on to keep the peace. Carías may have been one of the United States' greatest opponents to making Honduras a peaceful country, but his efforts to influence US opinion of him began to pay off as he slowly began to take on a new reputation as a strong and reliable Honduran politician willing and able to assist the United States in reaching its goals.

## Conclusion

During the Paz Baraona Administration the US-Carías relationship was anything but constructive. In 1925, after initially working with the United States to contain communist destabilization on the North Coast, Carías began to actively oppose Paz Baraona and seek his removal from office. The United States did what it could to seek stability, prosperity, and the elimination of foreign interference in Honduras, but in order to do so it was forced to unremittingly deal with Carías's power grabs and political sensitivities. On several occasions, the

US government chose to promote harmony by dictating terms to both Carías and Paz Baraona at the expense of limiting the president's legal constitutional authority. US officials were often frustrated Paz Baraona tried to treat Carías like a "courtier," and believed if the President realized Carías's strength and stopped trying to be "boss" instability could largely be avoided.[92] It appears US policymakers were more concerned about sidestepping violence than they were about promoting democracy or the rule of law. Meanwhile, Honduras remained menaced by lawlessness and several small revolutions that threatened to unravel the small gains the country had made towards security and improving its economy. Honduras's stability remained a constant worry for US officials eager to see the country pacified, a fact that years later would help the United States accept Carías as Honduras's dictator.

By the end of the four-year period, both the United States and Carías had significantly changed their tactics for dealing with one another. After years of trying to reach the presidency with blunt and destructive maneuvers such as revolution, intrigues, and ultimatums, which only antagonized the US government, Carías found taking on the United States head on was largely ineffectual. However, he could achieve results by threatening to revolt and using his allies such as Martínez Funes and Quesada to create conditions that made the US government work in his favor. Carías was still willing to oppose Paz Baraona and therefore the goals of the United States in Honduras, but he knew not to take matters to the point where the United States would see him as an enemy. In the final months of the Paz Baraona Administration, Carías ceased his attempts to undermine the President, and instead became a law-abiding citizen refraining from election violence in October 1928 and surprising everyone by accepting the election results peacefully when he lost. The United States finally learned Carías was a force to be reckoned with and

[92] Dennis to Secretary of State, November 9, 1925, 815.00/3906, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

needed to be considered in all major issues. Although the State Department recognized Carías and his followers as regularly problematic and often the biggest stumbling blocks to stability, it never made him a permanent adversary. As long as Carías pursued the presidency by legal means the United States never moved against him, but when he did so unlawfully it diplomatically stepped in and put itself between him and Paz Baraona. Fully aware of his domestic power, the United States organized to placate and constrain Carías even when it meant undermining the rule of law and Honduran sovereignty.

# CHAPTER 6

# LEARNING TO RECONCILE

"There is reason to believe that American lives and property may be more in danger now than during former upheavals."[1]

-US Minister Julius G. Lay describing conditions a few weeks before the Honduran presidential elections of 1932.

During the presidency of Vicente Mejía Colindres (1929-1933), the US-Carías relationship was not nearly as rigorous as it had been in previous years, but a number of events and transformations took place in Honduras during this period that affected their interaction later on. As president of the Honduran Congress, Carías remained one of the most powerful Honduran politicians of the period, but his reluctance to destabilize Mejía Colindres and willingness to put aside his political ambitions gave the United States fewer reasons to deal with him directly. Because the Honduran government was stronger than previous regimes, and the United States more disinclined to intervene in Honduran internal affairs under the Hoover Administration, Carías and the US government enjoyed a time of relative harmony. This is not to say all was well in US-Honduran relations. On the contrary, the United States was extremely concerned about what it saw as the proliferation of international communism in Honduras and how this so called menace threatened to destroy its citizens' vast foreign investments. Additionally, the US government worried Honduras could easily return to a state of anarchy if a peaceful transfer of presidential power failed to take place in 1933. Honduras's bankrupt treasury, its deep economic troubles, and its supposedly inept politicians made many US officials lose faith in the possibility Honduras would ever find peace and prosperity.

[1] Julius G. Lay to Secretary of State, October 13, 1932, 815.00-General Conditions/34, RG 59, NA.

As Honduras was experiencing yet another difficult period, and the United States looked on with despair, Carías began to morph his identity from a destabilizing strongman to that of an anti-revolutionary and pacifier. This account contrasts one of the most notorious and erroneous assumptions surrounding Carías, that in 1932 he "grabbed power" or ascended to the presidency through "coup" or "revolution."[2] This chapter proves this belief wrong and substantiates its argument with US and Honduran sources that not only show Carías was elected in free and honest elections, but that he was forced to defend his legitimate victory from a Liberal revolution. He made and kept a promise not to rebel during the 1932 presidential elections, and when civil war returned to Honduras he defended the Liberal government and stood by the rule of law. Although few US officials were swayed to esteem Carías, they noticed his efforts and detected indications he was someone they could grow to appreciate. The US media's portrayal of Carías also began to improve as it switched from representing him as a thug and rebel to defender of the peace, a significant development when one considers the influence of US public opinion on the formation of US foreign policy. Applying the importance of public opinion to Honduras, this chapter also explores the impact of Honduran perspectives of the United States in the decade before Carías took power. It argues Honduran anti-Americanism had a tremendous influence on the US-Carías and US-Honduran relationship both before and during his presidency, and ultimately strengthened Carías's power.

**US American Fear of Communism in Honduras**

Over the course of the 1920s the United States increased its holdings in Latin America by well over a billion dollars, and Honduras made up a high per capita proportion of this foreign

[2] Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), p. 64; and Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 32.

investment.[3] One of the most important issues facing the US-Honduras relationship during Carías's long career was the United States' effort to protect its vast investments on the North Coast and the larger cities of the country. US citizens had investments in many industries including soap and candle factories, breweries, ice plants, cigarette factories, sugar mills, tanneries, hydroelectric plants, bottling works, mines (such as the Rosario Mining Company), and massive cattle ranches. When added together these and other private and small corporate investments were valued in the tens of millions of dollars. As impressive as these assets were, the most significant US wealth generated in Honduras came from the banana companies. After having bought out the Cuyamel Fruit Company's holdings in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico in November 1929, the United Fruit Company's properties in Honduras alone amounted to roughly $38 million. This incredible collection of estates was spread out over many hundreds of square miles of company lands and hundreds of miles of railroad track, and included livestock, farming equipment, wharves, boats, buildings, automobiles, and other elements necessary for the economies of scale needed for internationally competitive commercial banana production.[4]

As has been shown in previous chapters, the US government took threats to these investments seriously and did not hesitate to land troops on Honduran shores or briefly occupy the capital city in order to protect them. In the late 1920s, there was less revolutionary violence in Honduras than in previous years, but due to the increasingly frequent labor strikes and worker organization the United States continued to watch potential dangers to these holdings with concern. In mid-April 1925, US forces landed at La Ceiba in order to guard foreigners against political disturbances, and for the next seven years there were numerous requests by US officials

[3] David Green, *The Containment of Latin America; A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 37-50.

[4] C-11-b-20159, "Report on American Investments in Honduras," February 7, 1930, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 616, RG 38.

in Honduras to either station warships off the North Coast or to land troops there for protection.[5] Revolution was not nearly the problem that it had been in the past, but it was replaced by the efforts of the Honduran working class to assert itself against the Honduran elite and US corporations.

While US-Carías relations rarely involved the United States' concern with communism and organized labor during the Mejía Colindres Administration, radicalism nonetheless influenced their relationship in later years. Although radicalism was a concern of the United States in Honduras since 1919, between 1930 and 1932 it reached a crescendo. In mid-1930, US officials in Honduras began reporting significantly increased labor activity and communist "agitation" throughout Honduras. The most troubling situation for Washington was the influx of foreign "communists" to the North Coast banana communities. As foreign and Honduran "ringleaders" organized strikes and threatened to turn an otherwise peaceful environment into "a very serious situation," frustrated US American observers watched as Mejía Colindres's government reportedly dragged its feet in dealing with the "unrest." According to the US Consul in La Ceiba, Nelson R. Park, "unless the [Honduran] government acts promptly and energetically" there was considerable "danger" that things would get out of anyone's control.[6] Julius G. Lay, the US Minister in Tegucigalpa, warned the Department if violence broke out US

[5] For examples of requests for US forces in Honduras see: T. Monroe Fisher to Secretary of State, August 25, 1928, 815.00/4227, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 21, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, June 27, 1930, 815.00B/23, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, May 4, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/82, RG 59, NA; and COMSPERON to OPNAV, October 18, 1932, 815.00/4542, RG 59, NA.

[6] George R. Merrell, Jr. to unknown, May 2, 1930, 815.00B/18, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, June 14, 1930, 815.00B/19, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, June 17, 1930, 815.00B/20, RG 59, NA; Nelson R. Park to Lay, June 23, 1930, enclosed in Park to Secretary of State, June 23, 1930, 815.00B/26, RG 59, NA; and Park to Secretary of State, June 25, 1930, 815.00B/27, RG 59, NA.

Americans would be vulnerable because the communist literature being circulated in the region was anti-American, and there was an insufficient US military presence to assure their safety.[7]

In June 1930, largely in response to Lay's appeals, Mejía Colindres declared martial law on the North Coast to protect US Americans against the possibility of communist fomented violence on July 4 when rumors stated a general strike might occur. Showing his lack of faith in the ability of the Honduran government to deal with the situation to his satisfaction, Lay also requested the US Navy send a ship to help calm the region.[8] Lay and other US observers were worried the Honduran government did not have the laws necessary to deal with communism, because it used only its general immigration legislation to deal with political radicals.[9] Whatever the case, the much-anticipated general strike failed to manifest on the deliberately chosen Fourth of July, but the lack of actual communist labor upheaval did not stop US Americans from indulging in their paranoia.

US government officials and representatives of the United Fruit Company regularly discussed the possibility of labor unrest and contributed to the notion Honduras was about to be overrun by communism. For example, in November 1930, Walter Turnbull, General Representative of the United Fruit Company, informed Lay he had been instructed to fire 2000 employees to cut costs associated with the onset of the Great Depression. Lay and Turnbull were worried about the situation, because even before this was supposed to be done there were "already men out of employment, loafing in the towns and that the number of murders and assaults on the plantations have increased in the past three weeks." Turnbull thought the

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[7] Lay to Secretary of State, June 27, 1930, 815.00B/22, RG 59, NA; and "Martial Law was Decreed Yesterday in the Departments of Yoro, Atlántida, and Colon," *La Gaceta*, June 28, 1930, p. 1, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, July 7, 1930, 815.00B/30, RG 59, NA.

[8] Lay to Secretary of State, June 27, 1930, 815.00B/23, RG 59, NA.

[9] Lay to Secretary of State, October 4, 1930, 815.00B/32, RG 59, NA.

problems of disorders and communism would only get worse once he laid off another 2000 people, especially as more "agitators" arrived from Cuba, Guatemala, and Mexico. Turnbull was so concerned he even discussed the possibility of giving some of Cuyamel's banana plantations to "unemployed families for settlement."[10]

US fears regarding radicalism in Honduras were not unique in the Caribbean Basin during the period. Many in the US government and business circles were convinced Bolshevism was being spread throughout the region by an army of radical zealots emanating out of countries such as Mexico and Cuba. Historians such as Daniela Spenser have shown Moscow was indeed actively working to foment revolution in Mexico. However, communist agents failed in their efforts due to the indigenous nature of the Mexican labor movements and the lack of understanding Moscow exhibited in the local political environment.[11] Throughout the 1920s, communism was actively being cultivated in and amongst Honduras's neighbors, but its lack of success never eased the anxieties of US officials or business interests. While establishing the origins or the degree of connectedness of leftist radicals operating in Honduras to Communist International is problematic, US government sources often found evidence suggesting Honduran radicalism was part of a transnational conspiracy. It was this conclusion that encouraged them to continue worrying about the perceived communist threat.

Over the course of the next two years, Honduran communists were constantly under the surveillance of the US government. US military and State Department officials worked diligently to locate, collect intelligence on, and silence radical groups. Names and addresses were collected and shared with Honduran authorities in the hopes the Honduran government might act upon

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[10] Lay to Secretary of State, November 21, 1930, 815.00B/33, RG 59, NA.

[11] Daniela Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way Through Mexico: The Early Years of the Communist International* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), pp. 1-7.

information gathered by the United States.[12] Anyone of foreign origin was a candidate for US surveillance during these years. In La Ceiba, "a good many men with Russian and German names" living in "the farming section" were considered suspicious simply because they were foreign and had more money than most people in the district.[13] In June 1932, Lawrence Higgins, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, admitted that in Tegucigalpa communism was unlikely to become widespread, but he was suspicious enough to report he had heard rumors "twenty or thirty Central Europeans" were "living together in a house a few miles outside of Tegucigalpa," and stated they were "reported to be active communists."[14] This kind of thinking led the US government to compile lists of names and addresses of possible communists groups throughout the country and those associated with it internationally.[15]

Some action was taken by the Hondurans against communists but not nearly enough for the United States to be satisfied. For example, Honduran-US American communist organizer Juan Pablo Wainwright, who is often credited with helping to found the Communist Party in Honduras with Manuel Calix Herrera in 1927, was imprisoned after circulating literature and reporting back to his "comrades" in New York City regarding the horrible labor conditions of Honduran workers.[16] Additionally, Calix Herrera was exiled to Roatan after a rival communist

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[12] Naval Attaché Report, "Honduras-A list of Communist names and addresses," February 14, 1931, 815.00B/35, RG 59, NA.

[13] Warren C. Stewart to Secretary of State, March 8, 1932, 815.00B/43, RG 59, NA.

[14] Lawrence Higgins to Secretary of State, June 24, 1932, 815.00B/51, RG 59, NA. For another example of possible non-Honduran communists under US surveillance in Honduras see: C-10-g-20499, "Honduras," July 12, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38.

[15] Naval Attaché Report, "Honduras-A list of Communist names and addresses," February 14, 1931, 815.00B/35, RG 59, NA; Thomas C. Wasson to unknown, February 27, 1932, 815.00B/42, RG 59, NA; and Franics M. White to Wasson, April 19, 1932, 815.00B/42, RG 59, NA.

[16] C-10-g-20499, "Communist Activities," February 16, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38, NA. Donald F. Busky argues in *Communism in History and Theory: Asia, Africa, and the Americas* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002) that Wainwright was executed by the Carías regime in 1932, but this is incorrect because Carías did not officially come

betrayed him and turned him into Honduran military authorities.[17] While the Honduran government dealt with these men, US officials were frustrated more was not done. Alberto Masferer, an exiled Salvadoran communist, circulated "communistic pamphlets and newspaper articles" in an effort to "incite the people of Honduras into a communistic uprising against the government," but Mejía Colindres refused to act against him. This situation caused some in the US military to believe "unless strict energetic measures are immediately taken serious trouble may be expected." According to these US observers, the Honduran government's "half-hearted action" against communism was becoming a liability.[18]

A small but by no means insignificant incident that caused considerable concern for US officials in Honduras was the communist outrage over the dubious rape convictions of eight black youths, often referred to as the "Scottsboro Boys," in Scottsboro, Alabama in 1931. When communist attorneys decided to take on the racially charged case, the small Honduran Communist party provided moral aid and made the US incident their own by associating it with "Yankee Imperialism."[19] On July 7, 1931, communist leader José Luis López drafted a letter to Lay protesting the "monstrous crime" committed by the "Justice of Yankee Capitalists," and called for the liberation of millions of black workers living in "a state of slavery under the

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to power until 1933 (p. 191).

[17] Kenneth S. Stout to Secretary of State, February 23, 1932, 815 Revolutions/280, RG 59, NA. For more on US monitoring of communists and so called "agitators" see: Wasson to unknown, February 27, 1932, 815.00B/42, RG 59, NA; and White to Wasson, April 19, 1932, 815.00B/42, RG 59, NA.

[18] C-10-g-20499, "Communistic Activities in Honduras," February 11, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38; C-10-g-20499, "Communist Activities in Honduras, March 1, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38, NA; and C-10-g-20499, "Honduras," August 17, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38.

[19] For more on the "Scottsboro Boys" and their series of circus trials see: Gerald Horne, *Powell V. Alabama: The Scottsboro Boys and American Justice* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1997); and James A. Miller, *Remembering Scottsboro: the Legacy of an Infamous Trial* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009).

capitalistic dictatorship."[20] In March 1932, Lay reported Socorro Rojo Internacional Secretariado del Caribe was circulating literature outlining the evils of capitalism, and arguing the "Scottsboro Boys" were only the most recent victims of capitalistic greed. A few months later, the US Legation in Tegucigalpa had communist graffiti on it. Sending a message to the United States, the Honduran communists wrote "Down with Yankee Imperialism" and "We demand the liberty of nine negroes Alabama" on the Legation's walls. Lay considered the Honduran Communist outrage over the Scottsboro case as evidence the Honduran people were susceptible to radical propaganda. He worried the combination of communist literature from Cuba, Mexico, the United States, and El Salvador, the high rate of unemployment in Honduras, and the reduced wages of those still employed would prove destabilizing.[21]

The location and content of the distribution of communist literature collected in Honduras further fed US fears because it blamed Honduras's social ills on the United States. In July 1931, US naval intelligence gathered fifteen books available for sale in Honduras with titles and topics that frightened US authorities. Titles such as *Ten Years of White Terror*, *Program of the International Communist*, and *Anarchy and Socialism*, were reportedly widely available on the North Coast and helped make San Pedro Sula, Tela and El Progreso "hotbed[s] of communism in Honduras."[22] Since banana company operations were located almost entirely in this region the

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[20] C-10-g-20499, "Translation of Original Letter…'Yankee Imperialism,'" July 31, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38, NA.

[21] Lay to Secretary of State, March 23, 1932, 815.00B/46, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, May 10, 1932, 815.00B/48, RG 59, NA. See also: Higgins to Secretary of State, June 24, 1932, 815.00B/51, RG 59, NA; Gaston Smith to Secretary of State, June 24, 1932, enclosed in Higgins to Secretary of State, June 24, 1932, 815.00B/51, RG 59, NA; and C-10-g-20499, "Honduras, Political Parties…," May 18, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38.

[22] C-10-g-20499, "Work Accomplished by Anti-Communist Workers," February 27, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38, NA; C-10-g-20499, "Honduras," July 25, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38. For examples of communist literature on the North Coast in 1932 see: Wasson to Secretary of State, April 24, 1932, 815.00B/47, RG 59, NA; and Wasson to Secretary of State, April 24, 1932, 815.00B/47, RG 59, NA.

presence of anti-American literature there unsettled US officials. The high rate of North Coast unemployment, international sources of radical propaganda, and a three thousand strong Castilla District worker strike in March 1932 caused Lay to write:

> Communism is spreading rapidly in this country and that I believe that unless drastic measures are adopted immediately to check the subtle machinations of both foreign and Honduran communistic agents in this country an uprising may be started and rapidly extend beyond the powers of the Government to quell.[23]

In the years leading up to Carías's presidency, the presence of communism in Honduras contributed to the United States' acceptance of his regime because the United States was eager if not frantic to eliminate the subversive political philosophy. The United States had much to lose in Honduras, so it took even the smallest of threats to US investments seriously. When the Honduran government failed to act to US officials' satisfaction they worried the country would fall into chaos and thus jeopardize the lives and property of US Americans. The United States did everything within its power short of breaching Honduran sovereignty in order to curtail communist operations, but it would never be enough to placate its fears. According to US Americans, Hondurans were particularly vulnerable to leftist ideas. As an already poor country with a weak government, Honduras was exceptionally hard hit by the Great Depression because of the lack of demand for the country's main export of bananas. As communist literature became widely available on the North Coast, US observers felt an already delicate situation was becoming worse. When communists brazenly painted anti-American messages on the US Legation and the Honduran government failed to act, it was obvious to US officials something needed to change. When Carías was inaugurated in early 1933, he was less than revered by the

[23] C-10-g-20499, "Spread of Communism throughout Honduras," March 23, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 512, RG 38.

US government, but his predecessors' supposed ineptness in dealing with communism made his ascendency more palatable to the United States.[24]

**Honduran Politics and US Anxiety**

Besides a supposed strengthening communist presence on the North Coast, the United States also found reason to worry itself over the possibility war might break out between the Nationals and Liberals sometime around the presidential elections of 1932. As soon as the campaign season started in early 1932, rumors began circulating there would be another revolution in Honduras. The two main candidates, Carías and Liberal politician Angel Zúñiga Huete, were by this time political veterans with a firm grasp of domestic and international politics, and both were seen as potential victors in a race that was sure to be closely contested. The race quickly heated up when accusations and insults began being hurled in the contentious Honduran presses. A pro-Nationalist flyer circulated in Choluteca stated if Zúñiga Huete was elected president his reforms would make women into prostitutes and rape no longer a punishable crime.[25] The focus of most of the political mudslinging was over which candidate was most likely to keep the peace and not plunge the country into war. The question of peace was an important part of each candidate's platform. The victor needed to inspire voters to be confident in his ability to suppress the expected political disturbances that would almost surely arise during his presidency. When Zúñiga Huete accused Carías of being associated with the rebellious strongman Filiberto Diaz Zelaya on the North Coast, Carías, calling himself the

[24] Sheldon B. Liss argues in *Radical Thought in Central America* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991) that Carías stomped out communism in 1932, but this was impossible since he did not become president until 1933 (pp. 97-99).

[25] [Arthur R. Harris?], "National Elections. Pre-election Activities," July 25, 1932, 815.00/4527, RG 59, NA.

"sustainer of peace," was forced to publish a defense of his character in the press claiming he was dedicated to harmony and was the country's best hope for tranquility.[26]

Stressing both the power of the United States and the tenacity of the campaign, US officials were aware Zúñiga Huete and Carías were vying for both the affections of the United States and the belief amongst their followers the US government supported their presidency.[27] In early May 1932, *El Cronista* reproduced a *Washington Post* article. The replicated *Washington Post* piece clearly stated the United States would be neutral in the presidential elections planned for later that year, but *El Cronista* and Liberal politicians "intentionally distorted" the fact the *Washington Post* piece failed to mention Carías as a presidential candidate. This was done to show the US government supported Zúñiga Huete's presidency. Liberal Party leaders attempted to give credence to this assertion by spreading the erroneous information the *Washington Post* was the "official or semi-official mouthpiece for the American Government." Higgins wrote, "the Liberal candidate, has been intentionally distorted by the radical Liberal press and some of the politicians, into the false interference that the Department rather favors Zuniga Huete's candidacy."[28]

When US officials compared the campaign tactics of Carías and Zúñiga Huete they were more impressed with the abilities of Zúñiga Huete. Besides the subtle manipulation of the US press in his campaign, Zúñiga Huete was known as an innovative campaigner. According to

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[26] Lay to Secretary of State, May 21, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/307, RG 59, NA; and Carías, "Declarations of General Carias," *El Cronista*, May 20, 1932, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, May 21, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/307, RG 59, NA. See also: Miguel Paz Baraona, "Speech of Paz Barahona," *El Cronista*, September 12, 1932, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, September 14, 1932, 815.00/4534, RG 59, NA.

[27] Higgins to Secretary of State, June 20, 1932, 815.00/4512, RG 59, NA.

[28] Higgins to Secretary of State, June 10, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/30, RG 59, NA; "THE UNITED STATES WILL BE NEUTRAL IN THE LATIN AMERICAN ELECTIONS," *El Cronista*, May 9, 1932, reproduced in Higgins to Secretary of State, June 10, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/30, RG 59, NA; and "U.S. TO BE NEUTRAL IN LATIN ELECTIONS…," *Washington Post*, May 9, 1932, p. 2.

Higgins, Zúñiga Huete was "the first candidate in Honduras to employ modern campaigning methods." By early June, he had flown throughout the country to drum up support for his campaign and excited people to the point one man accidently shot himself due to hysteria. By contrast, Carías hardly campaigned at all, and instead relied on his deputies and high-ranking devotees to do his work for him.[29] In late September, Lay reported Carías had "not budged from Tegucigalpa, leaving the travelling, speechmaking, etc. entirely to his subordinates," and that he had "not made a single address since the beginning of the campaign."[30]

In early July, reflecting a chronic and acute assumption Honduras was a perpetually violent country, Higgins reported Honduras was moving towards war. Although Higgins had hoped because the parties had promised not to revolt regardless of the election's outcome, he stated, "There exists…an atmosphere of suspicion, fear and nervous tension." More meaningful than Higgins's gut feeling was the Honduran belief war was again coming. Besides rumors the Nationals were preparing for battle, Higgins reported "It is almost universally believed in Honduras that there will be civil war before the next government enters upon its functions." Furthermore, sensing the growing crisis Mejía Colindres issued a presidential order barring people from publicly carrying pistols.[31] In mid-September, nervous sentiments remained when Lay wrote "The feeling is general that the Government will not be transferred from this Administration to its successor without civil trouble." Adding to Lay and Higgins's worries were the "increasingly active" Honduran communists who he thought would "probably produce a

[29] Higgins to Secretary of State, June 10, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/30, RG 59, NA.

[30] Lay to Secretary of State, September 23, 1932, 815.00/4535, RG 59, NA.

[31] Higgins to Secretary of State, July 13, 1932, 815.00/4520, RG 59, NA.

condition to be reckoned with in case of civil disorder." Lay also felt there were "indications that the more radical elements of the Liberal party" were forming an alliance with the communists.[32]

The prospect the Liberals and far left had combined forces was the source of some concern for US officials, but it by no means made Carías the United States' presidential favorite. Political slander was such a regular part of presidential campaigns that all accusations were taken with a grain of salt. On September 21, the Nationalist newspaper *Nuevo Tiempos* charged Zúñiga Huete of being in league with the Nicaraguan insurrectionist Augusto Sandino. The article stated, "Augusto Sandino, insurgent chieftain of Nicaragua, is perhaps uniting with Angel Zúñiga Huete, candidate of the Liberal Party for the Presidency of Honduras."[33] Zúñiga Huete quickly defended himself in the pro-Liberal newspaper *El Combate*, and claimed that Carías was paying people to spread rumors about him and his supposed association with Sandino.[34] Lay found it "difficult to believe that Zuniga Huete would be foolish enough to enter into a binding agreement with Sandino," but he did know reputable Hondurans such as ex-President Miguel Paz Baraona believed communists and forces loyal to Sandino might be associated with Zúñiga Huete.[35]

As Election Day loomed there was less concern violence would break out before the ballots were counted, but few believed it could be avoided entirely. Lay wrote that both candidates were so "cocksure" they were going to be victorious they had no "incentive to start a revolution." After having won over many voters to his side using his sophisticated campaigning

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[32] Lay to Secretary of State, September 15, 1932, 815.00-General Conditions/33, RG 59, NA. For more pessimistic sentiments on the prospects for peace in 1932 see: C-10-j-11904-e, "Political Trend in Honduras," August 11, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38.

[33] "The Sandinization of Honduras," *Nuevo Tiempos*, September 21, 1932, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, October 7, 1932, 815.00/4538, RG 59, NA.

[34] "Sandino Returns to the Tapis," *El Combate*, September 22, 1932, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, October 7, 1932, 815.00/4538, RG 59, NA.

[35] Lay to Secretary of State, October 7, 1932, 815.00/4538, RG 59, NA.

techniques, Zúñiga Huete was so certain of victory he even pre-selected his presidential cabinet.[36] Nevertheless, almost everyone believed the losing party would claim fraud and rebel after the election results came in. Lay even reported the situation might "ultimately result in a siege similar to that of 1924." Demonstrating the serious of the situation affluent Hondurans and foreigners began leaving the country, stores started closing up shop and shrinking their inventory, and business came to a near "standstill."[37]

In the two weeks prior to October 30, 1932, there was a flood of concern that war would either come on Election Day or shortly thereafter. Faced with a lack of funds the Honduran government was unable to pay its police force, which resulted in police mutinies and "lawlessness" that was "almost epidemic." Helplessly witnessing events, US Americans in Tegucigalpa began asking the US Legation if a US gunship or military force would be made available if conditions deteriorated.[38] US officials were so worried about the possibility of violence they began taking action to protect US citizens and their property. Anxious the Nationals were exaggerating the impositions the Liberal government was supposedly committing against them, Lay felt Carías's party was trying to create the conditions necessary for a "revolutionary coup." Believing the danger to be great, he requested that the Special Service Squadron be on standby in case US Americans were threatened.[39] A few days after Lay made the

[36] Lay to Secretary of State, September 23, 1932, 815.00/4535, RG 59, NA; and Richard M. deLambert to Edwin C. Wilson, "Presidential election, Honduras," Memorandum, September 26, 1932, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, September 14, 1932, 815.00/4534, RG 59, NA.

[37] Lay to Secretary of State, October 13, 1932, 815.00-General Conditions/34, RG 59, NA; and C-10-j-11904-e, "Revolutionary Possibilities in Honduras," October 7, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38.

[38] Lay to Secretary of State, October 20, 1932, 815.00/4543, RG 59, NA. For more on US American worries about the situation see: Wasson to Secretary of State, October 22, 1932, 815.00/4546, RG 59, NA.

[39] Lay to Secretary of State, October 14, 1932, 815.00/4541, RG 59, NA.

appeal, the US Navy was placed on standby with "grave apprehension" that "disorder" would take place.[40]

Even with all of the United States' alarm about conditions in Honduras, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson was annoyed the Navy had been put on alert. Obviously upset he had not been consulted, Stimson wrote the US Legation in Tegucigalpa about the situation. He stated, "You will of course appreciate that in the event of disorders in Honduras which might warrant the dispatch of a war vessel to Amapala, the only purpose of such a visit would be to assist in evacuating from Amapala Americans whose lives might be in danger."[41] A few days later, Stimson informed Lay the "general policy of this Government" was the same it had been during the early 1931 Nicaraguan political upheaval. US Americans in Nicaragua were advised on April 16, 1931 that:

> all Americans who do not feel secure under the protection afforded them by the Nicaraguan Government through the Nicaraguan National Guard to withdraw from the country, or at least to the coast towns whence they can be protected or evacuated in case of necessity."[42]

These messages indicate a change in US policy from previous years. Unlike in the past when the US government was reluctant but willing to land US troops in Honduras to protect US citizens, the State Department was exhibiting an unwillingness to even mildly offend Honduran sovereignty. It seems during the elections of 1932, the United States was content to gather intelligence and encourage both candidates to pursue peace. There is little to substantiate the US government attempted to find a compromise candidate, form a coalition government, or even

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[40] COMSPERON to OPNAV, October 18, 1932, 815.00/4542, RG 59, NA.

[41] Henry L. Stimson to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 19, 1932, 815.00/4542, RG 59, NA.

[42] Stimson to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 24, 1932, 815.00/4543, RG 59, NA. For more on the Department's decision not to land troops in Honduras see: deLambert, "American Forces at Tegucigalpa, 1924," Memorandum, October 22, 1932, 815.00/4542½, RG 59, NA.

debated landing troops on Honduran soil. This shows how developed the principles of noninterference and nonintervention were before Franklin D. Roosevelt came to the presidency and officially instituted the Good Neighbor policy.

In the final few days before the elections US officials in Honduras were positive war would break out either on Election Day or immediately afterward. After discussing how the Tela Railroad Company was making arrangements to transport voters in the Tela District to the voting stations, vice-consul Kenneth S. Stout stated he thought "both parties…adopted plans for any contingency."[43] Lay informed Washington he heard "Rumors that that the losing party will start a revolution as soon as they know they have lost," and although the Honduran government had taken measures to limit political discord among its citizens, such as prohibiting the sale of liquor that artillery, grenades, and other munitions were being stockpiled for the coming conflict everyone believed to be inevitable. When violence did break out few had faith in the government's ability to "quell any serious revolt" on account of its financial troubles, which Lay called "the worst in the memory of man."[44] Trying to avoid what many saw as the inevitable while still attempting to refrain from interfering in Honduran affairs, Lay requested both Carías and Zúñiga Huete publish announcements promising not to rebel or turn to violence in the event they lost. Showing their willingness to work with the United States and appear as peaceful politicians they complied with Lay's request on October 28.[45] As Election Day loomed, it

[43] Stout to Secretary of State, October 24, 1932, 815.00/4548, RG 59, NA.

[44] Lay to Secretary of State, October 27, 1932, 815.00/4549, RG 59, NA. See also: Lay to Secretary of State, October 27, 1932, 815.00/4549, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, October 28, 1932, 815.00/4551, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, October 28, 1932, 815.00/4545, RG 59, NA; C-10-j-11904-e, "Next Presidential Elections," April 11, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38; C-10-j-11904-e, "Next Presidential Elections," April 5, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38; and C-10-j-11904-e, "Next Presidential Elections," March 7, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38.

[45] Lay to Secretary of State, November 12, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/35, RG 59, NA.

seemed to US officials that Honduras had reached a new nadir. Communists were perceived as overrunning the most lucrative parts of the country for US Americans. Revolution seemed all but certain. And, the Honduran government's finances were in such disrepair it could not even provide basic services or pay its employees. The only thing that could have made matters worse was civil war, and that was just around the corner.

When Election Day came and went without any serious disturbances US officials were flabbergasted. Lay told Washington what took place was "to the astonishment of all concerned what will probably prove to be the most peaceful presidential elections in the history of Honduras." Besides "Only…three deaths from altercations on election day" all was quiet in an "overwhelming victory for the Nationalist" Party. Carías "carried all but two districts," and the Nationals secured their democratic takeover winning forty-two out of fifty-nine seats in Congress. By all accounts, Carías and his National Party had won in what could only be considered one of the most surprising and peaceful presidential elections to take place in the history of Honduras.[46]

The prospects for peace and a tranquil transfer of power also looked promising. Almost as soon as the polls had closed and it was obvious Carías and the Nationals had won, Zúñiga Huete conceded defeat, and Lay was confident he would not contest the results.[47] Reporting from Puerto Cortés, Wasson informed Lay there was "very little to report concerning the recent elections. From all accounts, they appear to have been orderly, honest, and fair." Wasson found "No cases of intimidation," and stated that in a "decisive" triumph Carías had won in an election

[46] Lay to Secretary of State, October 31, 1932, 815.00-Elections/18, RG 59, NA. According to Thomas J. Dodd, Carías equated his victory with that of president-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt's election "sweep" that same year (*Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005], p. 45).

[47] Lay to Secretary of State, October 31, 1932, 815.00 Elections/17, RG 59, NA.

that could not be debated by the Liberal Party since they had control of the government and counted the ballots.[48] In a spirit of premature pride and celebration Lay sent word to Washington "the danger of revolution seems definitely past," and gloated stating "It is pleasing for me to hear that my efforts to secure peaceful elections are considered fruitful."[49]

**Carías as Anti-Revolutionary**

On November 12, 1932, Liberal rebels seized San Pedro Sula thus destroying the belief Honduras had turned over a new leaf and was on its way toward a sustained peace. With some humility Lay confessed to the State Department that for two weeks after the elections "people lived in a fool's paradise believing that all danger of revolution was passed."[50] On November 13, martial law was declared and a state of siege returned to Honduras that reminded many of Carías's rebellion during the War of Revindication.[51] However, unlike 1924 this time Carías offered to assist the Honduran government in putting down the revolution, and due to its extreme frailty the Mejía Colindres accepted his proposal. A strange situation had emerged; Carías, the National party, and the Liberal government had joined forces against a Liberal insurgency spreading throughout the country, and the United States not wanting to get involved remained on

[48] Wasson to Lay, November 2, 1932, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, November 8, 1932, 815.00/4555, RG 59, NA. For more US optimism about the prospects for peace see: Stout to Secretary of State, November 10, 1932, 815.00/4554, RG 59, NA. Despite promises from Vicente Mejía Colindres the election would be fair, few Hondurans put much faith in his words. As a Liberal Mejía Colindres was expected to aid Angel Zúñiga Huete, and even when he gave orders for free and honest elections to take place few believed his sincerity or the willingness of Liberal authorities to carry them out (Harris, "National Elections. Government Measures to Insure Impartial Elections," July 29, 1932, RG 59, NA).

[49] Lay to Secretary of State, November 4, 1932, 815.00/4552, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, November 8, 1932, 815.00/4555, RG 59, NA. Lay also sent a patronizing note to Zúñiga Huete thanking him for accepting defeat in a "patriotic spirit" (Lay to Zuniga Huete, November 2, 1932, enclosed Lay to Secretary of State, November 8, 1932, 815.00/4555, RG 59, NA).

[50] Lay to Secretary of State, December 6, 1932, 1932, 815.00-General Conditions/36, RG 59, NA.

[51] Lay to Secretary of State, November 14, 1932, 815.00/4553, RG 59, NA.

the sidelines unresponsive.[52] Even Stout's request that the USS *Overton* be sent to Tela to protect the city from war was "cancelled before the arrival of the ship" on the grounds of noninterference.[53]

Within two days of the outbreak of hostilities, members of the US military were persuaded any thought Honduras was headed toward serenity was irrational. A US Navy report on Honduras stated, "Revolution in Latin-American Republics is the rule rather than the exception. This is due to the primitive and uneducated state of the mass of people as well as the difficult economic situation usually existent in these countries."[54] After traveling to Honduras to survey the conditions there and having his airplane shot at by Liberal rebels, US military attaché Arthur R. Harris reported:

> Its people know no patriotism,—but love high sounding phrases on that subject. Its leaders fight for the spoils,—never for the good of the country. For the most part its people are poor and ignorant who would rather fight than work. It has no leaders of distinction or ability."[55]

According to US military sources, there was little that could be done to pacify Honduras; communists were believed to be everywhere, the government was either too weak or unable to stop the spread of radicalism, and its politicians were incapable of avoiding revolution for more than a few years at a time.[56]

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[52] C-10-j-11904-e, "Coup d'etat Attempted by Insurgent Liberals," November 18, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38. For what the National party press was reporting on the revolution see: "Revolution in Honduras," *El Cronista*, November 30, 1932, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, December 2, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/393, RG 59, NA.

[53] Lay to Secretary of State, December 6, 1932, 1932, 815.00-General Conditions/36, RG 59, NA.

[54] C-10-j-11904-e, "Honduras," November 14, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38.

[55] C-10-j-11904-e, Harris, "Report on Trip to Honduras, December 10 to 21, 1932," December 26, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38.

[56] C-10-j-11904-e, "Honduras," November 14, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38.

As the revolution unfolded the United States began to accept matters could deteriorate even more than they already had. There was unfounded but nonetheless serious alarm Sandino and his Sandinistas were coming to the aid of the Liberal rebels. This was no ignorable matter because if it were true then the isthmus was turning into the stage of an international conflict that would be almost impossible to reconcile. The day the revolution began, Lay was already receiving reports from multiple sources Zúñiga Huete was in league with Sandino.[57] The US military also believed Sandino was potentially a serious problem. Stating that if Sandino did enter the fray "Honduras will continue in a state of anarchy indefinitely." The US Navy even obtained specific but ultimately inaccurate intelligence regarding when, where, and which Liberal generals were receiving support from Sandino.[58]

Even the US press reported Sandino was indeed coming to the aid of the rebellious Liberals. C.H. Calhoun wrote Sandino had "many Hondurans as well as natives of other Central American countries in the irregular forces with which he has fought the American marines," and there was "a suggestion that a combination of the revolutionists and the irregular forces of" Sandino "might make serious trouble for the constitutional government of Honduras." Calhoun even theorized this was all part of Sandino's plan, to take control of Honduras and use its military to then move on Managua.[59] On November 28, the *Washington Post* reported 600

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[57] Lay to Secretary of State, November 12, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/35, RG 59, NA. See also: Lay to Secretary of State, November 25, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/379, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, December 2, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/392, RG 59, NA.

[58] C-10-j-11904-e, "Coup d'etat Attempted by Insurgent Liberals," November 22, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38; and C-10-j-11904-e, "Coup d'etat Attempted by Insurgent Liberals," December 7, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38. For an interesting summary of what the US military thought about Honduras's association with Augusto Sandino see: C-10-d-20239, "Honduran Psychology, re: Nicaraguan Banditry," August 17, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 476, RG 38.

[59] C.H. Calhoun, "UPSET MAY FOLLOW REVOLT IN HONDURAS," *New York Times*, November 27, 1932, p. E7.

Sandinista soldiers "invaded the southeastern corner of Honduras near San Marcos," and that "Another group of 300 was reported operating in the Danli district."[60] According to these sources, it appeared the United States' idea of a worst-case scenario for Honduras was beginning to come true. Honduras was fulfilling the United States' prediction it was doomed to fail.

In the eyes of both US officials and the US press Carías was beginning to take on the mantle of a stabilizing leader, and was therefore becoming Honduras's best hope for peace. When it looked as though Liberal forces under control of Generals José Maria Fonseca and José Antonio Sánchez were about to besiege Tegucigalpa in late November, Lay reported General Carías was made "Chief of Military Operations" and was taking charge of the city's defenses. In a situation eerily suggestive of the capital's troubles of 1924, both Nationals and Liberals took to "the streets without discipline or restraint," and "clashes between them resulting in street riots and looting" were "greatly feared." The city's streets were "already unsafe at night," and random shots were fired twenty-four hours a day. Sensing imminent danger, Zúñiga Huete fled the country to Managua with his family. Carías mustered the government forces with a command between 1500 and 2000 men, and thus inspired confidence in both the US Legation and the residents of the city he would be able to repel the Liberal army.[61] The US Navy's intelligence suggested that without Carías and his National party forces the government of Mejía Colindres would surely fall.[62] Harris called it "a miracle" the government survived at all.[63] As a voluntary

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[60] "SANDINO'S REBELS MENACE HONDURAS," *Washington Post*, November 28, 1932, p. 1.

[61] Lay to Secretary of State, November 28, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/384, RG 59, NA.

[62] C-10-j-11904-e, "Coup d'etat Attempted by Insurgent Liberals," December 1, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38; and C-10-j-11904-e, "Coup d'etat Attempted by Insurgent Liberals," December 7, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38. For an example of the US press favoring Carías's political strength see: "SANDINO'S REBELS MENACE HONDURAS," *Washington Post*, November 28, 1932, p. 1.

[63] Harris, "Armed Revolutionary Movements, The Honduras Revolution," Report, December 9, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/413, RG 59, NA.

anti-revolutionary, Carías began to take on a role the United States had wished he had assumed earlier. Within a matter of a few months, Carías reinvented himself as an advocate of peace, and shown himself to be the only politician strong enough to maintain the struggling Honduran government.

In addition to his new domestic roles, Carías also moved to strengthen his relationship with the United States as he was leading the government's effort to put down the uprising. On November 22, 1932, Carías informed the US Legation as president he would support the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923.[64] This was no small strategic change for Carías, because no other Honduran had challenged or chafed under the Treaty more than he had. Carías abhorred Washington's backing of the Treaty more than any other US foreign policy, because it helped to prevent him from rising to the presidency at least two times over the previous decade. However, Carías's conversion in regards to the Treaty can be considered a calculated political move that would not only strengthen his efforts to put down the Liberal revolution because it potentially would lead to greater US support for the Honduran government, but also help prevent future uprisings during his presidency.

Carías also took his search for US affections one step further by contacting Lay and informing him his government would "be orderly" and "give guarantees both to persons and business." Carías wanted to assure the United States his past confrontations were behind him and he would "maintain the most cordial relations with the governments of other nations, especially with that of the United States and those of Central America."[65] The State Department found

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[64] Lay to Secretary of State, November 22, 1923, 815.00 Revolutions/360, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, November 23, 1932, 815.00/4560, RG 59, NA.

[65] Lay to Secretary of State, November 23, 1932, 815.00/4560, RG 59, NA; and Carías to American Minister (Tegucigalpa), n.d. [November 1932?], enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, November 23, 1932, 815.00/4560, RG 59, NA.

Carías's unsolicited remarks interesting and informed Lay he should "informally and orally state to President-elect Carías that the Government of the United States appreciates having been spontaneously informed of the policies which his government proposes to follow."[66] This signaled a sea change in US-Carías relations, whereas previously the two parties had been enemies or at least opposed to one another's goals, Carías was now declaring to the United States their previous problems were behind them.

**Carías in the US Media in 1932**

The overall portrayal of Carías in the US media in the months before his inauguration on February 1, 1933 was generally positive.[67] Laudatory representations of Hondurans in the US media are rare today and were even more so in the 1930s, so any sanguine coverage of Carías no matter how seemingly insignificant should not be marginalized. The United States still considered him a Honduran strongman and politician, labels that carried a substantial amount of overt and implied assumptions and understandings about what kind of person he was, but he was also evolving into something more amicable for US Americans. In previous years, US news sources made Carías out to be a rebel, a violent thug, and yet another corrupt and selfish Honduran politico, but in 1932 he became a man of action, someone who the United States could do business with, and politically and militarily powerful. He was still associated with violence, but this time he was on what the United States considered to be the correct side of it, the side of stability and strong government.

In early July 1932, the rebellious General Justo Umaña Alvarado began wreaking havoc on the North Coast and created a potential public relations nightmare for Carías. There were

[66] White to Lay, December 12, 1932, 815.00/4560, RG 59, NA.

[67] The lack of United States interest in Carías as president can be seen in the fact that his 1933 inauguration barely made the US news. For one example of a short piece covering his inauguration see: "ANDINO INAUGURATED HONDURAN PRESIDENT," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1933, p. 1.

rumors his 500 strong rebel force was associating itself with Carías and even flying the National Party's flag. After word the rebels caused an incident where fifty-one people were killed, Carías could no longer afford to remain aloof from the events. He released a "statement…condemning the revolt," and claimed he and his supporters "had nothing to do with it." The *New York Times* reported there was yet another outburst of violence in Honduras, but this time Carías could not be considered its instigator.[68] The Baltimore *Sun* and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* also described the troubling events in Honduras, and all but exonerated Carías from any war guilt.[69] Although the destabilizing events on the North Coast only fleetingly made the US news and were relatively quickly dealt with by the Honduran authorities, this coverage demonstrates Carías was beginning to develop an identity separate from that of a simple belligerent and rebel.

When war broke out in November 1932, the US press portrayed Carías as an anti-revolutionary, and therefore a source for peace and stability. *The Sun* showed Carías to be a man of action who resolutely worked with the government despite its control by the opposing party in order to deal with the rebels. As leader of government forces, it was Carías who dispatched the troops to the frontlines to deal with the situation.[70] Describing the revolutionary violence around San Pedro Sula, the *New York Times* inadvertently made the rebellious Liberal Party out to be the perpetrators of violence and therefore implied Carías's association with authority and constancy.[71] This development should not be underestimated, because not only had Honduras

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[68] "Clash Reported in Honduras," *New York Times*, June 9, 1932, p. 9.

[69] "51 Killed in Campaign Fighting in Honduras," *The Sun*, June 9, 1932, p. 13; and "REVOLT FLARES UP IN HONDURAS; 51 DIE IN BATTLE," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1932, p. 10.

[70] "HONDURAN CABINET DISCUSSES REVOLT," *The Sun*, November 18, 1932, p. 13. For more on Carías's willingness to reach out to the opposing Liberal party see: "REVOLT IN HONDURAS ALARMS THE CABINET," *New York Times*, November 18, 1932, p. 5.

[71] "HONDURANS REVOLT; HUNDREDS ARE SLAIN," *New York Times*, November 15, 1932, p. 4.

been connected with destructive revolutionary activity for decades, but Carías too had been known as a destabilizing force.

As the extent of the 1932 Liberal revolution revealed itself and rumors Sandino's forces were coming to its aid reached a feverish pitch, Carías's reputation began to improve by simple lack of association with the Liberals. He began to be represented as an alternative to not only revolutionary violence but also the kind of murderous banditry connected with Sandino. As Carías rallied to the defense of his country's government and organized the defense of Tegucigalpa, the *New York Times* described the reports of Sandino's aid to the Liberal rebels and the possibility his troops were already in Honduras. As an alternative to these destabilizing powers, the article's author stated Carías was "a man of strong character with large popular support" that was "not confined entirely to the Nationalist party, which elected him."[72] Building on this positive portrayal the *Washington Post* informed its readers when Tegucigalpa was threatened "Carias hurriedly took the necessary measures toward [its] defense."[73]

Carías also profited from the possibility Tegucigalpa would become the scene of yet another prolonged siege. Ironically, Carías had originally damaged his reputation in the United States by besieging the city in early 1924, and compelling Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes to dispatch nearly 200 US soldiers to enforce a neutral zone for several weeks. This time, when the "whole country was said to be in what amounted to a state of war," Carías stood against the "insurgents" and defended the city rather than assaulting it.[74] When he was told to

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[72] C.H. Calhoun, "UPSET MAY FOLLOW REVOLT IN HONDURAS," *New York Times*, November 27, 1932, p. E7. For more coverage of Carías as an alternative to extremism see: "SOCIALIST ELECTED PRESIDENT OF CHILE," *The Sun*, November 1, 1932, p. 11; and "3 NATIONS TO ELECT PRESIDENTS TODAY," *The Sun*, October 30, 1932, p. 9.

[73] "SANDINO'S REBELS MENACE HONDURAS," *Washington Post*, November 28, 1932, p. 1.

[74] "Honduran Insurgent Army Captures City Near Capital: Whole Nation in Virtual State of War…," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1932, p. 2.

surrender by the rebellious General Fonseca, the *New York Times* reported he "challenged the rebels to take the city by force."[75] The "ultimatum" failed to shake Carías, and he did not back down even after "heavy fighting" outside of the city.[76] In this regard, Carías was more than just an anti-revolutionary; he was a source of strength that defended the lawful government of Honduras. Although Carías was obviously acting in his own self-interests by defending the Liberal government because it supported the electoral results, which finally legitimized his presidency, his opposition to the rebels made him out to be the best hope for the rule of law to prevail in Honduras.

**The Prospects for Honduran Peace**

Just before Carías was set to take power in February 1933, Honduras was in what can only be described as a dismal state. Besides the ongoing "unjustifiable" Liberal revolution, there were a host of destabilizing and costly problems facing both the United States and the future Honduran president. Communists continued to spread their anti-American propaganda on the North Coast and threatened strikes, more revolution, and curtailed profits for US businesses. The Honduran government was bankrupt, unable to pay its employees and with few prospects it would be able to do so in the near future due to the reduced demand for its primary export of bananas. The political and labor violence of the past few years had destroyed infrastructure and wreaked havoc across the country. Revolutionists in the past few months alone had caused $150-200 thousand in losses due to looting alone. Bridges were burned with no funds available for their repair. Private assets were seized and destroyed by the ravages of war. Food was "scarce"

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[75] "INSURGENTS THREATEN CAPITAL OF HONDURAS," *New York Times*, November 30, 1932, p. 4.

[76] "Honduran Rebels Drive on Capital: Heavy Fighting Begins…," *Washington Post*, November 30, 1932, p. 1. See also: "Surrender of Honduran Capital is Demanded," *The Sun*, November 30, 1932, p. 2. For a negative portrayal of Carías in early 1933 see: "MEXICAN PRESTIGE TO SOUTH ON RISE…," *New York Times*, January 29, 1933, p. E8. For an informed overview of Honduran politics prior to 1932 see: Raymond L. Buell, "The United States and Central American Revolutions, *Foreign Policy Reports* vol. 7 no. 10 (July 22, 1931): pp. 187-204.

and staple prices exorbitant. Foreign and domestic investors were cutting their losses and taking their capital elsewhere.[77] In sum, Carías was set to take over what resembled a failed state.

From 1924-1932, almost all US officials observing events in Honduras at some point came to the conclusion the country could never achieve anything resembling higher civilization, peace, or prosperity. According to these men, Honduras was run not by professional politicians but by "god-father[s]" who resembled mafia bosses.[78] While stationed with the US Navy in the Canal Zone, Thomas S. Clarke said Honduras was "most pathetic" because its people were "wretchedly poor, due to continual revolutions." Clarke felt because revolutions caused Hondurans' possessions to be destroyed, stolen, or confiscated they had lost their natural industriousness, which caused Honduras "to be rapidly approaching a state of total economic exhaustion."[79] US Americans often found themselves astonished at what they saw as the "wanton-ness and lack of respect for human life" the Hondurans exhibited in their "murders in cold blood, shooting people in the back, pistol and machete fights," and banditry. One unnamed US naval man even went as far as to say that "These people had a taste of blood."[80] Hondurans as a race were considered "negligent in the observation of the rules of sanitation," dishonest, alcoholics who consumed "low grade" liquor, hot blooded, ignorant, and possessing inferiority

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[77] A good summation of the state of affairs in Honduras in early December 1932 can be found in: Smith to Secretary of State, December 5, 1932, 815.00-Revolutions/424, RG 59, NA. For documents examining the instability caused by aspiring politico Filiberto Diaz Zelaya on the North Coast in 1931 and 1932 see: C-10-j-11904-D, "Possibilities of Further Revolution in Honduras," October 16, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38; Higgins to Secretary of State, June 10, 1932, 815.00/4511, RG 59, NA; Higgins to Secretary of State, July 20, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/31, RG 59, NA; and *El Cronista*, June 27, 1932, article reproduced in Higgins to Secretary of State, July 20, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/31, RG 59, NA.

[78] Ernest Evans to Secretary of State, November 8, 1926, 815.00/4017, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 20, RG 59, NA.

[79] C-9-e-16741, "Political Conditions," May 18, 1926, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 449, RG 38, NA.

[80] C-10-d-20239, "Peace and Order," July 20, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 476, RG 38.

complexes.[81] In sum, the general opinions of US officials dealing with Honduras were so low that they could only improve, thus providing Carías's presidency the opportunity to easily impress US policymakers.

According to Carías biographer Thomas J. Dodd, the US government welcomed Carías's presidency. Dodd writes, "The United States hoped for a Carías victory," because the election of Zúñiga Huete would undermine US interests in the country due to his association with Sandino and radical elements on the North Coast. He goes on to argue that because "a Yankee diplomat" stated "This legation should be able to get anything it asks for from the new administration" that "Washington was delighted with Carías's election."[82] While it is true the US government worried about the Liberal party's possible alliance with Sandino, this does not mean that the United States wanted Carías to be president or that he was viewed in a favorable light by any part of the US government. As previously examined, between 1924 and 1932 Carías was associated with "henchmen" such as international man of mystery Alfredo Schlesinger, insinuations of organized crime, and employing corrupt administrators.[83] In 1932, US naval intelligence considered Carías of "excellent reputation" but "not well educated," and someone who had "doubtless[ly] not forgotten that he" was "frustrated twice from getting" the presidency "by the United States' policy (1924 and 1928)." For this reason it was believed "he probably feels intense resentment at

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[81] C-10-d-20239, "Honduras-Characteristics," March 17, 1930, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 476, RG 38; and Lawrence Dennis to Secretary of State, March 26, 1925, 815.00/3671, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 18, RG 59, NA. For a depressing and violent story of how Carías's nephew killed another man publicly in cold blood see: Herschel V. Johnson to Secretary of State, May 16, 1927, 815.911/24, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 40, RG 59, NA; and "AROUND THE WORLD," *The Living Age* vol. 333 no. 4310 (July 15, 1927): p. 01.

[82] Dodd, pp. 44-47.

[83] For more on the US military's negative opinion of Schlesinger see: Harris, Military Attaché Report, MID 2657-P-119, July 22, 1932, "Alfredo Schlesinger Swindles Salvador Government out of $4,000.00," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

what he considers American interference in his country's affairs and yet for policy's sake he endeavors to keep on good terms with the Legation." At the same time, Zúñiga Huete was considered to have a "good reputation," "outstanding ability," and whose opinion of the "Liberal discontents" was that of condemnation.[84] Far from pleased with Carías's election, the US government accepted it as it did any other Honduran presidency with cynicism and a lack of faith in his ability to improve Honduras's plight. While it is true the United States' affection for Carías had increased since the turbulent days of 1924, it should not be said it significantly favored him over any other Honduran politician.

**Explaining Carías's Peacefulness**

As previously shown, a number of US American and Honduran historians have attributed more power to the United States to influence the affairs of Carías and his fellow Honduran politicians than is justified. One of the most important examples of this way of thinking can be seen in the belief Carías was completely constrained from rebelling against Mejía Colindres because he feared US nonrecognition based on the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Long time employee of the State Department, Dana G. Munro, argued "I was convinced that it was the American government's non-recognition policy which was making a peaceful change of government possible."[85] Thomas M. Leonard writes in *The History of Honduras*, "Carías did not seize power nor did he again take to the hills to lead a revolt against the government, knowing that U.S. nonrecognition would follow."[86] While Munro and Leonard's contention is well supported in US and the few Honduran sources that exist on the subject, they do not take into

[84] C-9-e-16741, "Honduras, Leaders and Characteristics…," November 10, 1932, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 449, RG 38.

[85] Dana G. Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 290-291.

[86] Thomas M. Leonard, *The History of Honduras* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2011), p. 100.

account the domestic Honduran political situation. There were multiple influences that kept Carías from openly rebelling against Paz Baraona and Mejía Colindres, and understanding them allows a more accurate picture of US-Carías and US-Honduran relations to emerge.

During the Paz Baraona Administration, Carías lacked the political and military power necessary to take and hold the presidency. He was irrefutably the most powerful politician during the period, but his position was not uncontested, and he was forced to balance his own power against those of his foes. Besides Paz Baraona and any government troops that may have remained loyal to the President in the event Carías rebelled, Carías would have also had to face General Vicente Tosta, General Gregorio Ferrera, enemies within his own party such as Nationalist Party politico Paulino Valladares, and the disenfranchised Liberal party. Carías and Tosta had been enemies ever since the end of 1924 when Tosta withheld his support for Carías's presidential bid. While Tosta's followers were fewer in number than Carías's, they were nonetheless numerous and commanded respect due to their military prowess. Ferrera posed a real and continual threat to Carías. Besides going to war with the Provisional Government of Tosta in August and September of 1924 because he opposed Carías's candidacy, Ferrera either prepared for war or actively revolted almost continuously against the administrations of Paz Baraona and Mejía Colindres until he was assassinated in 1931. Seizing the government during the Paz Baraona Administration simply was not an option, nor was it after the 1928 presidential elections.[87]

When Carías lost to Mejía Colindres in the 1928 presidential elections, he did so because of the temporary alliance between Tosta and the Liberal Party (called the Liberal Republican

[87] For more on the political rivalries that limited Carías and other Honduran politicians' power see: Dennis to Secretary of State, October 24, 1925, 815.00/3892, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA; and Dennis to Secretary of State, October 3, 1925, 815.00/3888, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 19, RG 59, NA.

Party). Although Tosta died in 1930 thus eliminating one of the largest impediments to Carías's control of the country, his death was close enough to the 1932 presidential elections for Carías to wait and try to arrive at the presidency legally. Patience made sense to Carías, because his main political rivals were both dead by 1931, and he was confident that he could defeat Zúñiga Huete in a fair election. In sum, it was mainly the Honduran domestic situation that kept Carías from rebelling between 1924 and 1932 and not the United States' policies.

**In the Shadow of the Giant**

Lauren Derby, author of *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo*, dedicates nearly an entire chapter of her work to exploring "how the perceived challenge to national sovereignty" in the Dominican Republic from the United States influenced the rise of religious and racial identities that created the proper environment for Trujillo to come to power. Derby demonstrates how Trujillo skillfully designed his constantly adapting political persona to help meet the cultural needs of his country, and ultimately rule through a complex cacophony of techniques in addition to simple coercion.[88] Similarly, Carías's power can also be seen as the result of cultural influences affecting the Honduran people. Throughout the decade prior to Carías's rule, the United States found itself reacting to Honduran animosity toward both its foreign policies and US business interests, a situation that allowed Carías and his fellow Honduran politicians to repeatedly manipulate to their respective advantage. While it is true most of the occasions when US officials in Honduras requested the presence of the US Navy off the coast or to land troops on Honduran shores were due to revolution, from time to time adverse Honduran sentiment for the United States was powerful enough to make the US military disembark troops. As the most powerful politician of his time,

[88] Lauren Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. ix, 25-65.

Carías was on the frontlines of popular opinion, and constantly witnessed how Honduran judgments of the United States affected his career. At times his opponents used anti-Americanism to strengthen their positions against him, and at others he harnessed ill will toward the United States in an effort to control US foreign policy.

The average Honduran loved Carías, because he presented himself as one of them. He wore thick belts, rough cut boots, cheap shirts, and could mimic the language of the poor and uneducated at will.[89] In general, Carías's popularity in Honduras prevented the United States from dealing with him in a more blunt fashion. This was particularly the case in late 1924, when the United States refrained from officially declaring it would not recognize a Carías regime. The State Department knew his presidency was a real possibility, and therefore it did not want to put itself into a diplomatic conundrum of being unable to officially recognize the government of Honduras. Honduran animosity toward the United States gave Carías domestic strength and almost provided him with the support necessary to secure the presidency.

Evidence of Carías benefitting politically from anti-US sentiment can be found throughout the second half of 1924. In July 1924, in Tegucigalpa "Cries of 'death to the American Minister' and 'Long live Carias' were uttered at frequent intervals," and there were rumors Carías might attempt to force his presidency regardless of the will of the United States.[90] On the North Coast, where Carías had many supporters, people publicly accused the United States of unjustly meddling in the country's political affairs. In the banana growing regions Carías's followers said, "'Carias is our choice, and will be overwhelmingly elected, whether the United States likes it or not, and we will have him for President in spite of all the gringos can

[89] Mark Rosenberg and Philip L. Shepherd, *Honduras Confronts Its Future: Contending Perspectives on Critical Issues* (Boulder, Colorado: L. Rienner Publishers, 1986), pp. 6-8.

[90] Morales to Secretary of State, July 23, 1924, 815.00/3225, RG 59, NA.

do.'" In La Ceiba, Hondurans exhibited an intense hatred for the US Minister in Honduras, Franklin E. Morales.[91] As the year dragged on and the elections loomed closer the anti-US sentiment in La Ceiba remained, and many of Carías's followers regularly said "Honduras for the Hondurans." The US Consul in La Ceiba, George P. Waller informed Washington resentment toward the United States had reached such a feverish pitch US Americans were being murdered. One US American woman in the city was even "accosted on the street by a Honduran who twice hurled a disagreeable epithet at her, and then struck her with his hat."[92] The combination of anger at the United States for opposing Carías's presidency and Ferrera's rebellion in August and September of 1924 resulted in the United States sending in the marines to help keep order in La Ceiba.[93]

In November and December, just weeks before the planned presidential election, the situation was reaching crisis stage. The usually pro-US American newspaper *Reconciliación* declared no other government had the right to interfere in the issues of Honduras, and the "free," "sovereign," and "independent" people of Honduras had chosen Carías for their president. Feeling the nation had been assaulted the paper proclaimed only god had the right to "change our ideas and feelings."[94] Sensing Honduran displeasure with the United States, the then head of the US Legation in Tegucigalpa, Stokely W. Morgan reported to Washington:

> The anti-American feeling in Honduras is so strong that it never needs much to inflame it; and if Carias announces that he cannot be President because he will not be recognized

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[91] George P. Waller to Secretary of State, July 31, 1924, 815.00/3243, RG 59, NA.

[92] Waller to Secretary of State, August 29, 1924, 815.00/3321, RG 59, NA.

[93] Waller to Secretary of State, September 12, 1924, 815.00, RG 59, NA. See also: Joseph Grew (Acting Secretary of State) to Secretary of the Navy, n.d. [October?] 1924, 815.00/3430, RG 59, NA.

[94] "The peoples' opinion in relation to the renunciation of General Carías," *Reconciliación*, December 5, 1924, p. 1. As a subtle reminder of other occasions when US Americans breached the sovereignty of Central America *Reconciliación* published an article recalling William Walker just a few weeks after Carías's withdrawal. See: "The house that William Walker lived in," *Reconciliación*, December 26, 1924, p. 4.

> by the United States and the other Central American Republics if he is elected, there is no doubt that this will be interpreted by the majority of the people as a wholly unjustifiable interference by the United States in the internal affairs of this country.

Morgan was so concerned about the endangerment to US American lives and property in the country he requested that yet another gunship be brought to the coast in order to deal with any issues that may have arisen.[95] In mid-December as it was becoming certain Carías had withdrawn, Morgan pleaded with the State Department to send a naval presence to the North Coast. He feared riots, assaults, and murder could be expected if the US military failed to act. He warned violence already committed against foreigners went "unpunished," and a warship would make the Hondurans think twice before acting against US Americans.[96]

At other times, Carías's opponents utilized US opinion of the United States to their advantage. On the Fourth of July 1923, the "American Colony" in La Ceiba hosted a social event for "prominent Hondurans" in order to celebrate the United States' independence, but "Not one of them came." The disastrous party did not result from a shortage of invitations or the Hondurans invitees being unwilling to attend, but rather "a crowd of youths" that "loudly expressed their determination to handle any native who attended the dance roughly." It seems that at least since 1922, many Hondurans in La Ceiba felt "a slight feeling of irritation" because they were not "invited to become members of the [American] Club." Throughout early 1923, Alexander K. Sloan, the US consul in the city, had been investigating why there was a growing bitterness between US Americans and Hondurans throughout the district. As regional newspapers such as *El Norte* published articles detailing the United States' wrongs throughout

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[95] Stokely W. Morgan to Secretary of State, November 12, 1924, 815.00/3475½, RG 59, NA. Morgan requested another warship in mid-December when anti-American sentiment reached its highest point (Morgan to Secretary of State, December 13, 1924, 815.00/3490, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA).

[96] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 16, 1924, 815.00/3516, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

Latin America, the US Legation was dumbfounded and declared it simply was unable to discover any motive behind the friction beyond that of the Lagos family, who Sloan felt was trying to drum up "anti-American sentiment" for political gain.[97] This made sense because Hondurans on the North Coast were politically divided, some supporting the government and others fearing Nicaraguan intervention and opposing the employment of Nicaraguan mercenaries in their country. By unifying the Hondurans behind anti-American sentiment these two opposing groups could theoretically put aside their differences and mutually support the government, which in turn strengthened the Lagos family's position throughout the country.[98] One of the pamphlets circulated by the Lagosistas provides evidence for this notion because not only does it state the people of La Ceiba should give a common front against US interventionism, but also the people of Latin America should tell the US Americans to keep out of their politics.[99]

One of the many reasons why Hondurans exhibited so much frustration with the United States was the lack of respect their country received from their northern neighbor. Antagonizing behavior by the United States toward Honduras took many forms, but one of the most upsetting for Hondurans was the almost constant stream of US American bigotry and arrogance they were forced to abide. An example of this unfortunate reality can be seen in the Honduran reaction to an insensitive and insulting *Liberty* article written by US Marine Major General Smedley D. Butler in October 1931. For the first three decades of the twentieth century, Butler found himself on military missions throughout the world. During his career he was well known for his service throughout the Caribbean and as far away as China and the Philippines. Although he was

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[97] *El Norte*, May 10, 1923 through July 25.

[98] Alexander K. Sloan to Secretary of State, July 5, 1923, 815.00/2622, RG 59, NA. See also: Sloan to Secretary of State, July 25, 1923, 815.00/2645, RG 59, NA.

[99] Pamphlet entitled "The 4th of July," *El Duende*, n.d.,1923, enclosed in Sloan to Secretary of State, July 5, 1923, 815.00/2622, RG 59, NA.

decorated with the Congressional Medal of Honor twice and retired as one of the most decorated marines ever, he is more often remembered as a critic of US foreign policy than for his military service. It was Butler who memorably stated, "I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism."[100] These often quoted words have become a cornerstone of ideological doctrine for those opposed to US military intervention around the globe, but they represent only part of a complex and deeply racist man.

For years, historians have understood how Butler's racialism impacted his worldview and influenced his military operations in places such as Haiti and Nicaragua, but there is still insufficient understanding of how his exploits and later critical writings on US foreign policy were received by foreign peoples.[101] This is a significant oversight since his often inflammatory and influential writing and celebrity were not only felt in the United States but also in the countries he invaded and occupied. Exploring the Honduran response to his work is crucial to explaining Honduran anti-Americanism and ultimately how it affected US foreign policy toward Honduras and US-Carías relations.

In March and April 1903, Butler found himself in Honduras to protect US lives and property from the "throes of a revolt."[102] Setting sail with a detachment of marines from Puerto Rico aboard a converted banana boat called the *Panther*, Butler and his fellow US Americans at first had difficulty finding any signs of warfare let alone danger to US interests in Honduras. At

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[100] Smedley D. Butler, "America's Armed Forces: 2. 'In Time of Peace': The Army," *Common Sense* vol. 4 no. 11 (November 1935): pp. 8-12.

[101] For excellent discussions on how Butler's racism and worldview impacted his military career see: Hans Schmidt, *Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1987); and Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[102] Butler, "Opera-Bouffe Revolts: What Usually Happens When the Marines Have Landed," *Liberty* vol. 8 (October 10, 1931): p. 28-34.

his first port of call, Butler witnessed little more than the absconding of $6000 of the Louisiana lottery holdings by government forces. After sailing the North Coast for sometime, the US soldiers finally found their way to Trujillo where a battle raged between the forces of president-elect Manuel Bonilla and questionably installed President Juan Angel Arias. Upon their arrival the belligerents ceased fighting, and Butler and a number of marines disembarked to try and find the US consul. According to Butler, they found the consul "wrapped in an American flag made into a sort of garment resembling a Mother Hubbard," and concealing himself in the "floor beams" of the consulate.[103] Once the consul was secured the *Panther* again set sail to take up patrol duties offshore. Butler had a rather uneventful time in Honduras and found no real reason to have been dispatched there, but twenty-eight years later he decided to write about his experiences to try and popularize his disgust with what he saw as the mismanagement of the US military by politicians.

In an article entitled, "Opera-Bouffe Revolts: What Usually Happens When the Marines Have Landed" Butler relentlessly insults not only the US military but also the Hondurans who failed to provide him with a reason to be in their country. A number of the insulting elements of Butler's article should briefly be examined, because they strike at some of the main sources of Honduran resentment toward the United States during the period. Butler begins his article by asking the question of why US marines were routinely sent to Honduras to quell its "familiar" revolutions. Although he is against using US forces in Honduras his observations about why they should not be sent there demonstrate a simplistic and inaccurate understanding of Honduras that rightly infuriated Hondurans. He explains the many revolutions in Honduras were "accepted by the people as something to be expected," and they were caused by "An ambitious local leader

[103] Butler, "Opera-Bouffe Revolts," p. 33.

[who] simply decided that the then president had had enough of public office and what goes with it." Sure of his claim he wrote, "That's the reason for virtually all revolts in the Caribbean."[104]

When describing the Honduran military he is even less merciful. Butler makes fun of Puerto Cortés's two-day and ultimately incomplete twenty-one gun naval salute upon his arrival due to limited stores of gunpowder. In detailing the Honduran military he states soldiers were unpatriotic and "may switch" their "allegiance to the insurgents," and rebels often "may find it advisable, during a siesta, to join the ranks of the federals." According to Butler, the country's soldiers were "shoeless," took part in regular "looting and sacking," and were rarely armed. He mocks the Honduran generals by calling them more pompous than "the drum major of a leading college band." He wrote the Honduran Navy at the port "consisted of a small river tugboat…a silly little boat," and that the commander of Puerto Cortés "had no regular uniform and wore a frock coat and a shaggy silk hat, his costume being distinguished from that of an ordinary citizen only by the addition of a huge saber of ancient design and vintage." He also related details of an "absurd" demonstration of Honduran military skill, "a small wheelbarrow" that had "a tiny brass cannon sticking over the wheel," which he felt was "silly," and pronounced the only real "danger" to US Americans in Honduras was "yellow fever or flea bites."[105] Obviously, any Honduran who read this piece would have been exasperated by what they read, and there were many who voiced their outrage to the US government and through the Honduran press.

There were two main types of Honduran journalistic reactions to Butler's article: one was polite and concerned about correcting Butler's errors, and the other incensed and more focused on returning the US American's insults. Those who chose to respond with more courteous words

[104] Butler, "Opera-Bouffe Revolts," pp. 28-34.

[105] Butler, "Opera-Bouffe Revolts," pp. 28-34.

were often quite systematic in their assertions: first, quoting Butler and then countering his claims. For example, after citing Butler's reasoning for Honduran revolutions, one author explained Hondurans revolted for a variety of reasons including "liberty of suffrage," "electoral imposition," and presidential refusal to leave office, and like any freedom loving people they were sometimes forced to defend their democracy through arms. Hinting at the role of private US firms in Honduran violence, the author also writes if Butler was truly interested in the causes of revolutions and warfare in Honduras he should study the history of the banana and the "treachery and bribery" surrounding the fruit. Providing evidence Hondurans were a peaceful people, the author goes on to explain when nothing was "imposed" upon them they "knew how to use…liberty" and refrained from revolution.[106] Representing the more scathing and less intellectual attacks on Butler is an unnamed author writing for *El Pueblo*. The anonymous person calls Butler "a gloomy waste of the human race," and:

> a filthy and vulgar spy gentleman, the model wife of an unfaithful husband, the invulnerable judge of condemning the innocent, the immaculate priest of perverting chastity, the loving son enjoying the suffering of his mother, and the model of sobriety of intoxicating himself with the blood of the unfortunate.[107]

Another author challenged Butler to a duel and claimed he could not refuse due to his military service.[108]

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[106] "Tales of Comic Opera: II," *El Pueblo*, November 25, 1931, enclosed in Higgins to Secretary of State, November 30, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/256, RG 59, NA. For another example of a Honduran blaming Honduras's revolutions on bananas and US interests see: C-10-j-11904-e, "Criticism of an Article written by Major General Smedley D. Butler…," December 3, 1931, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38.

[107] "Tales of Comic Opera," *El Pueblo,* November 24, 1931, enclosed in Higgins to Secretary of State, November 26, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/255, RG 59, NA.

[108] "The Time is approaching for General Smedly Butler to Settle Accounts with the Honduran People," *Comicios*, January 31, 1932, enclosed in Stout to Secretary of State, February 3, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/277, RG 59, NA.

US diplomats in Honduras were keenly aware Butler's article had inflamed local animosities not only toward Butler but also US Americans in general. Nearly every US mission in Honduras sent copies of the article and Honduran editorial responses back to Washington.[109] The matter was hard to ignore as people talked about it, the presses covered it, and exaggerated versions of Butler's writings were spread through Honduran radio stations.[110] One US official explained the article "caused a very bitter feeling among the Hondurans," and it "jeopardize[d] the lives of individual Americans resident in Honduras." The same official found it difficult to understand why such a "gratuitously insulting" article could have been written about a "politically friendly nation," and felt Butler should be dealt with in "strong terms."[111] US citizens living in Honduras were also upset Butler had added to the animosity already existing between themselves and the Hondurans.[112]

The article was formally brought up with the State Department by the Honduran government, which requested the US government force Butler to "make amends to the Honduran Army."[113] The State Department was well aware of the damage done to US-Honduran relations, but knew there was little that could be done to make amends. Butler had retired from the US

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[109] Stewart to Secretary of State, October 10, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/253, RG 59, NA; and Higgins to Secretary of State, November 30, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/256, RG 59, NA. For more Honduran responses to Butler's article see: "La Cobardia de Butler," *El Espectador*, December 2, 1931, enclosed in Higgins to Secretary of State, November 30, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/256, RG 59, NA; numerous articles from *Diario del Norte*, November 26, 1931, enclosed in Stewart to Secretary of State, December 8, 1931, 815.00-Revolutions/257, RG 59, NA; *El Espectador*, November 28, 1931, enclosed in Stewart to Secretary of State, December 8, 1931, 815.00-Revolutions/257, RG 59, NA; "Us and Butler," *Nuestro Criterio*, November 21, 1931; and an editorial in *El Tiempo*, December 9, 1931, enclosed in Wasson to Secretary of State, December 17, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/263, RG 59, NA.

[110] Henry S. Haines to Secretary of State, 815.00 Revolutions/276, RG 59, NA.

[111] Stewart to Secretary of State, December 8, 1931, 815.00-Revolutions/257, RG 59, NA.

[112] Wasson to Secretary of State, December 17, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/263, RG 59, NA. See also: deLambert to Wilson, January 4, 1932, 815.00 Revolutions/272, RG 59, NA.

[113] Céleo Davila to Stimson, December 16, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/264, RG 59, NA.

military on October 1, 1931, and as a private US citizen he was entitled to say and publish whatever he wanted.[114] Secretary of State Stimson offered his sincere regret to the Honduran government but failed to apologize for the article, and instead simply wrote, "my Government sincerely deplores" such "statements."[115]

Eventually, the Honduran angst over the matter faded away, but the episode touched upon chafing sentiments Hondurans had been feeling toward the United States for three decades. By the early 1930s, the Honduran people had many reasons to be displeased with the United States. Hondurans had reluctantly hosted US troops on their soil at least seven times, had their political establishment manipulated by both the US government and private interests on an almost constant basis, endured material and opportunity inequality on the North Coast, and were treated as second class citizens within their own country by employees of the US banana companies.

The formation of Honduran frustration and even hatred of the United States can be seen in the Honduran reaction to the partial occupation of Tegucigalpa by US soldiers in March and April 1924. Within hours of the US soldiers' arrival to the city Morales received a letter from the Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs protesting their presence and demanding their "immediate withdrawal." Now confident in his new found security and position of strength, Morales informed the Minister the US troops had no intention of leaving, and they were only there to provide protection for US Americans and other foreigners from the dangers of the war. Morales also informed the Minister the sailors were not to leave their barracks unless there was a threat to

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[114] DeLambert to Wilson, Memorandum, December 19, 1931, enclosed in Davila to Stimson, December 16, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/264, RG 59, NA; and deLambert, "Draft of note to the Honduran Minister," n.d. [December 1931?], enclosed in Davila to Stimson, December 16, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/264, RG 59, NA. See also: [deLambert?] to Wilson, Memorandum, n.d., enclosed in Haines to Secretary of State, 815.00 Revolutions/276, RG 59, NA.

[115] Stimson to Davila, December 28, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/265, RG 59, NA.

the neutral zone.[116] Mario Ribas, a witness to the events in the city, and author of one of the few accounts of the siege, recorded when the US contingent came they carried the US American flag. This action upset Ribas and his national honor. He wrote the US troops were unwelcome, and it would have been better for them to leave because their presence was a breach of national sovereignty.[117] Initial resentment ran so deep some Hondurans fired at the marines as they came into the capital.[118]

Other Honduran writers had similarly negative things to say about the US occupation. The Honduran intellectual and journalist Froylán Turcios regularly criticized the presence of US American forces in a publication entitled *Boletín de La Defensa Nacional*. One of the periodical's contributors, Visitación Padilla, refused to hide his disgust and told his readers the presence of the marines was the equivalent to "selling the freedom of the homeland abroad." Padilla was upset with Hondurans that welcomed the stabilizing influence of the US forces and had "unjustifiable hatred" for the Honduran soldiers who had only recently looted the city. Padilla wanted to see Hondurans united rather than divided against themselves, and he warned that Honduras's only friend was Honduras and not the United States, which only sought to take advantage of those who it saw as inferior.[119]

Anti-Americanism in Tegucigalpa during the rebel siege of 1924 was one of the main reasons why Hughes agreed to send in US troops to enforce a neutral zone. This of course caused

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[116] Morales to Secretary of State, May 16, 1924, 815.00/3178, RG 59, NA.

[117] Mario Ribas, *Diario de la guerra de Honduras: 30 de enero-30 de abril, 1924* (Tegucigalpa: Edicult, 2004), pp. 52-55.

[118] MID 2657-P-134 (10), April 3, 1924, "Honduras Revolution," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 4, RG 165, NA.

[119] Visitación Padilla, "It would be wrong," *Boletín de La Defensa Nacional*, April 5, 1924, available online at: http://todo.honduraslaboral.org/leer.php/154, accessed 11-11-11.

more negative sentiment towards the United States, but there were other motivations for it as well. Terrified Hondurans witnessing the use of the airplane in battle for the first time in Central America blamed the United States for this new terror. Not only was the airplane used to bomb Tegucigalpa built in the United States it also was rumored to have been piloted by a US American.[120] Furthermore, the "President's Personal Representative" Sumner Welles reported to the Department the Liberals in Honduras were furious with the United States because they maintained it had been partial towards the rebels during the war. According to Welles, the fact the "forces of the revolution were paid and armed with American money and American arms and ammunition given by American business interests" only eroded Honduran "good faith" in the US government.[121] It was this kind of behavior by US interests that led to a "fanatical anti-Americanism" amongst those defending Tegucigalpa.[122]

Obviously not all Hondurans hated the United States or harbored ill-will towards their powerful and often intrusive neighbor. There were several Honduran journalists who exhibited a deep understanding of both the Honduran and US American psyche and history, which allowed them to have a much more balanced and accurate view of what their country's relationship with the United States was and could have been. These observers recognized the United States' wrongs in their country and the rest of the world, but also gave credit to the United States where it was due. Additionally, their opinions were capable of changing. When the United States altered its policies, some commentators rationally changed their opinions of Washington to better address the ever-shifting environment. This reality supports the notion anti-American sentiments

[120] Morales to Secretary of State, May 16, 1924, 815.00/3178, RG 59, NA; and Morales to Secretary of State, April 7, 1924, 815.00/3073, RG 59, NA.

[121] Sumner Welles to Secretary of State, June 2, 1924, 815.00/3185, RG 59, NA; and Charles Evans Hughes to the Commissioner in the Dominican Republic (Welles), April 8, 1924, 815.00/3077a, RG 59, NA.

[122] Welles to Secretary of State, April 25, 1924, 815.00/3121, RG 59, NA.

were generated by US actions rather than irrational prejudice against US Americans. In 1931, an anonymous author writing in *El Sol* argued the United States was demonstrating a "new policy" toward Latin America under President Hoover and it would no longer "interfere…with internal political matters of Central American countries." The author maintains the United States had often intrusively manipulated Honduras, but it would now allow it to manage its own future. He closed his piece by arguing if Hondurans wanted the United States to continue this policy they first needed to "show themselves worthy of managing their own destinies," but he doubted whether his countrymen would be able to do so because they couldn't even manage their own water supply.[123]

Another unnamed Honduran author, this time writing for *El Cronista*, observed that Hondurans were often displeased with the United States when it sent gunships to protect its citizens and investments on the North Coast. However, rather than simply complaining about the breach of Honduran sovereignty the US naval presence caused, the author showed his understanding of the US American perspective toward Latin America by describing why the ships were dispatched in the first place. He wrote, "they will always come to us with their warships when informed that we are heedlessly killing each other in order to overthrow another President." Just as eager to see gunboat diplomacy cease as some of his more impassioned anti-American colleagues were, he proposed Hondurans had a role to play in achieving this goal. He maintained Hondurans needed to "establish only one condition: Cemented peace," and that this would remove the United States' need to protect its investments.[124] In 1926, Mario Vasquez

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[123] "Perspectives," *El Sol*, May 8, 1931, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, May 11, 1931, 815.00-Revolutions/120, RG 59, NA.

[124] "Latest Developments," *El Cronista*, May 2, 1931, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, May 4, 1931, 815.00 Revolutions/82, RG 59, NA. For a similar argument from a Honduran author see: "Relics of Barbarousness," *El Sol*, May 7, 1931, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, May 11, 1931, 815.00-Revolutions/120, RG 59, NA. For other examples of authors willing to both criticize and compliment the foreign policies of the United States in

wrote in *Reconciliación* Honduras's natural resources and overall potential were squandered not by US interventionism, but rather the internal conflicts the country habitually suffered from. Vasquez argued prosperity would come when Hondurans put aside their chronic and "wasteful" squabbles.[125] These writers tried to show their country did not always have to play the victim in the US-Honduran relationship, and that they were even more capable of determining their own destiny than the United States.

It is much more difficult to find a Honduran author who was willing to take an overtly pro-US stance. The politically charged newspapers during the period sometimes published articles aimed at winning the United States' support for their particular political group or government, and they often showered the United States and its policies with praise to do so.[126] Finding evidence of less politically motivated pro-US sentiment is even more challenging to uncover. One such example can be found in the "anti-American" newspaper *Los Sucesos* in May 1923. The anonymous author argues the US government acted without preference in the presidential crisis of 1923, and offered "no special or vehement interest" to any particular candidate. He wrote Morales served "only as a mediator within the limits permitted him, and in the spirit of procuring harmony" and "peace" in the country. Thankful for the United States' role in attempting to resolve the national emergency he stated the United States' actions "Up to this

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Honduras and elsewhere see: "THE NEW PHASE OF AMERICAN POLITICS," *Reconciliación*, April 20, 1925, p. 2; M. Gutierrez y Campos, "CHINA FOR THE CHINESE," *Reconciliación*, November 12, 1925, p. 1; and "The contemporary concept of independence," *El Cronista*, March 12, 1925, p. 2.

[125] Mario Vasquez, "What Honduras needs to be happy," *Reconciliación*, April 9, 1926, p. 1. See also: "Economic imperialism," *El Cronista*, December 28, 1925, p. 2. For an example of an article speculating on the domestic sources of chronic Honduran violence see: "The effects and causes of machetismo," *El Cronista*, July 13, 1925, p. 2.

[126] For annual examples of this see *Reconciliación* July 4, 1924-1927, and especially "THE ANNIVERSARY OF A GREAT PEOPLE," *Reconciliación*, July 4, 1927, p. 2.

point" were "favorable to the well understood national interests."[127] More evidence of pro-US feeling in Honduras can be found in US travelers accounts. Wallace Thompson who traveled to Honduras in the early 1920s related one story of meeting a Honduran citizen who said he had once "hated all North Americans" and had even "shot" at US soldiers in Nicaragua. However, the man said that he had since changed at that he and others now looked "to the United States to help" them, particularly in the unity of Central America into a single republic.[128]

Honduran perspectives of the United States were varied and exhibited a dynamic and constantly changing opinion of the United States based on the actions of its citizens and foreign policies. Unlike US media coverage of Honduras, which was often informed by Manifest Destiny and racism, Honduran publications from the period reveal a greater diversity of viewpoints that were often more knowledgeable than those of US Americans. When dealing with events in Honduras, the US press often displayed only basic knowledge of what was taking place and regularly included erroneous and presumptuous information. Although the same could be said for many Honduran newspapers, some Honduran news sources such as *Reconciliación*, *El Cronista*, and *La Tribuna* kept their readers abreast of happenings in the United States with accuracy and a regularity that the US media during the period rarely matched.[129] Honduran

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[127] "Distorted Viewpoints," *Los Sucesos*, May 31, 1923, enclosed in Morales to Secretary and Under Secretary, May 31, 1923, 815.00/2596, RG 59, NA.

[128] Wallace Thompson, *Rainbow Countries of Central America* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1924), pp. 75-76. For a Honduran reaction to Thompson's "concept" of Central America see: "This is the Concept of an American Author," *El Cronista*, November [15?], 1926, p. 2. For another example of an author willing to defend the actions of the United States and encourage its leadership in Central America see: "THE FIVE REPUBLICS OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE PRESENT MOMENTS," *Reconciliación*, March 26, 1925, p. 2. An interesting article by prominent Honduran intellectual Carlos Izaguirre argues Hondurans had much to learn from the educational and child rearing habits of the United States ("Some general aspects of the education in the United States," *Reconciliación*, January 12, 1927, p. 1). In "Our relations with Washington," *El Cronista*, January 23, 1926, p. 2, a Honduran author argues the United States should be credited with bringing an end to Honduran revolutions through its support of the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Another Honduran author argued Honduran industrialization would come from the United States ("Our industrial development depends on quick understanding with the United States," *El Cronista*, May 14, 1926, p. 2).

[129] There are many examples of well-informed Honduran press coverage of news in the United States; even

literature from the period indicates that for better or worse the Hondurans identified the United States' presence in their country, and felt compelled to respond to it. Harnessing his countrymen's concern of the United States would therefore become a major concern for Carías in his efforts to maintain himself in power during his presidency.

**US Officials Explain Honduran Anti-Americanism**

From 1923 to 1933, there were numerous ways US officials attempted to explain why Hondurans exhibited so much ill will towards US Americans and the United States. One of the most misguided and thoughtless explanations was that there was something wrong with the Hondurans. Some US officials felt they were incapable of reason, and of seeing things for what they really were. In December 1924, Morgan recognized Hondurans were upset with the United States over its policy of opposing Carías's presidency, but he believed the main source of the animosity came from an "inferiority complex." Morgan wrote:

> Anti-American feeling in this country is strong, and runs through all classes of society. It is founded on an inferiority complex coupled with jealousy; and, while not always manifest, is likely to show itself at any time when the attitude of the United States Government does not meet with the approval of this Government or of an influential faction of the country.

In order to deal with such innate feelings, Morgan felt it best to have a US warship present on the North Coast "at all times."[130] US American Vice-Consul de Carrière in Charge in Puerto Cortés, George P. Shaw felt that US American "prestige" was waning in Honduras because the United States failed to "protect Americans." He maintained that because the Hondurans were like "bad

random events unrelated to Honduras were covered. For instance, see ongoing coverage for the destructive flooding of the Mississippi River Basin in the spring of 1927: "The flooding of the United States…," *Reconciliación*, April 22, 1927, p. 2; "NEW ORLEANS IS IN GRAVE DANGER OF FLOODING," *Reconciliación*, April 29, 1927, p. 2; and "THE FLOODING OF THE UNITED STATES," *Reconciliación*, May 2, 1927, p. 1. See also: "Yesterday was Thanksgiving in the United States," *Reconciliación*, November 27, 1925, p. 2. For an insightful article on the importance and impact of US foreign policy in Honduras during the early twentieth century see: "Which will be the new politics of Washington," *El Cronista*, February 19, 1925, p. 2.

[130] Morgan to Secretary of State, December 16, 1924, 815.00/3516, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

children" and incapable of "decent government" unless it was dictated to them by the United States, the United States inadvertently encouraged Hondurans to rob and "impose upon" US Americans due to the lack of repercussions for doing so. In other words, Shaw informed Washington that it manufactured trouble for itself because it failed to exercise the proverbial "big stick" in Honduras.[131] Unfortunately, the suggestions of these commentators were for more intervention, which was one of the main sources of Honduran anger towards the United States.

Another more sensible answer to the question of where negative Honduran sentiments towards the United States came from could be found in the socio-economic conditions on the North Coast. The State Department was not blind to the fact the wealth disparity between the Hondurans and the US Americans in Honduras was great, and that the Hondurans were frustrated about the inequality. Waller wrote in April 1924, the Hondurans "own no property themselves and practically all the property they see around them is foreign-owned."[132] The way in which US Americans treated the Hondurans also made matters worse. After traveling to Honduras a United Fruit Company stockholder, Henry F. Plummer, returned to the United States and informed the State Department Hondurans detested the United States and its citizens. Plummer stated, "the feeling of the natives against the Americans on the north coast was exceedingly bitter, largely because of the conduct of Americans and their attitude." He also related his frustration with the US banana company's ability to manipulate the Honduran government through bribery. Plummer felt if conditions were not changed "a very serious situation" would develop.[133] Sloan felt the matter of US banana company manipulation of the Honduran political scene "incensed" the

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[131] George P. Shaw to Secretary of State, August 28, 1924, 815.00/3320, RG 59, NA.

[132] Waller to Secretary of State, April 9, 1924, 815.00/3101, RG 59, NA.

[133] Munro to White, Memorandum, October 2, 1924, 815.00/3507, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA.

Hondurans and made the companies appear as "exploiters of themselves and their country."[134] The Department was aware of the situation and wanted to do something to curb the United Fruit Company's destructive behavior in Honduras, but was legally unable to do anything. As explained in previous chapters, the Department lacked proof of the company's involvement in the War of Revindication and its support for Carías's 1924 presidential bid. Without verifiable evidence there was little the Department could do even though many there felt it would help alleviate US-Honduran tensions and promote Honduran prosperity.[135]

Feelings of animosity toward the United States in the decade before Carías's presidency were commonplace. The fact that hostility was so prevalent before Carías's regime as compared to during it, made his presidency all the more desirable in the eyes of US officials. Carías's often frustrated career before his presidency was the source of much of Honduras's anti-Americanism, so when he became president a significant amount of the motivation behind it disappeared. Failing to recognize this, US policymakers attributed a less abrasive and unstable political environment in Honduras to Carías, when in reality this was only partially true. It was US policy that had caused much of the destabilizing anti-Americanism during the 1920s, so when US policy changed to consent to Carías's presidency and refrained from landing troops on Honduran

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[134] Sloan to Secretary of State, May 10, 1923, 815.00/2578, RG 59, NA.

[135] White to Under Secretary of State, Memorandum, October 6, 1924, 815.00/3508, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Munro to White, Memorandum, October 10, 1924, 815.00/3508, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA. Another issue State Department officials knew caused a significant amount of anti-foreign feeling in Honduras was the 1925-1926 public debate on the issue of refinancing the Honduran foreign debt with British investors (C-10-j-11904-B, Waller to State Department, "Political and Economic Conditions Potentially Grave at La Ceiba…," March 1, 1925, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Attaché Reports, 1886-1939, Box 539, RG 38). For more descriptions of Hondurans and their feelings and threats towards US Americans in the 1920s and 1930s see: Morales to Secretary of State, February 7, 1924, 815.00/2860, RG 59, NA; Willard L. Beaulac to Secretary of State, November 9, 1924, 815.00/3458, Records of the State Department Relating to Internal Affairs of Honduras 1910-1929, Reel 17, RG 59, NA; and Jane Harvey Houlson, *Blue Blaze; Danger and Delight in Strange Islands of Honduras* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1934), pp. 30-31.

shores anti-Americanism somewhat dissipated giving the illusion Carías was completely responsible for a pacified Honduran populace.

Furthermore, although President Roosevelt adopted the Good Neighbor policy and exhibited a remarkable refusal to send US troops to protect US interests in the region, Hondurans could not have helped but credit Carías with the diminishing number of occasions when their sovereignty was overtly breached by the United States. As many of his contemporary biographers note, Carías did help to politically stabilize Honduras, which removed the primary reason why the United States sent its military to the country.[136] In this respect Honduran perceptions of the United States strengthened Carías domestically, because they were pleased with Carías for providing the conditions necessary for their country to enjoy greater sovereignty and suffer less insults from the United States.

**Conclusion**

In the four years before Carías became president a number of developments occurred in Honduras that not only paved the way for his later dictatorship, but also the United States' acquiescence to his rule. Economic troubles brought on by the Great Depression combined with several revolutions and the near absence of governmental authority throughout much of the country and created a situation that left much to be desired. US and Honduran concern over the acute unemployment and deplorable working and living conditions on the North Coast were amplified by the spread of communism and other radical ideologies in the region. When events

[136] There were many sycophantic authors who credited Carías with a plethora of great accomplishments including stabilizing Honduras. However, most of these authors fail to point out the human costs of Carías era stability, or how it was orchestrated using his relationship with the United States. Some of the best examples of this kind of scholarship are: Gilberto González y Contreras, *Un pueblo y un hombre; Honduras y el general Carías* (Tegucigalpa: Imprenta La Democracia, 1934). See also González y Contreras, *El ultimo caudillo* (Mexico City: Costa-Amic, 1946); Salvador Maldonado R., *Reportaje sobre Honduras* (Mexico, D.F.: n.p., 1946), pp. 30-31; Romualdo Elpidio Mejía, *La obra patriótica del Congreso nacional; el ideal continuista y el esfuerzo reivindicador* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1941) pp. 21-22; and Rafael Bardales Bueso, *El fundador de la paz* (San Pedro Sula, Honduras: s.n, 1989), pp. ix-x.

began to spiral out of control during the 1932 presidential elections and eventually led to civil war many US officials completely lost faith the situation in Honduras would ever improve. Furthermore, after years of chafing foreign policies, military interventions, and corporate and private antagonisms emanating from the United States, Honduran opinion of the United States was poor and complicated interaction between the countries. At the same time this anti-Americanism provided Carías with opportunities to enhance his power and prestige with both Hondurans and US Americans.

Despite Honduras's bleak outlook and the lack of US affinity for Carías, the US-Carías relationship had come a long way since the end of 1924 when the US actively opposed his presidency. For eight years, Carías remained peaceful. Although he actively undermined the Paz Baraona regime much to the United States' chagrin, he never took to the battlefield in open rebellion after 1924. In fact, he was an agent for stability when he came to the aid of the Mejía Colindres Administration when it was faced with a rebellion of disgruntled Liberals. Neither friend nor foe of the United States, Carías had reinvented himself as an independent politician able to position himself to his own advantage and capable of outlasting and out maneuvering his enemies whether foreign or domestic. There may be scant evidence that he purposefully manipulated Honduran public opinion of the United States, but he certainly made use of it to support his political career.

Carías came to power at an extremely opportune time. Although Honduras was experiencing a complicated mix of political and economic crises in 1933, if Carías did anything to improve the situation he would appear as a national hero to many Hondurans and as a long awaited savior for Honduras to concerned US Americans. Because the United States had little hope Honduras would be a peaceful nation, and even less desire to again become bogged down

in its tumultuous politics, Carías's stabilizing presidency was eventually appreciated by US officials. With less impetus to intervene in Honduran affairs, the United States abandoned its previously meddlesome role and gave Carías the opportunity to appear as a source of strength and as a leader strong enough to influence the Northern Colossus from blatantly interfering in Honduran affairs.

# CHAPTER 7

## IMPRESSING THE SUPPOSEDLY GOOD NEIGHBOR

"The great problem for the next Administration will undoubtedly be a financial one. The outgoing Administration has squandered Government funds, and with the outbreak of a revolution, additional expenses have been incurred which will be no small burden on the Carías Administration."

-US Minister to Honduras Julius G. Lay describing one of the many problems facing Carías's presidency in early 1933.[1]

After at least a decade of trying to reach and control the presidency through war, subversion, and democracy, Carías finally reached his longtime goal at his inauguration on February 1, 1933.[2] For years he worked diligently to make this vision a reality, and so it is no surprise he took the office extremely seriously, doing his best to make sure he was not the victim of another subversive strongman not unlike himself. Without question, Carías had proven he was a skillful politician using both domestic and international politics to his personal advantage. By exploiting everything from his countrymen's disillusionment with revolutionary violence—something he was personally guilty of contributing to—to the weakness and inconsistency of US policy, Carías reached a position without rival in Honduran politics. In 1933, not only did he enjoy the support of a vast majority of the National party, but also the appreciation and respect of many Liberal party members for pacifying the now almost subdued Liberal revolution of late 1932 and early 1933. Carías may have been popular and his position powerful, but his situation was delicate. The country was bankrupt, politically fractured, and in the midst of the Great Depression. If Carías failed to improve his country's situation, it was only a matter of time

[1] Julius G. Lay to Secretary of State, January 10, 1933, 815.00 General Conditions/37, RG 59, NA.

[2] Unfortunately, there are few sources that cover Carías's inauguration. For one example see: "The National Reconstruction," *Tegucigalpa* series 80 no. 317 (February 5, 1933): pp. 1 and 6.

before he too would face a successful coup, revolution, or Congress that sapped his power. Aware of his precarious predicament Carías did his best to validate his presidency as soon as he entered office. In the first few months as head of state, he went to work cleaning up corruption, collecting taxes to balance government finances, building a larger and more professional military, and attempting to stimulate the Honduran economy.[3] The task of putting Honduras on the road to peace and prosperity was immense, but Carías defied all expectations and did a surprisingly impressive job of stabilizing and pacifying the country in a short period of time.

One of the keys to Carías's domestic success was his relationship with the United States. He felt he needed to secure the favor of US policymakers to assure the support he believed was necessary to provide Honduras with the peace and opportunity to develop. Therefore, during the first years of his administration Carías made a concerted effort to encourage the US government to appreciate his leadership. He instituted a well-planned and executed public relations campaign designed specifically to maintain good relations with the United States. Time and again, issue after issue, Carías tried to show himself as a close friend and ally of his powerful neighbor. By presenting himself as an upright and resolute leader he was able to convince many in the US government without him Honduras would return to a state of near anarchy, and that he was the best possible leader of the Honduran government. He was so eager to please the United States he even pressured the Honduran Congress to agree to the disadvantageous US-Honduran Reciprocal Trade Agreement in 1935. The Agreement cost him significant domestic support and helped stifle nascent industries and reduced Honduran governmental revenue, but he obviously felt the

[3] The best investigation of Carías's efforts to extinguish corruption can be found in: Thomas J. Dodd in *Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), pp. 51-85. See also: J. E. Pineda to Cornelio Vijile, June 17, 1933, Packet, Correspondence: 1933 Ministero de Fomento, Centro Documentación e Investigación Histórica de Honduras, El Archivo Nacional de Honduras; and Lino Avila y Unos Liberales, "ALERT to the People of Lengue!," November 1930, Packet, Correspondence: 1933 Ministero de Fomento, Centro Documentación e Investigación Histórica de Honduras, El Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

gratitude of the US government was worth the trade. By early 1936, he was so successful at marketing himself to the United States the US government accepted his rewriting of the Honduran constitution and repudiation of Honduran democracy to allow him to remain in office. Carías was no puppet, but instead a master of persuasion and a calculating leader.

Charmed by Carías's performance as a stabilizer and reliable ally, the United States abandoned its previous support for Honduran democracy and began to strengthen his regime. Faced with decades of portrayals of Honduras as a country rich with possibilities and resources, but home to depraved and inferior people, many in the US government became more open to overlooking Carías's tyrannical tendencies. US policymakers were aware Carías imprisoned, exiled, and harassed members of his opposition and trampled on the Honduran constitution by rewriting it to allow him to stay in power, but they still provided him the moral and military support that helped him to do so.[4] The primary goal of US policy in Honduras continued to be stability for the purposes of keeping European economic competition out, the country dependent on US trade, and the protection of US business interests. Therefore, when the Carías Administration proved itself both willing and able to root out the few communists in the country, and a more competent and less corrupt manager of the Honduran economy than previous governments, the United States took note and began removing policy barriers that prevented it from backing the regime. Not only did the United States give Carías the sole power to decide who possessed arms and ammunition in Honduras, but it also provided his government with US planes and pilots to subdue the country. When it came time to decide whether to recognize Carías's prolongation of power beyond the original constitutional limits (*continuismo*), the US

[4] For a sobering look at Carías's efforts to suppress dissent see Jesus Evelio Inestroza's extremely interesting collection of primary sources addressing the topic *Documentos clasificados de la policía secreta de Carías, (1937-1944)* (Tegucigalpa: Instituto Hondureño de Historia y Antropología, 2009).

government abandoned its policy of following the 1923 Treaty of Peace and Amity and moved to maintain relations with his dictatorship.

**Early Worries and Successes**

When Carías became president of Honduras, the unflattering reputation of the country as a nearly failed state incapable of managing its own affairs cast doubt in the minds of most US officials Carías could be any more competent than his predecessors. The condescending and paternalistic ideas the policymakers in the US State and War Departments harbored were based upon not only historical precedent, but also the continuing civil war and horrific economic conditions Honduras was facing. Carías's standing had drastically improved in the eyes of most US authorities since its nadir in 1924, but he was still Honduran, and for US Americans strongly influenced by prejudice and a superiority complex as citizens of the Northern Colossus Carías offered little optimism. Business remained at a "standstill," government finances were in ruins, and the country's credit was so poor securing a loan seemed impossible.[5] US Minister in Tegucigalpa, Julius G. Lay had little faith in Carías and informed Washington it was highly unlikely his Administration would be able to overcome "The great problem" of the country's finances.[6] Obviously pessimistic he wrote, "Honduras needs the very best man it has for the colossal task of pulling her Government out of its present financial debacle."[7]

Besides the challenging economic situation, Carías also faced racism and personal aversion by members of the US Legation in Tegucigalpa, which made his job of dealing with Honduras's most important international relationship all the more difficult. According to Lay, Carías was a "very low type of Indian" and exhibited a number of unbecoming characteristics

[5] Lay to Secretary of State, February 10, 1933, 815.00 General Conditions/38, RG 59, NA.

[6] Lay to Secretary of State, January 10, 1932, 815.00 General Conditions/37, RG 59, NA.

[7] Lay to Secretary of State, January 13, 1933, 815.00-Revolutions/435, RG 59, NA.

such as stubbornness, the inability to forgive, and a bad temper. If this were not bad enough, Lay also faulted Carías for not being intelligent, well traveled, or of a respectable class. He was convinced Carías was more of a "myth" rather than "man," because he possessed few of the qualities necessary to lead the troubled country. Lay maintained he only had a political following because politics were unimportant in a country where charisma and personality trumped "programs" and "principles." He wrote, "Carias is not an astute politician, but in the last campaign he had able campaign managers."[8] Faced with such discrimination, Carías's performance as president needed to be stellar if he was ever going to find support in the US government.

Although many in the State Department had their doubts about Honduras's future under Carías's leadership, his presidency was still greeted with friendliness and respect by both the outgoing Hoover and incoming Roosevelt Administrations. Unlike several other Caribbean presidents of the time such as Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic and Maximiliano Hernández Martínez of El Salvador who had reached their positions under dubious circumstances, Carías had legally been elected, so there was no legitimate reason why the United States would have given him the cold shoulder. This does not mean the United States was delighted by Carías's presidency; rather Carías's warm reception was typical of a new government democratically elected in the hemisphere. When Carías sent a letter to President Hoover stating he had been "unanimously declared" the president elect of Honduras by Congress, and he was Hoover's "friend" and "servant," he received a note in return from Hoover stating he took "pleasure in reciprocating" his "good wishes."[9] When Carías finally took the oath

[8] Lay to Secretary of State, March 3, 1933, 815.00/4575, RG 59, NA.

[9] Carías to Hoover, January 9, 1933, reproduced in Hoover to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 18, 1933, 815.001Carias A., Tiburcio/5, RG 59, NA; and Hoover to Carías, January 18, 1933, 815.001Carias, A.,

of office, the US government decided not to send a special envoy to Honduras, because it would have been a large and unnecessary expense for the poor country to incur. In the place of a special envoy, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson instructed Lay to attend ceremonies as US minister and to express to Carías "the cordial good wishes of President Hoover for the success of his administration and his personal welfare." This was the same treatment Carías's contemporary Presidents Harmodio Arias Madrid of Panama, Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno of Costa Rica, and Juan Bautista Sacasa of Nicaragua enjoyed when they were inaugurated.[10]

Originally, US officials may have had misgivings about Carías's presidency, but the severity of these uncertainties began to quickly fade shortly after Carías made his inaugural speech. Not only did Carías's inauguration take place "tranquilly" despite the waning but ongoing revolution, but he also made a number of promises that impressed US observers.[11] Carías assured those present that he would end the "Frequent wars, unjustified uprisings, periods of administrative anarchy" and "disorder." He stated it was "Our duty, the duty of all Hondurans…to put an end to this sad situation, laboring in a constant and disinterested manner in the arduous undertaking of national reconstruction."[12] US officials had heard these words

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Tiburcio/4, RG 59, NA.

[10] Henry L. Stimson to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 30, 1933, 815.001Carias, A., Tiburcio/7, RG 59, NA; Carías to Hoover January 9, 1933, reproduced in Hoover to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 18, 1933, 815.001Carias A., Tiburcio/5, RG 59, NA; and Hoover to Carías, January 18, 1933, 815.001Carias, A., Tiburcio/4, RG 59, NA. Similar exchanges were made by Carías and Roosevelt a few months later. For more information see: Francis M. White to Lay, April 8, 1933, 815.001-Carias A., Tiburcio/15, RG 59, NA; Cordell Hull to Antonio Bermudez M., April 6, 1933, enclosed in White to. Lay, April 8, 1933, 815.001-Carias A., Tiburcio/15, RG 59, NA; and Roosevelt to Carías, March 30, 1933, enclosed in White to Lay, April 8, 1933, 815.001-Carias A., Tiburcio/15, RG 59, NA.

[11] Lay to Secretary of State, February 1, 1933, 815.001-Carias A., Tiburcio/8, RG 59, NA.

[12] Lawrence Higgins to Secretary of State, February 17, 1933, 815.001Carias., A., Tiburcio/10, RG 59, NA. US press coverage of Carías's inauguration was nearly nonexistent. For a rare and short article on the event see: "ANDINO INAUGURATED HONDURAN PRESIDENT," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1933, p. 1.

emanating from Honduran leaders before, but they quickly set the tone for Carías's regime and the stability the United States had long been looking for.

A few weeks after making these promises, Carías began to deliver on them and thus went from enjoying little US appreciation to being seen by the US government as one of Honduras's best presidents ever. After Carías was in office only a little more than two months, Lay informed Washington the Carías Administration had "already proven itself superior to the administration of Dr. Mejia Colindres." He was impressed because he felt "Public order" was "being maintained in practically the entire country, and though the Administration" was "laboring with the problems of organization" it was "slowly creating order out of the chaos left by the last Administration." Lay was also impressed with the smoothly functioning Honduran Foreign Office which promptly responded to official business, the fact old government buildings were being restored, and troops drilled rather than slept in the barracks.[13] Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Lawrence Higgins was stunned by the financial improvements Carías's Administration was able to provide the country within such a short period of time. Higgins felt there was now "honest revenue administration and collection," and Carías was well on his way to balancing the budget while managing to pay governmental employees and make public works a priority.[14] These achievements should largely be attributed to the hard work and tenaciousness of Carías and his ministers who accounted for every cent of government expenditures as soon as they came to power. Embezzlement and improper financial dealings were simply not tolerated and were

[13] Lay to Secretary of State, April 7, 1933, 815.00-General Conditions/39, RG 59, NA.

[14] Higgins to Secretary of State, July 6, 1933, 815.00-General Conditions/42, RG 59, NA. Thomas M. Leonard argues Carías became president "without plans to confront the impact of the Great Depression," but Carías's early public works program and desire to remain in power indicate he did what he could to improve the country's economy (*The History of Honduras* [Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2011], pp. 114). For more on Carías's attempts to improve the efficiency of his government and provide infrastructure for the citizens of Honduras see: Carías to the Departamento de Fomento, Agricultura, y Trabajo, August 26, 1933, no. 140, Contenido Junta Agua y Luz Gobernación Política, 1933, Centro Documentación e Investigación Histórica de Honduras, El Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

regularly investigated according to Carías's orders.[15] Carías even personally wrote Roosevelt and apologized for his inability to pay his government's $2048.42 Western Union telegraph and radio bill.[16]

As government operations began running more efficiently and the Honduran state began regaining the appearance of functionality, US officials were exceedingly pleased by the increased political stability Honduras exhibited. After years of writing pessimistic reports to Washington that either addressed actual revolutions and coups or potential political disturbances, the US Legation in Tegucigalpa began writing about "peace" and "tranquility" in real terms rather than as a distant or impossible goal. Lay told Washington that not only had the Honduran Finance Minister, Julio Lozano, saved Honduran finances from "a state of chaos," but also there were "No political disturbances" and none were "anticipated." Merchants were so optimistic about peace they even began overstocking their shelves with goods.[17] Throughout 1933 there were dozens of US Legation notes to Washington that indicated the political situation in Honduras was "very quiet" and looked like it would remain so.[18] However, the best example of how enthusiastic US officials came to be over the Carías Administration in 1933 can be found in the usually extremely disparaging and cynical military attaché reports. Military attaché Arthur R. Harris told his superiors Carías's government was:

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[15] For numerous examples of the Honduran government attempting to eliminate corruption see: Packet, Correspondence: 1933 Ministero de Fomento, Centro Documentación e Investigación Histórica de Honduras, El Archivo Nacional de Honduras, especially Robert Soto Suazo's unnamed attorney to Carías, et al., June 7, 1933, No. 790.

[16] Bermudez M., *Memoria presentada al congresso nacional en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1934 por el secretario de estado en el despacho de relaciones exteriors, 1932-1933* (Tegucigalpa, Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1934), pp. 36-38. Carías was so successful at balancing the budget his government never defaulted on its external debt payments even during the Great Depression, and was one of the few Latin American governments to do so (Victor Bulmer-Thomas, "Honduras since 1930," *The Cambridge History of Latin America* vol. VII, ed. Leslie Bethell [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], pp. 283-316).

[17] Lay to Secretary of State, August 8, 1933, 815.00-General Conditions/43, RG 59, NA.

[18] Higgins to Secretary of State, November 2, 1933, 815.00 General Conditions/46, RG 59, NA.

> the most enlightened, honest, and efficient administration that that country has ever experienced. This may not be saying a great deal, - but in all fairness it might be admitted that an intelligent fight is being waged against inefficiency and corruption, in the government. The present government is strong and determined. There is little chance of a successful revolution.[19]

After decades of regular upheaval and a seemingly endless amount of political violence, it finally appeared to many in the US government Honduras had turned over a new leaf. Carlos A. Contreras argues when Carías eliminated his Liberal opponents in the revolution of 1932 he acquired a previously unknown amount of control over the country's institutions, which provided him the strength necessary to consolidate his rule and pursue *continuismo*.[20] Contreras's interpretation of events is supported by the US government's belief the country was fully under Carías's influence with few suggesting the situation was about to change anytime soon. There were "still a few roving groups of bandits" to contend with, but martial law was in effect throughout 1933 and most of the country was "enjoying peace."[21] With much of the enfranchised country politically united behind Carías the Honduran Congress doubled his salary from 1000 to 2000 Lempiras.[22] The US press began running articles portraying Carías as a new kind of Honduran politician, and someone willing to coordinate with neighboring countries to weed out "unrest."[23] According to almost every US observer, Carías and his Administration were credited

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[19] MID 2657-P-312-8, Arthur R. Harris, October 13, 1933, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 6, RG 165, NA.

[20] Carlos A. Contreras, *Hacia la dictadura cariíasta: La campaña presidencial de 1932* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Iberoamericana, 2000).

[21] Higgins to Secretary of State, July 6, 1933, 815.00-General Conditions/42, RG 59, NA. One of the least understood features of Carías's rule and a potential major reason for Honduras's peace was his relationship with the Catholic Church. For a discussion on the important role of the Catholic Church in Honduran history see: Frederick M. Shepherd, "Church and State in Honduras and Nicaragua Prior to 1979," *Sociology of Religion* vol. 54 no. 3 (Autumn 1993): pp. 277-293.

[22] Lay to Secretary of State, April 7, 1933, 815.001-Carias, A., Tiburcio/18, RG 59, NA.

[23] "Hondurans and Nicaraguans Rout Bandits in Border Area," *New York Times*, May 30, 1933, p. 5.

with bringing stability to Honduras, something the United States had for decades sought unsuccessfully.[24]

For the United States, stability in Honduras meant more than just economic prosperity, emboldened national security, and the ability to keep economic rivals out. It also fulfilled US observers' identity as modernizers and the architects of prosperity. More than simple selfishness, stability was genuinely wished for Hondurans by US Americans who felt they brought prosperity wherever their dealings took them. Because Carías offered peace to Honduras he was more likely to be appreciated by US Americans whether policymakers, businessmen, journalist, or missionary. With this in mind, it is possible to see why Carías would become so successful in manipulating US citizens to welcome and support his regime.

**Courting the United States**

Edward J. Williams writes "dictators have traditionally advertised themselves as friends of the United States," and asserts they have proven more than willing to "act in accordance with U.S. policies and prejudices" when the goals of Washington differed from their national interests but supported their own.[25] Carías's popularity within the US government was no accident; it was the result of a calculated campaign by Carías to ingratiate himself and his country with the United States. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Honduran people were forced to face an inequitable reality; the United States exercised an immense amount of power in nearly

[24] For two sources crediting Carías with bringing peace to Honduras despite the supposedly overwhelming odds see: MID 2657-P-439-23, Harris, November 8, 1933, "Stability of Government. Armed Revolutionary Movements," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA; and Raleigh A. Gibson to Secretary of State, November 1, 1934, 815.00/4604, RG 59, NA. Charles D. Ameringer claims the "stability" Carías provided the country with led "cautious foreign investors" to invest in the "banana industry on the north coast," but banana production was already well established years before Carías ever came to power and in fact declined rather than grew during his presidency; see: Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile; The Antidictatorial Struggle in the Caribbean, 1945-1959* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1974), pp. 48-49.

[25] Edward J. Williams, *The Political Themes of Inter-American Relations* (Belmont, California: Duxbury Press, 1971), pp. 105-114.

every political and economic aspect of their country. Honduras, like the rest of Central America, was an important part of the United States' national security and economic strategies. For US policymakers, keeping rival foreign powers out of the United States' "backyard" was a top priority, this meant lessening the region's dependency on foreign capital and trade, which would not only benefit the US economy, but protect the Panama Canal Zone as well. US investments kept Central Americans close to Washington both economically and politically, and abrogated the need of European governments to send their navies to the region for debt collection. Promoting strong and financially secure Central American governments was an integral part of this approach, and for years almost constantly brought US officials into the decision-making process of these countries.[26]

As Honduran sovereignty was breached by the United States many Hondurans longed for the day when they would be fully in charge of their country's affairs. Honduran intellectuals such as Froylán Turcios joined the chorus of Latin American critics concerned with the United States' meddling in their respective countries, but the asymmetrical relationship between the United States and Honduras meant that for decades these complaints would fall on deaf ears. With the United States unwilling to curtail its role in Honduras, and the Hondurans lacking the strength to satisfactorily separate themselves from their northern neighbor, many in the Honduran political class accepted the fact the United States was a force they could not ignore. Regardless of how one felt about the United States, during the first half of the twentieth century, most Hondurans realized the US government needed to be considered in nearly every major political and economic matter.

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[26] A number of the ideas addressed in this section concerning US-Carías amiability were inspired by similar causes of "cordiality" between Jorge Ubico and the United States. See: Kenneth J. Grieb, *Guatemalan Caudillo, the Regime of Jorge Ubico: Guatemala, 1931-1944* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), pp. 67-73.

For over a decade before Carías became president he was forced to face the reality of US power in his country. Besides the immense impact of the US owned banana companies on Honduran politics and the UFCO's involvement in his own political career, Carías grappled with the US State Department on a somewhat routine basis. As previous chapters have demonstrated, the State Department's power in Honduras was far from absolute, and it commonly reacted to Carías and other Honduran politicos rather than set the country's agenda. Without a doubt, US power in Honduras was strong, and it influenced nearly every key political decision Carías made before his presidency, but he displayed a marked ability to resist, defy, and influence US policy at the same time. While Carías's career shows evidence Honduras possessed leaders that not only controlled their own destiny but also the country's, the United States would remain one of Carías's principal concerns throughout his tenure in office and for good reason.

Even though nonintervention and noninterference had become the main elements of the Hoover Administration's foreign policy in Honduras well before Roosevelt officially adopted the Good Neighbor policy, the United States' power loomed large in the hearts and minds of Hondurans well after Roosevelt came to the presidency. Besides the fact that US banana companies owned and managed the North Coast largely as a giant plantation, the US government's presence could also be regularly felt by the average Honduran citizen. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, ships of the Special Service Squadron habitually made "goodwill" visits to Amapala and ports on the North Coast, and reminded Hondurans while US marines had not landed on their shores since 1925 they could be ordered to do so at any moment.[27] The US occupation of neighboring Nicaragua and its effort to pacify the "bandit" Augusto Sandino

[27] For examples of the many "goodwill" visits of US ships to Honduras see: Salvador Aguirre, *Memoria presendta al congresso nacional por el Secretario de Estado en el Despacho de RELACIONES EXTERIORES, 1940-1941* (Tegucigalpa:Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1942).

conveyed the idea although the United States may have publicly claimed to change its approach to Latin America it was not beyond altering its policies or making exceptions to it. Further US military power could be seen in the United States' development of its Air Force, and the flights of US airplanes to and from the Panama Canal Zone, which sometimes landed in Honduras.[28] In sum, US military power in Honduras was simply too powerful for Carías to ignore.[29]

Perhaps more important to Carías than the presence of US military power in and around his country was US economic might. By 1933, Honduras like the rest of Central America had experienced significant economic troubles due to the Great Depression. Although Honduras faired much better economically during the international crisis than its neighbors it was still impacted by falling world demand and prices for bananas.[30] This negatively influenced both Honduran employment on the North Coast and slashed governmental revenue. Honduras's agricultural export based economy needed to expand if the economic and financial health of the country was ever going to improve, and US capital and markets were absolutely critical to accomplishing this. Honduras may have been able to sell its agricultural products to other

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[28] Bermudez M. to Leo J. Keena, March 5, 1937, *Diplomatica Recibida, Legacion de Honduras en los Estados de America, 1936-1937*, Archivos de la Cancillería de Honduras; John D. Erwin to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras, November 22, 1938, *Dipca, Recibida Lg. E. U. de N: A., 1938-1939*, Archivos de la Cancillería de Honduras; and Bermudez M., *Memoria presentada al congress nacional…*, p. 30.

[29] Fearing the US military was a common theme amongst dictators in Central America. See Grieb, pp. 67-73.

[30] Frederick Stirton Weaver, *Inside the Volcano: The History and Political Economy of Central America* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 109-111. A number of authors contend the Great Depression did not as adversely affect Honduras as it did its neighbors. For examples of scholars who argue this see: Bulmer-Thomas, *Studies in the Economics of Central America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988). Bulmer-Thomas claims the difficulties Honduras's banana exports faced were more the result of disease rather than a decrease in the level of demand (pp. 54-56). See also: Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Edelberto Torres Rivas argues in *History and society in Central America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), the Central American economy was able to "absorb" the problems brought on by the Great Depression because of the prevalence of subsistence agriculture (p. 59). According to this interpretation Carías's government had only a limited role in holding the country's economy together. Additionally, Torres Rivas maintains Honduran export revenues were protected from price decreases "by an increase in export volume." However, he does concede the Great Depression made the Honduran economic position far from ideal (p. 60).

markets besides the United States, but the sheer size of the US market made it impossible to ignore and other markets while still important significantly less vital. Regardless of one's feelings, the United States was and would remain Honduras's most important trading partner throughout Carías's tenure in office. This reality would only expand as Secretary of State Cordell Hull and other members of the Roosevelt Administration developed the impression Reciprocal Trade Agreements were fundamental to jumpstarting both US and Latin American economies. Therefore, if Honduras was ever going to experience countrywide economic development and an increase in its living standards it would come from its trading and business investment relationship with the United States. Consequently, Carías took the US-Honduran economic relationship seriously, and did all he could to see Washington was satisfied with him, so he could potentially improve his country's financial plight.[31]

Another aspect of the US-Honduran relationship that would greatly influence his policy toward the United States was his own experience with the colossus's power. In 1923 and early 1924, he witnessed the efforts of the State Department to try and find a peaceful transition of the Honduran executive branch, which prompted the United States to take an active role in negotiations in his country's domestic politics. He saw firsthand what the consequences of ignoring the United States' wishes in Honduran affairs were when he started the War of Revindication and tried to become president in 1924. During the Miguel Paz Baraona Administration, he saw the United States' obsession with maintaining stability in Honduras, and

[31] Grieb also noticed a similar situation for US-Ubico relations during the same period. See: Grieb, pp. 67-73. For evidence Hondurans felt the United States had much to offer the United States technologically and economically see: "The Commerce of the United States with Latin America," *El Cronista*, March 27, 1934, p. 3. Carías's attention to the importance of the United States in his country's economic future was a constant part of his presidency. For an excellent example of one of his attempts to increase Honduran trade with the United States with new industries see: Albert H. Cousins, Jr., to Secretary of State, September 17, 1940, 815.176/7, RG 59, NA. For more on Carías's efforts to increase trade with the United States through export led growth see: Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 166, 186, and 218-219.

slowly but surely learned working with the United States rather than against it made his political life easier. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, while Carías participated in national government as the head of the National party and the President of Congress, he actively helped the United States confront the spread of radical leftist ideologies on the North Coast, and saw the US government's trepidation over the spread of communism in his nation's productive banana growing districts. Carías slowly learned over the decade before he took power the United States above all wanted peace and stability in Honduras and was willing to intervene in his country's politics and economy to foster it.

With the knowledge the United States not only possessed the strength to project its goals on the Honduran political scene but had demonstrated the will to do so time and again in dealing with him personally, Carías followed the lead of Latin American strongmen such as Jorge Ubico and Rafael Trujillo and made himself a stabilizing friend and ally of the United States in Honduras. This was no easy task, and required Carías to exercise a vigilance and creativity in both foreign and domestic affairs that demonstrated a tenacious will to stay and hold power and readiness to sacrifice the freedoms, lives, and economic prosperity of his fellow countrymen. Carías sought to manipulate US foreign policy toward his regime by presenting himself and his country as exactly what the United States wanted and needed in Honduras. Since remaining in power was Carías's primary goal, the fact he did so for sixteen years speaks to the success he enjoyed in his foreign policy with the United States.

From the outset of his Administration, Carías used a variety of methods to ingratiate himself in the hearts and minds of US policymakers. One of the most effective ways he did so in 1933 was to foster unquestionably good public relations with the United States. Besides the expectedly friendly diplomatic exchanges that took place between Washington and Tegucigalpa,

Carías waged a public relations campaign that would rival any of his contemporary US politician's efforts to improve their brand. The most important medium of his time in Honduras was text, and newspapers his best available option for his message to spread rapidly and to the widest possible audience. Knowing full well members of the US Legation read Honduran periodicals and used them to gauge Honduran affairs, Carías's allies strategically placed and wrote pieces designed to create an image of him as both an unmistakable friend of the United States and an irreplaceable leader for Honduras.

Newspaper reports from both the independently owned and operated *El Cronista* and the paper of Carías's National party faction *La Epoca*, which was launched on July 1, 1933, published a host of articles aimed at depicting the United States and Carías as the closest of friends.[32] For instance, when a banquet was given in honor of Honduras's new president at the US Legation on March 1, 1933, *El Cronista* reported the event represented a special US-Carías relationship. The next day the paper stated the occasion "expresses to the Honduran people that its high representative can depend not only on their support and on that of a sister and neighboring nation but… the great federation of the north," and printed Lay's toast. Lay also felt the festivities went extraordinarily well because thirty-eight of the forty invitations issued were accepted, which he considered "a most unusual record in Honduras where the government officials are habitually shy of formal social functions." There can be little doubt the high turnout was largely due to orders from the Presidential Palace, which wanted to put its best foot forward with the United States. A few months later, when Carías returned the social favor and invited Lay to a formal "banquet" Lay's toast was quoted in *El Cronista* shortly thereafter. Lay's

[32] Lay to Secretary of State, August 8, 1933, 815.00-General Conditions/43, RG 59, NA.

statement there was "proof of the genuine friendship which has always existed between our two countries" was the focus of this media coverage.[33]

A real public relations victory for Carías took place in June 1934 when the US military provided the survivors of the flooded town of Ocotepeque with sixty-five tents to shelter them from the elements. When US Minister Lay learned of the disaster he quickly sent a telegram to US officials in Panama informing them of the destruction of the town, and that tents were needed by the many residents of Ocotepeque who lacked housing and were suffering under horrible living conditions. Eleven bombers were soon dispatched by the US military to Honduras with the requested tents. Because of legal reasons and not wanting to appear to interfere in the affairs of Honduras too much, the tents were "loaned" to the Honduran Government until they would be no longer needed. On June 16, 1934, the bombers arrived in Tegucigalpa and were greeted by Carías and other major Honduran officials. Carías personally thanked the pilots for their efforts and entertained them at the Presidential Palace. Not wanting to miss an opportunity to portray himself as a friend of the United States he and a "large local crowd" sent the pilots off when they left the next day to return to the Canal Zone. The Honduran newspaper coverage of the United States' aid to Honduras was exhaustive and presented the exchange in a positive light. *La Epoca* especially described the United States' generosity in extravagant terms and left no reason to

[33] "The Banquet Last Night in the American Legation in Tegucigalpa," and "International Cordiality," *El Cronista*, March 2, 1933, p. 3; and Lay to Secretary of State, March 3, 1933, 815.001-Carias, Tiburcio/12, RG 59, NA. The Honduran government wanted the banquet remembered for posterity and had it recorded in its official historical overview (Bermudez M., *Memoria presentada al congresso nacional…*, p. 31). For other examples of Carías's early attempts to impress the United States through overt praise see: "The Reception Yesterday at the American Legation," *El Cronista*, July 5, 1934, p. 3; and "The President of a grand nation," *El Cronista*, July 4, 1935, p. 1. An example of Carías appealing directly to Roosevelt to court his favor can be found in Bermudez M., *Memoria presentada al congresso nacional…*, pp. 39-40.

question the strong friendship Carías and the people of Honduras enjoyed with Roosevelt and the United States.[34]

**The United States Interferes in Honduran Affairs**

Carías's efforts to convince the United States he was a leader worthy of its appreciation were unquestionably successful, because within a matter of a few months of taking office there were important changes to US foreign policy toward Honduras that strengthened Carías's power. As previously argued, Carías was known amongst US officials as a stabilizing force in Honduran politics, but his reputation was earned not won, and this was something US observers understood well. Carías was credited with taking preemptive action against potential unrest. During the municipal elections of late 1933, the government made efforts to assure tranquility and prohibited the sale of alcohol and guns before voting day. Higgins thought this historically common practice in Honduras along with Carías's decision to continue martial law throughout 1933 were some of the main reasons why the elections "were carried through calmly and without

[34] Lay to Secretary of State, July 13, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/54, RG 59, NA. For newspaper coverage of the US assistance to flood victims and Carías's representation as a friend of the United States see: *La Epoca*, June, 14-16, 1934; *El Cronista*, June 14-16, 1934; and *El Ciudadano*, June 16, 1934. For examples of the interesting exchange that took place between several Departments of the US government on the legal complications of gifting, loaning, and selling the tents to Honduras see Gibson to Secretary of State, October 6, 1934, 815.48-FLOODS, 1934/18, RG 59, NA; Hull to George H. Dern, n.d., 815.48 FLOODS- 1934/19, RG 59, NA; and Dern to Secretary of State, November 9, 1934, enclosed in 815.48 FLOODS- 1934/19, RG 59, NA. Some interesting articles from *El Cronista* present Carías as being at ease with the US military. See: "Tomorrow 5 American hydroplanes will arrive at Amapala bringing tents for the survivors of Ocotepeque," *El Cronista*, June 14, 1934, pp. 1 and 8; "The American hydroplanes arrived at Toncontín airfield," *El Cronista*, June 15, 1934, p. 1; and "Eleven American military planes arrived this morning at Toncontín airfield," *El Cronista*, June 16, 1934, p. 6. Carías also proved himself capable of making use of other tragic situations to improve his image with the United States and his fellow countrymen. As many skilled politicians throughout the world have shown, national disasters can strengthen political standing and ultimately benefit political careers if they are managed correctly. Carías used the flooding of 1933 and 1934 to just such an advantage. "Seven Killed By Storm in Honduran Capital," *The Sun*, August 20, 1933, p. 2; and "FLOOD IN TEGUCALPA," *New York Times*, October 1, 1933, p. 25. Honduras has often suffered horrible flooding during its history, but the floods of 1933 were among the worse, and US officials recognized it. For a report from the US Legation on the flooding see: Higgins to Secretary of State, November 2, 1933, 815.00 General Conditions/46, RG 59, NA. For Honduran coverage of the disaster see: "A pathetic and touching relation of the destruction of the city of Ocotepeque," *El Cronista*, June 14, 1934, pp. 1 and 8; and several articles in *El Cronista*, June 16, 1934, p. 1. Most importantly see the from Carías to Roosevelt reproduced in "Messages of international fraternity," *El Cronista,* June 14, 1934, p. 3.

disorders beyond a few street brawls here and there."[35] Lay felt Carías's vigilance for "any signs of discontent" helped him stabilize the country and prevented things from getting beyond his control.[36] By November 1934, most US officials believed Carías was in "absolute control" of the country because he was able to dominate Congress through an "overwhelming triumph for the Nationalist party" in congressional elections, and the Liberals were too disorganized and bankrupt to create any trouble.[37] The Honduran Liberals and at least one member of the State Department felt Carías might have exercised such a commanding position over the country because during the October elections the government may have engaged in voter intimidation. There were numerous reports Honduran planes flew over Tegucigalpa around election time, and Honduran military circulated pro-Nationalist propaganda. None of these developments seemed to bother the US government. Instead, US policymakers appeared somewhat satisfied that Honduras was peaceful regardless of how the government promoted it and whether Carías was displaying authoritarian tendencies.[38]

One of the most important changes to US policy toward Honduras made as a result of Carías's new reputation as a stabilizer was the reworking of the US arms embargo. Ironically, the embargo had been in place since March 1924 and was largely an effort to lessen the destructive capacities of Carías and his then fellow revolutionaries during their siege of Tegucigalpa. In May 1934, the State Department decided to lift the embargo it had formerly instituted to restrain

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[35] Higgins to Secretary of State, December 1, 1933, 815.00/4593, RG 59, NA.

[36] Lay to Secretary of State, August 3, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/55, RG 59, NA.

[37] Gibson to Secretary of State, November 1, 1934, 815.00/4604, RG 59, NA. See also: Higgins to Secretary of State, December 1, 1933, 815.00/4593, RG 59, NA.

[38] Gibson to Secretary of State, November 1, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/58, RG 59, NA. US American Colonel Emmanuel Lombard was even sent to congratulate new Honduran military officer graduates. See: Juan Manuel Galvez, *Memoria Guerra, Marina, y Aviación, 1934-1935* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1935), pp. 3-16.

Carías because it was no longer functional and obviously paternalistic. In a State Department memorandum, Lawrence Higgins provided his colleagues with a list of five reasons why he felt the embargo should be raised. The first reason he gave was his feeling the conditions "for which the embargoes were established" had "ceased to exist." According to Higgins, the Honduran government was "stable," and Carías had "a strong military and political hold on the country." Additionally, in his opinion the embargo was not "consistent" with the Good Neighbor policy because it represented a "parental" approach to Latin America. Concerning the embargo he wrote, "Isn't this treating them a little like children?" Higgins went on to make three more pertinent points chiefly concerning the ineffectiveness of the policy, but his main argument was that "Complete peace now prevails in Honduras," so it was unnecessary.[39]

Within a few weeks Higgins's sentiments about the embargo were adopted as US policy, and Welles instructed Lay to ask Carías if he wanted the US government to lift it.[40] Of course, Carías was more than happy to have the embargo eliminated because it made it more difficult for his government to secure the weapons he needed to control Honduras, but Carías's government made one exception clear. Honduran officials informed the State Department they desired the embargo to be raised except in the case of "long range arms [rifles]."[41] The only plausible explanation for this reservation was that the Honduran government knew such weapons could be effectively used against it and wanted to avoid facing an enemy armed with modern rifles. Fully cognizant of the reasoning behind the Honduran government's reluctance to allow the importation of such dangerous weapons, the Department presented another option.

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[39] Higgins to Edwin C. Wilson, May 25, 1934, 815.113/492, RG 59, NA.

[40] Sumner Welles to Lay, June 6, 1934, 815.113/492, RG 59, NA.

[41] Lay to Secretary of State, July 5, 1934, 815.113/494, RG 59, NA.

Rather than lifting the embargo on all but "long range arms," the State Department made Carías an even better offer. Welles instructed Lay to inform Carías that:

> this Government will continue the embargo as at present, except that licenses for the exportation of arms and munitions will be issued in the future only after the Department has been informed by the Honduran Legation in Washington that the prospective shipment has the approval of the Honduran Government.

In other words, anyone in Honduras could apply for arms in the United States, but only in cases when the Honduran government gave its consent would the purchase be allowed by the State Department.[42] This proposal eventually became US policy and helped to steel Carías against all potential domestic and foreign foes throughout his tenure in office. With this policy, the Carías Administration could literally decide who had what weapons and how many, a situation that made it impossible for oppositionists to match his firepower and thus stifled revolution. Because potential revolutionaries were impotent to face Carías's forces on the field of battle, Carías would later be in a commanding position to institute *continuismo* and have little fear of revolutionary backlash. In its efforts to stabilize Honduras and appear more in tune with the Good Neighbor policy, the State Department essentially placed an arms embargo only on Carías's enemies, and therefore was guilty of directly interfering in Honduran affairs, and helping to sustain Carías.

**US American Pilots**

Another important change the United States made in its foreign policy toward Honduras was its position on Honduran air power. Since the revolution of 1924, when Carías first employed the use of airplanes in Honduran combat, the US government exhibited serious

[42] Welles to Lay, July 30, 1934, 815.113/494, RG 59, NA. See also: Lay to Secretary of State, July 13, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/54, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, August 24, 1934, 815.113/497, RG 59, NA.

reservations about the new war making technology.[43] It was no secret in Honduras or among US policymakers US citizens flew US made planes that were responsible for the deaths of Hondurans during the War of Revindication and more recently in the Liberal revolution of 1932-1933.[44] As previously explored in chapters three and six, these actions not only terrified the Honduran populace but also contributed to anti-Americanism. Because eliminating anti-US sentiment was one of the main reasons behind the adoption of the Good Neighbor policy, it is no surprise that the Roosevelt Administration viewed the development of a Honduran Air Force with US made planes and US American pilots as conflicting with its overall strategy of nonintervention in Latin America. Although US reservations about a Honduran Air Force piloted by US aviators were never abandoned during Carías's presidency, these objections never prevented Carías from achieving his air power goals.

During Carías's presidency, the United States never once prohibited US pilots from flying Honduran military airplanes or blocked the sale of US military aircraft to Honduras, despite the philosophical foundations of the Good Neighbor policy not to interfere in the affairs of its southerly neighbors. Steve C. Ropp and Marvin Barahona argue the US government supported the development of Carías's armed forces before the beginning of World War II, and

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[43] In *Correspondencia Varia 1922-1923,* Ministerio de Guerra Marina y Aviación, Archivos, Escuela Militar de Aplicaciones, there is a report written for the Honduran government explaining the story of US American D. Ivan Lamb's attempt to create a Honduran air force as early as 1921 and 1922. Lamb's efforts to bring air power to Honduras failed due to lack of funds, expertise, and supply chain issues. However, the episode is an import part of Honduras's aerial history and should not be overlooked by interested scholars.

[44] Higgins to Secretary of State, December 21, 1933, 815.248/58, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, January 27, 1933, 815.248/39, RG 59, NA. In putting down the Liberal revolution of 1932-1933 US American Guy Mahoney and New Zealander Lowell Yerex dropped a few bombs in Carías's employ that "consisted of large milk cans filled with nuts, bolts, and other metallic junk, and a stick of dynamite stuck in the middle of it…The fuses were cut to a burn time corresponding to the expected drop altitude, so that the bombs exploded just about ground level." They were supposedly "extremely effective" (Philip Schleit, *Shelton's Barefoot Airlines* [Annapolis, Maryland: Fishergate Publishing Co., 1982], pp. 13-14).

that "under U.S. auspices, a process of 'creeping professionalization' began to occur."[45] This dissertation adds complexity to these authors' findings by asserting that only Washington's acquiescence, not support, was given begrudgingly before 1938 to Carías's military. During the five years between 1933-1938, Carías's Air Force was quietly and somewhat reluctantly sanctioned by the State Department, because it provided Carías an unmatchable and incredibly powerful tool to pacify his historically troubled country. The United States did not appreciate being associated with or supplementing Carías's air arsenal, but the alternative of a weaker Carías or the possibility he might develop closer ties to fascist governments to replace US participation was deemed even less desirable, so the US government decided not to intercede in Carías's efforts. A distinction should be made between overt US backing and unenthusiastic acceptance for the Honduras Air Force.

The United States made its decision to back Carías's Air Force despite its misgivings early in his presidency, and did what it could to expedite its development while keeping a low profile. In May 1933, the Honduran government made overtures to the State Department for the purpose of purchasing three used US military planes, because it could not afford securing new ones, but the State Department turned down the Honduran proposal and instead told the Honduran representative to secure the desired planes from private sources in the United States.[46] Several months later, when the Honduran government found the planes it wanted to buy there was a snag, because they were not outfitted for war and lacked "armament and bomb racks." Believing it would be better if the planes were purchased in the United States rather than in

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[45] Steve C. Ropp, "The Honduran Army in Sociopolitical Evolution of the Honduran State," *The Americas* vol. 30 no. 4 (April 1974): pp. 504-528; and Marvin Barahona, *Honduras en el signol XX: Una* síntesis histórica (Teguciglapa: Editorial Guaymuras, 2005), p. 103. See also: Ropp, "In Search of the New Soldier: Junior Officers and the Prospects of Social Reform in Panama, Honduras, and Nicaragua" (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 1971), pp. 64-70.

[46] Lay to Secretary of State, May 10, 1933, 815.00 General Conditions/40, RG 59, NA.

Europe and would "doubtless be an effective weapon in discouraging or suppressing revolutions," the Department not only allowed the sale to take place, but also gave permission for the planes to be equipped for war so the Honduran government could avoid the added expense of doing so in Honduras.[47] Officials in the War Department agreed with the State Department's decision to arm Carías with planes. While keeping the War Department informed of developments concerning Carías's new Air Force, Harris told his superiors the United States' support of Carías allowed him to find new ways of dealing with "any future revolutions," and he felt all revolts would certainly fail unless the revolutionists found a way to dispose of the newly acquired planes.[48]

When the US built planes finally arrived in Honduras on December 14, 1933, Welles made it known throughout the State Department and Carías's foreign ministry the United States would not look kindly on US pilots participating in violent acts while in Honduras. Even with this warning it was clear to the Department that it was "highly probable that Americans" would "participate in military air operations in the event of a war or insurrection," because there were no Honduran pilots capable of competently flying the planes without further training.[49] Lay expected US pilots employed by Transportes Aéreos del Continente Americano (TACA) to ultimately be forced to fly for the Honduran government if war ever broke out or lose their jobs

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[47] Richard M. deLambert to Wilson, August 14, 1933, 815.248/51, RG 59, NA; and Jefferson Caffery to Lay, October 10, 1933, 815.248/56, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, May 10, 1933, 815.00 General Conditions/40, RG 59, NA. See also: Lay to Secretary of State, April 24, 1933, 815.248/40, RG 59, NA; and Hull to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 27, 1933, 815.248/41, RG 59, NA.

[48] MID 2548-144-1, Harris, December 28, 1933, "Equipment," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 10, RG 165, NA. The United States also allowed the sale of 250 30 lb. aerial bombs to Honduras. See: MID 2548-144-3, Harris, January 3, 1934, "Acquisitions in Equipment," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 10, RG 165, NA.

[49] Welles to Lay, January 6, 1934, 815.248/58, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, January 16, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/48, RG 59, NA.

if they refused since TACA and Carías were so closely connected. Additionally, Honduran governmental records indicate it planned on using pilots employed by private corporations in its Air Force in the event of hostilities as early as 1933.[50] Further State Department and US military angst was directed at Captain Harold A. White, a US citizen who took a job with the Honduran government as aviation instructor for the Honduran military. White's activities in Honduras bothered the US military so much an investigation was requested to see if he broke any US laws and whether he should face "immediate discharge" for his actions.[51] In the end there was little the Department could do to prevent US pilots from taking part in Honduran military operations, because there were no laws preventing them from doing so, but events in Honduras certainly did not motivate the US government to legislate any.[52]

**The US-Honduran Reciprocal Trade Agreement**

One of the most important and most commonly examined interactions between the United States and Carías was the corroboration of the Reciprocal Trade Agreement in December 1935. For years after the Agreement was completed, several US scholars, who defended the Good Neighbor policy as a truly new and well-meaning development in US-Latin American relations, saw the Agreement as an innocent and well-meaning attempt at jumpstarting the economy of the Americas during the Great Depression.[53] As historians began revising their

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[50] *Licencias Para Aviadores, 1933,* Ministerio de Guerra, Marina, y Aviación, Archivos, Escuela Militar de Aplicaciones.

[51] MID 2548-144-4, January 17, 1934, "Activities of Reserve Officer," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 10, RG 165, NA. See also: Gibson to Secretary of State, December 20, 1934, 815.248/62, RG 59, NA. For another example of a US American being threatened with penalties from the US Legation for fighting in the nascent Honduran Air Force can be found in Schleit, p. 15.

[52] Lay to Secretary of State, January 17, 1934, 815.248/59, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, May 31, 1934, 815.248/61, RG 59, NA.

[53] Scholars defending the Reciprocal Trade Agreements between the United States and Latin America can be found in: J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960* (Austin: University of

interpretations of the United States' relationship with the rest of the world, so too did many historians' opinion of the Good Neighbor policy and the Agreement. For the last thirty years, the historical consensus on the US-Honduran Reciprocal Trade Agreement has been that Honduras was pressured during negotiations, and only accepted it because Carías wanted to please the United States, and coax it to look approvingly on his regime and his efforts to institute *continuismo*. Furthermore, most historians agree the arrangement lowered Honduran governmental revenues and helped to muscle out the United States' trade competitors in Honduras thus retarding Honduras's economic growth.[54]

This study concurs with the modern consensus on the Reciprocal Trade Agreement and the findings of Dario A. Euraque, Mario Argueta, and Dick Steward, but adds complexity to the discussion in several ways. It argues Carías expended considerable domestic political capital to see it realized, and that this undermined the power of his regime by alienating important segments of the Honduran population. Furthermore, it refutes Thomas M. Leonard's argument the Agreement "meant very little economically," and Thomas J. Dodd's assertion Honduran industries were relatively unscathed by it with hard evidence from State Department records.[55] All too often students studying the relationship between the United States and authoritarian

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Texas Press, 1962), pp. 112, 123, and 468-469; Bryce Wood, *The Making of the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. ix, 136, and 286-287; and Mark T. Gilderhus, *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations Since 1889* (Wilmington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), pp. 85-87.

[54] All studies of the Agreement with Honduras are brief but some of the best are: Dick Steward, *Trade and Hemisphere: The Good Neighbor Policy and Reciprocal Trade* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), pp. 212-214; Dario A. Euraque, "Merchants and industrialists in northern Honduras: The making of a national bourgeoisie…" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1990) pp. 245-248; Mario Argueta, *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras, 2008), pp. 175-183; and Leonard, "Central America and the United States: Overlooked Foreign Policy Objectives," *The Americas* vol. 50, No. 1 (June 1993): pp. 1-30. For two excellent studies of Honduran economic development see: Euraque, "Merchants and industrialists in northern Honduras: The making of a national bourgeoisie…;" and Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[55] Leonard, *The History of Honduras,* p. 117; and Dodd, p. 130.

regimes underestimate the importance of internal politics of countries other than the United States. This common oversight undermines the power of everyday citizens vis-à-vis their dictatorial government and over simplifies national histories. In regards to the United States it gives it an undeserved share of power in the affairs of others, and perpetuates the erroneous idea that the country is the only major catalyst in world events. However, because Carías forced the Agreement through the Honduran Congress and knowingly incurred the resentment of the Honduran people for doing so, the episode demonstrates the importance Carías placed on the United States' power and his desire to see it satisfied. The signing of the Agreement represented something larger than just having the United States accept his *continuismo*. It was also a reflection of Carías's prior experience with the ire of the United States, and the Honduran knowledge that when the Yankees were displeased they were liable to start interfering in their affairs. Carías weighed his options: please the United States by signing the Agreement or risk losing domestic support by allowing more economic competition between the US and Honduran economies. Ultimately, he chose the latter and was able to weather the political and revolutionary fallout at least partially because the United States appreciated his decision and increased its support for his regime.

This analysis of the US-Honduran Reciprocal Trade Agreement also illuminates the nature of the Good Neighbor policy and explores the identity of US policymakers. It argues US officials pressured Honduras into the Agreement with the sincere belief that it would lead to further economic development through increased trade for both countries. However, as economic data was gathered over the months and years after the Agreement was instituted and demonstrated Honduras's economy and governmental revenues suffered due to lower tariffs, US authorities were extremely reticent to admit to the Agreement's negative effects on Honduras.

The economic data available to US officials quickly showed an increasingly disparaging financial situation for Honduras, but they were loath to analyze the data objectively because of their identity as modernizing and analytically superior US Americans. The paternalistic attitude of the policymakers created a kind of mental block that prevented them from seeing US policy as either imperial or detrimental toward Honduras. This understanding of the Agreement shows that while the US government had the best of intentions, the evidence supports the contention that during the Good Neighbor era not only was the Roosevelt Administration consciously manipulating Central American economies, but its strategies in the region differed little from those of prior administrations.

From the outset, the Agreement faced considerable obstacles to its formation in Honduras. When Lay first informed the Honduran government the United States was seeking to bring about a mutually beneficial trade agreement between the two countries in mid-1934, he was apprehensive about its potential for success. Lozano explained to Lay he "was doubtful that a trade agreement between the two countries could be negotiated that would accomplish much toward increasing the market for United States products," or that any Honduran commodities besides bananas would "find a substantial market in the United States if granted concessions." Additionally, Lay felt Lozano communicated to him the potential problems the proposed agreement might create for Honduras's foreign markets (such as Germany's) and thus make it undesirable from the Honduran point of view.[56] In other words, because Honduras was already saturated with US American products, and the United States already consuming the vast majority of Honduras's predominant export of bananas both men felt finding mutually advantageous positions in negotiations would be difficult if not impossible.

[56] Lay to Secretary of State, August 10, 1934, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, *1934*, (hereafter *FRUS*, with appropriate year, volume, and page numbers) vol. 5, pp. 373-374.

The Carías Administration was thus placed in an awkward position, if it refused to negotiate with the United States it faced risking its approval, but it agreed to the United States' terms it would lose valuable revenue during a worldwide depression. Not wanting to disappoint the United States, Lozano met with Lay a few days after the initial exchange and proposed a different plan that would protect Honduran governmental revenues while providing US goods improved access to the Honduran market. Lozano was "inclined to favor securing…a super-tax on products from countries that import only small amounts of or no Honduran bananas." Lay felt this plan or something like it would work toward improving the position of US goods, but the State Department continued to seek its goal of reducing tariffs between the two countries.[57] Yet as the weeks dragged on the Hondurans continued to courteously push back against the United States' proposal because Honduran officials felt, "Any slight advantage that might be gained by an increase in exports of a few Honduran products to the United States created by lower United States duties would not compensate Honduras indirectly for this loss in customs revenue."[58]

As the months dragged on negotiations continued but with limited results, and eventually an "impasse" was reached that threatened the entire Agreement. It seems "a number of Deputies in the Honduran Congress" who were concerned about "local industries, would not consent to any reductions on soaps of all kinds, butter, cotton shirts, eggs, hog lard, wheat flour," and a number of other domestically produced products. Lozano also refused to push the matter any further in Congress because it had already rejected some of the tariff reductions he had "proposed" earlier. "Finding it impossible to carry on satisfactory negotiations with Señor Lozano," Lay went directly to Carías to try and push something through. However, rather than

[57] Lay to Secretary of State, August 24, 1934, *FRUS*, *1934*, vol. 5, pp. 376-377; and Lay to Secretary of State, August 27, 1934, *FRUS*, *1934*, vol. 5, pp. 377-378.

[58] Lay to Secretary of State, September 7, 1934, *FRUS*, *1934*, vol. 5, pp. 379-380. See also: Gibson to Secretary of State, October 3, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/57, RG 59, NA.

finding Carías willing and able to force his will on Congress as he had seen him do in the past, Lay felt Carías did "not wish to antagonize any of the deputies" because he needed "all the support he" could "muster in congress for his plan to extend his term of office." Carías eventually sidestepped Lay's appeals to intervene on the United States' behalf by creating a special commission of "three members of the Committee on Finance of Congress" to look into the issue, which helped to buy him time and avoid compromising.[59]

Raleigh A. Gibson, the US Chargé d'Affaires in Honduras, knew what the United States was asking Honduras to give up would hurt local industry, and that the Agreement seriously jeopardized Honduras's political stability. Gibson informed Washington the US "Mission" felt there was "justice in the refusal to lower duty on eggs, lard, and flour due to the protection needed by the small producers of these articles, and that the fact the flour mills would find it very difficult to compete with the American article." He also reported the Agreement had the potential to divide Congress even further than it already was, and the "Honduran public" might become "bitter" if the matter was not dealt with delicately.[60]

In late August 1935, negotiations suddenly improved when the Honduran government became much more agreeable to the United States' proposals. The new US minister in Honduras, Leo J. Keena, reported to Washington the Honduran government was "willing and even eager to give prompt and favorable consideration to the Agreement." He felt this was due to the "national political situation."[61] He did not clarify what the "situation" was, but it conceivably concerned the growing assurance Carías would succeed in changing the constitution and retain the

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[59] Lay to Secretary of State, February 28, 1935, *FRUS*, *1935*, vol. 4, pp. 733-735. See also: Lay to Secretary of State, February 14, 1935, 815.00/4611, RG 59, NA.

[60] Gibson to Secretary of State, May 17, 1935, *FRUS*, *1935*, vol. 4, pp. 737-739. See also: Lay to Secretary of State, March 5, 1935, 815.00-General Conditions/62, RG 59, NA.

[61] Keena to Secretary of State, August 30, 1935, 815.00-General Conditions/68, RG 59, NA.

presidency beyond his original allotment of four years. Sensing the writing on the wall, the Honduran Congress most likely fell in line behind Carías when they realized he would most assuredly remain President, and punish them if they failed to support him when he did. Additionally, Keena felt "the path for accomplishment had been cleared and made straight by the "'Good Neighbor' policy."[62] Although Keena may have felt the good relations between the countries emanated from the Good Neighbor, it is more likely that Carías did not want to give the United States reason to abandon then current US policy and start interfering in his affairs. In other words, while Keena may have felt the Agreement was a kind of thank you to the United States for the Good Neighbor policy, it was probably an attempt by Carías to influence US policy to see it maintained. Whatever the case, the Agreement was signed December 18, 1935 and was quickly scorned by the Honduran people.[63]

Because Carías dominated the press even before he instituted his *continuismo*, there was little public criticism of the Treaty, but there is still considerable evidence Hondurans resented it and were upset with Carías's actions. A number of articles were published to try and convince the populace of the benefits of the Agreement, and they predictably spelled out the forecasted profits to be gained by increased trade.[64] In mid-January 1936, *El Cronista* published an article specifically dealing with the Reciprocal Trade Agreement, which contained US American oppositional commentary and explored the beliefs of prominent US politicians the Agreement posed a danger to US agriculture. For people who enjoy freedom of the presses, such an article

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[62] Keena to Secretary of State, January 31, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA.

[63] The full text of the Agreement was released to the Honduran public in *La Gaceta*, February 19, 1936, p. 1.

[64] One of the best examples can be found in "Buy from those that buy from us," *El Cronista*, December 10, 1934, p. 10. See also: "The U.S.A. Celebrates Commercial Treaties with Central America," *El Cronista*, October 4, 1934, p. 1.

may not seem noteworthy, but it was a subtle method by which the Carías regime was able to acknowledge and counter domestic opposition to the Agreement without admitting there was any in the first place. Recognizing this, Keena reported to Washington the article "suggest[s] that there is some opposition to the Trade Agreement in the United States to counteract the opinion of those in Honduras who consider the advantages obtained under the Agreement too one-sided."[65] Despite the efforts of his Administration, Carías's attempts at trying to sell the Agreement to the Honduran people were largely unsuccessful.

As the months wore on after the Treaty's signing, US officials became even more aware of Honduran animosity toward it, and slowly came to the conclusion the Hondurans had reason for resenting it. Facing the fact that six Honduran congressmen voted against adopting the Agreement in a Congress considered to be made up of Carías's sycophants, the US Legation admitted "many Hondurans" opposed it.[66] Obviously concerned about how the United States benefited from the Agreement, Welles ordered the US Legation in Tegucigalpa to study and make regular reports on its effects on Honduras.[67] Although information on the Agreement's effects on Honduras was slow to emerge and took years to fully develop, the US Legation's reports between 1936 and 1941 paint a dismal picture for Honduras.

In 1936, when data was just starting to be collected on the Agreement's effects on the Honduran economy, US officials exhibited a cautious optimism in Honduras. In December, Vice Consul and Secretary of the US Legation, Walter W. Hoffman prepared a detailed yet admittedly

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[65] Keena to Secretary of State, January 17, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA; and "THE COMMERCIAL TREATY BETWEEN HONDURAS AND THE USA IS DEBATED IN WASHINGTON," *El Cronista*, January 15, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, January 17, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA.

[66] Keena to Secretary of State, January 24, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, July 8, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA.

[67] Welles to Keena, August 10, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA.

incomplete report summarizing the economic situation of Honduras. He was aware the Honduran government was "regretting the loss of revenue caused by lowered duties," but criticized the Hondurans for their supposed shortsightedness for not "realizing that an increased volume of imports serves actually to raise the level of customs collections." Evidently plagued by cognitive dissonance caused by his belief in the inherit virtuousness of the United States and the negative consequences of the Agreement in Honduras, he went on to write "at first sight…the trade agreement was operating in a very one-sided manner and that all the advantage lay with the United States," but the economic activity witnessed "in recent months" was "safe to assume was as much attributable to the trade agreement as was the previous falling off."[68] Hoffman apparently wanted to report to Washington the Agreement was benefiting Honduras, but was unable to do so because the information available to him simply did not support his desired results. In his mind Honduran ignorance was to blame for the country's negative opinion of the Agreement, but at the same time he was unable to conclusively prove to himself it was beneficial to Honduras.[69] However, only a few weeks later, when more data was available to him, he conceded there was "no evidence that exports from Honduras" had been "stimulated by the agreement."[70]

A year later, data collected by the US Legation in Tegucigalpa continued to confirm only the United States benefited from the Agreement. In January 1938, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, Fred K. Salter reported to the State Department "The past year was not a particularly satisfactory

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[68] Walter W. Hoffman, Memorandum, n.d., enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, December 12, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA.

[69] Hoffman, Memorandum, n.d., enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, December 12, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA.

[70] Hoffman, Memorandum, December 29, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, December 31, 1936, 631, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 7, RG 84, NA. See also: Keena to Secretary of State, January 8, 1937, 815.00/4724, RG 59, NA.

one for the commerce and industries of Honduras." According to Salter, Honduras faced a menacing trade imbalance in 1937. He wrote:

> The value of the country's foreign trade for the fiscal year ended on July 31, 1937, was slightly more than 20 million dollars, of which $10,287,271.29 represented imports and $9,641,483, exports. The foreign trade during the previous fiscal year was valued at $17,938,340.21, with imports aggregating $8,723,130.21 and exports valued at $9,215,210.

US officials could all see the Agreement had produced no tangible beneficial results for Honduras, but rather than admitting it was poor economic policy for Honduras to continue to follow it other factors were blamed for Honduras's failing economy. Salter felt limited "revolutionary activities," the Honduran-Nicaraguan boundary dispute, and the banana disease sigatoka were the real causes of Honduras's troubles. In the end, rather than write a negative assessment of the Agreement in 1937, Salter stated it was "impracticable to analyze" it because of the difficulty in measuring these inputs.[71]

While the US government may not have been willing to fully affirm the Agreement hurt the Honduran economy and reduced governmental revenues, certain Hondurans had no problem telling US officials that it did. Members of the Carías Administration told US Minister John D. Erwin it was "beneficial to the American Republics," but outside of Tegucigalpa, particularly on the North Coast where foreign trade was a part of everyday life, it was a different story.[72] US Vice Consul in La Ceiba, Edgar L. McGinnis, Jr., knew from first hand experience "Honduran officials believe[d] that Honduras was out-traded by the United States, inasmuch as the former received no substantial concessions from the United States that she did not already enjoy."[73] In

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[71] Fred K. Salter, "ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. HONDURAS," January 11, 1938, 600, vol. 4, Honduras, Box 33, RG 84, NA.

[72] Erwin to Secretary of State, January 31, 1938, 631, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 34, RG 84, NA.

[73] Edgar L. McGinnis, Jr., "DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND HONDURAS FOR THE QUARTER ENDING DEC. 31, 1937," January 7, 1938, 631,

Puerto Cortés, Honduran customs agents told US officials they lost revenue as a direct result of the Agreement.[74]

It was not until March 1940 that members of the US Legation were willing to admit Honduras had lost revenue and suffered economically due to the Agreement. Data collected by the US Legation in tables 1 and 2 shows that while the value of annual Honduran foreign trade varied by little more than a million dollars from 1936 to 1940 the US share of Honduran foreign trade grew at least four percent. When this is considered alongside the data from table 3 there is strong evidence that as the percentage of US trade with Honduras grew Honduran customs revenue shrank. This caused one member of the US Legation to declare "In view of this situation…there may be some justification for the claims of the Honduran Government of the loss of revenue on account of the operation of the agreement."[75]

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vol. 5, Honduras, Box 34, RG 84, NA.

[74] William M. Cramp to Secretary of State, September 30, 1938, 631, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 34, RG 84, NA.

[75] Erwin to Secretary of State, March 6, 1940, 631, vol. 4, Honduras, Box 56, RG 84, NA.

Table 1: Honduran Foreign Trade in Millions of Dollars, Erwin to Secretary of State, March 6, 1940, 631, vol. 4, Honduras, Box 56, RG 84, NA.

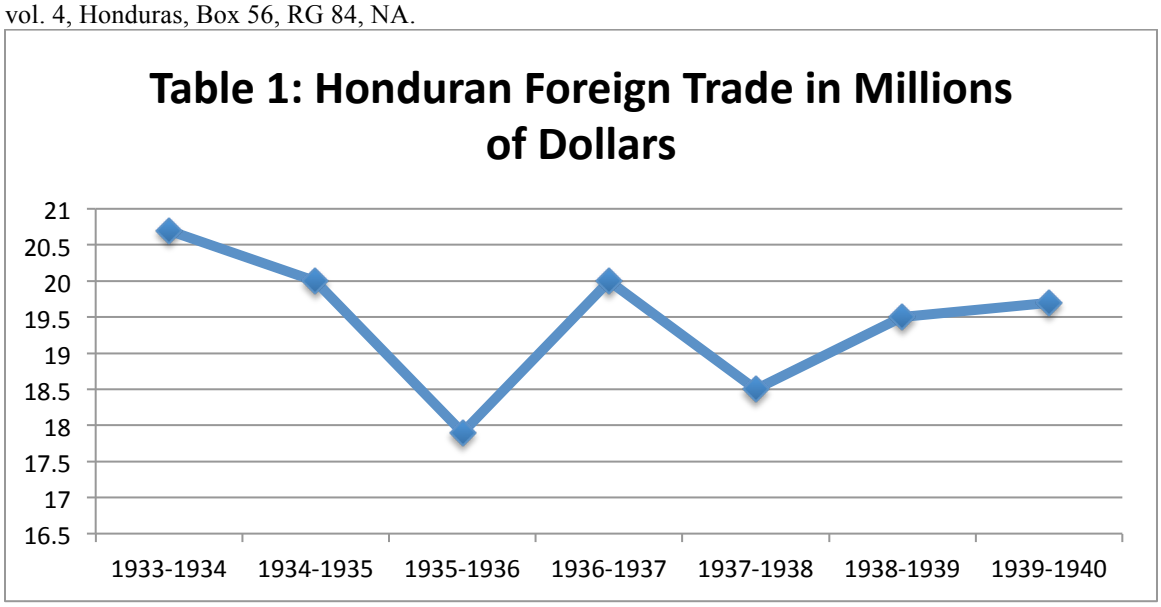



Table 2: Percentage of US Market Share of Honduran Foreign Trade, Erwin to Secretary of State, March 6, 1940, 631, vol. 4, Honduras, Box 56, RG 84, NA.

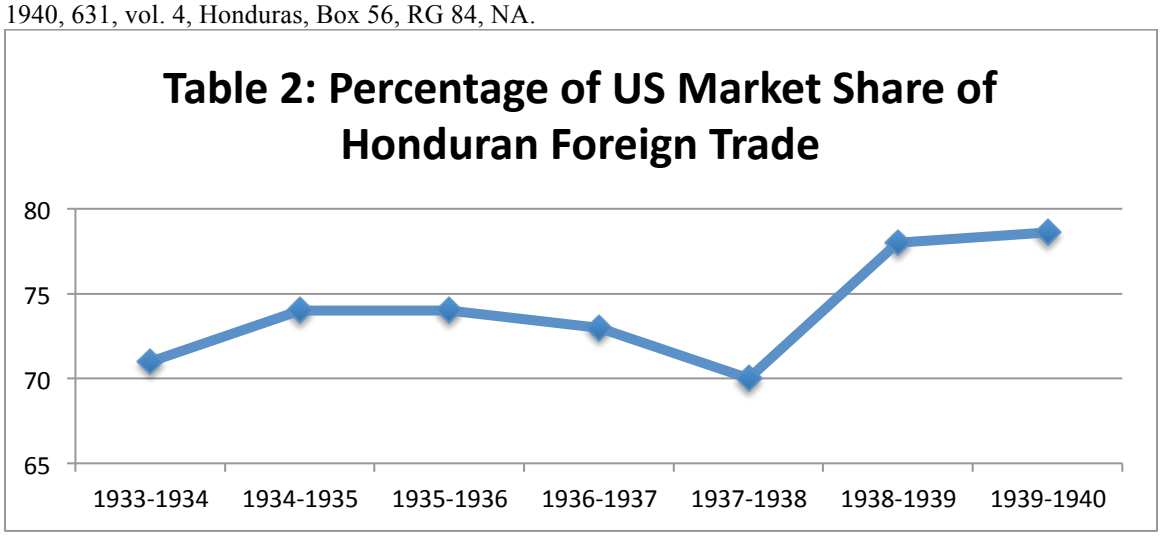
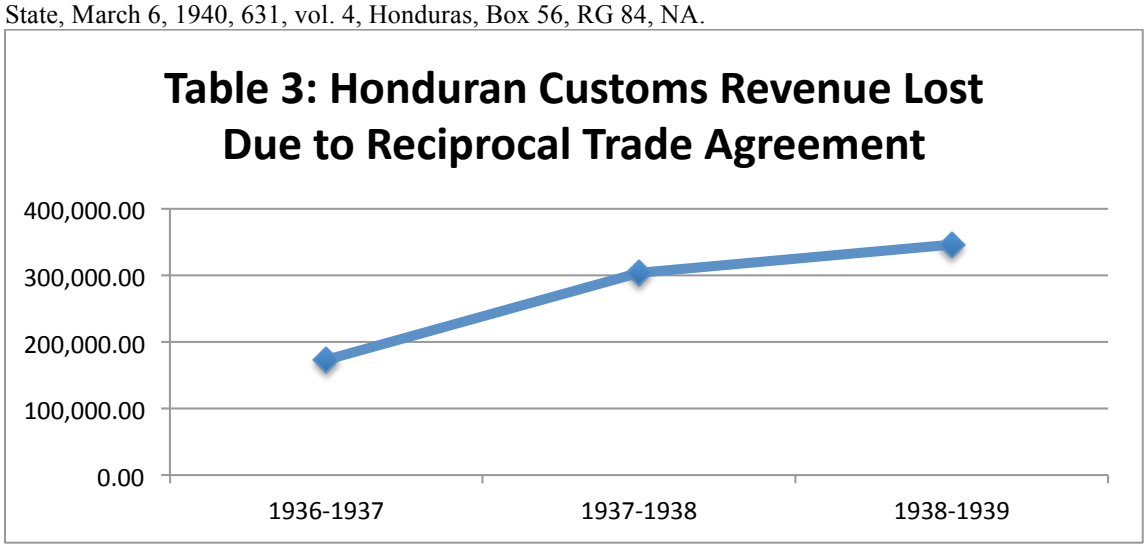


Table 3: Honduran Customs Revenue Lost Due to Reciprocal Trade Agreement, Erwin to Secretary of State, March 6, 1940, 631, vol. 4, Honduras, Box 56, RG 84, NA.




Revisionist David Green, author of *The Containment of Latin America: A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy*, believes US policy toward Latin America was thoroughly imperial during the Roosevelt Administration. Green argues US diplomats understood their policies undermined the interests of the region's inhabitants, but ignored the negative results because their primary goal was the strengthening of US capitalism. For Green, the New Dealers in Washington knew being a "Good Neighbor" meant giving Latin America its fair "share," but that this goal was only half-heartedly pursued. Green believes the Good Neighbor policy was aimed at maintaining the region's dependency on the USA by stifling nationalism and trade with nations other than the United States. He believes this was done by a concerted US determination to encourage the region to adopt reduced tariffs for US manufactured products, and the exclusion of third parties in trade negotiations between the United States and Latin America.[76] The US-Honduran Reciprocal Trade Agreement seems to verify his contention for US policy in Honduras.

[76] David Green, *The Containment of Latin America; A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 37-50.

The United States' refusal to abandon the Agreement despite the knowledge it adversely effected the Honduran economy and government's revenues speaks not only to the United States' goals in its implementation, but also the nature of the Good Neighbor policy. It seems the State Department was satisfied with the conditions it created, and largely unconcerned about the loss of revenue sustained by the Honduran government, and the damage it caused to Honduran manufacturing. Faced with unpleasant evidence and a naïve belief in their country's benevolence and modernizing capacity, US officials attributed Honduras's worsening trade imbalances with the United States to the Great Depression, revolution, and banana crop failures.[77] In the end, the United States and Carías benefited from the Agreement; the United States through increased trade, and Carías through continued US support for his dictatorial regime in the form of war material and moral support. The victims were the Honduran people who saw their nascent nonagricultural industries suffer, and their government lose potentially constructive revenue.

**The Prospect of *Continuismo***

Attempts to seize or retain power in Honduras through revolution, coups, and electoral fraud and intimidation had been a routine part of the country's history since its independence, and Carías was no stranger to this reality. In 1923, he had the presidential election stolen from him by the Lopez Gutiérrez regime. He took part in revolutions since his youth, and was the leader of the country's most bloody civil war in 1924. Conducting politics outside Honduran law was not something strange to Carías, so manipulating the constitution so that it allowed him to remain in power beyond his legally allotted limit of four years was not uncharacteristic behavior for him. For these reasons, and because his fellow Central American presidents Ubico and Martínez had already extended their presidencies by quasi-legal methods, it was no surprise to

[77] Erwin to Secretary of State, March 6, 1940, 631, vol. 4, Honduras, Box 56, RG 84, NA.

anyone Carías would try to remain the president of Honduras after his original term limit was set to expire.

In November 1934, rumors circulated in political and diplomatic circles that Carías had become so powerful he might try to remain in office and establish a "military dictatorship." This was not beyond the realm of reason; Carías by this time enjoyed a Honduran Congress that was made up of fifty-five Nationals and only four Liberals. Gibson felt conditions were such that Carías would now be "able to carry out his executive program without opposition that he met at times in the preceding Congress."[78] With Congress stacked with enough Nationals to give them unrivaled power, Carías and his Cabinet quickly began trying to decide who could be counted on to back a rewriting of the nation's constitution. By closely watching the actions of the new Congress in January 1935, Carías's inner circle was "able to make a fairly well based decision regarding the possibility of the success of their plans for the continuance in office of President Carías."[79] By February, Lay was confident Carías could accomplish any constitutional change he wished due his control of the government, the disarray of the Liberal party, and Carías's tremendous popularity throughout the country.[80] Even the US military felt there was "probably little to prevent General Carias' continuing in office, except the Hondurean's [*sic*] well known love of fighting for the flimsiest of excuses."[81]

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[78] Gibson to Secretary of State, November 1, 1934, 815.00/4605, RG 59, NA; and Gibson to Secretary of State, November 16, 1934, 815.00/4606, RG 59, NA.

[79] Keena to Secretary of State, January 7, 1935, 815.032/139, RG 59, NA.

[80] Lay to Secretary of State, February 14, 1935, 815.00/4611, RG 59, NA.

[81] MID 2657-P-505-3, Nicholas W. Campanole, July 8, 1935, "HONDURAS - Political," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA. For more on early signs of *continuismo* see: "Honduras Needs Peace," *Tegucigalpa* series 87 no. 348 (September 10, 1933): pp. 1-2; and "The President's Birthday," *Tegucigalpa* series 81 no. 323 (March 19, 1933): pp. 1 and 8; "HONDURAS EXILES CRITICS," *New York Times*, October 19, 1935, p. 7; and "Coercion in Tegucigalpa," *El Ciudadano*, October 29, 1934, enclosed in Gibson to Secretary of State, November 1, 1934, 815.00/4605, RG 59, NA.

The prospect Carías might try to extend his tenure was certainly not unwelcomed by the US Legation. Lay stated that none of the Liberals or Nationals in opposition could manage Honduras as effectively as Carías. He wrote, "I do not believe any of them could administer the country and maintain peace as well as General Carías, although he is not an outstanding, enlightened administrator and governor like Ubico in Guatemala."[82] There was a widespread appreciation for what Carías had done in Honduras during his short time in office. He and his government had performed remarkably well in the economic realm by keeping Honduras's economy alive and increasing government revenue despite the Great Depression (a fact that did not go unnoticed even by the US news media).[83] As we have seen the United States also appreciated Carías's fight against corruption, and overhauling of the Foreign Ministry, but it was most approving of the President's pacifying influence on the Honduran political scene. Although a few bandits harassed the Honduran frontiers, and the usual rumors of violence were spread, the US Legation regularly reported to Washington "In general the situation" was "calm," something it had only rarely done over the course of the last three decades.[84]

Besides his exemplary performance in the eyes of the US government, Carías also proved himself to be a responsive and loyal friend of the United States. In October 1935, when three US naval ships visited Honduras at La Ceiba on a goodwill visit, Carías sent a special representative to welcome them to make sure they were "well received."[85] More impressively, Carías made sure negotiations for the Reciprocal Trade Agreement were completed by December 1935, and thus

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[82] Lay to Secretary of State, February 14, 1935, 815.00/4611, RG 59, NA.

[83] "Honduras Takes Pride in Financial Standing," *New York Times*, April 21, 1935, p. E5.

[84] Keena to Secretary of State, August 7, 1935, 815.00-General Conditions/67, RG 59, NA.

[85] Keena to Secretary of State, October 3, 1935, 815.00-General Conditions/69, RG 59, NA.

demonstrated to the State Department he was someone who could be counted on even during difficult economic times.

In September 1935, when Antonio Bermudez M., the Honduran Foreign Minister, finally formally brought Carías's plan to extend his term in office to the attention of the US Legation, the prospect democracy and the rule of law would be trampled upon failed to worry US officials. What did discomfort them was the possibility Carías's plan would lead to civil war. For some time, the State Department was aware *continuismo* could lead the Liberals and Nationals in opposition to Carías to revolt under the justifiable reasoning Carías was breaking his covenant with the Honduran constitution and people and therefore needed to be forcibly removed from office. There were a number of strong personalities the Department knew would start trouble if Carías's plan was instituted including Liberal leader in exile Angel Zúñiga Huete and Nationalist politician Venancio Callejas.[86] Keena reminded Bermudez M. of these facts, but sensed the Presidential cabinet was unconcerned with any potential "opposition," because it believed it could be easily suppressed. In fact, Keena felt the Carías government might even foster revolution. He wrote, "steps will be taken by the Government to hurry its period of incubation," so that once it starts the government will exile the leaders and "declare martial law."[87] The US Legation was also under the impression the Liberal Party and oppositional Nationals were too weak to create a significant revolution because they were disorganized and nearly bankrupt.[88]

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[86] Keena to Secretary of State, January 7, 1935, 815.032/139, RG 59, NA.

[87] Keena to Secretary of State, September 25, 1935, 815.00-Carias, A. Tiburcio/27, RG 59, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, September 25, 1935, 815.00/4530, RG 59, NA.

[88] Lay to Secretary of State, February 14, 1935, 815.001-Carias, Tiburcio/25, RG 59, NA. See also: Keena to Secretary of State, September 25, 1935, 815.00/4530, RG 59, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, January 7, 1936, 815.032/139, RG 59, NA.

The State Department had apparently adopted the exact position the Carías Administration hoped it would, that while Carías was destabilizing the Republic by wanting to remain in office he was still the best chance for peace the country had. Bermudez M. told the US Legation Carías's *continuismo*:

> was in the best interest of Honduras; that the country needed a prolonged period of tranquility without the disturbances incidental to a change of administration and that they were confident the public would be very favorable to a project which would continue President Carías as the head of the state.[89]

There was some truth to this logic. Not only was it probable the Honduran government could put down any revolutions, but the alternatives to a prolonged Carías presidency for the United States were even less appealing than his dictatorship. According to the lessons previously learned by US officials and the way US culture had traditionally interpreted events in Honduras, the United States' stance on *continuismo* made historical sense. If Carías left power at the end of his term he would probably be replaced by a handpicked successor who might not be able to pacify the country as well as Carías had. This was the case when Paz Baraona became president in 1925; although Carías essentially chose him to be president in his stead, Paz Baraona made his own path and nearly plunged the country into civil war when he refused to be Carías's puppet. If someone outside the Carías camp became president in honest elections, it was almost impossible to believe Carías having tasted power would voluntarily sit on the sidelines. Carías had never once shown himself to be someone who willingly stayed out of the political fray.

Even with all of the success Carías enjoyed in his early presidency there were still some glaring problems Honduras continued to face in the minds of US policymakers besides the impending revolution. These troubles helped make Carías all the more appealing, because he was the nation's most powerful politician and had a promising record of promoting stability. By late

[89] Keena to Secretary of State, September 25, 1935, 815.00/4630, RG 59, NA.

1935, the Great Depression had seriously begun taking its toll on the Honduran economy, and despite all the Carías Administration's efforts there was little that could be done to alleviate the situation in the short-term. As all students of Honduran history are aware, the country's economy was based on an agricultural export model that relied on bananas for the vast majority of its production. As both the cultivation and demand for bananas decreased, so too did the government's revenue and the amount of capital available in the Republic to do business.[90] The poor economic situation contributed to a growing number of unemployed on the North Coast who were not only restless in the minds of US officials, but were also susceptible to radical philosophies. The Carías Administration had shown itself to be a willing and able ally in the United States' fight against communism within Honduran borders. Honduran officials shared intelligence with the US government on radicals, and were proactive in trying to prevent them from circulating subversive literature. The Honduran government was so successful in its anti-radical campaign that by 1935 communism had ceased to be a major source of concern for the US Legation.[91]

Although the United States took no official stance on Carías's manipulation of the Honduran constitution until well after it had been completed, its actions spoke louder than words and gave Carías the assurance he needed that it would not try to undermine his political aspirations.[92] Even when Carías's plan to rewrite the constitution was openly discussed with the

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[90] Keena to Secretary of State, November 1, 1935, 815.00/4636, RG 59, NA. An excellent source of information on how Honduras's banana export economy worked can be found in: John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

[91] Miguel Paz Baraona to William Phillips, July 27, 1933, 815.00B/58, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, September 6, 1933, 815.00B/62, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, August 24, 1933, 815.00B/59, RG 59, NA; Lay to Secretary of State, October 8, 1933, 815.00B/64, RG 59, NA; Harllee Branch to Secretary of State, August 30, 1933, 815.00B/60, RG 59, NA; and "Honduran School Closed as 'Red,'" *New York Times*, June 21, 1933, p. 8.

[92] US policymakers in Washington debated whether to take an official stance on Honduras in mid-

US Legation, and information on when and how it would be executed was known the US government refused to take an official position, which only served to endorse it.[93] It was no secret in either the United States or Honduras Ubico had received a letter from Roosevelt giving him "well-wishes" after he had extended his presidency beyond the previously legal limit, and that this was "interpreted throughout Central America as a tacit endorsement of this novel system of continuing Presidents in office."[94]

Doing nothing was one thing, but the United States went beyond aloofness and conducted itself in a fashion that endorsed Carías's efforts. In late November 1935, only two months after the Honduran government had officially discussed Carías's *continuismo* with the US Minister, the US Legation gave a ball in Carías's honor.[95] The event was wisely manipulated by the Honduran press to emphasize the close friendship the United States had with the Carías Administration.[96] The State Department did not appear to mind the Honduran government's propaganda despite the knowledge its actions were being utilized in such a way as to influence Honduran public opinion, and it continued to conduct itself in a manner that led unofficial support to Carías's *continuismo*.[97] It seems the US officials' dedication to the Good Neighbor

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December, but ultimately it was decided doing nothing was the best course of action. See: Laurence Duggan to Harry McBride, Memorandum, December 13, 1935, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, December 5, 1935, 815.918/4, RG 59, NA.

[93] Keena to Secretary of State, November 29, 1935, 815.00/4646, RG 59, NA; and MID 2657-P-312-12, Campanole, December 13, 1935, "Pre-Election Activities," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 6, RG 165, NA.

[94] MID 2657-P-312-11, Campanole, November 29, 1935, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 6, RG 165, NA.

[95] Keena to Secretary of State, November 22, 1935, 815.463/17, RG 59, NA.

[96] "The Celebration Offered to Mr. President Carías and his wife by the Minister of the United States Mr. Keena and his legation," *La Epoca*, November 21, 1933, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, November 22, 1935, 815.463/17, RG 59, NA.

[97] The US media made no secret Carías had significant domestic opposition. See: "HONDURAN EXILES

policy and its emphasis on noninterference combined with their positive opinion of Carías made them susceptible to his explanations on why he needed to remain in power.[98]

Besides controlling all of the major Honduran presses when he closed down the last of the major oppositionist newspapers *El Ciudadano* on November 30, 1935, and threw "the editor and [his] entire staff…in jail," Carías exhibited a desire to control the US news media as well.[99] He may not have had the resources or audacity to bribe US journalists, or as pressing a need to complain to the US Legation about negative reports as Ubico, but Carías did his best to make sure US public opinion did not ruin his chances at receiving US recognition after he extended his presidency.[100] In November and December 1935, a series of mildly critical articles in the *New York Times* were published that presented Carías as a repressive dictator and someone who destabilized Honduras by exiling and imprisoning oppositionists.[101] Rather than let this damaging press stand, Julian R. Caceres, Honduran Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim in Washington, wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* in an effort to encourage another interpretation

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WANT CARIAS OUT," *New York Times*, December 1, 1935, p. E6; and "HONDURAS EXILES CRITICS," *New York Times*, October 19, 1935, p. 7.

[98] For examples of how Carías explained he needed to stay in power see: "Necessary Explanations," *La Epoca*, December 2, 1935, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, March 9, 1933, 815.00 Revolutions/451, RG 59, NA. See also: "THE UNIQUE COUNTRY WITHOUT DEBTS," *El Cronista*, July 3, 1935, p. 3; and "The Triumph of Continuismo is the Triumph of the New Honduras…," *La Epoca*, March 27, 1936, p. 1; Carías, "Presidential Message," January 1, 1936, 815.032/138, RG 59, NA. On January 1, 1937, a special edition of *La Epoca* was published with more than a hundred pages dedicated to praising Carías's accomplishments and explaining the necessity of *continuismo*. This unique publication was written just before Carías would have stepped down had he not rewritten the constitution. It can be found at the Centro Documentación e Investigación Histórica de Honduras, El Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

[99] Keena to Secretary of State, December 5, 1935, 815.918/4, RG 59, NA. Carías's wing of the National party also purchased *El Norte* in early January 1936, a paper that formerly supported Venacio Callejas (Keena to Secretary of State, January 2, 1936, 815.911/51, RG 59, NA).

[100] For more on Trujillo and Ubico's relationship with the US news media see: Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 88-126; and Grieb, pp. 79-81.

[101] For examples see: "Honduras Bars Envoy to U.S.," *New York Times*, November 27, 1935, p. 9; "EXPELLED FROM HONDURAS…," *New York Times*, December 23, 1935, p. 10; and "ESCAPES FROM HONDURAS," *New York Times*, November 11, 1935, p. 10.

of Carías and Honduras. Caceres explained in his published letter Honduras was at "complete peace," and its people appreciated their president who had made serious efforts to improve the country through his public works program. Caceres also wanted the paper's readers to know that despite the rumors Carías was not planning to do anything illegal and he was a democratically elected president who respected the country's constitution.[102]

### Instituting and Blessing *Continuismo*

On January 7, 1936, Carías called for a Constitutional Assembly to take place on March 8, and therefore all but announced to the world his intent to remain in office beyond his constitutionally allotted term. Most Honduran and US observers believed this proclamation would lead to "forcible attempts to overthrow the Government" within a short period of time, but this did not deter the United States from giving its moral support to his regime or Carías from attempting to retain it.[103] Carías's efforts to woo the United States now began in earnest, and the main way he did so was by marketing himself to the United States as the best possible leader for Honduras, and someone it could count on in all things.

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[102] Julian R. Caceres, Letters to the Editor, "Conditions in Honduras," *New York Times*, December 6, 1935, p. 24.

[103] Keena to Secretary of State, January 7, 1936, 815.032/137, RG 59, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, January 9, 1936, 815.032/141, RG 59, NA.

Figure 5. Carías and Members of his Cabinet in 1935. Centro Documentación e Investigación Histórica de Honduras, El Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

In the few months before the Constituent Assembly, the Honduran press executed an unmistakable campaign to justify Carías's *continuismo* while simultaneously making it more appealing to the United States. The Carías regime was cognizant of the fact it needed to convince both the US government and the Honduran people of the benefits of his dictatorial rule, and one of the ways it did so was to continue to ingratiate itself with the Roosevelt Administration and demonstrating a close connection between Washington and Carías. If Carías could persuade his countrymen he was esteemed by Washington he was more likely to be respected and appreciated. From the vantage point of the Hondurans, a people who had their sovereignty and national pride violated by the United States for decades, a strong relationship between Carías and the US government meant it was less likely US marines would be sent to occupy the Honduran capital or ports on the North Coast. Additionally, having healthy interactions with Honduras's most

important trading partner certainly must have seemed attractive during the Great Depression when the entire region was financially suffering. Carías also needed to impress the United States at this critical juncture, because if it even slightly appeared he had fallen into disfavor his credibility would take a beating. Furthermore, if the State Department decided to stop allowing him to purchase arms in the United States or prevent US pilots from manning the Honduran Air Force, Carías would have found holding onto power much more difficult. Therefore, Carías tried to make himself appear needed by both the Hondurans and the US government.[104]

To this end, Carías's Administration attempted to address as many conceivable reasons why Carías should remain president as possible.[105] In early 1936, Carías was forced to appear as an admiring and appreciative ally of Roosevelt rather than another popular leader who declined to relinquish power. This can be seen in the Honduran news media's coverage of Roosevelt. For example, on January 3, Roosevelt made a speech to the US Congress that was relatively routine, but it was treated in the Honduran press with an undeserved and almost embarrassing amount of praise. For example, Jorge Fidel Duron's article in *El Cronista* stated Roosevelt's speech inspired him, and it moved him to "enthusiasm to think that true democracy can count on a leader of such great proportions as Franklin Roosevelt."[106]

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[104] Carías was not the only Caribbean dictator of his time that tried to manipulate the opinions of US policymakers through the media. Ubico, Trujillo, and Somoza all did the same. For two examples of how this was executed see: Paul Coe Clark, *The United States and Somoza, 1933-1956: A Revisionist Look* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1992), pp. 69-73; and Roorda, pp. 88-122.

[105] Dodd points out Carías "drew parallels for *continuismo* with Franklin Roosevelt's reelection in 1936," although this is true it should be noted this was not a fitting argument for Carías before he instituted his constitutional changes in March, well before Roosevelt won his reelection in November 1936, and because second terms were legal in the United States (Dodd, pp. 113-114).

[106] Jorge Fidel Duron, "Amicable speech President Roosevelt made last night…," *El Cronista*, January 4, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, January 9, 1936, 101, vol. 1, Honduras, Box 1, RG 84, NA. Roosevelt's speech was also covered and reproduced in *La Epoca*. See "From the President of the United States…," *La Epoca*, January 21, 1936, p. 2. See also: "Reforms of the Constitution," *Tegucigalpa* series 118 no. 470 (January 12, 1936): pp. 1 and 18.

Just as articles praising Roosevelt's leadership were appearing in the Honduran press so too was propaganda aimed at garnering support for constitutional changes, and in this regard Carías found ways to mimic Roosevelt's actions. *El Cronista* argued sometimes constitutions needed to be changed in order for them to meet the needs of the times. It was claimed this was done in the United States under the direction of Roosevelt whose New Deal policies could be considered as a reinterpretation of the US constitution.[107] It is easy to see Carías's Administration was less than subtly trying to court the United States as well as the Honduran public to support the proposed constitutional changes, and it was no coincidence the texts praising Roosevelt appeared during the same period as the pro-Constitutional Assembly pieces. The US Legation in Tegucigalpa may not have drawn the connection between these particular lines of propaganda, but it was well aware the country's press was completely controlled by the Honduran government.[108]

Another example of Carías's attempt to garner more domestic support by exploiting US policy to fit his own needs while courting the United States at the same time, can be seen in the events surrounding Honduras's invitation to the Buenos Aires Peace Conference of 1936. On February 5, Welles wrote Keena and informed him in the Legation's diplomatic mail he would find a confidential letter from President Roosevelt to Carías, and that this was to be given directly to Carías. A few days later, Keena wrote to the Secretary of State telling him he had done as instructed, and told Carías the letter was "confidential." It seems Carías cared little about

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[107] "New Constitutions," *El Cronista*, February 6, 1936, p. 3; and "CONVOCATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY," *El Cronista*, January 8, 1936, p. 3. More excellent examples of propaganda explaining the reasons why Carías needed to remain in power can be found in: "The Prolongation of Power," *El Cronista*, March 26, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, April 3, 1936, 815.00/4686, RG 59, NA; and "OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRIVATE SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC," *El Cronista*, March 25, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, April 28, 1936, 815.00/4694, RG 59, NA.

[108] Keena to Frank P. Corrigan, January 14, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

discretion when there was a chance telling a state secret might benefit him politically, because "a few hours after" Roosevelt's letter was given to him its contents appeared on the front page of *El Cronista*.[109] The State Department desired all of the leaders of the American Republics to respond to Roosevelt's invitation to a hemispheric peace conference to be held later that year before it was made public, but Carías needed to use the unexpected invitation as another weapon in his propaganda arsenal as quickly as possible. The Constitutional Assembly was just around the corner, and he could not afford to wait for Roosevelt's personal letter to become public.

Using the invitation to his full advantage, Carías swiftly made sure a series of articles flattering the United States' peace initiative appeared in national newspapers, and the State Department was fully aware of his accommodating nature. For instance, *El Cronista* ran an article stating that Roosevelt was wise to have called such a conference because of the discord then taking place in Europe. It called the United States the protector of civilization and praised it for promoting peace and neutrality in the face of war.[110] Carías also dispatched an extremely conciliatory note to Roosevelt making his intention to support the coming conference unmistakable. Carías wrote:

> My Government responds to a traditional aspiration and unchanging ideal in accepting with great cordiality the suggestion to convoke an extraordinary Inter-American

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[109] Welles to Keena, February 5, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, February 12, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA. See also: Roosevelt to Carías, January 30, 1936, enclosed in Welles to Keena, February 5, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA.

[110] "Pan American Peace Conference," *El Cronista*, February 13, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, February 14, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA. For more articles on the United States' call for a peace conference for the Americas in 1936 see *La Epoca* and *El Cronista* throughout the month of February and into May, and again in November and December the same year. For particularly good examples of Carías's efforts to court the United States and convince Hondurans of his close relationship with Roosevelt see: "INVITATION OF MR. ROOSEVELT TO GENERAL CARIAS ANDINO," *La Epoca*, February 17, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, February 20, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA; "The Invitation of Mr. President Roosevelt to the American Conferences of Peace and the Reply of Our Leader General Carías to this Beautiful Initiative," *La Epoca*, February 18, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, February 19, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA; and "INTERAMERICAN CONFERENCE," *Diario Comercial*, February 26, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, February 27, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA.

> Conference which awakens the idea of solidarity among the countries of the Continent giving great force to the concept of historic responsibility.

If there were any questions about how he wanted the United States to think of him, he finished the note by stating "I am pleased to sign myself your attentive and faithful servant."[111] Although the State Department was displeased that Carías had gone against its wishes the invitation remain private, its appreciation for him as a leader overcame any urge to significantly admonish him.[112]

In early January 1936, all was quiet, but there were indications there would soon be trouble in Honduras as the Congress continued to act as though it would support Carías's *continuismo*. In mid-January, Carías received "a vote of appreciation" from Congress that stated he had performed well in the service of the "Nation" and had "succeeded in maintaining the peace," which was supposedly so desperately needed by the "people of Honduras."[113] It was plain for all to see Carías now enjoyed the unquestioned support of Congress and if left unchallenged would change the constitution to allow him to remain president. This encouraged his opposition to begin making serious efforts to start a revolution. On January 13, purportedly motivated by patriotic zeal and a fervent dedication to democracy, Callejas "secretly" left Tegucigalpa and was reported to have traveled to El Salvador.[114] There were also rumors General Justo Umaña Alvarado was either in Mexico or British Honduras preparing an invasion force, and there were indications as many as 2000 Honduran emigrados were in Nicaragua

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[111] Carías to Roosevelt, February 17, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, February 18, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA.

[112] Keena to Secretary of State, February 12, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA; and Keena to Bermudez M., February 15, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA.

[113] Keena to Secretary of State, January 15, 1936, 815.00/4659, RG 59, NA; and The National Congress, Decree No. 36, January 11, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, January 15, 1936, 815.00/4659, RG 59, NA.

[114] Keena to State Department, January 17, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA; and Policarpo Callejas, Interviewed by author, personal interview, Archivos de la Cancillería de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, May 3, 2012.

poised to invade. According to the US Legation, none of this seemed to faze the Honduran government, because it claimed it was "prepared for" a revolution "and that the great majority of the country" was "in favor of the Government and the holding of the Constitutional Assembly."[115]

With Carías looking as though he was about to become a dictator, and the country ready to break out into civil war, Keena thought it prudent to ask his superiors at the State Department what official US policy was. Obviously uncertain of what to do, he wrote to Washington asking "Does the Department wish me to make any statement to the President of Honduras in regard to these elections?"[116] Hull wrote him back with a typical Good Neighbor response:

> The Department does not wish you to make any statement to the President of Honduras regarding the conduct of the Honduran elections. However regrettable the conditions you describe may be from the point of view of a friendly observer, the matter at issue is one solely of internal policy for the Honduran people themselves to determine.[117]

The matter was essentially decided, the United States would stay out of Honduras's affairs because they were none of its business. However, this sentiment was not shared by many Central Americans who believed US policy to be directly responsible for allowing the region's democracies to wither and die, and that it was virtually impossible for the United States not to have a role in Honduran politics.

Fully aware the Central American trend toward dictatorship was gaining steam, and it posed a problem for not only the people of the region but US policy as well, the US Minister in San Salvador, Frank P. Corrigan, wrote a memorandum to the State Department explaining his view of the situation. He wrote many people in Central America were concerned about the

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[115] Keena to Secretary of State, January 17, 1936, 815.00/4660, RG 59, NA. See also: Warren C. Stewart to Keena, January 20, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

[116] Keena to Secretary of State, January 21, 1936, 815.032/142, RG 59, NA.

[117] Hull to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 22, 1936, 815.032/142, RG 59, NA.

effects of the Good Neighbor policy. It seems it was easy for observers to draw connections between the Good Neighbor, dictatorship, and revolution. He informed the Department some people felt because the United States abandoned its previous policies of intervention and interference dictators were allowed to come to power, and having their freedoms taken away then caused people to revolt. Corrigan evidently thought there was some truth to this argument because he wrote that dictators were using the Good Neighbor policy as "a free hand in the re-establishment of the old order of rule by force" based on the idea "that the non-intervention feature" of the Good Neighbor policy allowed them to do as they pleased without consequence.[118] The United States was placed in yet another awkward position. If it refused to recognize his government after the constitutional changes, it would be accused of abandoning the Good Neighbor policy and interfering in Honduras affairs. If the United States did nothing and continued to consider what was happening an internal matter, it would still be blamed for fostering the conditions Carías found useful for controlling Honduras.

Carías was not the only Honduran politician who tried to influence US policy toward their country. Recognizing the power of the United States, Carías's opponents in exile did what they could to convince the US government its policies were aiding tyranny at the expense of democracy and freedom. Callejas met several times with US officials at the US Legation in San Salvador to inform US officials a revolution against Carías would not be long in coming, and to persuade them to notify Carías "that his present course" was "not looked upon with favor" by the United States. Callejas felt this was all that was necessary "to avoid civil war."[119] He made sure

[118] Corrigan to Secretary of State, January 21, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

[119] Corrigan to Secretary of State, March 2, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/479, RG 59, NA. Any kindness shown to Venacio Callejas by the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran governments had little to do with their opposition to Carías and was more the result of close familial and friendship ties on the isthmus. Policarpo Callejas, Interviewed by author, personal interview, Archivos de la Cancillería de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, May 3, 2012.

the State Department was aware of the undemocratic actions Carías had taken over the course of his presidency, and as a "usurper" he "must now be overthrown by force."[120] Former Honduran President Paz Baraona also shared his disappointment with what was taking place to his country's constitution with anyone who would listen. In December 1935, Paz Baraona resigned from his position as Honduran Minister to France in protest over Carías's plan to change the constitution, but was forced to travel to the United States instead of Honduras because he was not permitted to return home.[121] In early February 1936, Paz Baraona wrote a heartfelt plea to the Honduran Congress not to give into intimidation or throw away the sacrifice so many thousands of Hondurans over the years had made to have a democratic government. He wrote Carías had broken his "promise" to be "'faithful to the Republic, to comply with and make comply with the Constitution of the laws.'"[122]

Knowing the Good Neighbor policy stifled democracy and strengthened dictatorship was not enough for the United States to abandon the policy in Honduras, this was largely due to the stabilizing effect and cordial behavior exhibited by Carías over the course of his presidency. Although there was solid evidence revolutionaries were planning to invade Honduras from British Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, neither the US government nor Carías was willing to change their course. Keena informed Washington the Honduran government continued to be "confident" it could deal with any problems that might arise.[123] Trouble seemed a world away as

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[120] Corrigan to Secretary of State, March 3, 1936, 815.00/4680, RG 59, NA.

[121] Keena to Secretary of State, December 14, 1935, 815.00/4648, RG 59, NA.

[122] Stewart to Keena, March 20, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA. See also: Keena to Secretary of State, April 16, 1936, 815.001Carias, Tiburcio/33, RG 59, NA.

[123] Keena to Secretary of State, January 24, 1936, 815.00/4664, RG 59, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, January 31, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

Honduras experienced "tranquil" elections for the delegates to the Constitutional Assembly.[124] Historian Gerald K. Haines's argument the Roosevelt Administration "rationalized that Latin American dictatorships were not totalitarian dictatorships," and that they were "inevitable" and "perhaps the only way of achieving stability, peace, and economic development" in Latin America certainly finds support in Washington's appraisal of Carías's manipulation of the Honduran constitution.[125]

There is considerable evidence suggesting the US Legation in Tegucigalpa supported Carías's *continuismo*. In early February, the Legation prepared a detailed report for the State Department, which can only be interpreted as an endorsement of Carías's rule. The report entitled "GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN HONDURAS," began with an overview of the way Honduras's then thirty-four presidents had left office. Painting a bleak picture of Honduran politics and the country's ability to rule itself, the Legation reminded Washington of the Honduran presidents twelve left office violently, only eleven by "expiration of office," seven by "resignation," three by natural deaths, and one by "Assassination." According to these numbers, the country's chances of having a stabilizing leader were discouraging. It was then stated Carías was the "undisputed leader of the [National] party, and the man having the greatest personal popularity amongst the lower classes of Honduras." Carías's main rival Zúñiga Huete had "lost influence" and did not enjoy the support of all the Liberals. Additionally, it argued Carías had placed the government's finances "in excellent condition," decreased the national debt, and Honduras had three airplanes in its Air Force and an Army capable of defending the

[124] Keena to Secretary of State, January 25, 1936, 815.00/4662, RG 59, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, January 27, 1936, 815.00/4663, RG 59, NA.

[125] Gerald K. Haines, "Under the Eagle's Wing: The Franklin Roosevelt Administration Forges an American Hemisphere," *Diplomatic History* vol. 1 no. 4 (Winter 1977): pp. 373-388.

nation.[126] In February 1936, although he was most certainly aware that it would be considered an endorsement of his regime, Keena encouraged Roosevelt to contact Carías with wishes of good health when he was ill, and wanted the United States to officially acknowledge the adoption of the Reciprocal Trade Agreement by the US President, so the Honduran government could receive a moral boost.[127]

Shortly thereafter, evidently partially moved by the Legation's inferred validation of Carías, the State Department moved to clear the way for an endorsement of his regime. In mid-February a memorandum written by Assistant Chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs, Willard L. Beaulac, was circulated in the Department advocating the United States to no longer recognize the Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 as its policy in Central America. Beaulac argued the Treaty was a meaningless document since Carías and other regional presidents had ignored it and were successful in implementing *continuismo*. Beaulac also thought the Treaty violated the principles of the Good Neighbor policy because enforcing it would "constitute 'meddling' of a flagrant kind."[128] It took over two months for the Department to officially abandon the 1923 General Treaty of Peace and Amity, but the new conditions under which the United States would now recognize Central American regimes allowed Carías's *continuismo* to be legitimate on the international stage. On April 21, 1936, Beaulac circulated another memorandum outlining the new policy on recognition of governments in Central America. Using Somoza's presidency as an example, he wrote "if General Somoza headed a regime which

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[126] Gibson, "GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN HONDURAS," enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, February 7, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

[127] Keena to Secretary of State, February 2, 1936, 815.001-Carias A., Tiburcio/31, RG 59, NA.

[128] Willard L. Beaulac, "RECOMMENDATION THAT AMERICAN POLICY IN CENTRAL AMERI CA NO LONGER BE AFFECTED BY ANY PROVISION OF THE CENTRLA AMERICAN GENERAL TREATY OF PEACE AND AMITY OF 1923," Memorandum, February 18, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

effectively governed the country and fulfilled its international obligations we would extend recognition to him regardless of his eligibility to recognition under the 1923 Treaty."[129] The decision was made, because Carías fulfilled these criteria he too would benefit from the United States recognition. Hull then informed Keena he was to allow Honduran politics to take their course without worrying about what kind of government the country had.[130]

While the United States tried to find new criteria to continue good relations with the stabilizing dictators of Central America, Carías wasted no time and pursued his goal of changing the constitution. On March 8, 1936, under the specter of war the Constituent Assembly met to rewrite the constitution. On March 28, less than three weeks later the Assembly completed its debate. There were a number of changes to the constitution of 1924, but the most important for US-Carías relations was the extension of the President and Vice-Presidents' terms of office to January 1, 1943.[131]

**Recognition**

Shortly after the Constituent Assembly finished its work on March 28, 1936, Carías sent a letter to Roosevelt formally notifying him of his plan to remain in office beyond his original four-year term. By doing so Carías was both forcing the United States to respond to his *continuismo* and informing Roosevelt his "greatest endeavor" would "be that of maintaining and strengthening the bonds of cordial friendship…between our two countries," and that he "valued"

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[129] Beaulac, "OUR NEW POLICY IN REFERENCE TO THE 1923 GENERAL TRATY OF PEACE AND AMITY," April 21, 1936, *FRUS*, *1936*, vol. 5, pp. 132-133. For a commentary on *continuismo* from the period in question see: Russell Humke Fitzgibbon, "'Continuismo' in Central America and the Caribbean," *Inter-American Quarterly* vol. 2 no. 3 (1940): pp. 56-74.

[130] Hull to Keena, April 30, 1936, *FRUS*, *1936*, vol. 5, pp. 134-136.

[131] For more on the domestic conditions that helped Carías remain in power during the 1930s see: Enrique A. Baloyra-Herp, "Reactionary Despotism in Central America," *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 15 no. 2 (November 1983): pp. 295-319.

Roosevelt's "cooperation."[132] Yet, even before the letter arrived in Washington, Hull had made the decision to recognize Carías's government. Hull informed the US Legation at Managua the Roosevelt's response would be the same neutral response as was given Jorge Ubico on July 30, 1935.[133] On April 4, Keena first indicated the United States' intentions to the Honduran government when he responded to a letter from Bermudez M., and wrote his government desired "the maintenance of the bonds of friendship which so happily exist between the United States and Honduras," and was interested in "continuing and strengthening…those very friendly relations."[134] Keena's letter was quickly printed in the Honduran press to assuage any doubts the Honduran populace may have had, and to make any would be revolutionists think twice about rebelling.[135]

Washington did not try to secure *continuismo* for Carías, and certainly many in the State Department such as Hull viewed his manipulation of the Honduran constitution as "regrettable," but his prolongation of power was aided by the Good Neighbor policy. Besides the Good Neighbor's abandonment of the use of military intervention, diplomatic interference, and the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923, the policy encouraged the Roosevelt Administration to communicate with Carías in such a way as to allow him to exploit it. The warmth of Roosevelt's letter to Carías acknowledging his presidential term extension demonstrates how the

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[132] Carías to Roosevelt, April 20, 1936, enclosed in Julio Lozano to Secretary of State, May 15, 1936, 815.001-Carias A., Tiburcio/34, RG 59, NA.

[133] Hull to US Legation (Managua), April 7, 1936, 815.00/4684, RG 59, NA.

[134] Keena to Secretary of State, April 6, 1936, 815.00/4689, RG 59, NA.

[135] "The international relations of Honduras," *El Cronista*, April 6, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, April 6, 1936, 801.1, vol. 10, Honduras, Box 9, RG 84, NA. As similar positive responses from world leaders arrived in Tegucigalpa they too were published in the press. For examples see: "The Legation of Nicaragua Answers in Cordial Manner…,"*El Cronista*, April 11, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, April 17, 1936, 815.00/4691, RG 59, NA; and *El Cronista,* May 18, 1936, referenced in Raleigh A. Gibson to Secretary of State, May 20, 1936, 815.00/4703, RG 59, NA.

Good Neighbor created room for Carías's recognition and how it fortified Carías to face his opposition. Roosevelt wrote:

> Great and Good Friend:
>
> I cordially reciprocate the sentiments you express for the continuance of the friendly relations existing between the United States of America and Honduras, and I assure Your Excellency of my best wishes for your personal welfare and for the prosperity of the Republic over which you have been called to preside.[136]

By calling Carías his "Great and Good Friend" and stating he desired "the continuance of…friendly relations" between their two countries, Roosevelt was unmistakably expressing his acceptance of Carías's usurpation of power.[137] Although there was nothing diplomatically exceptional about the letter Carías could use it to irrefutably claim the approval of the United States and reap the domestic rewards.

From the United States' perspective the Good Neighbor approach to Honduras inadvertently but not necessarily lamentably maintained the status quo. The current situation in Honduras fit both parties' goals: Carías's longing to remain in power, and the United States' aspiration to have the country stabilized and open for US business while sticking by the Good Neighbor's principle of maintaining good relations with whatever government held power. Leonard briefly claims the United States "did little more than register its displeasure at the constitutional maneuverings of…Carías to extend" his tenure, but Roosevelt's note suggests Carías would have quickly forgotten any US criticism that may have been given.[138] Nor is it evident US policymakers had any serious "displeasure" with what Carías had done.

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[136] Roosevelt to Carías, May 21, 1936, enclosed in Gibson to Secretary of State, June 15, 1936, 801.1, vol. 10, Honduras, Box 9, RG 84, NA.

[137] Gibson to Secretary of State, June [?], 1936, 815.001Carias A., Tiburcio/39, RG 59, NA.

[138] Leonard, "Central America and the United States: Overlooked Foreign Policy Objectives," pp. 1-30.

The United States' response provides evidence for Gordon Connell-Smith's contention the United States understood itself to be an anti-imperial power in Latin America, but still pursued policies that allowed it to exploit the weaker nations of the region.[139] Although the State Department considered Carías's actions to be unconstitutional and therefore illegal, it was not gravely concerned about democracy or human rights in Honduras. In a study circulated in the Department regarding the constitutional changes, little attention was paid to Carías's *continuismo*. The bulk of the essay instead dealt with economic issues and how they would affect foreign companies operating in the country. The United States' priorities were clearly laid out in the document: economics were more important than politics in Honduras.[140] It can therefore safely be said the United States turned its back on the Honduran people in favor of maintaining a secure state of affairs in Honduras. The Department defended its undemocratic actions by clarifying the Good Neighbor policy for the US Legations throughout Central America. Hull reminded the heads of Legations the policy was based on "mutual respect for each other's rights and interests," and US officials were to "abstain from offering advice on any domestic question" in their host countries.[141] In other words, dictatorship in Central America was not the United States' problem because the Good Neighbor provided a justification to ignore it. Carías benefited from the United States' precedent of extending recognition to other Caribbean dictators such as Ubico and Rafael Trujillo and earned the United States' recognition through his stabilizing rule, but he understood the United States' favor could be withdrawn at any time.

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[139] Gordon Connell-Smith, *The United States and Latin America: An Historical Analysis of Inter-American Relations* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974).

[140] "CHANGES OF INTEREST EMBODIED IN NEW HONDURAN CONSTITUTION," Memorandum, May 5, 1936, 815.011/31, RG 59, NA; and Beaulac to Wilson, Memorandum, March 19, 1935, enclosed in Lay to Secretary of State, March 7, 1935, 815.00/4612, RG 59, NA.

[141] Hull to Keena, April 30, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA. For more on the United States' stance on Carías's *continuismo* see: John E. Findling, *Close Neighbors, Distant Friends: United States-Central American Relations* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 98-99.

## Conclusion

While the US government may not have looked forward to Carías's rule when he first came to power, it quickly changed its opinion of him. This was largely due to Carías's success as a stabilizing force in Honduras, and his public relations campaign to impress the United States with the idea he was the best available leader for Honduras and a close ally that could be counted on at all times. Not only had Carías calmed Honduras's financial crisis within months of assuming the presidency, he also pacified the country to a degree previously not witnessed by US diplomats for decades. Formerly routine issues such as communism and banditry ceased to be focuses of the US Legation. Instead, US officials in Honduras settled into a comfortable habit of writing reports that focused on Honduras's relatively quiet political scene, and Carías's repeated attempts to demonstrate his loyalty to the United States. This was never more the case then when Carías betrayed domestic industry and reduced governmental customs revenue and forced the Reciprocal Trade Agreement through the Honduran Congress.

For his efforts Carías was rewarded with a number of concessions from the United States that helped him retain his grip on power and ultimately made his *continuismo* a success. When he was able to demonstrate he was serious about ridding the country of revolutionary violence and lawlessness, the United States allowed him to purchase airplanes for military purposes. Although worried about the prospect of these planes being piloted by US aviators, the US State and War Departments ultimately decided not to interfere and allowed the US pilots to operate the Honduran Air Force, because the fear of foreign intervention and the possibility revolution might return overcame their reservations. In 1934, when it decided the US arms embargo on Honduras was not in the spirit of the Good Neighbor policy, the State Department elected to maintain it because it sympathized with Carías's desire not to allow weapons to fall into the hands of his

opposition. The United States may have been a “Good Neighbor” to Carías, but the Honduran people paid a price for their close relationship. By indirectly strengthening Carías’s military with US personnel and military supplies ultimately replaced the United States’ need to send the marines to Honduran shores to protect US interests. Carías could now do the United States’ dirty work, allowing it to appear to have a hands-off foreign policy essential to the Good Neighbor. In the end, the United States’ military concessions to Carías presented him with the power he needed to maintain himself in office and trample Honduran democracy.

# CHAPTER 8

# OUTWITTING THE NEIGHBORS

"We have objected to use of Americans in bombing operations against revolutionaries in Honduras"[1]

-Ellis O. Briggs commenting on Carías's refusal to ground his US American pilots during internal hostilities.

During his first three years as president, Carías convinced many in the US government he was the best available Honduran leader. He had proven himself adept at dealing with the difficult financial situation despite the Great Depression, agreeable to the disadvantageous Reciprocal Trade Agreement, which exclusively profited the United States, and most importantly pacified a country that had known few periods of peace in its history. From the United States' point of view, these were major reasons to appreciate Carías and caused it to be more amenable to his institution of *continuismo* in 1936, and encouraged Washington to amend its official foreign policy to be more accommodating to the recognition of dictators in Latin America. Fully aware his increasingly friendly relationship with the United States was largely due to his firm control of Honduras and his presentation of himself and his government as Washington's close friend and ally, Carías continued to do all he could to maintain the United States' positive perceptions of his regime for the remainder of his presidency.

The United States may have learned to welcome Carías's leadership and eventually recognized his *continuismo*, but the Good Neighbor policy forced it to keep its distance from his regime. US policymakers were cognizant even the appearance of being friendly with Carías could lead to a public relations fiasco, so it discouraged ties to Carías that seemed to implicate it

[1] Ellis O. Briggs to Unknown, Memorandum, November 10, 1937, enclosed in John D. Erwin to Secretary of State, November 2, 1937, 815.248/100, RG 59, NA.

in supporting his rule. This can be seen in the State Department's efforts to dissuade Carías from employing US citizens in military operations for fear they would create resentment toward the United States for killing Hondurans. However, throughout 1936 and 1937, the United States regularly acquiesced to Carías's political and military needs, not necessarily because it wanted to overtly support him, but rather because the alternatives to doing so seemed even less appealing than aiding a dictator. During this period, fear of implication in interfering in Honduran affairs, fascist influence in Central America, and the possibility Honduras could return to a chaotic state at any moment guided the decision-making of US officials, and influenced them to knowingly strengthen Carías's rule. Not only was the US Navy dispatched to Honduran waters to prevent the landing of revolutionaries on Honduran shores, but the United States continued to allow US mercenaries to fly Honduran military operations, and permitted the strengthening of the Honduran Air Force to a point where Carías's power was believed to be incontestable.

Carías remained eager to show the United States he and his government were not only well-meaning and competent, but also capable of leading Honduras into the future despite having changed the country's constitution. He took no chances when it came to crushing revolts and attempted revolutionary activity. Jailing hundreds and perhaps thousands of Hondurans to protect his regime, he created resentment and frustration with his government. Many Hondurans opposed Carías's use of mercenaries to kill their fellow countrymen, and found his *continuismo* unpalatable. As a result, Carías was forced to work diligently to suppress revolutionary sentiment throughout much of 1936 and 1937. Faced with an increasingly hostile populace, Carías's government coordinated a surprisingly elaborate effort to increase its popularity by exploiting the longstanding boundary dispute between Honduras and Nicaragua. Appearing eager to resolve the crisis with the United States, Carías's government prolonged the dispute by using stalling tactics

while simultaneously provoking the Nicaraguans to escalate the confrontation. Doing so made many previous enemies of Carías rally behind his leadership and eliminated a significant amount of employment competition for Hondurans at the expense of Nicaraguan migrant workers.

**Defending Carías**

In mid-February 1936, the State Department received intelligence from the Honduran government indicating as many as 400-armed men were aboard the ship *Adventure* in Mexican waters, and that this force was destined to take part in a revolution against Carías.[2] According to the information available to the US Legation in Tegucigalpa, the threat to Carías's regime was by no means small. The *Adventure* reportedly carried all the elements necessary to mount a serious war effort including 500 rifles, fourteen machine guns, and proven military men General Justo Umaña Alvarado and Carlos Lagos. Knowledge of the suspected rebel mission was quite specific: not only did both the Honduran and US governments know the men planned to land near Tela, but also that several US Americans were aboard the boat.[3] Recognizing the *Adventure* was in all probability registered in the United States, and that US citizens' involvement in a revolution against Carías would prove extremely bad for US foreign relations, the State Department did what it could to try and stop the *Adventure* from delivering its destabilizing cargo to Honduras.

For decades, US fruit companies and mercenaries such as Lee Christmas in Honduras tarnished the United States' reputation in Latin America, and forced the US government to rethink its relationship with the region. As a major part of the Good Neighbor strategy, improving US public relations in Latin America required the appearance of a hands off approach,

[2] Leo J. Keena to Secretary of State, February 19, 1936, 815.113/524, RG 59, NA.

[3] Keena to Secretary of State, February 20, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/477, RG 59, NA.

so the US government simply could not allow its citizens to be guilty of involving themselves in yet another plot to overthrow the Honduran government. The *Adventure* issue was soon passed from the State Department to the Treasury Department and the Attorney General's office to try and find a legal way of dealing with the situation before an international incident occurred.[4] Time was of the essence because it was suspected the "revolutionary force" would land "before March 8, 1936, the day on which the formal session of the Constitutional Assembly [was to] commence."[5] Secretary of State Cordell Hull recognized the seriousness of the situation and requested the Navy Department to "overtake" the *Adventure* and *Stormalong*, a smaller vessel also chartered by the rebels, "upon the high seas, and keep them under surveillance," and informed the US Legation "to keep the Honduran Government advised informally of the reports you receive."[6]

The US Navy dispatched the USS *Manley* to intercept the rebel-chartered ships, which it believed were then headed on a direct course to land their cargo on the Honduran North Coast. Faced with a mutually disadvantageous situation, the US and Honduran governments coordinated their efforts and exchanged intelligence on the ships and their contents, and permission was granted by the Honduran government for the USS *Manley* to enter Honduran waters and refuel at Tela.[7] Although Carías was "delighted" the *Manley* was under orders to "intercept" the *Adventure* and *Stormalong*, other Central Americans were upset the United States

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[4] Josephus Daniels to Secretary of State, February [20?], 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/481, RG 59, NA; and Sumner Welles to Attorney General, March 4, 1936, 815.00-Revolutoins/480, RG 59, NA.

[5] Keena to Secretary of State, February 28, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/482, RG 59, NA.

[6] Cordell Hull to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 4, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/491, RG 59, NA; and Laurence Duggan to Joseph K. Taussig, April 4, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/491, RG 59, NA.

[7] Keena to Secretary of State, April 7, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/498, RG 59, NA; Keena to Secretary of State, April 7, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/496, RG 59, NA; Thomas D. Bowman to Secretary of State, April 7, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/501, RG 59, NA; and Daniels to Secretary of State, March 30, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/495, RG 59, NA.

had returned to the use of gunboats in its foreign policy toward the region.[8] The crisis was further elevated when the Honduran Foreign Minister told Leo J. Keena, the US minister in Tegucigalpa, it was the Honduran government's "intention to use airplanes to attack these boats to prevent a landing." Not wanting to make an unfortunate situation worse by having a Honduran plane attack a ship under a US flag, Keena told the Honduran Foreign Minister the United States wanted to "remain entirely neutral," and that the US government would prefer no US American pilots flew Honduran planes.[9]

Since neutrality and keeping a low profile in Honduran affairs were the goals of the State Department, it is no surprise both the Navy and State Departments were "very much exercised over the possibility that the Commander of the U.S.S. MANLEY may have to make a decision regarding the action, if any, he should take if Honduran planes should bomb the STORMALONG." The "matter" was considered "extremely urgent, since the MANLEY" expected to spot the *Stormalong* "at any moment" on April 8.[10] Green Hackworth, the State Department's legal advisor, helped to alleviate the situation when he recommended that the *Manley* be "call[ed] off" because there was "no positive evidence" the *Stormalong* had "engaged in a nefarious enterprise," and if it was shown the "vessels" were "engaged on a peaceful mission and they should be attacked by Honduran bombing planes with an American naval vessel in the vicinity, a very embarrassing situation would result." In the end, Hackworth wrote "I think we should leave it to the Honduran Government to protect its own interests."[11]

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[8] Keena to Secretary of State, April 7, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/506, RG 59, NA; and MID 2657-P-525-1, Nicholas W. Campanole, April 17, 1936, "HONDURAS - Political," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[9] Keena to Secretary of State, April 3, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/491, RG 59, NA.

[10] Duggan to Green Hackworth, Memorandum, April 8, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/503, RG 59, NA.

[11] Hackworth to Duggan, Memorandum, April 8, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/502, RG 59, NA.

With this knowledge in mind, Hull ordered the *Manley* to cease its operations in Honduran waters, and instructed Keena to inform the Honduran government it needed to "consider carefully the responsibilities which it might incur for damage to lives and property as a result" of attacking the ships, and the United States' desire that no US pilots be used in "any military operations."[12] Carías promised Keena no US pilots would be used in military activities, but Keena felt the situation was still far from resolved and informed the Department a "naval vessel cruising in the vicinity of Honduras for the next two weeks or until definite news of the abandonment of this attempted landing may be received" was "advisable" since "1000 Americans" made the North Coast their home.[13] Keena went on to add a "naval vessel cruising in the vicinity of Honduras…would be good in the event of an outbreak of hostilities on the north coast."[14] Hull responded to Keena's recommendation by reminding him the US "Government considers that the responsibility for the maintenance of order and the protection of foreigners rests squarely on the Government of Honduras."[15]

In the end, US and Honduran efforts to prevent the landing of rebels on the shores of Honduras were successful. The *Adventure* was never able to leave the port of Puerto Mexico, and the *Stormalong* sailed aimlessly for several days before it disembarked Lagos and other would be revolutionaries in British Honduras and returned to New Orleans. In New Orleans, *Stormalong's* owner, US citizen Willard Campbell, was arrested on September 12, 1936, "while transporting a truck load of arms said to be intended for shipment to Honduran rebels."[16]

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[12] Hull to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 10, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/491, RG 59, NA.

[13] Keena to Secretary of State, April 11, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/505, RG 59, NA.

[14] Keena to Secretary of State, April 15, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

[15] Hull to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 14, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/505, RG 59, NA.

[16] Keena to Secretary of State, January 8, 1937, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 23, RG 84, NA.

The episode is a prime example of how the nonintervention and noninterference philosophies of the Good Neighbor policy provided US support to Carías, and were constantly evolving in their application in Honduras. US policymakers were sincerely concerned about the fallout that could have emerged from any publicity showing that US Americans were aiding Honduran rebels and breaking US neutrality laws. They were also worried US aviators flying for the Honduran government would attack a private US ship. This fear was so strong it prompted the United States to send a warship to Honduran waters three years after the Good Neighbor policy was officially inaugurated, and at a crucial juncture in Honduran politics due to Carías's efforts to rewrite the country's constitution. Hull's order to withdraw the *Manley* from Honduran waters shows the dedication Washington had to the nonintervention principle, but Keena's request a US gunship be sent to Honduran waters to protect US citizens in the event of violence demonstrates not all US policymakers were on the same page. It seems the United States was in a particularly difficult situation. If it did nothing and allowed its citizens to interfere in Honduran affairs it was not being a Good Neighbor, but if it prevented the landing of revolutionaries on Honduran shores using its Navy it was also interfering beyond its self-imposed jurisdiction. Whatever the case, Carías benefited from Washington's actions.

There is no textual evidence that suggests the US government wanted to strengthen Carías by dispatching the *Manley* to stop the *Stormalong*, but by doing so it unmistakably did. Even when the mission was aborted, the message was out. The United States was willing to temporarily ignore the Good Neighbor policy and send a US gunship to defend the friendly dictatorial government in Tegucigalpa. If Carías was "delighted" by the US Navy's actions, his opposition must have felt disheartened. From the perspective of all would-be Honduran revolutionaries, the United States came to the aid of Carías in an effort to prevent his enemies

from launching an invasion. For the rest of the period in question, all further attempts to unseat Carías were constrained by the knowledge the United States had helped sustain his regime.[17]


Figure 6. Carías and Members of his Cabinet in Plaza Mayor in Tegucigalpa. Centro Documentación e Investigación Histórica de Honduras, El Archivo Nacional de Honduras.

## Competing for the Attention of the Northern Colossus

After the *Stormalong* fiasco further weakened Carías's opposition, the revolutionists and the president engaged in an intense struggle for the affections of the United States throughout the

[17] For other examples of the United States' efforts to thwart US citizens attempting to supply Hondurans with illegal weaponry see: Edward A. Gleason to The Commissioner of Customs, November 24, 1937, enclosed in James H. Moyle to Office of Arms and Munitions Control, December 11, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/585, RG 59, NA; Francis H. Inge to The Attorney General, May 22, 1939, enclosed in Welly K. Hopkins to Secretary of State, May 26, 1939, 815.00 Revolutions/604, RG 59, NA; William G. Rupprecht to Secretary of State, March 24, 1938, 815.00 Revolution/597, RG 59, NA; and Stephen B. Gibbons to Secretary of State, n.d. [1938?], 815.00 Revolutions/593, RG 59, NA.

remainder of 1936. Both sides mounted a sophisticated campaign aimed at their northern neighbor in an effort to control Honduras. The rebels felt if they could induce the United States to withhold moral support from Carías's government they would be able to do the rest of the work necessary to topple the regime. Carías, on the other hand, did his best to maintain his previous course and model himself as the United States' ideal Honduran politician. The rebels may have had the moral high ground and proved adept at utilizing concepts such as democracy and justice, ideals the United States claimed to support, but their appeals fell on deaf ears. Carías proved extremely skillful at delivering the United States all it could hope for in a Honduran president; most importantly going along with the United States in international matters, and providing Honduras with the stability that had eluded the country since its independence.[18]

After the constitution was rewritten, rumors continually circulated throughout the remainder of 1936 that part of Honduras had fallen to a rebel force or that an invasion of many thousands of emigrados could take place at any time.[19] When these claims of revolutionary successes and planned uprisings were repeatedly proven false, the credibility of the aspiring revolutionaries came into question. Frank P. Corrigan, US Minister in San Salvador, found the

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[18] An interesting exception to the idea Carías wanted to be a model leader for the United States in Honduras was that throughout Carías's tenure in office his government refused to relinquish its claim to the Swan Islands in a territorial dispute with the United States. From 1934 through 1941, there were sporadic minor efforts made by the Honduran government to force the claim, but in all likelihood Carías probably had little to do with pressing the issue since it would have antagonized his most important foreign relationship. Even if Carías was behind his government's occasional push for absolute sovereignty over the islands, he backed down quickly when the State Department made an issue of it. For more on the Swan Island dispute with the United States during Carías's presidency see: John G. Lay to Secretary of State, April 24, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/51, RG 59, NA; Raleigh A. Gibson to Secretary of State, June 2, 1936, 815.0144/10, RG 59, NA; *La Gaceta*, April 20, 1936, pp. 1-3; William M. Cramp to Secretary of State, August 30, Erwin to Secretary of State, July 12, 1938, 800, vol. 6, Honduras, Box 35, RG 84, NA; and Gibson to Secretary of State, June 2, 1936, 714, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA; "Snooping for the Caribbean," *El Cronista*, January 10, 1941, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, January 14, 1941, 801.4, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 68, RG 84, NA. For Honduran sources on the dispute see: Salvador Aguirre, *Memoria presentada al congreso nacional por el Secretario de Estado en el Despacho de RELACIONES EXTERIORES*, 1938-1939 (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1940), p. 26; and Romulo E. Durón and Augusto C. Coello, *Las Islas del Cisne* (Tegucigalpa, 1938).

[19] Keena to Secretary of State, April 15, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/510, RG 59, NA; and Frank P. Corrigan to Secretary of State, April 14, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/508, RG 59, NA.

conflicting and consistently erroneous gossip frustrating and informed the State Department it should be wary of the prevalence of unsubstantiated information available in Honduras due to the censorship of the national press.[20] Besides their frequency there was one other characteristic of the rumors that proved predictable. The names of known revolutionaries such as Venancio Callejas, Angel Zúñiga Huete, and Carlos Lagos habitually came up when US officials spoke with Central Americans about the possibility of instability in Honduras.[21]

For months these men tried to muster the oppositionist forces into a competent fighting force and convince the United States of the illegality of Carías's extension of his presidency and to do something to prevent it.[22] In May 1936, growing desperate to do something to stop Carías, Callejas wrote to Julian A. Weston, a news correspondent living in Costa Rica, to try and bring the plight of the large number of Hondurans living in what he called a "Caesar-like tyranny" to US public scrutiny. Callejas told Weston "the people of Honduras cry aloud with despair and anguish under the savage weight of tyranny," and that Carías was stifling the nation's economy and looting the treasury.[23] Appeals like this regularly found their way to US officials from the oppositionist leaders and concerned Honduran citizens, but their appeals were dead on arrival.[24]

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[20] Corrigan to Secretary of State, April 16, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/513, RG 59, NA.

[21] For examples see: Leo R. Sack to Secretary of State, May 13, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA; Gibson to Secretary of State, May 22, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/524, RG 59, NA; and Keena to Secretary of State, August 29, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/534, RG 59, NA.

[22] Corrigan to Secretary of State, April 20, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/514, RG 59, NA.

[23] Venancio Callejas to Julian A. Weston, May 12, 1936, 815.00/4699, RG 59, NA.

[24] Other examples of 1936 appeals to the United States to do something to end Carías's presidency can be found in: Joseph F. McGurk, Memorandum of Conversation, May 19, 1936, 815.00/4701, RG 59, NA; Corrigan to Secretary of State, June 18, 1936, 815.00/4706, RG 59, NA; and Angel Zúñiga Huete to State Department, "The Hondurenian Dictatorship," Memorandum, August 13, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA. See also: "The Political Situation of Honduras," n.d. [1936?], enclosed in Corrigan to Gibson, June 19, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA. One of the best examples of Zúñiga Huete's efforts to explain the unconstitutionality of Carías's government can be found in: *UN GOBIERNO DE FACTO…*, (Mexico: 1943), Latin American and Iberian pamphlets 1802-1950, Library of Congress, Reel 118, Microfilm 93/4502.

Carías defended himself against his critics' attacks by offering a counternarrative. Instead of a usurper and despot, the Honduran press portrayed him as a democrat and resolute leader. He may have canceled presidential and congressional elections for another six years, but he claimed he had done so because his Administration was "heedful of the manifestations of public opinion," and it was his desire to respect the will of the people.[25] Rather than depriving the people of their national wealth, Carías claimed, he provided the country with a significant public works program that alleviated unemployment.[26] He also marketed himself as an innovator and economically minded technocrat who sought to "make special efforts to develop agriculture, mining and the cattle industry." He was also an optimist by stating that while the economic situation in Honduras was not "good" it was "not bad, and much better than that of many other countries hard hit by the world crisis."[27] He also presented himself as a proven asset to the United States in Honduras, which by implication depicted his opposition as untried and potentially unreliable.[28]

While the United States had its reservations about the troubling economic circumstances facing Honduras and the strength of the Carías government, it was never persuaded the revolutionaries would be able to topple it. As the Honduran government gathered intelligence on the coming revolution, it felt it was necessary to spend 5,000 Lempiras a day to maintain optimal military strength. This pushed back the payment of some government salaries as far back as five

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[25] Carías, Speech to National Assembly, March 8, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, March 13, 1936, 815.011/18, RG 59, NA.

[26] Keena to Secretary of State, April 3, 1936, 815.00/4687, RG 59, NA.

[27] "PLAN OF ACTION IN CONNECTION WITH CONTINUATION IN OFFICE,"*Diario de Costa Rica*, August 23, 1936, reproduced in MID 2657-P-439-34, Campanole, August 27, 1936, "Present Executive," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[28] Carías, Message of the President of the Republic, December 5, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, December 12, 1936, 815.032/148, RG 59, NA.

months, and was "a definite sign of weakness…and a potential source of great discontent." Rebels were reportedly using every one of Honduras's neighbors as a staging ground for invasion, and it was not uncommon for revolutionaries to raid remote frontier towns for supplies.[29]

Recognizing how delicate his situation was, Carías made several maneuvers that helped to garner support for his regime and provide an easy path to reconciliation for those who had either fled his government or left the country to join the revolutionary movement. These efforts proved influential in making US policymakers more comfortable with the idea Carías would be able to rule the country beyond his original four year allotted term. Carías freed a number of the people he had dubiously imprisoned in a decree that granted "full pardon or a commutation of half the sentence of certain crimes."[30] In mid-May, the Honduran government granted amnesty to the rank and file of the oppositionists and paid for some of the emigrados to return home and even transported them by plane free of charge. These moves convinced at least some in the US Legation "The Hondurans, as a whole, seem to have lost all interest in a possible revolution."[31] When revolutionary activity began taking place on the Salvadoran border, Carías transported Honduran troops to the area using airplanes. The resolute use of the new technology encouraged Keena to feel that a larger anti-government movement would not develop for some time.[32]

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[29] Gibson to Secretary of State, May 1, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/522, RG 59, NA; Gibson to Secretary of State, May 8, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/523, RG 59, NA; and Corrigan to Secretary of State, August 26, 1936, 815.00/4714, RG 59, NA.

[30] Keena to Secretary of State, April 17, 1936, 815.00/4693, RG 59, NA; and *La Gaceta*, April 7, 1936, p. 1.

[31] Gibson to Secretary of State, May 22, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/524, RG 59, NA. The extent of Carías's amnesty and pardons is difficult to gauge, but after his government's conciliatory actions thousands of Hondurans chose to remain in exile afraid for their lives. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude Carías's new stance on those that opposed him was more for show than a genuine change.

[32] Keena to Secretary of State, August 29, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/534, RG 59, NA.

The much-anticipated revolution finally developed in late August and early September 1936, but it was so disastrous that it ended up strengthening Carías's resolve and power and encouraging the United States to let Carías do as he pleased. The oppositionist forces managed to launch an attack on Honduran government positions near the boundaries of Guatemala and El Salvador in the southwest part of the country.[33] The revolutionists held the frontier village of Sinuapa for a few hours, but when they received no aid from any partisans residing in Honduras they retreated across the border to El Salvador.[34] These were considered "sporadic attempts" at staging a revolution and resulted in "no change of importance in the political situation of Honduras." After facing some two hundred rebels, Keena reported, "The Government appears confident it can cope with any efforts to foment a revolution which may be started by the Liberals and other opponents of the Government."[35] A few days after the attacks Zúñiga Huete was apprehended by Nicaraguan authorities and forced to reside in Costa Rica.[36] The revolt failed so miserably it fostered "The general opinion" amongst all observers "that the [Honduran] Government" was "strong and the opposition…surprisingly weak and that a period of more or less uninterrupted tranquility of some months may be looked forward to."[37] Apparently relaxed and somewhat enthusiastic about the turn of events, Keena declared "the revolutionists ain't got anything else but" "moral support."[38]

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[33] Keena to Secretary of State, September 5, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/536, RG 59, NA.

[34] Keena to Secretary of State, January 8, 1937, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 23, RG 84, NA; and Corrigan to Secretary of State, September 11, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/539, RG 59, NA.

[35] Keena to Secretary of State, September 5, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/536, RG 59, NA. See also: Keena to Secretary of State, September 3, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/535, RG 59, NA; and MID 2657-P-439-36, Campanole, September 9, 1936, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[36] Boaz Long to Secretary of State, September 18, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/542, RG 59, NA.

[37] Keena to Secretary of State, September 19, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/544, RG 59, NA.

[38] Keena to Corrigan, September 21, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA. See also: MID 2657-

For the remainder of 1936, while his opponents scrambled to secure support for their cause, Carías continued to perform extremely well in the eyes of the State Department as a reliable ally and a stabilizing leader in a chronically turbulent country. Carías's government paid close attention to words and actions of the Roosevelt Administration in order to remain in its good graces.[39] Carías's propaganda machine remained continuously active letting both Hondurans and the State Department know that not only did Carías's government consider Roosevelt a "Good Neighbor" for its nonintervention and noninterference policy in Latin America, but that "All of the America of Columbus renders him a homage of admiration."[40] Carías also fulfilled the role of the United States' collaborator in the 1936 Buenos Aires Peace Conference. In an internationally broadcasted speech in November, Carías praised the efforts of the American republics in promoting hemispheric peace. Making his position unmistakable, he stated, "May my message be a faithful expression of the fraternal sentiments that inspire the Honduran Nation toward all the other nations of the Continent."[41] Taking its praise of Roosevelt to the extreme, when Roosevelt arrived in Buenos Aires the Honduran press claimed the event was an "apotheosis."[42] Carías knew his actions pleased the United States when Hull informed his

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P-439-39, Alex A. Cohen, October 15, 1936, "Revolutionary Movements," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[39] Julian R. Caceres to Antonio Bermudez M., May 27, 1937, *Diplomatica Recibida, Legacion de Honduras en los Estados de America, 1936-1937*, Archivos de la Cancillería de Honduras.

[40] "The Politics of the Good Neighbor Implementation and Testing," *La Epoca*, June 6, 1936, enclosed in Gibson to Secretary of State, July 2, 1936, 700, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA; and "The politics of nonintervention," *El Cronista*, October 16, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, October 23, 1936, 700, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA.

[41] Carías, International Broadcast Speech, November 10, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, November 11, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA.

[42] "APOTEOSIS," *Diario Comercial*, December 14, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, December 14, 1936, 500, vol. 5, Honduras, Box 5, RG 84, NA. Other laudatory Honduran news coverage of Roosevelt in Buenos Aires can be found in *Diario Comercial*, December 15-17, 1936.

government Washington "shall always cherish the happiest memories of the agreeable associations that have been formed here between the members of our respective Delegations."[43]

Competing for the affections of the United States, Carías's challengers tried to use US foreign policy to their advantage as well, but with no success. Former president of Honduras Vicente Mejía Colindres, Zúñiga Huete, and Callejas banned together to publish *CONFERENCIA POPULAR POR LA PAZ DE AMERICA*, a short book dedicated to the idea that Carías had no business participating in any international conference dedicated to such an admirable goal as peace. The authors argued, "Cesarist governments…should be disqualified from appearing before the assembly of American nations because they cannot, in justice, bind the countries which they represent with illegal credentials."[44] Directly engaging Roosevelt, Callejas wrote the US President a letter asking the United States not to "intervene" in Honduras, but just to "withhold" recognition from Carías. Callejas thought this was reasonable if the United States truly wanted to avoid war and promote justice in Latin America as Roosevelt previously claimed.[45] By attempting to appeal to the United States' espoused virtues of justice and democracy, the men hoped they could persuade it to cease its friendly association with Carías's government, but any chance this would take place was soon forgotten when rumors began emerging Carías's opposition was associating with communists.

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[43] Hull to Bermudez M., December 24, 1936, *Diplomatica Recibida, Legacion de Honduras en los Estados de America, 1936-1937*, Archivos de la Cancillería de Honduras.

[44] Vicente Mejía Colindres, Zúñiga Huete, and Callejas, *CONFERENCIA POPULAR POR LA PAZ DE AMERICA*, (San Jose, Costa Rica: La Tribuna, 1936), pp. 1-2. For more on Honduras's attendance and agenda at American conferences see: *INFORME: presentado al Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores por la Delegación de Honduras a la Octava Conferencia Internacional Americana, celebrada en Lima, Perú, del 9 al 27 de diciembre de 1938* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1938).

[45] Callejas to Roosevelt, November 30, 1936, enclosed in Callejas to Keena, December 11, 1936, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 8, RG 84, NA. See also: Sack to Secretary of State, December 4, 1936, 815.00/4720, RG 59, NA.

According to Keena, faced with scant resources and a limited number of fellow sympathizers willing to confront Carías's Air Force and sizeable military armed with US weapons, there were indications the rebels turned to communists in nearby countries to find support for their cause. The US Legation found reason to believe it was possible some Liberals were developing allegiances with Spanish, Mexican, and Costa Rican communists. Keena, like his US diplomatic predecessors before him, speculated communism might have fertile ground in Honduras because of the unemployment in the North Coast banana fields and its strategic location in the middle of Central America.[46] While it is possible oppositional leaders communicated with Central American communists in an effort to find support for their cause, it is unlikely anything would have developed from these efforts. In 1936, Central American communists simply lacked the resources to provide support to a flailing revolutionary movement. More likely, Keena found himself swayed by Carías's propaganda, performance, and renowned anti-communist stance, and unconsciously began promoting him in his reports to the State Department while simultaneously demonizing the rebellion.

By the end of 1936, US policymakers could find few examples of how Carías had disappointed them, and generally came to the consensus his government was strong and there to stay. Carías had shown himself secure in his position when he shrank the official Honduran Army garrison strength from 1,474 to 480.[47] By August, Carías had salvaged the difficult economic situation and managed to pay all long overdue government salaries and still have enough funds left over to purchase eight new military planes.[48] He began paying off "indian chieftains" to "insure their loyalty," and amassed a "large supply of arms and ammunition." Far

[46] Keena to Secretary of State, November 13, 1936, 815.00/4718, RG 59, NA.

[47] Gibson to Secretary of State, May 8, 1936, 815.20/35, RG 59, NA.

[48] Keena to Secretary of State, August 14, 1936, 815.00/4712, RG 59, NA.

from attempting to "isolate his country from modernizing trends," Carías impressed US officials with the roads he built—during his sixteen-year reign he would build more than 1600 kilometers of them—to transport government troops throughout the country quickly, and took the time to promote good relations with his neighbors. Keena believed the possibility Carías would be overthrown was minute unless it had foreign assistance and this did not appear likely.[49] When "practically all municipalities" elected the government's candidate in the November municipal elections, Keena declared Carías's faction of the National party had won "an overwhelming victory."[50] Carías had succeeded in silencing his competition, and maintaining the affections of the United States not by proving himself more democratic or law abiding, but rather fulfilling what many in the US government had in years past believed to be impossible by pacifying Honduras.

**Carías Faces the US Media**

Carías, like his fellow Latin American dictators, was quite concerned about US media coverage of his rule, and did what he could within the limits of his power to assure it was as complimentary as possible. His most similar tyrannical peers, Trujillo, Somoza, and Ubico, all exhibited strong desires to control the US press as they did their own, and they often had a difficult time accepting why they were unable to do so. Trujillo was not above pressing charges against US American news reporters who attempted to print disparaging information about his

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[49] Keena to Secretary of State, September 11, 1936, 815.00/4715, RG 59, NA; Charles D. Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile; The Antidictatorial Struggle in the Caribbean, 1945-1959* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1974), pp. 48-49; and James A. Morris, *Honduras: Caudillo Politics and Military Rulers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), p. 5. For more on Carías's efforts to develop his country see: James Rudolph, *Honduras: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Dept. of the Army, 1983), pp. 28-31. William S. Stokes claims Carías spent as much as 13.5% of the national budget on roads in Honduras during 1941. See Stokes, *An Area Study in Government* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1950), p. 12. A surprising defense of Carías's modernization efforts can be found in: Sheldon B. Liss, *Radical Thought in Central America* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 97-100.

[50] Keena to Secretary of State, December 4, 1936, 815.00/4721, RG 59, NA.

regime, and his efforts to create positive sentiments in the United States through the creation of the famed "Dominican lobby" are well-known.[51] When it became aware a number of critical articles had been published in international newspapers, Ubico's government mandated press dispatches sent from Guatemala be first subject to censorship. It was also not uncommon for members of the Guatemalan government to make complaints about negative press to the US Legation.[52] These authoritarians knew they were fighting an uphill battle to control their images in the United States, but they remained diligent in their efforts to do so because it was no mystery US policymakers were influenced by popular conceptions and would act accordingly either for or against their interests.

While Carías had less reason to manipulate the US media than Trujillo, lacked the funds necessary to create a Honduran lobby in the United States, and was more reluctant to complain to US officials about negative press than Ubico, he made sure undesirable coverage of his regime did not go unanswered. Throughout 1936 and 1937, when US newspapers regularly printed stories depicting Honduras at civil war and Carías as not fully in control of the country, the Honduran government reacted by circulating its own counternarratives. Aiming to portray Honduras as a stable country, run by a competent government, Carías and his fellow government officials rarely went through diplomatic channels to achieve their goals. Instead, they wrote letters to editors and published their own work in a calm and professional manner.

In early 1936, as oppositionists were attempting to prevent Carías from instituting *continuismo*, the US news media began publishing articles portraying Honduras as being destabilized by Carías's actions. Reports were so numerous and solemn Hull requested the US

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[51] Eric Paul Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 99-102.

[52] Kenneth J. Grieb, *Guatemalan Caudillo, the Regime of Jorge Ubico: Guatemala, 1931-1944* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), pp. 43-44 and 79.

Legation to "comment" on them since he thought they must have been inaccurate.[53] Mindful of what was taking place in the US press, the Honduran government moved to protect its reputation as a stabilizing regime. A number of articles began appearing in major US periodicals written by Honduran officials or that contained quotes made by Carías contradicting negative press. In the *New York Times* Carías's personal secretary José Maria Albir wrote of his supposed indignation at Costa Rican broadcaster Voice of the Tropics, and stated the broadcast had disseminated false information about Honduras having a revolution. Albir argued "all" was "peaceful" and "a revolution" existed "only in the imagination of a few disconnected voluntary exiles."[54] In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Gonzalo Carías complained the newspaper had done "damage to the prestige of the regime" by spreading the erroneous rumor Honduras was experiencing a revolution. Gonzalo argued only minor disturbances had taken place and that "The present Honduran Government is well equipped and is in a position to maintain order and protect private interests."[55] Even Julio Lozano, the Honduran Finance Minister, wrote the *Washington Post* to explain there was no revolution in Honduras and that the few "exiles" who attempted to start trouble were defeated and retreated back to Nicaragua. In Lozano's words, the entire republic of Honduras was "at peace."[56]

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[53] Hull to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), April 24, 1936, 815.00 Revolutions/515A, RG 59, NA; and "CENTRAL AMERICAN CLOUDS," *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1936, p. A4.

[54] "HONDURAS PROTESTS RADIO BROADCASTS," *New York Times*, March 22, 1936, p. 25.

[55] Gonzalo Carías C., "Honduras at Peace," *New York Times*, April 24, 1936, p. 20.

[56] Julio Lozano, "Report From Honduras," *Washington Post*, April 25, 1936, p. 6. See also: "HONDURAN REBELS REPORTED BEATEN," *The Sun*, April 25, 1936, p. 11; "HONDURAS BOMBS REBELS; CLAIMS REVOLT SMASHED," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 25, 1936, p. 13; and "HONDRUAS DENIES REVOLT," *New York Times*, May 23, 1936, p. 7. A similar situation unfolded in late 1936 and early 1937, with a predictable evolution of negative press being contradicted by Honduran officials and Carías. For more critical and potentially defamatory examples of US press coverage of Honduras see: "HONDURAN LOYALISTS SENT AGAINST REBELS," *New York Times*, September 4, 1936, p. 4; "Planes Rout Invaders," *Los Angeles Times*, September 4, 1936, p. 7; "HONDURAN REBEL FORCES LAUNCH REVOLT INVASION," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 4, 1936, p. 4; "Costa Rica Reports Revolt in Honduras," *The Sun*, September 5, 1936, p. 6; "CENTRAL AMERICAN PACT IN QUESTION," *New York Times*, November 22, 1936, p. E5; "HONDURAN REVOLT

When Carías faced uncomplimentary coverage of his regime and country due to the ill-advised statements of a US American in Honduras, rather than arresting the culprit (as Trujillo was known to do), Carías dealt with the matter in a more polite fashion. In early 1938, Walter C. Mayer, a US American in the employ of the Honduran military, gave an interview to a reporter working for the *Corpus Christi Times* that angered Carías. Surprisingly, the newspaper article that mentioned the interview found its way to Carías's desk and put Mayer on thin ice. The article's author, Bill Barnard, portrayed Honduras in an unflattering light, and made it seem as though the only way to get anything accomplished in Honduras was through bribery. Mayer's name was mentioned several times and often as a source of critical information about Honduras and its government.[57] Informing the US Legation of the trouble he had gotten himself into, Mayer stated in order to smooth things over Carías wanted him to write another article to make up for the damage he caused to the reputation of Honduras. Mayer did as he was told and published an article with "many laudatory, though exaggerated, statements designed to ingratiate the author with the Honduran Government" in *The Nassau Daily Review-Star* of New York.[58]

**Arming a Dictator**

As explored in chapter seven, the United States was by no means comfortable with the prospect of Carías's nascent Air Force being flown by US pilots, but throughout his legal presidency the United States did nothing to prevent it from taking place, because it feared the

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FEARED," *New York Times*, February 7, 1937, p. 3; and Frank L. Kluckhohn, "DICTATORS AGREE IN LATIN AMERICA," *New York Times*, July 20, 1937, p. 18. For more examples of Honduran efforts to counteract negative US press see: "REPORT HONDURAN UPRISINGS," *New York Times*, February 15, 1937, p. 6; "South and Central America," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1937, p. 20; "HONDURAN FIGHTS DENIED," *New York Times*, February 25, 1937, p. 15; and "Review of the Week," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 28, 1937, p. B6.

[57] Bill Barnard, "Percy Roberts Back From Honduras with No Gold but Plenty of Experiences," *The Corpus Christi Times*, March 18, 1938, p. 1.

[58] Erwin to Secretary of State, May 5, 1938, 815.6376/1, RG 59, NA; and Cramp to Secretary of State, June 17, 1938, 815.6376/2, RG 59, NA.

alternatives to US aviators more than the presence of a few US Americans potentially intervening in Honduran affairs. From 1933 to 1936, the United States tolerated US pilots in the Honduran Air Force because it helped stabilize the country. However, in 1937 the United States overlooked the fact that US pilots participated in putting down revolutionary movements to prevent Carías from instituting his *continuismo*. It was one thing for the United States to knowingly discourage revolution through the presence of US pilots in Honduras, but it was another for it to overlook US Americans flying missions in support of a nondemocratic regime. In 1937, the United States continued to be uncomfortable with the idea of US pilots in the Honduran Air Force, but it acted only to remove itself from culpability rather than end the practice. US policymakers permitted their participation, not because they lacked the power to prevent it, but because they appreciated the results and feared the alternatives.[59]

In January 1936, just as Carías was announcing his plans to rewrite the Honduran constitution, the United States was contemplating what it should do about US pilots in the Honduran Air Force. The State Department knew if Carías was denied US pilots he would turn elsewhere for the expertise he needed. As a result of pressure from the US government, Honduras was debating whether to hire French or Mexican aviators to replace the US Americans.[60] The Department and US military were also aware even if there were no US pilots officially employed by the Honduran government, US American TACA pilots could easily be ordered to fly for the Honduran Air Force or use TACA planes in military action. This was

[59] J. Mark Ruhl is one of the few authors who have written on Honduran military development. Although his findings on Carías's contribution to the Honduran military are unsubstantiated, brief, and do not explain how it was done, he too maintains the United States aided Carías in the professionalization of the Honduran military. See: Ruhl, "Redefining Civil-Military Relations in Honduras," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* vol. 38 no. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 33-66.

[60] Keena to Secretary of State, January 3, 1936, 815.20/34, RG 59, NA.

expected because the Honduran Air Force in early 1936 still only had three airplanes while TACA could boast the largest fleet in Central America.[61]

To try and reconcile the United States' desire to continue to provide Honduras with stability, and at the same time reduce the chance US Americans might get tangled up in a Honduran civil war during the era of the supposedly Good Neighbor, US officials worked hand in hand with Honduran authorities to train Hondurans to become competent aviators. Keena, the Honduran government, and US military attaché Nicholas W. Campanole all stridently lobbied the War Department to allow Honduran Captain Luis Alonso Fiallos to enroll in US special aviation training. Campanole felt "The return" the US government received "from training" foreign nationals was "invaluable and can not be over emphasized." He argued, "Successful graduates from these countries, as a rule," became "exponents of our methods and" contributed "immeasurably to the prestige and influence of the United States."[62] Unfortunately for the US officials and the Honduran government, the War Department had no spaces available for Fiallos to begin training with the United States, so the matter had to be dropped for some time.[63] However, three Hondurans did end up studying aviation in the United States, but upon completion of their studies they went to work for Lowell Yerex at TACA rather than the Honduran Air Force.[64]

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[61] MID 2657-P-312-14, Campanole, January 24, 1936, "Stability of Present Administration," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 6, RG 165, NA.

[62] Campanole, "Captain Luis Alonso Fiallos, January 28, 1936, 820.07, vol. 12, Honduras, Box 11, RG 84, NA.

[63] [Charles K.?] Nulsen, February 21, 1936, 820.07, vol. 12, Honduras, Box 11, RG 84, NA.

[64] Juan Manuel Galvez, *Memoria Guerra, Marina, y Aviación, 1936-1937* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1937), pp. 3-15. For a biography of the interesting life of Lowell Yerex see: David Yerex, *Yerex of TACA: A Kiwi Conquistador* (Carterton, New Zealand: Ampersand Pub. Associates, 1985).

Figure 7. Carías (far left) Posing with his US American Pilots. Brooks to American Consul (Tegucigalpa), August 4, 1936, 820, vol. 12, Honduras, Box 11, RG 84, NA.

Anticipating trouble from his opposition due to his changing of the constitution, Carías moved to strengthen what he believed to be his military's best weapon against revolution. In late February 1936, Carías established the Escuela Militar de Aviación_ (Military School of Aviation) outside of Tegucigalpa. In accordance with his custom, Carías hired a former US military man, Colonel William C. Brooks, as the "director" of the school.[65] The US government recognized Brooks had a difficult task in preparing the Honduran Air Force for battle. He only had three planes at his disposal, and those were in desperate need of maintenance and upgrading. Furthermore, it was no secret Brooks would be training the Air Force cadets under fire, a fact

[65] Keena to Secretary of State, March 4, 1936, 815.223/1, RG 59, NA. Shortly thereafter, a number of additional US Americans were hired as "instructors" at the school. See: Erwin to Secretary of State, November 27, 1937, 815.248/101, RG 59, NA. There is a considerable amount of discrepancy over when the Escuela Militar de Aviación was established. Usually secondary sources place its opening in 1934 or 1935. However, according to US primary sources it was opened in 1936.

that did not go unnoticed by Brooks who flew sitting on a cast iron pan so that revolutionaries' bullets would not strike him.[66] Brooks promised the US government that no US pilots would take part in "any bombing," and none of the US Americans in the employ of the Honduran government were enlisted in the Honduran military. Keena reported to Washington US aviators were only flying "practice and observation flights," and that he would make it known to Carías that if war broke out the US government did not want US citizens taking part in hostilities.[67]

By mid-1936, a common understanding developed throughout Honduras and the United States that the application of airplanes in combat, more than any other factor besides Carías's rule, had provided Honduras with stability. Since the early days of his presidency, Carías had worked hard to instill respect for the power of airplanes in the Honduran people. He consistently made a spectacle of the technology and treated pilots, the planes, and air shows with pomp and circumstance. In 1933, he even forbid the consumption of alcohol at an air show lest those present become distracted from the day's festivities.[68] It was generally regarded as a fact that not only did the airplane allow revolutions to be dealt with quickly and inexpensively, but also its reputation preemptively discouraged uprisings and limited the number of those willing to support revolt. This revolution in military technology appeared to be the application so long sought by both US policymakers obsessed with peace, and Carías whose main goal was to remain in power. The *New York Times* reported the airplane permitted Carías to send "government troops" to locations across the country in a matter of hours where it might have taken "days or weeks to

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[66] Cohen, March 11, 1936, 815.248/67, RG 59, NA.

[67] Keena to Secretary of State, March 17, 1936, 820.07, vol. 12, Honduras, Box 11, RG 84, NA; and William Brooks to Keena, December 28, 1936, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, December 30, 1936, 815.248/86, RG 59, NA.

[68] "ONE DAY OF TRUE IMPORTANCE FOR THE HISTORY OF NAITONAL AVIATION WAS LAST SUNDAY," *El Cronista*, December 26, 1933, pp. [?] and 6.

arrive on the scene" of rebellion previously.[69] The Honduran Air Force was so lauded it was called the "flotilla of peace" by the US press.[70] When revolution again threatened in late 1936, Campanole stated the Honduran Air Force made it unlikely the "new movement," although based in both Nicaragua and El Salvador, would have "any considerable success."[71] To those who advocated stability over all else the airplane was a godsend.[72]

As the United States' appreciation for the Honduran Air Force grew, so too did the specter of revolution, which placed the United States in a difficult position. US officials in Honduras knew a significant revolution was imminent by early 1936, and as February 1, 1937, the original date for the expiration of Carías's presidency drew closer, the United States realized the Honduran revolution did as well. Faced with this reality the State Department anticipated US Americans would take part in violence, and instructed Keena yet again to make sure US pilots were not used in Honduran military operations. Carías may have promised the US government

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[69] "NEW REBEL OUTBREAK IN HONDURAS RUMORED," *New York Times*, August 3, 1936, p. 2.

[70] "HONDURAN INSURGENTS ARE REPORTED IN ROUT," *New York Times*, September 5, 1936, p. 3.

[71] MID 2657-P-439-35, Campanole, September 3, 1936, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA. For more on the history of aviation in Honduras see: "History of National Aviation," *La Tribuna*, April 14, 1982, p. 12.

[72] For more on the near universal belief in the United States Carías's Air Force gave him an almost incontestable military see: "HONDURAS FIGHTING ARMIES OF REBELS," *New York Times*, April 24, 1936, p. 12; "Troops Rout Rebel Forces in Honduras," *Washington Post*, April 25, 1936, p. 1; "HONDURAS CRUSHES REBEL OUTBREAKS," *New York Times*, April 26, 1936, p. 26; "ENTIRE HONDURAS REPORTED AT PEACE," *The Sun*, April 26, 1936, p. 13; Frank L. Kluckhohn, "A DICTATORSHIP BELT: IN THE NEW WORLD," *New York Times*, September 5, 1937, pp. 12-13; MID 2657-P-439-32, Cohen, May 15, 1936, "Stability of Present Administration," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA; MID 2657-P-312-14, Campanole, January 24, 1936, "Stability of Present Administration," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 6, RG 165, NA; MID 2657-P-312-13, Campanole, January 9, 1936, "Pre-Election Activities," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 6, RG 165, NA; and MID 2548-69-3A, David L. Stone, August 6, 1937, "Airplane landing Fields and Other Facilities in British Honduras and Honduras," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 10, RG 165, NA.

he would not employ US aviators in combat, but few US observers believed him.[73] Throughout the first half of 1936, the US Legation was informed by various Hondurans US citizens had taken part in suppressing revolutions in Honduras and were responsible for the deaths of its people.[74]

Washington knew if revolution broke out US Americans would be employed by the Honduran government to suppress it, but the State Department did not meaningfully intervene to prevent it. Keena called the issue "a cause for concern," and reported to the Department the Honduran pilots being taught by Brooks at the military aviation school were "valueless" because they were ill trained. He suggested that some sort of "penalty" might be established for US Americans who fought for the Honduran government in order to discourage them from doing so and to protect the character of the Good Neighbor policy. He went as far as to recommend US belligerents in Honduras lose their citizenship if they did so.[75] The potential the issue would develop further grew exponentially as the Honduran government increased its military budget by $160,000 with most of the funds being allocated toward augmenting its Air Force (by June 1937 there were 13 planes "used exclusively for military purposes" in Honduras).[76] The debate about what to do in Washington took these facts into account, but in the end nothing was decided upon other than maintaining the status quo. One unnamed US policymaker stated, "the obvious intent

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[73] Wilbur J. Carr to Keena, November 30, 1936, 815.248/82, RG 59, NA.

[74] Benito Gomez, et al., October 5, 1936, 815.248/82, RG 59, NA. See also: Gibson to Secretary of State, June 4, 1936, 815.00-Revolutions/527, RG 59, NA.

[75] Keena to Secretary of State, December 12, 1936, 815.248/83, RG 59, NA. See also: Cramp to Secretary of State, June 12, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/575, RG 59, NA.

[76] Keena to Secretary of State, December 19, 1936, 815.51/912, RG 59, NA; MID 2548-144-6, Campanole, August 5, 1936, "Armament and Equipment," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 10, RG 165, NA; and MID 2548-144-12, Joseph B. Pate, June 3, 1937, "Armament and Equipment," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 10, RG 165, NA.

of the neutrality laws of the United States" was "to discountenance the enlistment of American citizens in foreign armed forces," and he feared the contract the then three US American pilots had signed with the Honduran government "obviously implied" they be involved in military operations.[77] However, he later argued there was nothing to be done other than to wait and see what took place.[78]

It seems by the end of 1936, the United States knew the Good Neighbor policy was undermined by US Americans taking part in Honduras's internal political violence, but judged the situation acceptable because of its stabilizing effect on the country and the volatile international environment. At the close of 1936, Keena lobbied Washington to permit the presence of US pilots in the Honduran Air Force. Keena admitted Brooks and other US pilots had taken part on an attack on the revolutionist held town of Sinuapa, but also claimed the air strike struck fear into the hearts of revolutionaries, discouraging them, and therefore were "the cheapest and most effective means of combatting them." Keena thought the US American aviators discouraged the possibility the Air Force would be susceptible to "partisan activities" and drastically improved the stability of the government. He worried if US Americans did not do the job German and Italian instructors then might be employed, thus augmenting Honduras's "fascist" tendencies. He warned if the Department reacted too rashly on this issue that Honduras might be placed in a position where it allowed its Fascists to control the strongest Air Force in Central America. He felt Honduras needed to "rely" on US pilots until their own force was strong enough to take on the task before them.[79]

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[77] Unknown to Willard L. Beaulac, October 7, 1936, 815.248/81, RG 59, NA.

[78] Unknown to Beaulac, December 21, 1936, 815.248/81, RG 59, NA.

[79] Keena to Secretary of State, December 29, 1936, 815.248/85, RG 59, NA.

## The *Stella H.* Incident

On February 12, 1937, several US newspapers reported that at least two unidentified planes had attacked a ship named the *Stella H.* off the coast of British Honduras. The information available was limited, but the ship's Honduran captain, Rollins H. Powery, stated "About 1,500 rounds were fired by one plane, and another burst of fire came from two planes four hours later."[80] Clueless about the event until the US media covered it, Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles instructed the US Legations in Honduras and British Honduras to investigate the matter.[81] Sensing the possibility the planes were Honduran, Welles ordered Vice Consul and Secretary of the US Legation, Walter W. Hoffman to ascertain the nationality of the planes and whether US aviators piloted them.[82] The report the State Department soon received on the matter from the US Legation was inconclusive about whom the planes belonged to and who piloted them, but all evidence pointed toward Honduras and its US American pilots. What was known by early March was that Captain Powery was aboard the boat alone after having disembarked cargo in Honduras and that he was in British Honduran waters when the incident took place. After spotting him, a plane circled his boat several times and then fired its machine gun, but no effort was made to hit the boat with the bullets. The plane then left, but two more appeared several hours later armed with bombs. They too fired their guns across the ship's bow, but did not strike it. The planes flew so close to Powery he claimed to have been able to ascertain their pilots' nationality, and maintained the pilots were "either German or Americans," because of their light skin color. US Vice Consul in British Honduras, Culver E. Gidden, recommended that

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[80] "Two Planes Attack Ship Off British Honduras: Master of Sloop Stella H Reports…," *The Sun*, February 12, 1937, p. 2; and "Two Planes Machine Gun Sloop Off Honduras Coast," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 12, 1937, p. 5.

[81] Welles to Culver E. Gidden, February 19, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/554, RG 59, NA.

[82] Welles to Walter W. Hoffman, February 19, 1937, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 23, RG 84, NA.

if the planes were indeed Honduran that the Hondurans "must be condemned for such a flagrant breach of international law."[83]

A few days later the US Legation in Honduras confirmed the *Stella H.* had been involved in revolutionary activities against Carías, and the State Department realized its fear of an international incident involving the Honduran Air Force and US pilots had nearly come to fruition. It was discovered the ship had "landed a party of some twelve insurgents, probably General Umaña and a quantity of arms and ammunition, on the Honduran coast near Tela, the night of February 1, 1937." Keena thought the matter was of little importance because "no harm" seemed "to have been done in the attack," but the same could not be said of Washington.[84] Department officials were upset Carías had broken his promise to restrict the responsibility of US pilots in his employ to patrols, training, and transportation. Not only had the pilots been implicated in the attack on the *Stella H.*, they had also dropped a number of bombs on insurgents on the North Coast and were supposedly receiving $50 bonuses from Carías for dropping bombs "regardless of results." "No deaths of any Honduran citizens" occurred but this did not lessen the Department's anger over the situation. Laurence Duggan, Chief of the Division of American Republic Affairs, stated the event had caused him to believe Carías's "assurances were empty ones." There were eleven US pilots in the employ of the Honduran military, and the incident confirmed they had and would almost certainly be continued to be involved in "the quelling of incipient revolutions."[85]

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[83] Gidden to Secretary of State, March 2, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/566, RG 59, NA.

[84] Keena to Secretary of State, March 5, 1937, 815.00-Revolutions/564, RG 59, NA.

[85] Duggan to Beaulac, Memorandum, April 5, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/564, RG 59, NA; and [Hoffman?], Memorandum of Conversation with Brooks, May 16 , 1937, 820, vol. 11, Honduras, Box 25, RG 84, NA. For more on Duggan's view of the United States' role in the Western Hemisphere see: Duggan, *The Americas* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1949).

Duggan knew the situation was delicate, but refused to act against Carías because of his fear Carías might turn toward fascism and the possibility Honduras might again return to chaotic revolution. He was aware "To the average individual" it looked as though the US government "was conniving at the activities of these American citizens in the maintenance in power of the present Honduran Government," but he justified his lack of initiative to change the course of US policy on the absence of United States law "governing the employment of American citizens as military pilots by the Government of Honduras." Furthermore, he argued if the US government denied the use of US pilots to its Air Force the Honduran government would simply replace them with someone else, and that "German or Italian" pilots would take their places. Duggan worried with an Air Force as strong as Carías's the entire isthmus might be brought under his control, and if he were allied with fascists it would pose a serious problem for the United States. Faced with a direct challenge to the spirit of the nonintervention clause of the Good Neighbor policy by Carías, and the possibility Honduras would fall into the hands of the European fascists or revolutionary disarray, Duggan recommended only reminding Carías US pilots should not be employed in "military operations."[86] Not wanting to offend Carías some in the Department felt this reminder should be done "orally" and "informally," because a written note might have proven "embarrassing" to the Hondurans.[87]

Accounting for diplomatic etiquette, Welles moved to tactfully reprimand Carías for breaking his promise and using US pilots in suppressing the revolt and sought further guarantees they would not be used in the same way in the future. Welles instructed Keena to "seek an early audience" with Carías and "reiterate to him the importance which this Government attaches to

[86] Duggan to Beaulac, Memorandum, April 5, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/564, RG 59, NA.

[87] [Beaulac?] to Duggan, Memorandum, April 13, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/564, RG 59, NA.

the non-employment of American citizens in active military operations…and to request him to give you renewed assurances that they will not be so employed."[88]

The way in which Carías dealt with the United States' mild condemnation and concern over his employment of US pilots demonstrates not only his awareness of the power of the airplane in controlling Honduras, but also his ability to manipulate the State Department to maintain his dominance of the Central American airspace. Keena visited with Carías and asked him point blank about the possibility of US American pilots becoming "active" in Honduran "military operations within or without the boundaries of Honduras." Carías stated US pilots would no longer be used in Honduran "military operations" and provided "the most unqualified assurances" to Keena. Carías admitted the *Stella H*. had been attacked by a Honduran airplane piloted by a US American, but also reminded Keena the ship had brought revolutionaries to Tela. Carías also claimed the pilot had acted without orders from the Honduran government and did no damage to the vessel or its occupants. Carías then told Keena "Instructions" had been "given all aviators connected with the Military Aviation School which will prevent the recurrence of any similar incident," but this time Carías refused to "promise that US American pilots would not be called upon to protect his government." Carías said if he made that promise "his political opponents would be unwarrantedly encouraged to try and foment a revolution against his government which might mean a considerable period of disorder in Honduras." Assuaging Keena's displeasure, Carías told Keena there was no need for the United States to worry about another incident taking place because Honduran pilots were being trained as they spoke at the

[88] Welles to Keena, April 19, 1937, 815.00-Revolutions/564, RG 59, NA.

Military Aviation School, which would negate the need for US pilots to be used in his Air Force.[89]

The *Stella H.* incident adds complexity to US-Honduran and US-Carías relations by showing what the United States was concerned about in Honduras, and how Carías positioned himself to address those US anxieties. Since the creation of the Honduran Air Force in 1933, the United States had proven itself fearful of the prospect it would be accused of intervening in Honduran affairs by acquiescing to the presence of US pilots in Carías's Air Force. When the attack on the *Stella H*. took place, it reminded US policymakers just how easily an embarrassing international incident could occur, and implicate them in aiding a dictatorship. Carías was well aware of the United States' reservations but refused to change his military doctrine in the face of Washington's unmistakable displeasure. Rather than abandon the use of US pilots, Carías lied to the United States on several occasions, promising no US citizens would engage in any fighting. He also moved to provide evidence to his assurances by establishing the Military Aviation School, which made the United States more likely to accept his earnest desire not to use US pilots in suppressing political opposition. Playing on the United States' long time fear of revolutionary violence in Honduras, Carías argued with US representatives if he was denied the use of US pilots the country would become destabilized. Although the historical record does not indicate Carías considered the United States' worry about fascist control of his Air Force, it does show Washington's approach to Central American affairs was influenced by events in Europe in early 1937, and that this helped Carías retain the employment of US pilots against the US government's better judgment.

[89] Keena, State Department Memorandum, June 4, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/573, RG 59, NA.

## The Attempted Revolution of 1937

In early 1937, Carías's opposition launched a failed attempt to start a widespread revolution. There were many reasons why the endeavor proved futile, but its failure showed the United States Carías was an entrenched and stabilizing force, and even if he was tyrannical and oppressive to his own people he was still the United States' best hope for peace in Honduras. This did not mean the United States was thrilled with Carías's presidency or that it had complete faith in his ability to remain in power, but rather it saw few positive alternatives to his rule. In this conflict, Carías continued his now anticipated ability to crush dissent with the use of US pilots in his Air Force. This practice cost him some popularity in Washington, but he obviously felt it was worth the trade because the participation of US pilots in Honduran military operations continued unabated throughout the first half of 1937. The revolt was fleeting, but the way in which it was suppressed made many US officials worry about the future of Carías's regime.

The attempted revolution of 1937 may have been one of the first revolts the United States did not anticipate with grave concern. For once, US officials were unworried that political instability would throw the country into a prolonged period of chaos. In late January, the US Legation admitted discontentment existed in Honduras, but informed Washington it would "only come to the surface in response to strong and vigorous leadership" and that this was "lacking." Hoffman believed Venancio Callejas and Zúñiga Huete were the greatest threats to the Carías government, but he knew they had been "discredited" due to "their failure to arouse the population and to achieve any [revolutionary] success during the past twelve months."[90] Because

[90] Hoffman to Secretary of State, January 22, 1937, 815.00/4725, RG 59, NA.

of this, when a Liberal force was disembarked by the *Stella H.* near Tela in early February, the US Legation remained almost completely indifferent.[91]

The United States' apathy over events in Honduras can largely be attributed to the revolutionists' inability to achieve any major victories other than staying alive. The rebels failed to destroy the government's Air Force at Tegucigalpa in a botched cloak and dagger operation, and had their attack on San Pedro Sula foiled by a traitor.[92] General Umaña, who arrived on the *Stella H.*, engaged in a number of skirmishes on the North Coast, but was forced to flee with only a handful of his men to the mountains when he suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of government troops in El Progreso. The revolutionists succeeded in derailing a train outside of Tela, but this was their only successful blow to the government.[93] Within a few days of the beginning of hostilities, after Venacio Callejas's brother and fellow conspirator, José Jorge Callejas, had given himself up to Honduran authorities, Hoffman declared, "it can safely be said that the Government has successfully weathered the severest storm to which it has, as yet, been subjected." He went on to report the revolutionaries failed to garner support because there was "a growing realization that General Carias" had "the best interests of his country at heart and" was "sincere in his efforts to govern it as well as possible."[94] US military attaché Alex A. Cohen was

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[91] Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 1, 1937, 815.00/4728, RG 59, NA.

[92] Pate, "Revolutionary Outbreak," n.d. [1937?], 815.00 Revolutions/565, RG 59, NA; and Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 9, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/555, RG 59, NA. For US press coverage of the rebels attempt to destroy Carías's Air Force see: "Conspiracy in Honduras Quelled by Government," *Washington Post*, February 13, 1937, p. 3; "PLOT FRUSTRATED," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 13, 1937, p. 7; and "Plot Against Honduran Government Revealed," *The Sun*, February 13, 1937, p. 9.

[93] Hoffmann to Secretary of State, February 5, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/553, RG 59, NA; Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 16, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/556, RG 59, NA; and Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 20, 1937, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 23, RG 84, NA.

[94] Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 9, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/555, RG 59, NA. General Justo Umaña Alvarado was later murdered in Guatemala by Ubico's henchmen in an effort to show Ubico's support for Carías's rule. For more information see: Keena to Secretary of State, April 3, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/570, RG 59, NA; Fay Allen DesPortes to Secretary of State, August 5, 1937, 815.00/4736, RG 59, NA; Cramp to Secretary of State, August 9, 1937, 815.00/4739, RG 59, NA; "Honduran Rebel Leaders Reported Shot By Guatemalans Under

so impressed with the Honduran government's work and skillful management of its Air Force, he declared, "Although the Honduran loves to fight and the art of revolution with its attendant guerilla warfare is second nature to him, the use of the airplane…instilled such a wholesome fear in the simple minded, would-be rebel, that" from then on "any plot of revolt aimed at overthrowing the government must" first eliminate the Air Force and TACA as tools of the military.[95]

Seeking to inspire assistance from the US government, Carías and his foreign office attempted to draw a connection between the revolutionists and communists on the North Coast. Honduran intelligence passed to the US Legation showed Zúñiga Huete was receiving funds from communists in Mexico. The Honduran government warned the US Legation their country was vulnerable to communists allying with the Liberals, and that the poor economic situation in the banana growing region made this alliance dangerous.[96] Obviously seeking to develop the idea Carías was anti-communist and willing to work with the United States to suppress the radical ideology, Honduran Foreign Minister Antonio Bermudez M. approached the US Legation about sharing intelligence that might help apprehend communists in Central America. The Honduran Foreign Minister was able to convince Hoffman that Zúñiga Huete was involved in communications with communists and was receiving their "support," but the Honduran government was unable to show there was a "signed pact" between the Honduran Liberals and

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Dictators' Accord," *New York Times*, August 10, 1937, p. 1; MID 2657-P-439-45, Pate, August 10, 1937, "Political Leaders," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA; and DesPortes to Secretary of State, August 19, 1937, 815.00/4741, RG 59, NA.

[95] MID 2657-P-439-42, Cohen, February 23, 1937, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[96] Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 5, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/553, RG 59, NA; Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 6, 1937, 815.00-Revolutions/554, RG 59, NA; and Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 6, 1937, 815.00B/68, RG 59, NA.

communists.[97] The United States was simply unimpressed with the oppositionists' prospects for destabilizing Honduras and found no lawful reason to persecute communists in Honduras, and was therefore unwilling to exchange the requested intelligence on communist activities in the region.[98]

In less than a month, Carías, with the help of US pilots flying his airplanes, had succeeded in suppressing the greatest threat to his rule yet, but it came at a price that worried US officials. The airplane may have struck fear into the "would-be rebel," but its operation by US Americans had caused many Hondurans to be upset with Carías's government for employing mercenaries.[99] Other Hondurans chafed under the imprisonment at the hands of Carías's henchmen, the country's struggling economy, and the inability of the government to pay its employees' salaries.[100] There were rumors Carías would be assassinated, and he was forced to take precautions employing a sizeable bodyguard and traveling in "an armored car followed by four guards in a station wagon armed with Thompson guns."[101] US officials in Washington were well aware there was "a good deal of resentment and criticism" aimed at Carías's government.[102] Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim William M. Cramp even thought there was enough evidence to

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[97] Hoffman to Secretary of State, February 13, 1937, 815.00B/69, RG 59, NA; and Hoffman to Secstate, February 20, 1937, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 23, RG 84, NA.

[98] The United States was concerned about unemployment causing the "spread of radical doctrines." See: Keena to Secretary of State, February 27, 1937, 800, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 23, RG 84, NA.

[99] Alfredo Perdomo to Roosevelt, February 16, 1937, 815.248/88, RG 59, NA.

[100] Beaulac to Duggan, March 4, 1937, 815.51A/3, RG 59, NA. See also: "Dissident Hondurans Jailed," *New York Times*, April 16, 1937, p. 6; and Gerald A. Drew to Secretary of State, May 4, 1937, 815.00/4731, RG 59, NA.

[101] Keena to Secretary of State, March 20, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/568, RG 59, NA; and MID 2657-P-439-48, Pate, November 21, 1937, "EXECUTIVE BRANCH," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[102] Duggan to Beaulac, April 10, 1937, enclosed in Keena to Secretary of State, April 3, 1937, 815.00 Revolutions/570, RG 59, NA.

report although nothing was likely to unseat Carías in the short-term, as time went on the corruption and incompetence of Carías's government would lead it to implode. Cramp did not feel Carías would be responsible for this downfall, because he felt Carías was well-meaning and one of the few able politicians in the country, but either way the future for Carías looked bleak.[103] Cramp was one of the few US officials willing to speculate Carías's government was in trouble, but his contention shows Carías's ruthlessness had grown since changing the constitution, and he needed to find some way of improving his domestic popularity.

## Exploiting the Honduran-Nicaraguan Border Dispute

After Carías had crushed the attempted revolution of 1937, he moved to strengthen his grip on power even more. Always creative in his techniques to gain and retain the presidency, this time Carías accomplished his goal by taking advantage of an international crisis which threatened to take Honduras to war with Nicaragua over a stamp. In a similar fashion and for comparable reasons to Ubico's pressing of Guatemala's boundary dispute with British Honduras, Carías set about to benefit politically from his nation's territorial quarrel with Nicaragua.[104] Although history usually records the diplomatic exchanges between Nicaragua and Honduras in late 1937 as a boundary dispute, it would be more accurate to describe the incident as a purposefully inflamed emergency orchestrated by Carías to inspire Honduran nationalism, improve employment opportunities for Hondurans, and rally his opposition to his support. To accomplish these goals Carías's foreign office instigated the dispute and made sure the Honduran people were enraged at Nicaragua and eager to defend their nation's territory and honor through

[103] Cramp to Secretary of State, June 25, 1937, 815.00/4732, RG 59, NA. See also: Cramp to Secretary of State, July 15, 1937, 815.00/4735, RG 59, NA.

[104] For Ubico's actions in inflaming the Guatemalan-British Honduras boundary dispute see: Grieb, "Jorge Ubico and the Belice Boundary Dispute," *The Americas* vol. 30 no. 4 (April 1974): pp. 448-474.

confrontational media coverage. In the face of Nicaraguan interest in resolving the hostility, the Honduran government refused to let the situation calm down and purposefully provoked the Nicaraguans to reignite passions and therefore prolong the heightened emotions of the Honduran people. During this episode, Carías skillfully balanced his domestic aspirations with the United States' earnest desire and efforts to see the matter resolved. To this end, Carías successfully completed an elaborate ruse to make the US government believe he desired a swift resolution all the while continuing to pursue a dangerous state of affairs with Nicaragua.

In early August 1937, the Honduran government registered a complaint with the Nicaraguan foreign minister in Tegucigalpa, Manuel Cordero Reyes, about a Nicaraguan postage stamp that depicted part of La Mosquitia region as Nicaraguan sovereign territory. Cordero Reyes did not think the issue was that significant since similar Nicaraguan stamps had been in circulation for years, but he told Cramp it "was a matter of vital importance to the Honduran Government."[105] Within a matter of days after the complaint was first made, Hondurans were speaking of going to war with Nicaragua to settle the issue. After speaking with Honduran officials, Cramp felt the Honduran government "was attempting to avoid making this matter public," but "the entire capital" was speaking of war.[106] The seriousness of the situation was hard for Cramp to ignore when he discovered Carías's son, Gonzalo Carías Castillo, was being sent to the United States to purchase "arms and ammunition," which Cramp felt could "only be interpreted as a safe guard against the possibility of armed conflict with Nicaragua."[107]

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[105] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 7, 1937, 712, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Cramp, "Memorandum of Conversation with the Nicaraguan Minister," August 26, 1937, enclosed in Cramp to Secretary of State, August 27, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[106] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 11, 1937, 712, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[107] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 13, 1937, 712, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

The Honduran people took a strong stance on what they felt was their sovereign territory. Over the course of the previous three decades, there had been numerous flare-ups between Honduras and Nicaragua, which required international arbitration. The Hondurans argued the boundary had been irrevocably finalized in 1906 by the King of Spain in a decision they called "definitive."[108] For years the matter had been a dead issue for Hondurans, and it was largely forgotten, so when the dispute returned many in Honduras felt Somoza was starting the trouble to "distract attention from troubles at home."[109] However, the evidence suggests it was not Somoza who started the trouble, but rather Carías who was having difficulty ruling his country.

Besides the fact it was the Honduran government that registered the complaint with the Nicaraguans in the first place, there were a number of other significant indications Carías needed the dispute to strengthen his regime. By late 1937, several members of the US Legation felt Carías's government was "far from secure," and that he needed to maintain an "iron hand" on the country if he wanted to remain in office. The trouble with clamping down on his fellow citizens was that it contributed to "ever-growing discontent throughout the country," and produced a vicious cycle of increasingly harsh measures by Carías to stay in power that only accelerated further disgruntlement. Cramp reported to Washington Carías's Administration had "notably failed to develop" and had "fallen into such provincialism and corruption" it was "unusual" "even for Central America."[110] Carías needed to quickly improve his position if he was going to remain in power.

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[108] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 14, 1937, 712, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA. The Honduran government would not budge on the Laudo of the King of Spain from 1906. For more on this see: Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, *Carta del Eminente Internacionalista Mr. John Basset Moore Para el Dr. Policarpo Bonilla, Representante de Honduras durante la mediacion en Washingotn, 1918-1921…* (Tegucigalpa, Talleres Tipo-Litograficos, [1921?]).

[109] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 13, 1937, 712, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[110] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 17, 1938, 815.00/4768, RG 59, NA.

The Nicaraguans were adamant the dispute was manufactured by the Hondurans, but US officials were reluctant to believe their accusations. The new Nicaraguan Minister to Honduras, Luis Mana Solórzano, told Cramp he only found out about the stamp issue when he arrived in Honduras in mid-August, and that in Nicaragua it was unimportant. Uncertain about what all the fuss was about Solórzano informed Cramp he felt "the stamp issue was being seized upon by Honduran political emigrados to discountenance the Carías régime." Solórzano speculated Honduras was stirring up trouble with Somoza because of past grievances with Nicaragua. Cramp did not believe Solórzano, and instead thought he had been scripted to dodge the matter so that Somoza could strengthen his regime.[111] The Nicaraguan claim Carías had started the trouble for his own purposes was never dropped during the crisis and was even put forth by Somoza and his brother-in-law Luis Manuel Debayle, adding weight to the contention Carías engineered it.[112] The Nicaraguan government was not the only entity that accused Honduras of concocting the international crisis. In late August, the *New York Times* reported Honduras was arming itself for war and was even "recruiting" along the Nicaraguan frontier. It went further and suggested Carías "raise[d] the issue of the Nicaraguan-Honduran boundary to divert notice from internal friction."[113] The US military also felt Honduras was acting much more aggressively toward Nicaragua both diplomatically and in its national press than Nicaragua was toward it. Cohen felt Honduras was making "mountains…out of mole hills," and US military attaché

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[111] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 24, 1937, 712, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Cramp, "Memorandum of Conversation with the Nicaraguan Minister," August 26, 1937, enclosed in Cramp to Secretary of State, August 27, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[112] Conversation Notes between Louis Manuel Debayle and Duggan, September 20, 1937, enclosed in State Department to the American Minister (Tegucigalpa), September 24, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[113] "NICARAGUA FEARS STRIFE," *New York Times*, August 31, 1937, p. 2. See also "Stamp Feud," *Time* vol. 30 is. 11 (September 13, 1937): p. 21; and "Stamp 'Incident Rouses Honduras," *Washington Post*, September 4, 1937, p. 26.

Joseph B. Pate thought Carías was being "aggressive with his air equipment," while Somoza was being "patient and conciliatory."[114]

The United States wasted no time becoming involved in the dispute, and within a matter of weeks began putting pressure on both countries to stand-down and try to find some sort of peaceful solution. In late August, Cramp told Solórzano he hoped war could be prevented and that both countries would "avoid any foolish demonstrations." He even took the matter a step further and suggested the Nicaraguans withdraw the aggravating stamp from circulation.[115] Cramp was gravely concerned the now twelve US pilots working in Honduras would "either for profit or for love of adventure…assist the Hondurans should hostilities break out." Cramp knew "American citizens serving in the armed forces of Honduras and the reaction throughout the American Republics would unquestionably be most unfortunate."[116]

By late August, the United States realized Carías was proving reluctant to engage in negotiations that could bring the situation to a peaceful conclusion, and did its diplomatic best to change his mind but with no results. After receiving indications from Nicaragua that Somoza was open to arbitration, Hull instructed the US Legation to convince Carías he needed to do the same. The Legation was told to inform Carías:

> that this Government has viewed with increasing concern the controversy between Nicaragua and Honduras. You should express to him the confidence of this Government that the Honduran Government will do all in its power not to permit the present friction to

[114] MID 2657-P-442-8, Cohen, October 4, 1937, "HONDURAS - Political," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA; and MID 2657-P-442-9, Pate, October 25, 1937, "NICARAGUA – HONDURAS - POLITICAL," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[115] Cramp, "Memorandum of Conversation with the Nicaraguan Minister," August 26, 1937, enclosed in Cramp to Secretary of State, August 27, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Cramp, Memorandum, September 9, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, September 10, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[116] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 31, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

> develop into a more serious controversy which would endanger the friendly relations between the two countries. You should remind him that the recent Conference at Buenos Aires was devoted primarily to the adoption of accords for the maintenance of peace on this hemisphere and that it would now be a misfortune that so shortly after that Conference two friendly nations could not get together and compose their difficulties on a high plane of statesmanship.[117]

While the United States pushed Carías to agree to arbitration and avoid escalating the delicate situation, the Honduran government ignored Washington and moved to purposefully antagonize Nicaragua further. Honduras began producing a blue sticker depicting a national map that incorporated the disputed territory as a part of its own, and began affixing it "on all mail passing through the Post Office and also on all governmental correspondence." The practice was so much a part of official policy the US Legation "even received Notes from the Foreign Office sealed in this manner." The map was also reproduced on "blue lapel buttons" that were worn by citizens in Tegucigalpa.[118]

It is highly unlikely Somoza or Carías contemplated war with one another, and it is more probable they both dreaded it. The Nicaraguan government knew US Americans fought for the Honduran Air Force and had absolutely no way of matching Honduras's air power.[119] Chargé d'Affaires ad interim in Managua Reginald S. Castleman reported to Washington Somoza was quite concerned about the possibility of war with Honduras, and that Somoza "stated that a war would be disastrous." Castleman believed Somoza felt vulnerable because the political situation could have drastically deteriorated if he lost any ground or suffered defeat at the hands of the Hondurans. Castleman was confident Somoza would not act aggressively and wrote, "Definitely

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[117] Hull to US Legation (Tegucigalpa), August 31, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[118] Cramp to Secretary of State, September 1, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[119] Cramp, "Memorandum of Conversation with the Nicaraguan Minister," August 26, 1937, enclosed in Cramp to Secretary of State, August 27, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

he does not want war…the country is not now in a situation to stand a war, just at a point of hope for a process of building up and with a number of important and delicate projects under way."[120]

Just as Honduras escalated tensions with Nicaragua, the Honduran government appeared conciliatory and eager to see the crisis resolved whenever Honduran officials met with the US authorities. Julio Lozano, the Honduran Foreign Minister to Washington, and Antonio Rivera, the President of the Honduran Congress, met with Cramp and told him that Honduras would be satisfied if Nicaragua simply withdrew the problematic stamp from circulation (a demand that was rejected by Nicaragua).[121] When Cramp spoke with Carías, Cramp reported, "The President looked extremely badly and as though he had not slept for several days, was unshaven, and appeared to be considerably worried" (it should also be noted Carías was known not to shave for several days and to meet diplomats looking rather disheveled). Cramp was convinced Carías was "quite sincere in hoping that the entire controversy" would "be peacefully settled."[122] Carías had even spoken with Walter E. Turnbull, by this time a UFCO Vice-President, and told him he wanted to avoid a war with Nicaragua.[123]

Although Carías wanted to avoid war, and his government appeared open to arbitration, the Honduran government made no effort to resolve the crisis for several months. Carías's government did everything possible to stall the mediation process while at the same time deflecting US pressure to bring the crisis to a swift conclusion. In mid-August, Carías and his

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[120] Reginald S. Castleman to Secretary of State, September 1, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[121] Cramp to Secretary of State, September 1, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Cramp to Secstate, September 2, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[122] Cramp to Secretary of State, September 1, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and William Krehm, *Democracies and Tyrannies of the* Caribbean (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1984), pp. 86-96. See also: Cramp to Secretary of State, September 8, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[123] Erwin to Secretary of State, September 24, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

advisers made clear their position was the same as that of the Laudo of the King of Spain in 1906. Showing evidence that powerful cultural forces were influencing US policy toward Honduras, Cramp felt Carías was simply avoiding making a decision because his Indian ancestry encouraged him to equivocate "whenever possible."[124] However, by September, it was obvious "Honduras would not repeat not permit the question to be re-opened to arbitration."[125] A few days after making this known to the United States, the Hondurans then refused mediation from Guatemala, which had offered its assistance, and then later rejected Cramp's suggestion both countries withdraw their inflammatory stamps from circulation.[126] On September 19, Cramp reported to Washington Honduras had caused a "stalemate" because of its refusal to engage in any arbitration that did not first establish "the Award of 1906" as "definitive."[127]

By early September, the situation was beginning to spin out of control, and the US Legation worried that war was just around the corner. Since the Honduran complaint against the Nicaraguan stamp was first made, the Honduran media had begun an inflammatory campaign to whip the Honduran populace into a frenzy of patriotic nationalism. *El Cronista* began running "daily" copies of the Arbitral Boundary decision made by the King of Spain in 1906, and other Honduran press began attacking Nicaragua as a selfish and lawless aggressor.[128] In addition to

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[124] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 17, 1938, 815.00/4768, RG 59, NA; and *LAUDO PRONUNCIADO POR S. M. EL REY DE ESPAÑA EN LA CUESTION DE LIMITES ENTRE LAS REPUBLICAS DE HONDURAS Y NICARAGUA* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1937), pp. 1-3. See also: Ricardo Beltran y Rozpide, *ALGUNAS NOTAS DOCUMENTADAS PARA ESCRIBIR LA HISTORIA TERRITORIAL DE CENTRO AMERICA* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1937), Latin American and Iberian pamphlets 1802-1950, Library of Congress, Reel 118, Microfilm 93/4502.

[125] Cramp to Secstate, September 1, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[126] Cramp to Secstate, September 7, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Cramp to Secstate, September 8, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[127] Cramp, Memorandum, September 19, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, September 19, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[128] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 26, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and "NICARAGUA PUTS A LARGE PART OF HONDURAN TERRITORY ON A POSTAGE STAMP AS ITS

newspapers the anti-Nicaragua campaign employed radio broadcasts and "inflammatory handbills" that led to demonstrations on the streets of Tegucigalpa with hundreds of people chanting "Death to Somoza and Nicaragua."[129] Another protest against Nicaragua for "anti-Carías broadcasting from Managua" involved over one thousand Hondurans marching in the "pouring rain."[130] Editorials and articles defending Honduras's claim slowly became less exaggerated, but they were a regular part of the Honduran press until the crisis was resolved.[131] One incident in particular caused the Hondurans to become enraged. In early September, the Honduran consulate in Chinandega, Nicaragua had its seal "mutilated" by a group of Nicaraguans.[132] Hondurans were upset their national honor had been insulted and reacted with "bitter resentment."[133] A month later, the Hondurans reacted by tearing up the Nicaraguan Legation's seal and throwing it "into the street." The seriousness of the situation can be seen when Solórzano told new US chief of mission Erwin he debated sending his family back to Nicaragua, and that the Nicaraguan government was thinking about asking its one thousand citizens in Tegucigalpa to return home.[134]

Sensing the situation could quickly lead to war and US pilots might be employed by Honduras, Hull gave instructions to Erwin "to prevent an increase in the tension which" existed

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OWN," *El Heraldo*, August 17, 1937, enclosed in Rupprecht to Cramp, August 17, 1937, 712, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA. See also: *El Cronista*, August 15-28, 1937.

[129] Cramp to Secstate, September 2, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[130] Cramp to Secstate, September 3, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[131] For another example see: "EN ESTOS MOMENTOS," *El Cronista*, September 30, 1937, p. 3

[132] Cramp to Secstate, September 8, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[133] Erwin to Secstate, September 14, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[134] Erwin to Secretary of State, October 5, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

"between Honduras and Nicaragua."[135] Yet despite warnings from the United States, the Honduran press and radio news broadcasts still continued their strong criticism of Nicaragua.[136] Erwin felt if the Honduran government only agreed to mediation and did not inflame the situation anymore the issue could be resolved, but he knew resolution was:

> entirely and absolutely dependent upon control of the press and radio broadcasting, the peoples of both countries having been excited to the pitch of patriotic enthusiasm. That without control of the press and radio, the temper and excitement of the masses will get entirely beyond control of a stupid war, which will financially ruin both countries, will result.[137]

From Washington's vantage point the feud was becoming increasingly troubling due to the tenacity of both countries' news media and mobilization of the countries' military forces to the frontier. The fact the Honduran press had for over a month been adding to the animosity between the two countries indicates Carías had a hand in the border dispute. No one doubted Carías's near absolute control of the Honduran news media, so the continued presence of anti-Nicaraguan rhetoric indicates it had Carías's endorsement. [138] Carías's refusal to moderate his country's media despite pressure from the United States proves that in this episode he was anything but a pawn, and acted entirely independent of the United States' efforts to control the situation.

Another major source of friction between the two countries and an unmistakably good reason for Carías to manufacture the dispute were the presence of thousands of Nicaraguan

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[135] Hull to Erwin, September 8, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, September 27, 1937, 815.248/98, RG 59, NA.

[136] Erwin to Secstate, September 9, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[137] Cramp, Memorandum, September 9, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, September 10, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[138] Nicaragua was also guilty of fanning the flames of animosity toward its rival; for evidence of this see: Castleman to Secretary of State, September 15, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA. It was not until mid-September that the Honduran press eventually began reducing its condemnation of Nicaragua; for an example of this see: Erwin to Secretary of State, September 17, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA. For rumors indicating the countries' troops were being sent to their border see: Castleman to Secretary of State, November 3, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

migrant workers in Honduras. Many of these immigrants had come to Honduras seeking work, but due to the depressed banana industry a large number were unsuccessful in finding any. Within a few weeks of the crisis taking root, the situation had become unwelcoming for many of the Nicaraguans living in Honduras and many began making plans to return home.[139] Pate described the Honduran "atrocities" against the Nicaraguans living in their country as "smacking of the middle ages."[140] By mid-September as many as five hundred Nicaraguans had left the North Coast alone, and an estimated 15% of all Nicaraguans living in Honduras had fled the country.[141] Castleman reported the Nicaraguan press daily reported on "the arrival in Nicaragua of groups of Nicaraguans fleeing from what they alleged [as] persecution or imminent danger in Honduras."[142] The absence of these competitive laborers created more work opportunities for Hondurans and increased national satisfaction with Carías's government. Even Carías's private secretary, Nicaraguan national José Maria Albir, was forced to resign his position, an action Cramp felt the president wanted Managua to interpret as a "definite hostile action."[143]

A few observers, such as Cramp, speculated Carías's presidency was endangered by the boundary dispute, but the fact Carías benefited significantly from it and prolonged its duration

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[139] Cramp, "Memorandum of Conversation with the Nicaraguan Minister," August 26, 1937, enclosed in Cramp to Secretary of State, August 27, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[140] MID 2657-P-442-9, Pate, October 25, 1937, "NICARAGUA – HONDURAS - POLITICAL," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[141] Erwin to Secretary of State, September 17, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[142] Castleman to Secretary of State, September 15, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA. See also: "The Nicaraguans in Honduras," *La Noticia*, October 1, 1937, enclosed in Castleman to Secretary of State, October 1, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA; Erwin to Secstate, October 14, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA; and Erwin to Secstate, October 16, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

[143] Cramp to Secretary of State, August 29, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and MID 2657-P-439-46, Cohen, September 14, 1937, "Present Executive – Personal Advisers," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

weakens their argument. Cramp thought Carías's regime was weak and "precarious." He reported that many of Carías's "opponents…welcome[d] taking advantage of the present difficulty with Nicaragua," and that four groups in particular relished the predicament, notably the Liberals, oppositionist Nationals, those economically suffering, and those in the government who sought to advance their own political power. Cramp wrote Carías had "few genuine friends among his advisers, most of whom…welcome[d] an opportunity to seize power or to advance their personal interests."[144] Although Cramp's observations made logical sense and undoubtedly held some truth, Carías's management of the emergency made him appear the architect of events rather than their victim.

A number of theories speculated as to why the boundary dispute emerged, some of them more plausible than others, but all of them added to Carías's power and prestige. Many Hondurans thought "the Nicaraguan stamp was deliberately issued to detract attention from the internal situation existent in Nicaragua." According to this belief, "The raising of the boundary question, naturally, would detract attention from the internal situation and tend to solidify popular feeling behind the President [Somoza]." Another scheme was proposed that accused the Liberals of orchestrating the crisis in conjunction with Somoza to topple Carías's government.[145] However, all of these conflicting hypotheses contributed to Carías's position by making him the defender of Honduran sovereignty. As long as he was not blamed for the controversy he would be looked to lead the nation, and this was indeed what happened. The Honduran press drummed up patriotism by arguing those who opposed Carías were not willing "to defend our dignity and

[144] Cramp, Memorandum, September 27, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, September 27, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[145] Cramp, Memorandum, September 18, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, September 19, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

honor."[146]As the crisis looked more and more likely to develop into war, many Liberals began pledging their "allegiance" to Carías. Even Callejas and the outspoken Carías critic and prominent intellectual Froylán Turcios declared if war came to Honduras from Nicaragua they would side with the Carías government. Most of these Liberals were younger members of the party, but regardless of their pedigree the fewer opponents Carías had the greater his grip would be on Honduras.[147] Prominent Liberals such as Zúñiga Huete who did not come to Carías's aid were demonized by the Honduran press.[148]

Another perspective on events was offered by Pate, whose opinion on the situation was less biased than the US Legation in Tegucigalpa because his responsibilities as US military attaché in Central America took him throughout the isthmus. With fewer opportunities to be swayed by either the Honduran or Nicaraguan governments, and immune to the groupthink so often associated with small groups such as that found in the US Legation or the State Department, Pate more than any other US observer formed his opinion of events in the dispute independently. Pate maintained events indicated that Carías was attempting to incite a "veritable

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[146] "The People Gather Around President Tiburcio Carías Faithful Defender of Territorial Integrity and National Dignity," *La Epoca*, September 4, 1937, p 1.

[147] Erwin to Secretary of State, September 19, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and "Declarations of Dr. Venancio Callejas" and "The author Froylan Turcios offers to contribute to the defense of the nation," *El Cronista*, October 22, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, October 23, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

[148] Erwin to Secretary of State, November 16, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA. See also: "Threatened Nicaraguans Leave Honduras As Row Over a Postage Stamp Increases," *New York Times*, September 5, 1937, p. 1; "The Honduran People Offer Their Loyalty to General Carías," *La Epoca*, September 6, 1937, p. 1 and 3; "The Honored Words of a Few Nicaraguans," *La Epoca*, September 6, 1937, p. 3; "Unconditional Support to President Carías A.," *La Epoca*, September 7, 1937, p. 1; "The Voice of Honduran Patriotism," *La Epoca*, September 8, 1937, p. 3; "The University Students given a Vote of Confidence to President Carías Andino," *La Epoca*, September 9, 1937, p. 1; "The Manifestations of Nicaraguan Residents in San Pedro Sula," *La Epoca*, September 16, 1937, p. 2; Daniel Hernandez, "The General Carías and the Order and the Internal Peace of Honduras," *La Epoca*, September 18, 1937, p. 3; and "The Real Situation of Nicaraguans that Live Among Us," *La Epoca*, September 24, 1937, p. 1 and 4.

exodus of Nicaraguans" from the country, and that although both countries exhibited equal "bloodthirstiness" Carías was to blame for how events developed. Pate reported to his superiors "Carias' stubborn and dogged determination to acquire a measure of popularity in his country," even "at the cost of peace, has been, in the opinion of this office, the greatest deterrent to an amicable solution of the present differences."[149]

It could be argued Somoza also benefited from the border dispute by the country rallying around him in the same way that many Liberals did in Honduras for Carías, and the evidence suggests he did, but Somoza did not start the crisis nor did his government provoke Hondurans in the same way Honduras's did. The idea of a Central American Dictators' League was proven erroneous long ago, so the idea Somoza and Carías might have worked together to orchestrate the boundary dispute for their mutual benefit is unlikely. Historian Kenneth Grieb demonstrated in the late 1970s the region's dictators regularly used their nation's long-term rivalries and competitive relations with their tyrannical peers to their advantage.[150]

After nearly two months of continually escalating rhetoric and talk of war, the State Department made another major attempt at resolving the issue, but Carías continued to prove difficult and was persistent in antagonizing Nicaragua. Hull instructed the US Legation in Tegucigalpa to inform Honduras it was willing to be one of three countries involved in the proposed mediation, but because of the recent conference at Buenos Aires and its focus on cooperation amongst the American Republics he felt it was best if the United States did not work

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[149] MID 2657-P-442-9, Pate, October 25, 1937, "NICARAGUA – HONDURAS - POLITICAL," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[150] Grieb, "The Myth of a Central American Dictators' League," *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 10 no. 2 (November 1978): pp. 329-345. The idea Carías inflamed the boundary dispute is a direct counter to Thomas M. Leonard's contention Carías "maintained good relations with his fellow Central American dictators" (*The History of Honduras* [Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2011], pp. 118).

alone in this matter.[151] However, Carías was still unwilling to take part in any "mediation" unless it was agreed upon beforehand that the 1906 decision "was legal and accepted by both parties."[152] Additionally, Honduras sustained its practice of provoking Nicaragua when the Honduran postal service sent back Nicaraguan "official mail" with the blue map sticker attached to it.[153] Honduras also began making "Military preparations…despite official utterances," and "Recruits" were "coming in from country districts daily in squads, issued uniforms and drilling" all day long.[154] While Honduras demonstrated defiance and prevented the facilitation of the reconciliation process, Nicaragua accepted the United States' terms, which made the State Department even more frustrated with Carías's languor.[155]

In late October, after no small amount of pressure from the US Legation, Carías's government finally agreed to accept mediation and meet with Nicaraguan authorities in San Jose, Costa Rica but only when he was in a position to benefit from doing so.[156] At this point, Carías's claims to desire peace appeared genuine, because during the San Jose conference he issued orders to the Honduran presses and radio stations to cease distributing any inflammatory or

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[151] Hull to US Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 6, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Hull to US Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 1, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[152] Erwin to Secstate, October 6, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA. See also: Memorandum of Conversation between Caceres and Under Secretary of State, October 5, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

[153] Castleman to Secretary of State, October 6, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

[154] Erwin to Secstate, October 15, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA.

[155] Castleman to Secretary of State, October 8, 1937, 715, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 21, RG 84, NA; and Hull to US Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 12, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

[156] "GOOD OFFICES ACCEPTED BY HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA," *El Cronista*, October 23, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, October 24, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA; Hull to US Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 16, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA; and Hull to US Legation (Tegucigalpa), October 28, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

"provocative matter" regarding Nicaragua.[157] Once Carías called off the incendiary media coverage the matter was quickly resolved and Honduran-Nicaraguan relations returned to normal. However, he was by no means finished wringing out benefits from the episode and continued to use the Honduran media to his advantage. *El Cronista* developed the idea Carías and President Roosevelt were close allies and supported his regime when it reported the United States backed Honduras's claim to La Mosquitia.[158] Additionally, the Honduran press argued Honduras needed to augment its military to meet foreign and domestic threats, and that the country required Carías's strength if it was to remain peaceful, both ideas that strengthened the regime.[159]

## Conclusion

Throughout 1936 and 1937, Carías and the United States engaged in a number of struggles over how Carías would oversee his military and conduct foreign relations. The United States proved itself somewhat disinterested in Honduran domestic affairs because it recognized Carías had a firm grip on his country and provided the stability it had so long desired, but it was extremely anxious about the possibility US private citizens working with revolutionists and Carías's Air Force would implicate the United States in an international incident that would tarnish the reputation of the Good Neighbor policy. However, not wanting to jeopardize Carías's stabilizing power or potentially encourage Honduras to seek closer relations with fascist

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[157] Erwin to Secstate, November 10, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

[158] "The Opinion of the American Government over the boundary controversy…," and an editorial entitled "The Opinion of the American Government," *El Cronista*, November 11, 1937, p. 1-2; and "The Gentlemen's Agreement," *El Cronista*, December 11, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, December 14, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA.

[159] "We Must Strengthen Ourselves," *El Cronista*, December 9, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, December 14, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA; and "The Doctrine of Peace," *El Cronista*, December 10, 1937, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, December 14, 1937, 715, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 22, RG 84, NA. Even as late as May 1938 the Honduran press continued to defend the Honduran claim to the disputed territory. See: "Frontiers Between Honduras and Nicaragua," *La Epoca*, May 2, 1938, pp. 2-3.

governments, US policymakers decided to only seek assurances from Carías that US pilots would not be used to kill Honduran citizens. During these years it seems pragmatism to retain the status quo drove US policy toward Honduras more than any altruistic rhetoric of the Good Neighbor.

Carías proved himself not only capable of resisting Washington's pressure to control his actions, but willing and able to convince the United States he was following its desires while still pursuing his own sometimes disparate goals. Carías simply refused to deny himself the expertise and greatly dreaded reputation of US pilots in his Air Force despite regular attempts by the United States to induce him to do so. Furthermore, when he recognized his need to unify Honduras after having alienated a large number of his citizens, he skillfully made use of the longstanding Honduran-Nicaraguan boundary dispute to provide Hondurans with more jobs (taken from Nicaraguans), and rally previous political opponents behind him. Carías may have done his best to impress Washington, but he was unafraid of pursuing a course that put him at odds with US policy. Saying one thing and doing another, Carías succeeded in keeping the United States' gratitude for his rule while defying some of its policies. This was not the performance of a pawn or puppet, but rather a master politician who against seemingly overwhelming odds outwitted and outmaneuvered the United States.

# CHAPTER 9

# BRACING FOR WAR

"How wonderful it would be if the democracy America could open wide its doors to these pathetic human beings who in all probability prefer death to a return to Nazi Germany."[1]

-President of the American League for Tolerance Abraham Felder writing to President Roosevelt on the plight of more than nine hundred Jewish refugees aboard the *St. Louis* in mid-1939.

During the first five years of his rule, Carías proved himself to be a competent ruler, most notably as a powerful stabilizing force in a historically turbulent country and in manipulating the United States to provide him with the support he needed to remain president. Lying to the United States, flattering US leaders, prolonging an international crisis to his benefit in spite of US pressure to end it, and sacrificing the Honduran economy for the United States' favor were just some of the ruthless and clever methods Carías used to influence his relationship with the Northern Colossus. Being on good terms with Washington provided Carías with the ability to claim its moral backing, which struck fear into the hearts and minds of enemies working toward his demise. It also encouraged Washington to give him the independence and leeway he needed to continue to employ US pilots in what had become by 1938 a twenty-three plane Air Force, by far the largest of the Central American republics.

Although the United States always appreciated Carías's stabilization of Honduras in the face of sometimes seemingly overwhelming odds, it did not view him in the warmest of lights after he instituted his *continuismo*. There were several glaring issues that kept US policymakers wary and annoyed at the Honduran leader. For one, he was a dictator, and for Democrats representing the world's then largest democracy he was difficult to embrace openly and closely.

[1] Abraham Felder to Roosevelt, June 8, 1939, 837.55J/48, RG 59, NA.

It was no secret Carías imprisoned innocent people, forced others into exile, and regularly engaged in intimidation.[2] He also frustrated the United States by employing its citizens in his military, and regularly having them fight for his government. Carías may have marketed himself as a friend and ally of the United States, but he still possessed a number of qualities the United States resented but was ultimately willing to overlook.

Beginning in 1938, the specter of war in Europe and East Asia caused a significant change in the US-Carías relationship. Faced with the prospect of war, the United States began looking for allies, and thankfully for Washington it had cultivated significantly better relations throughout the hemisphere during Roosevelt's first term.[3] When polled a significant majority of US Americans felt the Nazis were a serious threat to Latin America.[4] Although Honduras was not as strategically important as Panama or the island nations of the Caribbean, the United States still made it a national security priority and sought its support for the coming war. The United States concerned itself with Honduras in two main ways before it entered World War II: as a potential base for reconnaissance and patrolling missions and as a possible victim for Nazi subversion. During the war, as the wealthier of the two allies, the United States provided Honduras with $1.3 million worth of military hardware to help assure its ability to resist fascist

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[2] The State and War Departments were fully aware of Carías's undemocratic and tyrannical behavior between 1938 and 1941. For glaring examples of this see: Ramon Guzman M. to Cordell Hull, March 11, 1938, enclosed in Henry T. Unverzagt to Secretary of State, March 12, 1938, 800, vol. 6, Honduras, Box 35, RG 84, NA; Guadalupe Reyes to Hull, April 16, 1938, 815.00/4760, RG 59, NA; John D. Erwin to Secretary of State, July 12, 1938, 815.00/4766, RG 59, NA; The Liberals of Honduras to US Legation in Tegucigalpa, November 11, 1938, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, date illegible, 815.00/4776, RG 59, NA; and Fred K. Salter to Secretary of State, August 14, 1939, 815.00/4792, RG 59, NA.

[3] Philip B. Taylor Jr., "Hemispheric Defense in World War II," *Current History* vol. 56 no. 334 (June 1969): pp. 333-340.

[4] Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 247-253.

threats, and more importantly secure Honduran loyalty.[5] As the war drew closer, rather than distancing itself from a sometimes troublesome tyrannical leader that reminded some of fascists such as Hitler and Mussolini, the United States found itself courting Carías's favor.[6] The United States reached out to Carías to impress him with its military might and convince him to put his faith in the United States' ability to win the coming war. In exchange for military support, Carías was expected to provide the United States a base of military operations and to eliminate the threat from potentially dangerous individuals of German, Japanese, and Italian ethnicity.

Due to these and other US policy alterations, Carías was able to adjust his techniques for dealing with the United States and develop a closer and more beneficial relationship with it. Fully aware of the United States' desire for allies, Carías worked diligently in the years before the war to fulfill Washington's every need in and outside of his country. When the presence of Axis nationals became an issue for the State and War Departments, Carías made sure he presented himself and his government as exactly what the United States thought was needed to confront the menace. By making life more difficult for ethnic Germans, and provoking and eventually expelling Axis national diplomats, Carías was able to ingratiate himself with US officials in a way his anti-communist efforts never provided him with the opportunity to do. Additionally, when requested to make demonstrations of his military loyalty to the US government, Carías was always accommodating and was offered rewards for his policies, yet there were limits to Carías's ability to work with the United States. As Jewish refugees began fleeing Germany and Austria, the United States took note and attempted to induce Carías to help

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[5] Sumner Welles to Julian R. Caceres, n.d. [1941?], 815.24/345A, RG 59, NA.

[6] The full text of the US-Honduran Lend-Lease Agreement can be found at: 810.20-Defense/1343, RG 59, NA. For an excellent discussion on the impact of the Lend-Lease program on Central American militaries and governments see: Robert H. Holden, *Armies Without Nations Public Violence and State Formation in Central America, 1821-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 119-125.

alleviate the growing crisis. Carías proved eager to assist in the settlement of the displaced people, but was ultimately unable to do so due to domestic political pressure caused by Honduran anti-Semitism.

This chapter explores the limits of the United States' ability to abide by the pillars of the Good Neighbor policy in Honduras in the years leading up to World War II, and argues noninterference and nonintervention were only ideals and not unbreakable doctrines in US-Honduran relations. When presented with perceived threats to its national security and a humanitarian crisis, the United States reacted energetically and disregarded the Good Neighbor by encouraging Carías to work on its behalf, a role Carías was all too happy to satisfy because it strengthened his domestic power. From 1938 to 1941, Carías proved so skillful at pleasing the United States the US-Carías relationship gradually improved to a previously unreached point and in the process made Carías one of the United States' closest allies in Latin America.

## Carías Exploits US Paranoia of German "Puppet Regimes in Central America"[7]

Benjamin L. Alpers argues in the six years before the United States entered World War II the US American public was seriously concerned about dictatorships and the possibility one could be established on US soil. Alpers maintains this caused any earlier romance or admiration for autocrats to largely disappear from US culture, and a sharp divide to emerge between democrats and totalitarians. According to Alpers, US Americans began seeing the potential for dictatorship manifesting everywhere from the US Supreme Court to Roosevelt's third term. Tyranny was indeed spreading: Franco had established himself in Spain, Mussolini had Ethiopia in his grip, and Hitler was quickly gobbling up Germany's neighbors and pushing the world

[7] "Honduran President Uncovers Nazi Plot Aimed Against U.S.," *The Sun*, December 7, 1941, p. 1.

towards war.[8] With the world appearing to rapidly go the way of the fascists, it is little wonder the significant presence of Germans, Italians, and Japanese in Latin America was perceived as a major security risk to the United States throughout the Roosevelt Administration, but on the verge of World War II the more than a million ethnic Germans who lived in the region made US officials shudder with fear.

There was a general understanding in Washington that Latin Americans were simply unable to deal with the supposed threat of Axis nationals, and if allowed inroads in the region the Axis powers would deny the United States much needed war material, bases, and allies, and jeopardize the Panama Canal Zone.[9] Max Paul Friedman chronicles the United States' efforts to preemptively confront the perceived potential national security disaster in his groundbreaking study *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II*. Friedman argues the Good Neighbor policy seriously eroded when the United States coerced the region's governments to betray their ethnic German residents and citizens and deliver them up for internment. He provides convincing evidence that during World War II Carías was more than happy to aid the United States in deporting ethnic Germans from his country because they were politically subversive to his regime, and because he wanted to serve the interests of the international war effort, but his study's purview does not take into account how the US-Carías relationship was influenced by the presence of Germans in the country during the immediate prewar period.[10]

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[8] Benjamin L. Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 77-93.

[9] Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 305-315; and Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-8.

[10] Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, pp. 102-104 and 183. This study focuses little on Japanese and

This section builds on Friedman's work and argues Carías used the Germans in his country to his advantage well before the United States and Honduras entered World War II. In the years prior to Carías's ability to eliminate his German opponents and enrich his supporters through seizing their property in conjunction with the United States' policy of seeking the deportation of ethnic Germans in Honduras, Carías exploited them as pawns to impress the United States to gain its favor. Carías showed himself willing to not only sacrifice the freedoms of Honduran citizens, but also capable of adapting his techniques to woo the United States in a rapidly changing world. Because Carías received pressure from the United States to monitor and later move against the Axis nationals as early as 1938, the US-Carías relationship supports Friedman's contention the noninterference philosophy of the Good Neighbor was abandoned much earlier than the first days of the Cold War or with the death of Roosevelt.[11]

According to Kenneth J. Grieb, World War II "caused considerable strain between Guatemala and the United States," largely because "economics required that Ubico maintain close ties to Germany as well as to the Northern Colossus, and the presence of a strong German community that was thoroughly integrated into the national life." Although Carías and Ubico exhibited the same earnest desire to impress the United States they were its friends and allies,

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Italians in Honduras and how they influenced the US-Carías relationship. For information regarding these countries' nationals in Honduras see: William Cramp to Secretary of State, July 20, 1937, 815.52 J 27/1, RG 59, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, November 10, 1937, 815.52 J 27/2, RG 59, NA; and Salter to Secretary of State, April 21, 1939, 815.00-F/2, RG 59, NA.

[11] Friedman, "There Goes the Neighborhood: Blacklisting Germans in Latin America and the Evanescence of the Good Neighbor Policy," *Diplomatic History* vol. 27 no. 4 (September 2003): 569-597. Irwin F. Gellman argues the Good Neighbor "began cracking" beginning in 1943 and was finished when Roosevelt died in 1945 (Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy: United States Policies in Latin America, 1933-1945* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979], p. 2). Bryce Wood maintains the Good Neighbor policy fell victim in the early Cold War to "challenges to the security of the United States itself, as viewed by Washington" (*The Dismantling of the Good Neighbor Policy* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985], p. x). Fredrick B. Pike examines the cultural side of the Good Neighbor and finds although some of defining characteristics were abandoned in World War II, other elements remained the same or changed to continue well into the second half of the twentieth century (*FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995], pp. 290-354).

there was relatively little "strain" between Honduras and the United States as a result of the US-German conflict. This is interesting due to the similarity of Honduras and Guatemala's relationships with the United States and Germany. Honduras and Guatemala both had important trade with Germany and the United States and a significant number of disproportionately wealthy ethnic Germans living in their countries, yet Carías found siding with the United States over Germany considerably more to his liking than Ubico.[12] Grieb argues "the intense Yankee sensitivity to any sign of pro-fascism caused Americans" to see Ubico and his government as "pro-fascist."[13] However, unlike Guatemala, the US government never mistook Honduras for supporting anything other than the United States. Rather than pro-fascist tendencies, the United States predominantly worried about the prospect of Nazi subversion in Honduras.

From the beginning of Carías's presidency the United States showed significant interest in the activities of fascist governments and ethnic Germans in Honduras. At first, most of the United States' attention was directed at monitoring fascist governments' arms shipments and official military visits. For instance, US officials took note when arms arrived from Spain and Germany in the first months of Carías's tenure, and when the German cruiser *Karlsruhe* paid a courtesy visit to Amapala for five days in April 1934, which caused a considerable amount of excitement amongst the ethnic Germans throughout the country.[14] In August 1934, due to Carías's original admiration for non- Nazi German leaders, he "issued a proclamation of national mourning for a period of three days during which time all Government flags were at half mast"

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[12] Kenneth J. Grieb, *Guatemalan Caudillo, the Regime of Jorge Ubico: Guatemala, 1931-1944* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), p. 248.

[13] Grieb, "The Fascist Mirage in Central America: Guatemalan-United States Relations and the Yankee Fear of Fascism, 1936-1944," in *Perspectives in American Diplomacy: Essays on Europe, Latin America, China, and the Cold War*, ed. Jules Davids (New York: Arno Press, 1976), pp. 208-227.

[14] Julius G. Lay to Secretary of State, March 9, 1933, 815.00 Revolutions/451, RG 59, NA; and Lay to Secretary of State, May 24, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/52, RG 59, NA.

after the death of German president Paul von Hindenburg, and the Honduran press covered his passing in a number of articles throughout the month.[15] The State Department was not particularly worried about Honduran observation of the German misfortune, or the specific ties between the two countries, but it was growing more concerned about the German population that called Honduras home.

This study concurs with Irwin F. Gellman who maintains "United States commentators did not recognize…Nazi influences as a threat early in Roosevelt's administration." In 1934, although the US government monitored "Nazis" in Honduras, it failed to show considerable concern over them.[16] US military attaché Alex A. Cohen reported to his superiors the ethnic Germans living in Honduras were rich and well respected due to their superior education and specialized skill sets, but only the younger generation with "their loyalty and sympathies ever" for the "fatherland" was susceptible to Nazism. Cohen claimed these youths were working hard to "indoctrinate" Germans living in the region with the "Nazi gospel," but they were "doomed to failure" in Central America because of the lack of interest and the wiser judgment of the older generations about such matters.[17] Not until late 1937 did the US military feel there was a "secret" German conspiracy aimed at "furthering Nazism in Central America" that may have undermined the Honduran government.[18]

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[15] Lay to Secretary of State, August 31, 1934, 815.00-General Conditions/56, RG 59, NA; *La Epoca* August 1934; and Christian Zinsser, "Diplomatische Mission in Honduras," *Jahrbuch für Ceschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* vol. 12 (1975): pp. 434-455. Zinsser, the German representative to Honduras in the early 1940s, claims Carías was a great admirer of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

[16] Irwin F. Gellman, "The New Deal's Use of Nazism in Latin America," in *Perspectives in American Diplomacy: Essays on Europe, Latin America, China, and the Cold War*, ed. Jules Davids (New York: Arno Press, 1976), pp. 208-227.

[17] MID 2657-P-504-1, Alex A. Cohen, October 30, 1934, "Propaganda of Foreign Origin," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[18] MID 2657-P-504-4, Joseph B. Pate, December 4, 1937, "CENTRAL AMERICA - POLITICAL,"

As it looked more and more likely Germany would drag Europe into war, the United States ramped up its intelligence gathering on fascist nationals and their activities in Latin America. On October 13, 1937, the Department instructed the US Legations throughout the American Republics to keep Washington "currently informed of all developments in Japanese, Nazi, and Fascist activities."[19] A few months later, on March 7, 1938, Welles ordered "names, with brief biographical sketches if such may be discreetly obtained, of all prominent Fascist, Nazi or Communist leaders, whether foreign or native."[20] The US Legation in Honduras and US military attachés in Central America began accumulating intelligence on German, Japanese, Italian, and Spanish fascists along with what little information was available on the few communists in Honduras.[21] Although the US minister to Honduras, John D. Erwin, found little reason to believe Nazism was a threat to the country in late November 1938, he followed orders and came across a few interesting pieces of information.[22] The most important of this data originated from the radical author and editor Mario Ribas. Ribas had for some time been known as a native of Spain and a "Franco sympathizer" who was an "authority" on communists. Erwin felt Ribas may have exaggerated his anti-communist rhetoric because of his "zeal" for fascism, but valued his opinion on its development because he followed it so closely.[23] Ribas published the magazine *Renacimiento* in Tegucigalpa, which was considered a pro-Fascist publication.

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Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[19] Erwin to Secretary of State, December 12, 1938, 800.02, vol. 6, Honduras, Box 35, RG 84, NA.

[20] Welles to All American Diplomatic Officers in the American Republics, March 7, 1938, 820.02, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 37, RG 84, NA.

[21] "MEMORANDUM OF ITALIAN FASCISTS AND GERMAN NAZI ACTIVITY IN THE AMERICAN REPUBLICS," n.d., enclosed in Welles to All Diplomatic officers in the American Republics, March 7, 1938, 820.02, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 37, RG 84, NA.

[22] Erwin to Secretary of State, November 15, 1938, 800.20210/192, RG 59, NA.

[23] Erwin to Secretary of State, March 27, 1939, 815.00B/75, RG 59, NA.

Erwin was disturbed by Ribas's work and sent some of his material to Washington for the Department's consideration. One article published in *Renancimiento* entitled, "ADOLF HITLER, FUHRER OF GERMANY," had a number of praiseworthy statements regarding Hitler and Germany, but this was the most significant of the US Legation's reconnaissance on fascists in Honduras during the year and amounted to little.[24]

Unlike Erwin, US military attachés Cohen and Joseph B. Pate believed Honduras was being subjected to a sizeable effort by Nazis to increase their influence in the country, and like the State Department the War Department began keeping closer tabs on the known 356 Germans, 191 Italians, and 3 Japanese residing in Honduras in early 1938.[25] Although the evidence was limited, Pate reported it was "becoming increasingly evident that German economic penetration" was "a serious threat to our influence and interest in these countries." He felt there were serious efforts to keep Germans in Central America loyal to Germany and Nazism and there were secret courts trying Germans who refused to become Nazis. German abstainers were supposedly ostracized, boycotted, and coerced. This led Pate to believe "the average German…learned to accept the lesser of two evils and…enrolled under the Nazi banner."[26]

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[24] Erwin to Secretary of State, December 12, 1938, 800.02, vol. 6, Honduras, Box 35, RG 84, NA. For more on the United States' concern about the presence of Nazis in Latin America and the contention the Good Neighbor policy was abandoned due to the presence of the Nazis in the region see: Leslie B. Rout, Jr. and John F. Bratzel, *The Shadow War: German Espionage and United States Counterespionage in Latin America during World War II* (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, Inc., 1986), pp. 25-46.

[25] MID 2357-253-4, Pate, February 21, 1938, "HONDURAS - POPULATION AND SOCIAL," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA. See also: Ben Zweig, "MEMORANDUM FOR THE MINISTER," February 7, 1938, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, February 8, 1938, 820.02, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 37, RG 84, NA.

[26] MID 2657-P-504-[33?], Pate, November 19, 1938, "Nazi Activities," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA. For more on US military fear of Nazi inroads in Honduras see: MID 2657-P-504-10, Cohen, February 3, 1938, "Propaganda of Foreign Origin," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[26] Erwin to Secretary of State, March 29, 1938, 800, vol. 6, Honduras, Box 35, RG 84, NA.

While Friedman argues US blacklisting of "Axis nationals" in Latin America "fostered some of the most intense of the inter-American disputes the Good Neighbor policy was supposed to have abolished," he also asserts Honduras exhibited no displeasure with the United States for the policy. Friedman points out governments of such countries as Chile, Brazil, and Costa Rica were upset with the Proclaimed List policy and viewed it as an unwanted interference in their domestic affairs, but Carías's government welcomed this and other anti-German US policies that affected Honduras as an opportunity to confiscate German property and dole out favors to his supporters.[27]

As early as 1938, a number of ethnic Germans in Honduras were closely watched by the State and War Departments as possible plotters attempting to achieve an increased Axis presence in Central America. Under the impression "Axis cultural activities such as art exhibits, concerts, and scientific exchanges were part of a plan to 'soften' Latin America for fascist penetration," US observers, even with little to no evidence in hand, found reason to monitor these individuals largely because of their paranoia and the belief Honduras was vulnerable to Nazi and Italian power.[28] One of the most infamous and potential Axis sympathizers, according to the State and War Departments, who was watched in Honduras during the prewar period was Dr. Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen. Von Hagen was a US American of German "extraction" who first showed up on the US government's radar for taking large numbers of pictures of Honduras in 1938. Von Hagen called at the War Department and offered to share his "data" with the officers, but rather than graciously accepting his offer the US military put him under surveillance as a possible "spy." Von Hagen told US officials the reason he took so many photos was because he was

[27] Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors*, pp. 88-89, 102-104, p. 183.

[28] Gerald K. Haines, "Under the Eagle's Wing: The Franklin Roosevelt Administration Forges an American Hemisphere," *Diplomatic History* vol. 1 no. 4 (Winter 1977): pp. 373-388.

writing a book about Honduras, but this was considered a cover story by the US Legation and an excuse to continue his reconnaissance for Germany.[29] For years, Von Hagen was "very much in the bad books of the State Department," and was "sharply watched as long as he" was "in the Canal Zone."[30] The War and State Departments both admitted neither had any real reason "to consider" his "activities" as "serious" other than intuition, but this did not stop them from monitoring him.[31] Eventually, by August 1940, Von Hagen was labeled as an "ardent Nazi" and his entire family was investigated in Berkeley by California law enforcement.[32] It may not have cleared his reputation with the US government, but Von Hagen eventually produced a respectable study of the Moskito Coast entitled, "The Mosquito Coast of Honduras and its Inhabitants" in *Geographical Review* in 1940, and described his adventures in Honduras seeking photographs of the rare quetzal bird in *Jungle in the Clouds*.[33] In the end, the US government never substantiated that Von Hagen was a Nazi sympathizer or "spy" and the scrutiny was eventually dropped.

Von Hagen's reputation in the US government is a prime example of how although little hard evidence was collected on ethnic Germans living in or traveling through Honduras that

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[29] MID 2357-274-1, Homer R. Oldfield, August 25, 1938, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA.

[30] MID 2357-274-2, L. D. Carter, May 13, 1940, "Dr. Wolfgang Von Hagen," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA.

[31] MID 2357-274-4, May 28, 1940, "MEMORANDUM FOR COLONEL HARRIS," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA.

[32] MID 2357-274-6, John H. Wilson, June 24, 1940, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA; and MID 2357-274-8, W. F. Whitely, August 8, 1940, "Dr. Victor Wolfgang von Hagen," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA.

[33] Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen, "The Mosquito Coast of Honduras and its Inhabitants," *Geographical Review* vol. 30 (April 1940): pp. 238-259; and Von Hagen, *Jungle in the Clouds* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940).

proved they were Nazi sympathizers actively seeking the overthrow of Carías, it did not stop the US government from believing the threat from Axis nationals in the country was great. If upstanding US citizens of German extraction such as Von Hagen could be considered dangerous, it is no surprise United States concern over the German community in Honduras reached irrational extremes and provided Carías yet another opportunity to prove himself to Washington. Lists of suspected Honduran Nazis, Nazi sympathizers, Axis nationals, and ethnic Germans, Italians, and Japanese living in the country were all compiled in the prewar years. Women and children were included in some of these lists simply for attending parties where Germans were present or being associated in any way with prominent ethic Axis nationals.[34]

Although detractors such as Frederick Higgs have accused him as someone who appreciated and emulated Hitler, Mussolini, and other fascist leaders, Carías was more successful than any other Latin American leader of the period in convincing the United States he would be an unwavering ally in the coming war with the Axis.[35] By 1939, Carías's fidelity toward the United States was renowned. The State Department believed "The Government of Honduras" was "keeping a close check on Nazi activities and propaganda" and had "no fear that any pro-Nazi sympathizers" had "any important positions within the Government." At least one member of the Department felt Carías was so "anti-German" that he was "sure" his "Government could effectively control the Nazi and Italian activities within the Republic."[36] US military attaché

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[34] For examples of US government lists see: Erwin to Secretary of State, May 6, 1941, 820.02, vol. 11, Honduras, Box 70, RG 84, NA; MID 2657-P-439-61, James H. Marsh, April 26, 1941, "Weekly Stability Report," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA; and MID 2657-P-439-62, Marsh, May 3, 1941, "Weekly Stability Report," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA. Lists of other suspected troublemakers such as alleged Nazi agents and Japanese officials can be found in file 820.02, vol. 11, Honduras, Box 70, RG 84, NA

[35] Frederick Higgs, *Carías Andino of Honduras* (Mexico, D.F., 1945), pp. 3-14.

[36] E. B. Hardy, "Report on activities of nationals of non-American countries in the Republic of Honduras," June 16, 1940, 815.00N/35, RG 59, NA.

James H. Marsh was confident in Carías as an ally and stated, "President Carías has displayed an extremely friendly attitude toward the United States, and may be counted upon to follow its leadership."[37] When Carías issued a presidential decree on July 10, 1941 that called for the "dismissal from office of all government employees who sympathize with nazifascist policy, or who fail to realize the need for common defense of the hemisphere," Marsh felt absolutely positive Carías would support Roosevelt and the United States no matter what might develop.[38] On December 5, 1941, just two days before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Carías had the fortune of calling Roosevelt "the most distinguished defender" of small nations, praised the Good Neighbor policy, and called on the Honduran Congress to support the United States.[39] The US press also praised Carías's loyalty to the United States, and called him "America's Best Neighbor." When asked how he would respond to foreign events Carías told one reporter he would "wait until the United States" had "made its decision and then follow" its lead.[40]

Carías's reputation in the United States as "America's Best Neighbor" was no accident. In the three years before the countries' entry into World War II, Carías continued his increasingly elaborate efforts to court the United States' favor. By 1938, not counting time spent

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[37] MID 2657-P-439-51, Marsh, February 15, 1941, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[38] MID 2657-P-439-71, Marsh, July 12, 1941, "Weekly Stability Report," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[39] Erwin to Secretary of State, December 9, 1941, 815.032/175, RG 59, NA.

[40] H. R. Knickerbocker, "(Editor's note:)," February 23, 1939, 711.1, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 47, RG 84, NA; and H.R. Knickerbocker, "Honduras to Aid U.S. in War Event," *New York Journal and American*, March 2, 1939, 800, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 47, RG 84, NA. See also: "GEN. CARIAS URGES SOLID HEMISPHERE," *New York Times*, July 13, 1940, p. 3; Wayne Thomis, "3 LATIN NATIONS PROFESS LITTLE FEAR OF ATTACK," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 19, 1940, p. 10; and Francisco Zamora, "Our Mortgage on Honduras," *The Living Age* vol. 356 is. 4473 (June 1939): p. 311. Obviously, not all US coverage of Carías was positive during the period. One example of unusually harsh press coverage of Carías can be found in T. R. Ybarra, "CENTRAL AMERICA IS DICTATOR-RIDDEN," *New York Times*, March 14, 1939, p. 5.

before his presidency, Carías had more than five years' experience marketing himself to Roosevelt and the Northern Colossus as Honduras's president. Between 1933 and 1938, his ability to impress Washington was limited to only a few key issues: notably the Reciprocal Trade Agreement, providing Honduras with political stability, calming his country's turbulent financial situation, and praising US policies and officials in the national press. The arrival of war in Europe provided Carías an unforeseen plethora of opportunities to diversify his labors to control the United States' perception of himself and his country, prospects he skillfully took advantage of and made him a darling of US policymakers.

This does not mean Carías ceased his previous methods of inviting US esteem, but rather that he added to them. He remained extremely aware of the power of the US media and attempted to present himself as someone the US could rely upon in the coming conflict. When interviewed by US news correspondents or speaking publicly when he knew he might be quoted by US news outlets he consistently stated he appreciated the Good Neighbor policy, praised Roosevelt for his hemispheric guidance in protecting the Americas from fascism, and routinely assured his audience he would follow the United States in all foreign policy decisions. When Secretary of State Cordell Hull warned the Third Reich about "meddling" in the Americas, Carías quickly publicly announced he believed in "Pan-American 'solidarity and comprehension' to prevent European aggression in the Western Hemisphere," and that he was "in accord" with Washington's policies toward Germany.[41] After Roosevelt was reelected to a third term Carías praised the development, and stated Roosevelt was "the ablest man in America for the solution of

[41] "GEN. CARIAS URGES SOLID HEMISPHERE," *New York Times*, July 13, 1940, p. 3.

present world problems.[42] On July 5, 1941, at a speech at the US Legation, Carías claimed "Latin America" was indebted to the United States "for the good neighbor policy."[43]

The Honduran press also continued to print large numbers of news articles and editorials praising the Good Neighbor policy and Roosevelt's leadership in the hemisphere's affairs.[44] For instance, the Honduran government recommended Hull receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in promoting the Good Neighbor policy, and the endorsement was covered in the Honduras press in early 1938.[45] On July 4, 1939, *La Epoca* repeated its usual observation of the United States' Independence Day by paying yet another tribute to the Good Neighbor policy and Roosevelt. Lacking any serious commentary or facts, the article made up for its insubstantiality by claiming the United States was governed by the "brilliance of the illustrious Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt."[46] In November 1940, *La Epoca* attempted to associate the *continuismo* of Carías with Roosevelt arguing, "Our case is similar to that of the United States" because both countries realized that the desperate times called for extreme measures and strong and "steadfast" leadership.[47]

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[42] "Honduras Hails Victory," *New York Times*, November 7, 1940, p. 9.

[43] "HONDURAS LOOKS TO U.S.," *New York Times*, July 6, 1941, p. 5. See also: "Honduras Back U.S. on War," *New York Times*, July 30, 1941, p. 4; "Special Cable to the NEW YORK TIMES," *New York Times*, August 3, 1941, p. 12; "Unanimity in The Americas," *The Sun*, September 22, 1941, p. 8; "SOLIDARITY IN AMERICAS," *New York Times*, February 17, 1940, p. 6; "Honduran President Applauds," *New York Times*, September 13, 1941, p. 1; and Carías, Presidential Message to Congress, December 1940, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, December 6, 1940, 815.032/170, RG 59, NA.

[44] Earlier examples of laudatory Honduran press coverage of the Good Neighbor policy and Roosevelt, and Carías's efforts to impress the United States in other ways can be found in: Cramp to Secretary of State, July 8, 1937, 815.4061/4, RG 59, NA; Cramp to Secretary of State, July 5, 1937, 815.463/18, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, December 9, 1941, 803, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 68, RG 84, NA.

[45] Erwin to Secretary of State, January 18, 1938, 711, vol. 6, Honduras, Box 35, RG 84, NA. See also: Julio Lozano to Bermudez M., February 11, 1937, *Diplomatica Recibida, Legacion de Honduras en los Estados de America, 1936-1937*, Archivos de la Cancillería de Honduras.

[46] "THE GOOD NEIGHBOR OF THE LATIN-AMERICNA COUNTRIES," *La Epoca*, July 4, 1939, p. 1.

[47] "The Constitutional Ratification," *La Epoca*, November 19, 1940, p. 1. For more examples of the Honduran press lauding the United States and its leaders see: "CONFIDENCE IN ROOSEVELT," *La Epoca*,

One of the first issues to bring the United States and Germany into conflict over Honduran domestic affairs and provide Carías an excellent and new opportunity to please the United States was the distribution of US films. During the first years of the Good Neighbor, Germany and the United States hardly had reason to trouble themselves over the other's actions in Honduras, but as anti-fascist rhetoric became increasingly common in the United States, it was bound to offend the increasingly powerful and sensitive Third Reich wherever it traveled. In 1936, when US *March of Time* newsreels depicted Hitler "caricatured," the German government complained to the Honduran Censorship Committee, and was successful in influencing "the Minister of Government to censor all news reels in the future." In this case the Honduran government was more than happy to comply with the German grievance, because the newsreels also showed a scene of a narcotics bust in New Orleans with the contraband originating from Honduras.[48] The fact Germany objected to the film, Honduras censored it, and US officials reported them doing so, all points to the importance all three nations attributed to the medium, and that future problems would inevitably arise.

In the years before World War II, there were several incidents when the German and US governments clashed over Honduran film censorship and attempted to influence the Honduran government's actions. The most influential and important of these conflicts took place in 1938 and 1939 and was the result of the Honduran release of the US film *The Road Back*. *The Road Back* tells the fictional story of German soldiers at the end of World War I trying to come to grips with how their world had changed while they were away in the trenches. The four men the

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November 21, 1938, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, November 22, 1938, 500, vol. 4, Honduras, Box 33, RG 84, NA; "The Discourse of President Roosevelt," *La Epoca*, September 20, 1939, p. 3; and *El Norte*, *El Diario Comercial*, *El Cronista*, and *La Epoca* in late January 1941. Another example of the Carías Administration's attempt to associate itself with Roosevelt can be found in: José Zeron h., *Roosevelt y Carías Andino* ([Tegucigalpa ?]: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1942).

[48] Leo J. Keena to Secretary of State, August 8, 1936, 815.4061-MOTION PICTURES/11, RG 59, NA.

film is based around face anti-militaristic sentiment, transformed families, revolutionary violence, and other hardships as they try to adjust to a new postwar Germany. The German delegation complained to Honduran Vice-President Abraham Williams that the film depicted German soldiers in a negative light, so at the German consul's request it was banned. The film was also temporarily barred from being shown in Guatemala and El Salvador as well, but in Honduras the United States protested particularly strongly to its censorship.[49]

With heavy pressure from the United States to allow the film to be shown and from Germany for it to be banned, the Honduran government did its best to please both countries, but ultimately sided with the United States on the matter of film censorship. Williams attempted to deflect US objections to US film restriction by pointing out the German government had requested *All Quiet on the Western Front* be pulled from circulation, but that it was uncensored. Apparently, Erwin was unsatisfied with Williams's response because Williams eventually promised him he would not ban films simply based on petitions but rather through a systematic procedure to determine if they were suitable for release.[50] As a result of the United States' protest over the censoring of its films, the Motion Picture Censorship Board of Honduras was established to decide what would and would not be shown in films distributed in the country. More than a year after *The Road Back* was barred from Honduran theaters it was released, and this time to a much larger than usual audience, which had been attracted to the film due to the international controversy.[51]

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[49] Erwin to Secretary of State, April 4, 1938, 815.4061-MOTION PICTURES/17, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, June 16, 1939, 815.4061 MOTION PICTURES/20, RG 59, NA.

[50] Erwin to Secretary of State, April 4, 1938, 815.4061-MOTION PICTURES/17, RG 59, NA.

[51] Erwin to Secretary of State, June 16, 1939, 815.4061 MOTION PICTURES/20, RG 59, NA; and Salter to Secretary of State, "NEW REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE CENSORSHIP OF MOTION PICTURE FILMS IN HONDURAS," October 4, 1939, 815.4061-MOTION PICTURES/21, RG 59, NA. For more on the censoring of US films in Honduras see: Erwin to Secretary of State, April 18, 1940, 815.4061 MOTION PICTURES/29, RG 59,

Carías's solidarity with the United States against Germany and Japan remained unswerving throughout the prewar period. In late March 1938, rather than issue his own possibly dissimilar declaration on the recent German annexation of Austria, Erwin reported Carías was "anxious to act in harmony with the United States Government," so he waited for the United States to make its policy known first.[52] Later that year, when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was meeting with Hitler over the fate of the Sudetenland, Hull instructed the US Legation in Tegucigalpa to encourage Honduras to follow Roosevelt's lead and "appeal" to Hitler to avoid war.[53] In response to the United States' request Carías told Cramp he was "in whole-hearted agreement with the President's action and views in appealing at this time for the preservation of peace." Carías told Cramp "the policy of his Government was in complete accord with and would always follow the policy of our Government in international affairs."[54] This time true to his word, Carías sent a letter to Hitler and Edvard Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia, asking them "not to abandon pacific and civilized proceedings to solve the present conflict" between them.[55]

When Europe exploded into war in September 1939, Carías continued to associate himself with the United States and show his northerly neighbor he was unmistakably behind Roosevelt in whatever policies he decided to undertake. Following the United States' lead and at

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NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, June 25, 1940, 815.4061-MOTiON PiCTURES/32, RG 59, NA.

[52] Erwin to Secretary of State, March 29, 1938, 800, vol. 6, Honduras, Box 35, RG 84, NA.

[53] Hull to [US Legation Tegucigalpa?], September 27, 1938, 848, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 38, RG 84, NA.

[54] Cramp to Secstate, September 28, 1938, 848, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 38, RG 84, NA.

[55] Carías to Hitler and Edvard Beneš, September 28, 1938, reproduced in Cramp to Secretary of State, September 30, 1938, 848, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 38, RG 84, NA. See also: "11 Americas Back Roosevelt Peace Plea," *Washington Post*, September 30, 1938, p. 1. Carías also inquired about the United States' reaction to the German take over of Bohemia and Moravia, so his country would be in accord with the United States' policy. See: Erwin to Secretary of State, March 30, 1939, 711, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 47, RG 84, NA.

the prodding of the State Department Carías agreed to ban "belligerent submarines from entering the ports or territorial waters of Honduras." He also took the matter a step further and made it illegal for foreigners living in Honduras to "perform any act that may be considered incompatible with the obligations imposed by Honduran neutrality."[56] After Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles instructed Erwin to see if Honduras would grant the United States permission to patrol its coastal waters for belligerent navies Honduras quickly gave its consent.[57] When war between the United States and the Axis looked more certain and the US military approached Carías about moving troops across his borders, Carías was more than happy to oblige and offered any and all possible assistance to any US forces traveling through his country.[58]

Another one of the many ways Carías demonstrated his loyalty to the United States was his low tolerance for pro-fascist literature in the tightly controlled Honduran press. Abiding any kind of opposition was never a characteristic of Carías's Administration, so it is no surprise that when the editor of *El Cronista*, Manuel Calderon, began publishing pro-fascist articles Carías moved to censor him. The decision to prevent any dissenting press was a calculated effort to not only discourage the opposition, but also present the United States with a picture of Honduras as a country fully pacified and united behind Carías. Controlling the press allowed Carías to be seen as a reliably strong leader capable of withstanding even the smallest of insubordination, and it made it appear the entire country marched in perfect solidarity with the United States.

There were a number of somewhat mundane pro-fascist pieces that appeared in *El Cronista* in mid-July 1939, shortly before the German invasion of Poland, but nothing that was

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[56] Erwin to Secstate, November 14, 1939, 711.1, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 47, RG 84, NA.

[57] Welles to Erwin, December 21, 1939, 711.1, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 47, RG 84, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, December 30, 1939, 711.1, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 47, RG 84, NA.

[58] "Current Events-Visit of M.A. to Honduras," June 25, 1940, 815.00 M.I.D./34, RG 59, NA.

overtly pro-German or made it obvious the editor had fascist sympathies.[59] It was not until war broke out that *El Cronista* began printing unquestionably pro-fascist articles and editorials, which caused Carías's government to take note. Throughout early October 1939, *El Cronista* defended the actions of Germany and argued France and England were far from completely innocent due to their violent histories. One editorial stated, "the Fuhrer, say what you will, is supported by the great majority of the German people who see him as the creator of Greater Germany, and, furthermore, the Germans fear a repetition of the events that occurred" at Versailles after World War I when "the ominous terms of peace were "imposed" upon them. Carías was so distressed by what *El Cronista* was printing he spoke to both Calderon and the US Legation about what had taken place. Carías informed the State Department the only reason why the paper was printing the pro-German articles was because it was being paid by the Nazis to do so, and at least one US official, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Fred K. Salter, agreed with him.[60] For several months, Carías's admonition of Calderon prevented the paper from printing more than a handful of notably dissenting pieces.

In early 1940, the pro-Nazi publicity in *El Cronista* became too much for Carías to abide any longer. When *El Cronista* published an editorial questioning the strength of the British Empire and its ability to defeat the Axis, the British government filed a complaint with the Honduran Foreign Office.[61] This forced Carías to do damage control. Carías warned Calderon that if he did not stop printing pro-Axis material he would end the paper's large government

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[59] Erwin to Secretary of State, July 6, 1939, 800.20210/331, RG 59, NA.

[60] Salter to Secretary of State, October 14, 1939, 815.00N/15, RG 59, NA; and *El Cronista* October 1-9, 1939.

[61] Erwin to Secretary of State, January 27, 1940, 815.00P/1, RG 59, NA; and "What is Happening in the British Empire," *El Cronista*, January 25, 1940, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, January 27, 1940, 815.00P/1, RG 59, NA.

subsidy, and, if necessary, close the paper entirely. It was well-known that over the years Carías had paid *El Cronista* to print his government's bidding. One estimate placed the amount paid to *El Cronista* by the government at an incredible $192,000. This may not have worried Calderon too much because he was reported to then be on the payroll of the Nazis, and some in the State Department even wondered if the Nazis were paying him more than the government of Honduras. Carías eventually cut the paper's $3000 monthly subsidy, including funds to pay for transporting its papers throughout the country aboard TACA aircraft, and prevented private Honduran citizens and foreign nationals from taking out ad space to publicize political material presenting a point of view other than his own.[62]

Carías knew he was pleasing the United States by censoring the pro-fascist press, because at least one member of the US Legation informed his government he "enjoyed it," so it is no surprise that just as *El Cronista* was being censored, *La Epoca* attempted to repair the damage created by Calderon to Honduras's international reputation and reeducate its people on what they should believe about what was taking place in Europe. Interestingly, much of this anti-fascist and anti-communist literature took a strong stance for democracy. For instance, one article in *La Epoca* entitled, "FOR DEMOCRACY," presented the dangers the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact gave the free people of Europe, and argued the free peoples of the world needed to guard against these "anti-democratic" states.[63] Another article reproduced a sizeable quotation

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[62] Hardy, "Report on activities of nationals of non-American countries in the Republic of Honduras," June 16, 1940, 815.00N/35, RG 59, NA; MID 2657-P-533-1, Pate, August 23, 1940, "Domestic Press – EL CRONISTA," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, May 21, 1940, 815.00-N/21, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, May 21, 1940, 815.00-N/21, RG 59, NA. For an excellent example of ethnic Germans who were paid Nazi propagandists buying advertising space in *El Cronista* to circulate pro-German messages see: Albert Meyer and Juan Friedrichs, "Commenting on Remarks," *El Cronista*, May 15, 1940, p. 3.

[63] Salter to Secretary of State, October 14, 1939, 815.00N/15, RG 59, NA; and "FOR DEMOCRACY," *La Epoca*, August 29, 1939, enclosed in Salter to Secretary of State, August 30, 1939, 820.02, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 49, RG 84, NA.

from *Mein Kampf* that explored the "racial inferiority" of Latin Americans. This was obviously an attempt to reinforce the idea amongst the newspaper's readers the Germans felt Hondurans were an "inferior people," something Erwin claimed was well understood by the Hondurans.[64] These articles and others like them show Carías was not only trying to impress the United States with the idea he and his country supported its cause against the Axis, but also that the Hondurans had a stake in backing the United States against the Axis and communists.[65]

The news coverage in *La Epoca* was so critical of Germany in late 1940 and early 1941, it eventually moved the German Chargé d'Affaires in Honduras, Christian Zinsser, to object to the defamation of his country and request the ability to present Germany's perspective on events in Europe to the Honduran public. This episode provided Carías with an excellent opportunity to show the United States exactly where he and the people of Honduras stood on the war, and the US Legation reported to Washington precisely as Carías wanted them to as events unfolded. Zinsser was particularly upset about an article in *La Epoca* that argued Hitler wanted to "dominate the world." The editor of *La Epoca* Fernando Zepeda Durón responded to Zinsser's protestations with a published letter Erwin felt certain Carías had approved of. In the letter, Zinsser was "called a thick headed agent of the Gestapo giving orders to an inferior as if he were in Nazi Germany." The US Legation was pleased by the rebuttal and contentedly reported to Washington that the Honduran populace warmly welcomed Zepeda Durón's article and some

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[64] Erwin to Secretary of State, January 15, 1940, 815.00N/17, RG 59, NA, and "GERMAN RACIALISM AND LATIN AMERICA," *La Epoca*, January 11, 1940, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, January 15, 1940, 815.00N/17, RG 59, NA.

[65] Several other excellent examples of anti-Axis press coverage in *La Epoca* can be found in: *La Epoca*, September 3-30, 1939. One of the best is: "THE HEROIC SOLDIERS OF POLAND CONTINUE TO DEFEND THEIR NATIONAL HONOR," *La Epoca*, September 19, 1939, p. 1 and 4. See also: "The First Anti-Communist Iberioamerican," *La Epoca*, August 12, 1937, p. 2

even "congratulated" him for it, thus making Erwin feel that Zinsser would then find "life in Honduras even more unpleasant for him than formerly."[66]

Throughout much of January 1941, a bitter press war raged between *La Epoca* and Zinsser, which was allowed to continue because it presented Carías's government with a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate its loyalty to the United States. Zinsser played right into Carías's hand when he wrote a letter to the Honduran Foreign Office requesting he be given "diplomatic privilege" to publish a rebuttal against the anti-German press in *La Epoca*.[67] Zinsser was eventually allowed to distribute a pamphlet entitled "Circular of Hitler in America," which argued *La Epoca* was inaccurate and biased in its coverage of Germany and Hitler, but only gave the paper more material to dispute and make Honduras appear more anti-Axis in the process.[68]

When the media war had calmed down and Zinsser was sufficiently despised by the Honduran people, Carías squeezed one final drop of advantage from Zinsser by declaring him persona non grata on March 13. This action thrilled the United States. The Honduran Foreign Ministry explained to Germany its decision was due to Zinsser's attempts to disturb the US-Honduran relationship, the danger he posed to Honduran neutrality, and his efforts to stage a coup to oust Carías. Zinsser calls these allegations "ridiculous," but US officials felt differently. There was a general belief in the State Department "the sinister German Chargé d'Affaires, Zinsser" was actively trying to "sabotage" the "United States-Central American friendship."[69]

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[66] Erwin to Secretary of State, January 9, 1941, 815.91/2, RG 59, NA. Zinsser served as the German representative in Tegucigalpa from September 1940 to April 1941. Although he met with Carías, he claims Carías was always reluctant to discuss politics with him and never invited him to a formal reception at the Presidential Palace (Zinsser, "Diplomatische Mission in Honduras," pp. 434-455).

[67] Erwin to Secretary of State, January 27, 1941, 815.91, RG 59, NA; and Zinsser to Honduran Foreign Office, January 17, 1941, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, January 27, 1941, 815.91, RG 59, NA.

[68] Zinsser, "Circular of Hitler in America," pamphlet enclosed in *La Epoca*, January 10, 1941; and *La Epoca* December 30, 1940 through February 1941.

[69] MID 2657-P-439-51, Marsh, February 15, 1941, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and

Marsh called Zinsser an "Aggressive plotter," a "merciless Nazi hatchet man," and "the most dangerous person in" Central America, and estimated that with his exiling alone Honduras's "Subversive Activities" rating should decline from "Considerable" to "Slight."[70] Marsh was so impressed with Carías's action he reported, "President Carías has displayed an extremely friendly attitude toward the United States, and may be counted upon to follow its leadership." He even broke with what had been the traditional view of Carías as a petty tyrant and called him "a relatively benevolent dictator" who allowed "the return of political exiles" and managed to keep the country together during a period of bad banana harvests.[71] Erwin concurred with Marsh and argued Zinsser's removal proved the seriousness of Honduras's anti-Nazi stance.[72] Even the *New York Times* claimed Honduras was on the "democratic side," because Carías had "expelled" Zinsser.[73]

In 1941, Carías actively sought to coordinate his government's efforts with those of the United States to mitigate the perceived Axis threat to Honduras. In February, Carías "requested…a list of suspected German agents" from the US Legation in Tegucigalpa who then

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Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA; and Zinsser, "Diplomatische Mission in Honduras," pp. 434-455.

[70] MID 2657-P-439-55, Marsh, March 15, 1941, "Weekly Stability Report," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA. See also: "NAZI DIPLOMAT BARRED," *New York Times*, April 21, 1941, p. 5.

[71] MID 2657-P-439-51, Marsh, February 15, 1941, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[72] Erwin to Secretary of State, December 9, 1941, 815.032/175, RG 59, NA.

[73] "HONDURAN NAZIS WARNED," *New York Times*, December 6, 1941, p. 4. For more on Carías's crackdown on Axis propaganda see: MID 2357-292-1, Arthur C. Waters, May 27, 1941, "Comments on Current Events," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA. Stokes argues Carías's anti-Nazi stance was well known (p. 261). For more US media coverage of Carías siding with the United States against the Nazis see: Lawrence Martin and Sylvia Martin, "Nazi Intrigues in Central America," *The American Mercury* vol. 53 no. 211 (July 1941): pp. 66-72; "Nazi Envoy Ousted by Honduras," *St. Petersburg Times*, March 14, 1941, p. 21; and "Zinsser, Agent of Nazis, Ousted by Honduras," *The Milwaukee Journal*, March 14, 1941, p. 3. After being expelled from the Americas, Zinsser eventually found his way to Shanghai (Zinsser, "Diplomatische Mission in Honduras," pp. 434-455).

held "Honduran passports and others who have obtained fraudulent naturalization papers." Albert H. Cousins Jr., Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, reported to the State Department "the President wishes to cooperate with the American government in every possible way in these matters." The requested list was eventually provided to Carías's trusted friend and author Zepeda Durón, whom Carías personally asked to deal with the illegal entry of German nationals.[74]

Fully aware the United States feared the "Fifth Column" within Honduran borders, Carías moved against ethnic Axis nationals in a number of different ways and repeatedly told US officials whose side he was on. Besides banning some Germans from the country, Carías also forbade foreign clergy from entering Honduras because it was believed some of them were pro-totalitarian and might possibly try to indoctrinate the country with Axis propaganda.[75] In May 1941, he "canceled the exequatur" of four "consular officials representing European powers" because they were reported to be either "German or pro-German."[76] In July 1941, although it was not in his country's financial interests, Carías declared that no person from Germany, Italy, or Japan could become a citizen of Honduras and began prohibiting imports from these countries.[77] Later that month, the Honduran government instructed the two private airlines operating within the country to no longer provide air travel to any Axis nationals even if they were tourists.[78] Furthermore, according to Marsh, when rumors circulated Nazis had made

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[74] Albert H. Cousins, Jr., Memorandum, February 11, 1941, 820.02, vol. 11, Box 70, RG 84, NA; and "SUSPECTED GERMAN AGENTS" enclosed in Cousins, Memorandum, February 11, 1941, 820.02, vol. 11, Box 70, RG 84, NA.

[75] Erwin to Secretary of State, April 26, 1941, 800.20215/5, RG 59, NA.

[76] Erwin to Secretary of State, May 7, 1941, 702, vol. 8, Honduras, Box 67, RG 84, NA.

[77] MID 2657-P-442-11, Levi G. Brown, July 11, 1941, "Foreign Policies," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 8, RG 165, NA.

[78] Erwin to Secretary of State, July 25, 1941, 815.111/75, RG 59, NA.

inroads in the remote Patuca River Basin of eastern Honduras, "President Carias pledged his complete cooperation in investigating…[the] alleged activities.[79]

Although compared to the rest of Latin America Honduras was considered less of a potential domino for the fascists to topple, it was nonetheless viewed by US policymakers as yet another possible victim of German intervention. Lt. Colonel Walter C. Mayer, a US American working as a small arms instructor for the Honduran Army, informed the US Legation in Tegucigalpa he felt it was his "duty" to notify the United States government about the military preparedness of Honduras. In an unsolicited letter to Erwin, Mayer wrote it was "utterly impossible" for Honduras "to render any effective military assistance to the United States at any time." Mayer reported Honduras could never field "any large number of well-trained and well-armed men…unless they were armed with machettes [*sic*]." In Mayer's opinion this was not due to a lack affection for the United States on Carías's behalf, but rather the fact that Honduras simply could not afford to undergo the necessary expense of providing for and training a sizeable army.[80] When Marsh commented on Honduras's ability to defend itself he stated its military was "woefully obsolete," and that its soldiers were "barefoot" and armed with "single-shot" rifles. He was fairly confident the Honduran government would topple if the Germans or Italians decided to make Carías their enemy.[81] A few weeks later, Marsh reported, "With the exception of the Palace Troops and the Air Force, Honduran soldiers" were "stupid, ragged, ill-armed peons,

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[79] MID 2357-286-1, Marsh, March 25, 1941, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA. For more on Carías's attempt to make the United States think his country was vulnerable to the Nazis see: Zeron h. pp. 30-31.

[80] Erwin to Secretary of State, July 11, 1941, 815.20/49, RG 59, NA; and Walter C. Mayer to Erwin, June 24, 1941, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, July 11, 1941, 815.20/49, RG 59, NA.

[81] MID 2357-286-3, Marsh, July 12, 1941, Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA.

whose feeble conceptions of loyalty embrace only their immediate post commanders."[82] The US press added to the hype when it speculated on "the possibility…that either internal trouble or foreign intrigue" could create "a condition dangerous to American defense plans" in Central America.[83]

In the eyes of Washington, Nazi intervention was considered a real possibility, if not actual fact in Honduras, so when Nazi propaganda circulated in gradually increasing frequency it was viewed as a sign Washington's fear was beginning to manifest. Throughout late 1940 and early 1941, the US Legation and Honduran government found reason to fear the Nazis were undermining Carías's regime due to the presence of large amounts of readily available pro-Axis literature. According to US and Honduran reports, the Nazis were using every means at their disposal to spread their message including diplomatic channels and ethnic German owned businesses.[84] The Hondurans barred the national postal service from delivering Nazi propaganda, but it still managed to circulate through person-to-person contact.[85] However, the real concern for the US government were the rumors the Nazis were collaborating with Carías's opposition to mount a serious revolution.

Since the United States first began taking an interest in the civil wars of Honduras in the early twentieth century, it was concerned events could be exasperated by outside interference. Originally, the US government's main foreign worry for Honduras was the meddling of

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[82] Marsh, "Estimate," August 2, 1941, 815.014/51, RG 59, NA.

[83] "Central America: Countries To North of Panama Canal Provide Possible Gap in U.S. Defense," *The Sun*, February 23, 1941, p. 11. See also: "Honduran President Uncovers Nazi Plot Aimed Against U.S.," *The Sun*, December 7, 1941, p. 1.

[84] Cousins to Secretary of State, October 4, 1940, 800.20210/592, RG 59, NA.

[85] Erwin to Secretary of State, October 29, 1940, 815.00 P/5, RG 59, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, November 12, 1940, 815.00-N/42, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, December 12, 1940, 815.00N/46, RG 59, NA. See also: Erwin to Secretary of State, December 4, 1940, 815.00N/45, RG 59, NA; and Breckinridge Long to Erwin, February 6, 1941, 815.00N/42, RG 59, NA.

Honduras's neighbors, and in 1932 and 1933, just before Carías ascended to the presidency, it was the possibility the Sandinistas would ally with the Liberals that alarmed Washington. In the few years before the United States and Honduras entered World War II, US policymakers were once again anxious about the possibility foreign intervention could disrupt Honduran stability. Throughout Roosevelt's presidency, there had been a significant amount of US apprehension over German, Japanese, and Italian activity in Honduras, but by November 1940 the US government was confident the Nazis and possibly the Italians were working to overthrow Carías.[86] However, it was not until 1941 reports from the US military, US Legation, and Honduran government all contained specific details about a plot to "overthrow the Conservative Carias Government" in August of 1941. Intelligence suggested the German government had supposedly provided the Honduran Liberals with $250,000 in cash, 300 machine guns, at least 5,000 rifles, pistols, and all of the necessary ammunition.[87] The US government considered the Honduran Liberals as "pro-Nazi" along with the other "outs" in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, and believed the Nazis were promising to assist the opposition in these countries and would contribute to getting rid of the dictators then "divide up the American property among the people."[88] The port of Amapala was seen as Honduras's weakest point because it was inhabited by a large number of ethnic Germans, and many in the War Department thought there was a real possibility German businesses there could help distribute Axis weapons to the Liberals.[89] Finally,

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[86] Erwin to Secretary of State, November 4, 1940, 815.00/4809, RG 59, NA.

[87] MID 2657-P-439-64, Marsh, May 17, 1941, "Weekly Stability Report," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[88] MID 2357-296-1, Brown, "July 10, 1941, "Comments on Current Events," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165, NA.

[89] MID/2357-286, July 31, 1941, "Nazi – Honduran Liberal Plot," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 3, RG 165,

just before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Carías stated he had "proof" Nazis were involved in inciting revolt in Honduras and were planning to "fight against the United States." Undoubtedly trying to seek the United States' aid in defending his regime, Carías then promised to "support democracy and President Roosevelt," and he would soon get his chance.[90]

**The Colossus Courts Carías**

While dependency theorists such as James A. Morris and Steve C. Ropp have argued Carías was indulged by the United States due to his pampering of the United Fruit Company (UFCO) and other US business interests, and that the stability he provided was "directly attributable both to U.S. governmental policy and the consolidation of the North American banana empire in Honduras," the story is considerably more complex.[91] The US government and other US financial stakeholders undeniably benefited from Carías's rule. Besides providing the benefit of political stability, he was hard on labor activities whether they were radical or not.[92] He provided considerable tariff and railroad concessions to the UFCO. And, he arranged lower taxes for US companies such as the New York and Honduras Rosario Mining Company when it was unpopular with the Honduran Congress.[93] Since shortly after the beginning of his

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[90] "Honduran Chief Charges Nazis Incited Revolts," *Washington Post*, December 7, 1941, p. 8. For more on the history of Germans in Honduras see: Segisfredo T. Infante, *Los alemanes en el sur, 1900-1947* (Tegucigalpa: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, Editorial Universitaria, 1993).

[91] James A. Morris and Steve C. Ropp, "Corporatism and Dependent Development: A Honduran Case Study," *Latin American Research* Review vol. 12 no. 2 (1977): pp. 27-68. Two of the most critical authors of US policy in Honduras are Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), pp. 63-64, 83-86 and 133-134; and Marvin Barahona, *La Hegemonia de los Estados Unidos en Honduras, 1907-1932* (Tegucigalpa: El Centro de Documentacion de Honduras, 1989), pp. 209-230. See also: Mario Posas and Remy Fontaine, "Honduras at the Crossroads," *Latin American Perspectives* vol. 7 no. 2/3 (Late Spring-Summer 1980): pp. 45-56.

[92] Richard Swedberg, *The Honduran Trade Union Movement, 1920-1982* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Central America Information Office, 1983), pp. 1-8.

[93] Erwin to Secretary of State, February 3, 1940, 815.63/59, RG 59, NA; Unknown to Laurence Duggan, Memorandum, February 10, 1940, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, February 3, 1940, 815.63/59, RG 59,

presidency, Carías enjoyed the United States' support through its willingness to partially lift its arms embargo and refusal to do anything meaningful to prevent the employment of US citizens in the Honduran Air Force. He also benefitted from the Good Neighbor policy through Washington's moral support and the continued recognition of his regime when he instituted *continuismo* in 1936 and then extended it again in 1939. The United States' assistance to Carías from 1933 to 1937 is clear, but much of it was given reluctantly or even accidently. The State Department's averseness to intervene or interfere in Honduran affairs, the United States' troubled economy, and Carías's dictatorial characteristics prevented US policymakers from fully committing to bolstering Carías's power.

Now that the United States felt there was a Nazi threat to its hegemony in the hemisphere, it began to move away from isolationism and began to show a growing willingness to interfere in the affairs of others while still claiming to adhere to the Good Neighbor policy.[94] Beginning in 1939, shortly after war broke out in Europe, the United States gradually adopted a new policy towards the Carías regime, one that was much more to his liking and largely the product of his now five-year presidency. This modified approach led to what Ropp calls the "creeping professionalization" of the Honduran military "under U.S. auspices."[95] David Green maintains much of the United States' policy changes toward the region in the late 1930s were due to its fear of far left ideology, but in Carías's case leftwing radicalism was barely an issue at all.[96] Partly because the United States was desperate for as many allies as possible before

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NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, February 16, 1940, 815.63/61, RG 59, NA; and *La Gaceta*, March 2, 1940, pp. 1-2.

[94] John Child, *Unequal Alliance: The Inter-American Military System, 1938-1978* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 16-17.

[95] Steve C. Ropp, "The Honduran Army in the Sociopolitical Evolution of the Honduran State," *The Americas* vol. 30 no. 4 (April 1974): pp. 504-528.

[96] David Green, *The Containment of Latin America; A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good*

entering World War II, and partly due to Carías's success in convincing the United States he was its reliable friend and ally and that he was facing a legitimate threat against his regime from the Nazis, the United States began to do what it could to assure Carías's continued loyalty and strength. Although this new overt support was often similar to what was given in the past, it took new forms and was given much more freely and frequently, and often corresponded directly to Carías's demonstrations of allegiance to the United States and his decision to maintain a large air force.[97]

One of the first major demonstrations of support to the Carías regime from the US government took place in July 1939, when the USS *Charleston* and USS *Erie* paid a goodwill visit to Amapala and provided Carías firm evidence his regime was warmly appreciated by Washington. The weeklong visit of the US warships was a time of jubilant festivities with Honduran dignitaries being entertained aboard the ships and US officers visiting Tegucigalpa, the Mayan ruins at Copan, and the US owned New York and Honduras Rosario Mining Company mine. Of course, Carías was invited to partake of the festivities aboard the ships, but he declined, citing his fear of flying as his excuse. Both countries worked hard to assure their keenness to impress the other did not go unnoticed. Salter felt the Hondurans were so eager to please the US Navy officers it was becoming a financial burden on the country. Rear Admiral John W. Wilcox stated he "had rather expected" his "visit to Honduras would be in the nature of

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*Neighbor Policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 37-50.

[97] Carías's comparatively large Air Force for Central America had been a point of contention for the US government since the beginning of his presidency, but as war loomed, it helped make his leadership seem more appealing to US Americans. See: Wayne Thomis, "9,500 SOLDIERS GUARD CENTRAL AMERICAN LANDS," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 31, 1940, p. 6. A small but nonetheless meaningful early example demonstrating the United States' efforts to strengthen its bonds with Carías's government can be found in an article describing the honoring of a Honduran diplomat: "FOREIGN CONSULS GUESTS," *New York Times*, May 17, 1939, p. 30. The US media also picked up on the friendlier US policy toward Latin America. Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* argued the United States had abandoned democracy promotion in Latin America and that it was now supporting dictators throughout the hemisphere (Arthur Krock, "In the Nation: our Latin-American Policy on Unlimited Tenure," *New York Times*, September 25, 1940, p. 25).

an anti-climax after visiting Guatemala and Costa Rica," but he and his other officers "found the people of Honduras so cordial in every way that the contrary proved to be true."[98] In accordance with its custom, Carías's government made the most of the US Navy's visit and had the Honduran press provide no shortage of positive attention to the presence of the US military in the country.[99]

When Carías again extended his presidency in late 1939, the United States acted as though nothing happened and continued to conduct business as usual with the dictator whose reign would now extend through 1949. This response may not have been Carías's first choice, he would have preferred an open declaration of support from Roosevelt, but it certainly did not detract from his authority and happily contributed to the status quo. The US Legation in Tegucigalpa was aware Carías was moving to further tighten his grip on power when Carías explored the possibility of doing away with municipal elections, but it did little more than report on the development to Washington.[100] Erwin related Carías's presidency was not as popular as it was when he first instituted *continuismo* in 1936, and that conditions might require the Honduran government to institute countermeasures and a strong campaign to convince the Hondurans of its

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[98] Erwin to Secretary of State, July 6, 1939, 833, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 49, RG 84, NA; Salter to Secretary of State, July 25, 1939, 833, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 49, RG 84, NA; and John W. Wilcox to Erwin, July 26, 1939, 833, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 49, RG 84, NA.

[99] "Next Visit of the Destroyers…," *El Cronista*, July 11, 1939, enclosed in Erwin to Secretary of State, July 6, 1939, 833, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 49, RG 84, NA; and "The 2 Units of War that Will Visit Us," *La Epoca*, July 11, 1939, p. 1. There was also a visit of five US congressmen to Honduras on November 21, 1939 that illustrates this point. On this one day trip, Carías and several members of his cabinet spent hours entertaining and demonstrating their friendliness toward the US visitors. For limited coverage of this visit see: Erwin to Secretary of State, November 24, 1939, 823, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 49, RG 84, NA. See also: Juan Manuel Galvez, *Memoria Guerra, Marina, y Aviación, 1938-1939* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, 1939), pp. 3-15. In the next few years there were numerous visits to Honduras by US naval vessels for examples see: Galvez, *Memoria Guerra, Marina, y Aviación, 1939-1940* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, [1940?]), pp. 3-15.

[100] Erwin to Secretary of State, March 18, 1939, 815.011/33, RG 59, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, May 16, 1939, 815.00/4785, RG 59, NA. There were also a number of articles that appeared in the Honduran press that argued for the necessity of Carías remaining in power. One of the best examples is: "It is impossible to disturb the peace," *La Epoca*, August 4, 1939, enclosed in Salter to Secretary of State, August 7, 1939, 815.00/4790, RG 59, NA.

necessity.[101] On December 9, 1939, the bill extending Carías's presidency to January 1, 1949 was introduced to the Honduran Congress, and rather than debating its constitutionality or what it meant for US-Honduran relations, the State Department paid little attention to the matter and was not worried in the slightest about domestic opposition to his rule.[102] Even the US press remained virtually silent; most of the US coverage given to the extension considered little more than it acceptance by the Honduran Congress.[103]

In June 1940, Carías was visited by US military attaché Joseph B. Pate and was so conciliatory to US designs for his country Pate offered him special military honors in return. After Carías responded positively to Pate's request to allow US troops to cross Honduran borders in the event of war, Pate invited Carías to inspect his imposing YA-19 airplane he had flown to Honduras on. Impressed by the United States' firepower, Carías voiced the concern he had about guarding his Air Force from oppositionists and shared the plans he had for fortified hangars and more guard posts. Carías then told the military attaché how much he "appreciated" US "armament, airplanes and equipment for his army" because it was the only country that could supply the necessary "spare parts when he wanted them." Realizing the extent of Carías's desire to please the United States, Pate attempted to return the favor and offered Carías a chance for "a courtesy visit of a flight of his pilots to the Canal Zone." Carías thought this was an excellent idea but wisely decided to make use of the opportunity to impress Pate of the need to employ US

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[101] Erwin to Secretary of State, December 7, 1939, 815.00/4797, RG 59, NA.

[102] Erwin to Secretary of State, December 9, 1939, 815.011/38, RG 59, NA; and MID 2657-P-439-49, Cohen, December 11, 1939, "EXECUTIVE BRANCH – Present Executive," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA. See also: Erwin to Secretary of State, March 30, 1940, 815.00 Elections/23, RG 59, NA. See also: MID 2657-P-439-50, Cohen, December 19, 1939, "EXECUTIVE BRANCH – Present Executive," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

[103] "Honduras Adds 10 Yrs. To President's Term," *Washington Post*, December 17, 1939, p. 9; and "EXTENDS PRESIDENT'S TERM," *The Sun*, December 17, 1939, p. 3.

pilots in his Air Force. Carías expressed worry that his Honduran pilots could not make the trip because they were so "young and inexperienced in cross-country flying." Pate offered to select the pilots to make the journey, but Carías still refused stating he had only three planes that could make the flight. Shortly thereafter, Pate was informed Carías declined the "courtesy visit of a flight of his pilots to the Canal Zone" because he feared a German led revolution at any time. Obviously taken with Carías's earnestness to work with the United States and sympathetic to Honduras's supposed German threat, Pate told his superiors "the Honduran Government is genuinely loyal to the Government of the United States and is disposed to do anything within its power toward cooperating with us whenever we call upon them."[104]

Not long after Pate's visit to Honduras, in an effort to bolster their fear of and loyalty to the US government, Washington invited delegates from many of the American Republics to visit military installations in the United States on a two week tour.[105] Like eight other Latin American countries, Honduras accepted the invitation, but it struggled with deciding who would represent the country in the United States. Cousins wrote the proposal "threw…[the Honduran] Government into considerable confusion" because Carías believed "most of his military staff" were 'mountaineers like himself'" (the term "mountaineers" is misleading, and was probably selected by Cousins as an easy translation for commonly used Honduran word *campensino*, which roughly translated refers to an uneducated poor person who lives off the land in a remote region).[106] The anxious deliberation in Carías's circle was no doubt the result of his efforts to put Honduras's best foot forward at all times with the United States, and his worry a poorly chosen representative could cause considerable harm to his relations with Washington. General Leonidas

[104] "Current Events-Visit of M.A. to Honduras," June 25, 1940, 815.00 M.I.D./34, RG 59, NA.

[105] Hull to [US Legation, Tegucigalpa?], August 23, 1940, 102.2, vol. 1, Honduras, Box 53, RG 84, NA.

[106] Cousins to Secretary of State, September 9, 1940, 102.2, vol. 1, Honduras, Box 53, RG 84, NA.

Pineda and Amapala Commandante Calixto Carías (President Carías's nephew) were eventually selected to represent Honduras, and more specifically Carías, in the United States, and their visit was utilized by both the US and Honduran governments to impress their citizens.[107]

The presses of both the United States and Honduras reported extensively on the visit of General Pineda and Calixto Carías to the United States. Honduran coverage of the visit was aimed at developing the idea the Carías government was on excellent terms with Washington, and that the United States took his government seriously and cultivated its support. Not dissimilarly to the Nicaraguan press coverage of Anastasio Somoza's visit to Washington in 1939, the Honduran visit provided Carías yet another opportunity to present himself to his fellow countrymen as someone who enjoyed the full backing of the United States.[108] The Honduran coverage of the tour was apparently successful in inspiring a considerable amount of patriotic sentiment, because when Paramount Newsreel film was shown in Tegucigalpa with footage of the Honduran delegates shortly after the visit, the audience cheered for their countrymen. According to Erwin, this was a "most unusual" display for the Hondurans since most audiences hardly demonstrated "any reaction regardless of the nature of the film."[109] However, unlike Somoza's visit, the US press coverage of the Latin Americans' military tour of the United States was detailed and designed to develop the idea US Americans had many eager allies throughout the hemisphere. Honduras's participation in the tour was by no means singled out by the United States for aggrandizement, but it was certainly not ignored. Hemispheric solidarity was often the

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[107] Cousins to SecState, September 17, 1940, 102.2, vol. 1, Honduras, Box 53, RG 84, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, November 5, 1940, 102.2, vol. 1, Honduras, Box 53, RG 84, NA; and Galvez, *Memoria Guerra, Marina, y Aviación, 1940-1941* (Tegucigalpa: Talleres tipográficos nacionales, [1941?]), pp. 3-15.

[108] Paul Coe Clark, *The United States and Somoza, 1933-1956: A Revisionist Look* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1992), pp. 69-71. Some of the best examples of Honduran press coverage of the tour can be found in *La Epoca*, October 19, 1940.

[109] Erwin to Secretary of State, November 13, 1940, 102.2, vol. 1, Honduras, Box 53, RG 84, NA.

focus of this press, which stressed US military strength and preparedness. In an unsubtle attempt to depict Latin Americans as wartime allies of the United States, the Honduran delegates were shown standing happily next to US officers and excitedly handling US machine guns.[110]

Figure 8. General Calixto Carías (left) Inspecting a .50-caliber Machine-gun in the United States. *Washington Post*, October 4, 1940, p. 12.

[110] *Washington Post*, October 4, 1940, p. 12; and "Gen. Drum Greets Latin Delegation," *New York Times*, October 12, 1940, p. 7. See also: "Latin American Army Chiefs to Visit Atlanta," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 29, 1940, p. 12D; Willard Cope, "Officers From Latin America Pause Here on Military Tour," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 4, 1940, p. 1; "MILITARY MISSION READY FOR AIR TRIP," *The Sun*, October 1, 1940, p. 11; and "Latin-America Military Men Meet for Tour of Defenses," *Los Angeles Times*, October 1, 1940, p. 4.

Figure 9. General Leonidas Pineda (far left) and Other Latin American Army Officers Meeting with US American Lt. General Hugh A. Drum. "GEN. DRUM MEETS LATIN DELEGATION," *New York Times*, October 12, 1940, p. 7.

In the following months the United States continued to reach out to Honduras and proved itself eager to fulfill Honduran requests in a variety of ways. In November 1940, the Honduran Foreign Office appealed to the US Legation for a US Army officer to be sent to Honduras to review and advise its military. General Bruce A. Van Voorhis, Commander of the Canal Zone, went one better and sent two colonels to Honduras Serafin M. Montesinos and Herbert O'Leary. Erwin reported the response of the US government "impressed the Honduran authorities very favorably," with Carías showing his "personal appreciation" to the US officers.[111] When Captain Harold A. White, the Director of the Honduran Military Aviation School, informed the US Legation about the weaknesses and deficiencies in the Honduran Air Force, the US War and State Departments coordinated efforts to assure that a number of Honduran pilots would enroll in

[111] Erwin to Secretary of State, November 19, 1940, 815.20/39, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, December 21, 1940, 815.20/40, RG 59, NA.

two to three month training programs in the United States to help fill the gaps.[112] During the first half of 1941, the United States attempted to institute the directives of the Interdepartmental Committee on Cooperation with the American Republics in Honduras. One of the ways it did so was by sending social worker Mary Murphy to Tegucigalpa to meet and strategize with the Honduran Director General of Sanitation Pedro H. Ordonez Diaz and other relevant ministries to improve the lives of women and children. In May and June of that year, Murphy met with Vice-President Williams and several other high-ranking officials on matters of childcare and nutrition "for the purpose of furthering the cooperative relationship between such agencies in the United States and Honduras."[113]

Besides the routine demonstrations of aid and approval offered to the Carías regime throughout 1940 and 1941, the US press also provided Carías with a significant amount of positive press coverage. Rather than stressing his anti-democratic side, the US media during this period focused on Carías's backing of Washington and his anti-Nazi stance. The *Washington Post* covered a speech given by Carías at the US Legation on July 4, 1941, and failed to mention the ironic fact that Carías spoke out against totalitarian regimes although he was a dictator himself. The title of the article reads "President Carias Assails Dictators," but rather than portraying him as speaking out against himself, the newspaper praised him for his "gratitude for the Good Neighbor policy" and his close ties with the United States.[114] On the verge of the

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[112] Erwin to Secretary of State, January 16, 1941, 815.248/134, RG 59, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, July 18, 1941, 815.248/137, RG 59, NA; Welles to Erwin, August 18, 1941, 815.248/137, RG 59, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, August 21, 1941, 815.248/138, RG 59, NA; Lawrence Higgins to Department of State, August 5, 1941, 815.248/139, RG 59, NA; Erwin to Secretary of State, October 28, 1941, 815.248/143, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, December 29, 1941, 815.248/151, RG 59, NA.

[113] Welles to Erwin, February 27, 1941, 815.4055/1, RG 59, NA; Cousins to Secretary of State, March 8, 1941, 815.4055/2, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, June 3, 1941, 815.4055/4, RG 59, NA. For another example of the United States reaching out to Honduras see: G. Howland Shaw to Certain American Diplomatic and Consular Officers in the Other American Republics, July 22, 1941, 120.1, vol. 2, Honduras, Box 63, RG 84, NA.

[114] "President Carias Assails Dictators," *Washington Post*, July 6, 1941, p. 11.

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the *New York Times* reported approvingly on Carías's promise his nation's foreign policy would be "in complete accord with United States policy at all times and in all circumstances," and that he was in a desperate struggle to defeat the collusion of Nazis and oppositionists in his country.[115] Although US press coverage of Carías had been improving since 1932, in the few years just before World War II it had finally completed its about face from the almost completely negative attention given to him in the early and mid-1920s. Rather than a "rebel" and "revolutionary" he was now an "ally" and ardent friend of the United States.

**The Honduran Promised Land**

Allen Wells's *Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR, and the Jews of Sosúa* is an unconventional and refreshing approach to studying the *realpolitik* of World War II, and provides scholars of US-Latin American relations a unique window to understanding the dynamic relationship between Roosevelt and Trujillo. Wells examines the history of 750 Jewish refugees who escaped the Nazis by fleeing to the Dominican Republic. Settling in the small northern coastal town of Sosúa, the refugees made new and successful lives as agriculturalists. Viewing Sosúa as a kind of Caribbean Zion for Jewish refugees during World War II, Wells traces the experiences of the Dominican immigrants while simultaneously demonstrating how they were used as "pawns" by the world powers. Trujillo may not have been a major player on the world stage, but Wells argues he skillfully used the distressed Jews to his advantage in his relationship with the United States. After killing over ten thousand Haitians in 1937, Trujillo found himself out of favor with President Roosevelt. Wells believes Trujillo used the settling of the Jews in Sosúa in a propaganda campaign to improve international public opinion of his

[115] "HONDURAS CLINGS TO U.S.," *New York Times*, December 6, 1941, p. 1; and "HONDURAN NAZIS WARNED," *New York Times*, December 6, 1941, p. 4. See also: "Honduras Voices Full Accord," *New York Times*, August 16, 1941, p. 2.

regime, and thus helped Roosevelt forget about his murderous indiscretions. Wells shows that by redefining himself as a compassionate leader, Trujillo was able to strengthen his rule at home and secure economic and military aid from the United States. Wells writes, "the Sosúa episode makes clear, a subordinate position in an asymmetrical relationship does not mean that a shrewd leader cannot wring concessions to tighten his grip on power."[116]

Carías, like Trujillo, realized the power of a good relationship with the United States and attempted with no success to use the Jewish refugee crisis in Europe to his advantage to strengthen his ties to Washington. There was never a Honduran equivalent to the Dominican Sosúa, nor was Carías able to accept the immigration of more than a few dozen Jews to Honduras, but he nonetheless attempted to mimic Trujillo and even outdo him in settling Jews in his country for the purposes of impressing the United States. Recognizing Roosevelt's interest in alleviating the Jewish refugee crisis, Carías continued his traditional displays of loyalty and altered them to accommodate the US President's concern. Between 1938 and 1941, Carías entertained the possibility of settling as many as 10,000 Jews in Honduras for the dual purposes of jumpstarting the Honduran economy and pleasing Washington. Carías and his son Gonzalo did what they could to execute several plans to accomplish these goals, but were ultimately unable to do so due to political and family pressure rooted in anti-Semitism.

In 1937 and 1938, when Jews in Germany and Austria began fleeing their homelands by the thousands, many countries around the globe could not help but take notice of the refugee crisis quickly developing. Having lost their citizenship, their businesses vandalized, and forced from their places of employment for simply being of Jewish ancestry, many Jews saw the

[116] Allen Wells, *Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR, and the Jews of Sosua* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. xx and xxvi. Wells also makes the excellent point that "Washington's attitude toward Trujillo and other dictators was never static, and Trujillo often had to adjust to changes in U.S. policy" (p. xxvii).

proverbial writing on the wall and decided to start a new life elsewhere. During the period, as many as fifty thousand Jews left Austria alone, creating a refugee crisis that drew the attention of the world and helped force Roosevelt to action.[117] Although the reasoning behind the Roosevelt Administration's concern over the Jewish plight is disputed, it made some small efforts to assist them in their exodus from Austria and Germany that eventually encouraged Carías to take note.[118]

Carías was largely aloof to the plight of European Jews until the US government made it a priority, but once he was aware of the importance Washington placed on the crisis, he seized upon it in an attempt to make personal use of the distressed people. On March 23, 1938, Hull wrote a telegram to the US Legation in Tegucigalpa and instructed it to communicate with Salvador Aguirre, Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs, and inquire about the possibility of Honduras working "with the…United States in setting up a special committee composed of representatives of a number of Governments for the purpose of facilitating the emigration from Germany and Austria of political refugees."[119] As it always did with international conferences when it was invited to participate by the United States, Honduras soon accepted the US government's proposal and sent representatives to the international conference at the intergovernmental committee on political refugees at Evian, France.[120] On July 6, delegates from thirty-two countries met for nine days to discuss the issue, and although little of consequence

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[117] Wells, pp. xii-xiii.

[118] Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 22-33. For more on Roosevelt and US American response to the plight of European Jews see: Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[119] Hull to [US Legation Tegucigalpa?], March 23, 1938, 800, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 36, RG 84, NA.

[120] Erwin to Secstate, April 8, 1938, 800, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 36, RG 84, NA; and "TEXT OF RESOLUTION ADOPTED, JULY 14, 1938, BY INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE ON POLITCAL REFUGEES AT EVIAN, FRANCE," July 15, 1938, 800, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 36, RG 84, NA.

was accomplished, the invitation to participate in the conference piqued Carías's interest in the Jewish refugee crisis.[121]

With the knowledge the United States and other countries around the globe were at least giving lip service to the plight of the displaced Jews, Carías tried to encourage his countrymen to warm up to the idea of allowing Jewish immigration, so that his rule could benefit from it. One of the most efficient ways he did so was by using the Honduran press. In an article entitled, "Asylum for Austro-German Immigration," *El Cronista* argued Honduras needed to develop its "unpopulated territory and its embryonic agriculture" by "colonizing people who are able to take root (settle themselves) in the country and adopt its nationality." The article further stated Honduras lacked "technicians and experts in industries as yet not undertaken in the country," and that these shortcomings could be overcome through "selected emigration." While the article's author eschewed focusing on Jews, they were nonetheless implied when "humanitarianism" was listed as yet another reason to accept refugees into Honduras.[122]

The issue of Jewish immigration to Honduras largely fell silent until November 1938 when, after the Munich Agreement forced the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany, Jews began trying to seek asylum in Honduras through its consulate in Prague. Faced with serious interest from displaced Jews, the Honduran government took the matter up with the US Legation for the explicit purpose of pleasing the United States. After speaking with Honduran officials, Erwin reported to Washington that in regards to the Jews, "Honduras wishes to make its policy conform to that of the United States and other Central American countries," and that Honduras

[121] Feingold, pp. 28-33.

[122] "Asylum for Austro-German Immigration," *El Cronista*, August 1, 1938, enclosed in Cramp to Secretary of State, August 2, 1938, 800, vol. 7, Honduras, Box 36, RG 84, NA.

requested information on the US policy on the issue.[123] Pleased with Honduras's willingness to work with the United States on the contested problem of the refugees, Hull informed the US Legation he "greatly appreciated" Honduras's accord on the issue, and that he "hoped that the Government of Honduras will actively consider on broad humanitarian lines what contribution it can make to a solution."[124] A few days later, Hull wrote the US Legation again and expressed his desire for countries of the Americas "to make a specific and generous statement which will reflect the warm human sympathy which all of our people must feel for the tragic situation on their fellow men and women," and asked for Honduras to "comment" on its policy on political refugees in Europe and whether it would attend another conference on the matter.[125] After having learned of the United States' desire to have his country accept Jewish refugees, Carías quickly moved to satisfy Washington. Within a week of first bringing up the issue with the US Legation, the Honduran government informed Erwin it was considering admitting 1000 German Jews "to engage exclusively in agricultural pursuits and to be in possession of about one thousand dollars each in order to insure against them becoming public charges."[126]

Partially as the result of the United States' encouragement that Honduras accept Jewish refugees, twenty-five to thirty Jewish families were allowed to enter Honduras between January and March 1939. Several of these Jews were recruited to work in hospitals and schools, but most of them were only permitted to enter Honduras on the condition they engage in agricultural work. Their presence was closely watched by the Hondurans, "several" of whom "pointed out that should these refugees not live up to their promises it" would "indicate the fallacy of abiding

[123] Erwin to Secstate, November 18, 1938, 848, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 38, RG 84, NA.

[124] Hull to [US Legation Tegucigalpa], November 19, 1938, 848, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 38, RG 84, NA.

[125] Hull to [US Legation Tegucigalpa], November 22, 1938, 848, vol. 9, Honduras, Box 38, RG 84, NA.

[126] Erwin to Secretary of State, November 25, 1938, 815.5562/1, RG 59, NA.

by" the "wishes of the United States."[127] Honduras, like its Latin American neighbors, was desirous of skilled agriculturalists not white-collared professionals because they were viewed as potential competitors.[128]

By June 1, 1939, the Honduran government had proven itself reluctant to satisfy the United States' appeal to allow the settling of Jewish refugees, and even moved to prevent them from entering the country, but this did not mean the issue was closed. Jews were "prohibited" from Honduras unless they carried a valid passport and corresponding visa, but as difficult as these requirements were to acquire, a number of Jews still found a way to find refuge in Honduras. Erwin estimated as many as forty Jews had discovered if they arrived to the country aboard Pan American Airways aircraft they were "less likely to be promptly deported" compared to those that came on ships. While some people were able to circumvent Honduras's discriminatory "so-called undesirable race" laws, Carías and his son Gonzalo Carías attempted to open their country up to tens of thousands of European Jews for economic and diplomatic reasons.[129]

Erwin informed Hull of Carías and his son's plan "to settle 10,000 European Jewish families in Honduras" in June 1939, but unfortunately for these disenfranchised and desperate people they were not able to carry out their design. Returning from his overseas travels, Gonzalo Carías arrived in Tegucigalpa with a friend named Ricardo Jossua, a wealthy European Jew who traveled on a Spanish passport. The two men had a plan to jumpstart the Honduran economy while simultaneously pleasing the United States and aiding the refugees. Gonzalo and Jossua approached President Carías about allowing the ten thousand Jewish families on the condition

[127] F. H. Lamson-Seribner, "Jewish Refugees in Honduras," March 2, 1939, 815.55 J/2, RG 59, NA.

[128] Feingold, pp. 30-33.

[129] Erwin to Secretary of State, June 1, 1939, 815.55J/3, RG 59, NA.

they were "selected" and were able to bring in one thousand dollars so as not to become wards of the state. If this was accomplished, Honduras would be able to establish a central bank with an "aggregate of $10,000,000," and have a large number of "specialists" who would be able to develop nascent and potentially profitable industries for the country. Carías liked the proposal, but was unable to pursue it due to the anti-Semitic feeling of his countrymen.[130]

Carías brought his son's proposal up with his wife and Lozano, but they deemed it "unacceptable" because they felt the country was simply "not prepared to admit 10,000 Jewish families." Honduran Finance Minister Julio Lozano informed the US Legation he already felt the "Casa Presidencial" was admitting too many Jews, and he did not like the fact that some Jews had illegally entered the country and were encouraging Honduran citizens to break the nation's laws in pursuit of profiting from them. Erwin informed the State Department the Jews that had already entered Honduras made it difficult for Carías to execute his plan to settle ten thousand of them, because "most of them were probably well off in Europe; they live simply but well here and spend most of the time in lounging in the public parks of the city." He went on to write "They are eyed critically by Hondurans and are often referred to in conversation." He felt the Hondurans exhibited a serious prejudice against them. He reported the Hondurans were "uniformly uncomplimentary about them," and took "the line that, should the influx continue, their country" would be "in danger of being exploited by extraneous and unassimilable [*sic*] groups which certain more advanced European countries have found undesirable." Erwin neatly spelled out Carías's inability to settle the Jews due to its anti-Semitism when he wrote, "There can be no doubt but that the average Honduran, at least in Tegucigalpa, looks with disfavor upon

[130] Erwin to Secretary of State, June 1, 1939, 815.55J/3, RG 59, NA.

the entry of Jewish refugees from Europe, and, if the number of these immigrants increases substantially, this disfavor is likely to grow also."[131]

Less than two weeks after Gonzalo and Jossua pitched their plan to Carías, an opportunity arose for Carías to partially execute his son's plan and please the United States in the process. In early June 1939, the *St. Louis* sailed toward the Americas with as many as 990 German Jewish refugees aboard. With the knowledge the *St. Louis* was desperately seeking a port to disembark its human cargo, Gonzalo quickly attempted to convince his father to allow the people to disembark on Honduran shores. The matter quickly polarized the Honduran government and led to a minor crisis. Vice-president Williams and Lozano were diametrically opposed to the idea of allowing the refugees entry and made a firm stand against it.[132] Meanwhile, Hull instructed the US Legation in Honduras to see if Honduras would be open to the possibility of allowing the *St. Louis's* human cargo to be disembarked in Honduras, and he told the US Legation to impress the Hondurans with the idea the US government had "humanitarian interest" in the matter.[133] The next day, the humanitarian Maurice P. Davidson requested Erwin to use his "good offices with President Carias to bring about immediate favorable action today" in regard to the nearly one thousand refugees, and reminded him the US government had a "friendly attitude" to this end.[134] Although he was ordered to force the issue in an agreeable manner, Erwin reported to the Department "In view of the tense situation in the

[131] Erwin to Secretary of State, June 1, 1939, 815.55J/3, RG 59, NA. For information on the illegal practice of Honduran diplomats in Europe selling Honduran citizenship and passports to Jews see: James B. Stewart to Secretary of State, April 29, 1941, 815.012/11, RG 59, NA; and Erwin to Secretary of State, February 4, 1941, 815.012/10, RG 59, NA.

[132] Erwin to Secretary of State, June 9, 1939, 815.55J/5, RG 59, NA.

[133] Hull to [US Legation Tegucigalpa], June 10, 1939, 848, vol. 10, Honduras, Box 50, RG 84, NA.

[134] Maurice P. Davidson to Erwin, June 11, 1939, 848, vol. 10, Honduras, Box 50, RG 84, NA.

cabinet" created by the Jewish question he would not do so unless otherwise instructed.[135] After being denied permission to dock in Cuba and the United States, the *St. Louis* eventually was forced to return to Europe, where the 937 Jews aboard were finally allowed entry to several countries including Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Holland.[136]

Although Carías had failed to convince his fellow Honduran leaders to allow the Jews aboard the *St. Louis* to disembark on Honduran shores, he and his son continued to work towards allowing a significant number of Jewish settlers into the country. Salter reported that Gonzalo was attempting to work with his father to establish an "organization to aid in settling European Jews in Honduras." They were successful enough to put a bill before the Honduran Congress, which contained authorization for certain people to be allowed entry into Honduras for the benefit of the nation's economy. The bill was almost certainly in reference to Jewish immigration, because it was so polarizing. Lozano refused to endorse Gonzalo's organization, which needed the consent of several government ministries in order to function properly. Lozano simply did not like the idea of granting Honduran citizenship to certain immigrants, and because his personal beliefs prevented him from working with Carías he offered his resignation. Salter stated Carías's wife Elena sided with Lozano and essentially silenced the scheme. Rumors continued to circulate that the President might replace Lozano with someone more agreeable to Gonzalo's ideas, but nothing became of it. The US Legation was uncertain why Gonzalo was so adamant about settling Jews in Honduras, but it suspected he would receive some sort of financial concession for doing so. Salter felt Gonzalo was "tremendously interested in the

[135] Erwin to Secstate, June 12, 1939, 848, vol. 10, Honduras, Box 50, RG 84, NA.

[136] For more on the sobering attempt of the Jewish refugees aboard the *St. Louis* see: Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts, *Voyage of the Damned* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974).

refugee problem and that he is closely associated with certain Jews in New York who share his interest."[137]

In the end, Carías and his son were unable to garner the necessary political support to allow a sizeable number of Jews into their country. Anti-Semitic sentiment was simply too strong, and even the dictator's power was not able to overcome it. John Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, even weighed in on the disapproval Jewish immigration faced in Honduras and wrote:

> the sympathy felt for them was so strong that anyone who applied was allowed to enter the country but later on people's eyes were opened and the drawbacks to such a policy were realized, consequently, only agriculturalists and industrialists were admitted. The local people were beginning to grumble about certain doctors who were driving local practitioners out of business and about the admission of Germans in general, who, they suspected, were Hitler's spies, in spite of their being Jews.[138]

Had Carías forced the issue he risked not only alienating and splitting his government, but also estranging his wife. This was apparently too great a price for Carías to pay for the possibility of pleasing the United States and adding life to the Honduran economy. The episode demonstrates Carías's control of Honduras had considerable limits, and that he, comparatively speaking, had less control of his country than Trujillo. Carías had every intention of pleasing the United States, especially since it encouraged him to accept the entry of Jews on at least two occasions, but although he was able to force the unpopular Reciprocal Trade Agreement through the Honduran Congress, he was incapable of doing the same for the problem of Jewish immigration.

Ever since the United States first altered its arms embargo on Honduras in 1934, Washington routinely acquiesced to and supported Carías's government in numerous ways despite the guiding principles of the Good Neighbor policy. The Jewish refugee crisis is yet

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[137] Salter to Secretary of State, August 25, 1939, 815.55 J/8, RG 59, NA.

[138] John Edgar Hoover to Adolf A. Berle, Jr., October 22, 1941, 815.111/76, RG 59, NA.

another example of when the United States interfered in Honduran policy well before World War II. Furthermore, the fact the United States turned to Carías, and asked for his help on the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Europe and later aboard the *St. Louis* provides solid evidence Carías's efforts to portray himself as a reliable and loyal ally of Washington were tremendously successful.

## Conclusion

During the four years before the United States and Honduras entered World War II, Washington and Carías had few of the same goals aside from keeping Honduras stable, but both were happy to collaborate with the other on a wide range of issues because doing so ultimately assisted them in overcoming their most troubling concerns. The United States' preoccupation with the possibility of war with the Axis powers led to an irrational paranoia of ethnic Germans and Nazi sympathizers that provided Carías occasion to further improve his relationship with Washington. Working with the knowledge his anti-German policies thrilled US policymakers, Carías slowly but surely cut ties with Germany and made life difficult for its citizens and disenfranchised ethnic Germans living in his country. Carías was so successful in convincing the United States of his allegiance to Washington it abandoned its previous policy of half-heartedly backing his regime. Beginning in 1938, the US government reached out to Carías by providing him with moral support and later military training and advisors. When German and Austrian Jewish refugees created a humanitarian crisis in Europe, the United States lackadaisically endeavored to confront the challenge by turning to its proven ally in Honduras. Having learned from years of experience Carías was a dependable friend of Washington, the State Department tried to induce him to accept the settlement of Jews. Although Carías was more than willing to

concede to Washington and his son's pressure, he was unable to do so due to Honduran anti-Semitism.

# CONCLUSION

"A relatively benevolent dictator."[1]

-US military attaché James H. Marsh describing Carías in somewhat oxymoronic terms in early 1941.

Since the 1980s, there has been a series of vigorous debates as to what degree the United States has exercised control of Central America. US support for the Nicaraguan contras, the Salvadoran civil war, the international war on drugs, control of the Panama Canal Zone, and more recently the 2009 Honduran coup have led many to attribute the historic outcomes of the region exclusively to Washington's whims, and only some to grassroots movements, leftist radicals, and more rarely local politics. When one considers the more distant past and the age of gunboat diplomacy and the Good Neighbor, there are even fewer willing to interpret events as being outside the power of the United States. During the 1920s and 1930s, US American military might, paternalistic tendencies, and economic dominance all seemed to dwarf regional aspirations. The routine landings of US troops for short and extended occupations, and the State Department's manipulations of presidential elections, appeared to indicate the United States exercised an unquestioned preponderance of power over its much smaller and weaker neighbors. Scholarship of the last few decades has helped overturn many of these longstanding assumptions in the academic community, but a reluctance to attribute even a limited amount of agency to the region's leaders remains the norm for many people in both the United States and Central America. Overshadowed by highly visible signs of US power, Central American powerbrokers

[1] MID 2657-P-439-51, James. H. Marsh, February 15, 1941, "Stability of Government," Correspondence and Records Cards of the MI Division to General Political, Economic, Military Conditions in Central America, 1918-41, Reel 7, RG 165, NA.

are often overlooked, presumed subordinates, and labeled "puppets," "pawns," and "servants" regardless of the era in which they lived.[2]

Conventional wisdom concerning Carías is no different. In regards to his relationship with the United States, most Hondurans exhibit a reluctance to accept anything other than a narrative that portrays him as an obedient instrument of the United States in its attempt to control Honduran natural resources and protect US business interests. While there is much truth to this position, a deeper history is considerably more complex, attributes more independent and casual power to Carías, and provides Honduras with a more accurate understanding of its past. This history goes a long way to revising our understanding of Honduras as *the* "banana republic."

This dissertation has traced US-Carías relations from 1923 to 1941 in order to demonstrate Carías possessed a significant amount of independence in his relationship with the United States, and was on many occasions willing to defy Washington's dictates. More importantly, the previous chapters have shown him capable of influencing US policy despite his disadvantaged position. This is not to say Carías and the United States were not at times allies. On the contrary, their relationship was constantly evolving and strongly influenced by both countries' domestic situations, Central American regional developments, and world events. At times they were most definitely partners, but partnerships are never completely one-sided and always involve give and take. It is also appropriate to conclude Carías was sometimes able to set the agenda for the two countries' interaction. It was a complicated relationship, and it would be an oversimplification to summarize it by stating it went from bad to good during the period of

[2] Two of the most notorious books depicting the complete domination of Honduras by the United States are: Victor Meza et al, *Honduras--Estados Unidos: subordinación y crisis* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 1988); and Mark Rosenberg and Victor Meza, *Honduras: pieza clave de la política de Estados Unidos en Centroamérica* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 1986).

this study. The relationship was never static, and evolved over a much longer period than just Carías's presidency.

Throughout the period in question, both the United States and Carías had surprisingly simple goals. Washington sought stability, and Carías yearned for power. The United States pursued stability in the belief it would produce economic prosperity for both countries, and later with the understanding it would contribute to national security in the years before World War II. Washington was single-minded in bringing peace to a country many in the United States felt was a land filled with natural riches but cursed with an incompetent and degenerate race. After decades of trying to pacify Honduras, Carías finally offered US policymakers the ability to provide the country with stability while simultaneously providing the appearance of detachment. This allowed US policymakers to hail themselves as Good Neighbors and pursue their goal of economic expansion. Carías had been the source of much of Honduras's instability during the 1920s, and was therefore a US adversary if not nemesis. However, due to Carías's adroit rule of Honduras and proven ability to manipulate the United States' opinion of him, he became one of the United States' closest allies in Latin America. It was the United States' desire for an end to Honduran violence that allowed Carías to ultimately tighten his grip on the country. Once he had proven himself as a stabilizer and convinced Washington he was its best friend, Carías was presented with a variety of military and moral support, which directly translated into more power. Carías may have reacted more to the United States than vice versa, but he did so in such a way that the United States provided him with the concessions he needed to remain as Honduras's president.

When the United States and Carías had their first significant encounter in the spring of 1923, their troubled interaction foreshadowed years of struggle for the future of Honduras.

Working with the understanding his government needed to remove itself from the affairs of Central America, Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes did what he could to mediate a peace between Carías and his political rivals. Hughes would ultimately be unable to overcome the temptation to intervene both politically and militarily in Honduras, because Carías forced his hand. Unable to ensure free and honest elections due to President Rafael López Gutiérrez's weakness and its own reluctance to become more involved, the State Department diplomatically moved to contain Carías. Carías made no secret of his willingness to go to war to reach the presidency, and even provided the US government with several "ultimatums" in his attempts to do so. When he did revolt against the López Gutiérrez regime in the spring of 1924, he plunged Honduras into the worst civil war it had ever experienced since its independence. Displeased its goal of stability had been overwhelmed, the Coolidge Administration placed an arms embargo on Honduras to try to limit violence and Carías's military power. The US government also did what it could to prevent Carías from rising to the presidency in 1924 with its insistence the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923, which required governments in Central America to come to power legally or not be recognized, be respected. Ultimately, domestic rivals, a lack of support from the United Fruit Company, and the United States' threat of nonrecognition thwarted Carías from placing his name on the presidential ballot in December 1924, but only at the last possible moment and after much effort by the United States.

Between 1925 and 1932, a gradual change occurred in the US-Carías relationship that would place Carías on firm ground for receiving the United States' support during his presidency. Carías began this period as a frustrated strongman who had the Honduran presidency legitimately stolen from him by the López Gutiérrez regime and then denied to him in 1924 despite his immense popularity. Carías was the most powerful and popular politician in

Honduras during the Paz Baraona and Mejía Colindres Administrations, but a delicate domestic and international situation again prevented him reaching the presidency. During the Paz Baraona Administration, Carías worked diligently to undermine the president's power and position himself to take over the country either through revolution or by installing a regime more agreeable to his directives. At times he was successful in manipulating the United States' desire for stability, and moved the behemoth to protect his machinations by threatening to undermine President Miguel Paz Barahona. Nor was Carías afraid of standing in the way of the United States' efforts to alleviate Honduras's tremendous British debt burden when it stood to benefit him politically. When the Liberal Party was again able to enter politics in the fall of 1928, Carías proved unable to overcome the General Vicente Tosta-Vicente Mejía Colindres alliance, and lost the presidency this time in honest elections, not because of the United States' reach. Confronted by numerous national rivals, Carías chose not to rebel and force the issue. Instead, he continued to work within the political system and wait for another opportunity.

Meanwhile, the United States had gone through a transition of its own, and fully realized it could no longer pursue unilateral military intervention and political interference in Latin America as it had grown used to doing. President Herbert Hoover and Secretary of States Frank B. Kellogg and Henry L. Stimson all knew the United States' relationship with the region needed to change if its reputation was ever going to improve and intense resentment of US imperialism was to dissipate. With constricting budgets and few friends in the hemisphere, the US government began looking for ways to stabilize Honduras in a less intrusive manner, and gradually curtailed its meddlesome involvement in the Caribbean Basin.

In 1932, as the United States began seriously revising its traditional role in Central America, Honduras again fell into chaos and threatened the political gains made by two

relatively peaceful presidential administrations. However, unlike in previous years, when Carías was the main instigator of violence, political anarchy, and economic disruption, he was now a source of governmental strength as the National Party defended the Liberal government of Mejía Colindres. He did not enjoy the United States' appreciation and support until he outperformed his presidential predecessors as a stabilizer. The state of affairs in Honduras on the verge of his presidency put Carías in an excellent position to impress the United States. After all, with anti-Americanism at one of its highest points, the Honduran government's finances in shambles, and US lives and property threatened at the beginning of his administration, Carías only needed to improve the tumultuous situation by the slightest of margins to be appreciated by both his fellow countrymen and Washington.

When he finally did reach the presidency, he did so legally and with a level of enthusiastic support that Washington readily recognized. Just when the United States' faith in Honduras ever achieving anything more than a state of endemic civil war and economic stagnation was at a nadir, Carías improved government finances, brought peace to the country, and proved himself eager to please the United States in every way he could. Seeking US policymakers' favor was a pragmatic policy for Carías. For years, Washington had shown itself more than willing to interfere in Honduran affairs. Landing marines, dictating presidential candidates, and managing Honduran government debts were just some of the ways the US government had involved itself in Honduran affairs over the course of Carías's political career. Based on his own personal and his country's histories, Carías knew despite the advent of the Good Neighbor policy and the new Roosevelt Administration the United States was unlikely to abandon its meddling in Honduras. Carías made the pragmatic choice. Because he satisfied the United States, he was rewarded with its moral and military support. Provided with US airplanes,

military training for his armed forces, moral support, a monopoly on Honduran weapons from the United States through the manipulation of the US-Honduras arms embargo, and the ability to employ US pilots in his Air Force, Carías crushed all those who dared oppose him militarily. He was even able to encourage the United States to forsake its adherence to the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 and have his government recognized after he instituted his *continuismo*.

For Carías, pleasing the United States was no easy task. Doing so required a tremendous dedication to a number of activities that damaged his popularity and weakened him politically. He silenced oppositionist media sources, imprisoned and tortured his own people, forced thousands into exile, and knowingly coerced the Honduran Congress to sign a detrimental Reciprocal Trade Agreement with the United States. US policymakers and many in the US media resented Carías's techniques to control his country, but they were able to overlook his actions because they liked the results and their dedication to the Good Neighbor policy prevented them from objecting to internal governance questions. While some in the US government viewed Carías's human rights record and trampling of democracy as "regrettable," the United States' more pressing priorities of economic recovery and political stability overshadowed Carías's dictatorial behavior.[3]

When World War II loomed on the horizon for the United States, Carías seized upon the United States' fear of Axis intrusion in Latin America and its concern over the Jewish refugee crisis the Nazis created in Europe. Continuing to seek Washington's approval for the purposes of securing military and moral aid, Carías trumped up the threat of Nazi interference in Honduran affairs and the possibility they might undermine his regime. Knowing the United States was

[3] Cordell Hull to American Legation (Tegucigalpa), January 22, 1936, 815.032/142, RG 59, NA.

looking for allies in the coming conflict, Carías positioned his country as a reliable ally and fell in line behind the United States and its foreign policy toward events in Europe and Japan. By cutting ties with Germany, harassing and monitoring Axis nationals, and censoring pro-Axis media, Carías overcame any fears his autocratic style echoed that of European fascists, and convinced the US government he was an unswerving friend of the United States. When Jewish refugees fleeing Germany and Austria became an international quandary, Carías attempted to use their plight to further his relationship with the United States and improve his country's economy. Although he was ultimately unable to accomplish the settling of more than a few dozen Jews in his country, his efforts illuminate the importance he placed on his approach to the Colossus of the North and the boundaries of his power over Honduras.

In the interests of a more objective history, this dissertation has avoided judging Carías's career and eschewed considering the ramifications his rule had on Honduras except when doing so contributed to its overall thesis. Nevertheless, Carías's relationship with the United States had significant consequences for the people of Honduras that need evaluating. Whether friend or foe, Carías's interaction with Washington regularly placed the United States in direct opposition to the interests and wishes of the Honduran people. In pursuit of stability during 1923 and 1924, the United States chose not to support Carías's bid for the presidency despite his overwhelming popularity and the desire of many Hondurans that he become president. The United States simply was not interested in democracy. Instead, its goal was stability through the rule of law for the purpose of economic progress, and the best way the State Department felt it could achieve this during this period was through upholding the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. Because of violence caused by the War of Revindication, which Carías started, the United States ignored Honduran sovereignty by landing troops on several occasions on the North Coast and

occupied the Honduran capital. During the Paz Baraona regime, the United States again worked against democracy in Honduras when it instructed Paz Baraona not to exercise his legal presidential powers when they antagonized Carías and his fellow strongmen.

When Carías became president, the United States continued to disregard democracy and increased its indifference toward the well-being of the Honduran people. Besides knowingly implementing and maintaining the detrimental Reciprocal Trade Agreement of 1935, the United States consciously provided Carías with military and moral aid and acquiescence to his regime that increased his control of Honduras. The United States gave Carías a near monopoly on violence by manipulating its arms embargo, providing him with planes, bombs, US pilots, and training his military officers to improve his capacity to defend his government. US policymakers knew such actions resulted in the weakening of the democratic process and the deaths of Honduran citizens, but justified their actions using the Good Neighbor policy and the overall product of stability their efforts produced. It is true Carías, with support from Washington, provided his country with sixteen relatively peaceful years, but the price was his people's oppression. Consequently, the United States may have claimed it was a Good Neighbor to Honduras in the 1930s, but its actions suggest otherwise. In this regard, this study concurs with those revisionist scholars who argue the Good Neighbor policy was little more than a smoke screen for US imperialism.[4]

What happened in US-Carías relations after Honduras and the United States entered World War II is much better understood than the relationship during the timeframe of this study.

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[4] George Black, *The Good Neighbor: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp. 59-91; Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 253 and 316-317; Dick Steward, *Trade and Hemisphere: The Good Neighbor Policy and Reciprocal Trade* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), p. viii; and David Green, *The Containment of Latin America; A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 37-50.

Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s scholars assert the United States and Carías, like his fellow dictators in Latin America, enjoyed a close relationship during World War II. Receiving an abundance of military assistance from Washington, Carías's power was secure according to most US observers. Carías was anti-communist, and he made sure Washington understood this so it would continue to support him in the way it had when the Nazis were considered a threat. However, US policymakers knew their aid to dictators was unpopular in Latin America, so overt support to Carías began to wane towards the end of the war. With that said, after the war Carías was not unpopular with the US government or US business interests, nor was he forced out of office by anyone in 1949. Leonard found Carías was anxious to retire and longed for a less taxing life of farming. Carías may have handpicked his successor, but he appears to have done so with the goal of a peaceful transition in mind.[5] Leonard and other studies leave little room for the possibility of dramatic new revelations during the final eight years of Carías's rule, but there is still much work to be done. Understanding how the United States reacted to the growing Central American desire for freedom and democracy in the context of its traditional promotion of stability in Honduras would contribute to clarifying the still cloudy relationship the Truman Administration had with Latin America.

One of the most serious events that took place during World War II in Honduras was the San Pedro Sula massacre. On July 6, 1944 the city of San Pedro Sula was the scene of one of the worst massacres in the country's history. Marching only days after the overthrow of Guatemalan

[5] Thomas M. Leonard, *The United States and Central America, 1944-1949: Perceptions of Political Dynamics* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1984), pp. 107-126; Leonard, *The History of Honduras* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2011), pp. 118-134; Michael L. Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence: U.S. Policy Toward Central America, 1945-1954* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), p. 139; Mario Argueta, *Tiburcio Carías: anatomía de una época* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras, 2008), pp. 175-191; and Thomas J. Dodd, *Tiburcio Carías: Portrait of a Honduran Political Leader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), pp. 153 to 242. See also: Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, *Latin America between the Secon World War and the Cold War, 1944-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1-32.

dictator Jorge Ubico y Castañeda, hundreds of Honduran students, professionals, and banana workers called attention to the many injustices they saw in the rule of Tiburcio Carías Andino. Having earlier faced dissent in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, Carías dispatched his Minister of War, Navy, and Aviation Juan Manuel Gálvez to San Pedro Sula to manage the situation. Under orders from Gálvez, police loyal to the Carías regime closely scrutinized the actions of the marchers. As the demonstrators walked peacefully along a government approved route they made no speeches of any kind, and thus remained faithful to an agreement made with authorities. The facts are contested, but at some point toward the end of the demonstration government forces opened fire on the peaceful throng without provocation. A panic ensued and many innocent people lost their lives.[6] Later attempting to downplay the massacre, a member of the Carías regime stated there was so much blood on the city's streets because "The women demonstrators must have been menstruating."[7]

Newspapers from around the world covered the massacre and resoundingly condemned the Carías regime's actions. Desperate to control his image in the international press, as he was accustomed to doing domestically, Carías distributed statements of his own version of events to newspapers and governments throughout the Americas. Carías weathered the domestic and international storm that ensued from the slaughter, but how he did so is a matter historians have yet to adequately explain. Undoubtedly, Carías's firm grip on the nation's politicians, local leaders, and military steadied the regime when it was pushed, but these domestic sources of support did not safeguard the rule of his neighboring dictators in Guatemala or El Salvador.

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[6] The number of casualties resulting from these events is and has been a matter of great political and emotional importance to Honduran and US historians. As a result there is significant controversy over casualty estimates, which range from fewer than 10 to more than two hundred. The highest estimate comes from Black, p. 80.

[7] William Krehm, *Democracies and Tyrannies of the Caribbean* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1984), p. 99.

Leonard calls the anti-Carías demonstrations in the spring of 1944 "meaningless," but this seems unlikely when one considers the impact of less dramatic events on the US-Carías relationship during the 1920s and 1930s.[8] More research is needed to understand the United States' reaction to the tragic events in San Pedro Sula and others like them during World War II. Without thorough examination, it is impossible to know the true relationship between the United States and Carías in the later stages of his presidency.

Scholarship concerning the US-Carías relationship can also be furthered through an investigation of the closing days of World War II. The most important potential contributions may result from focusing on how their interaction changed as a result of the new international system brought about by the defeat of fascism and Harry S. Truman's rise to the presidency. The two primary issues the countries faced were the rise of communism and its perceived threat by the United States, and the rising democratic tide among the Central American people. If Carías used communism in a similar fashion to the way he exploited Nazism in his country, it would go a long way to understanding the amount of agency he possessed, and just how much bananas ruled in the "banana republic."[9]

From 1923 to 1941, the US-Carías relationship underwent dramatic change. During this period the United States was motivated to pursue stability in Honduras, originally for the purpose of economic prosperity for both countries, and later, in the years leading up to World War II, for national security purposes. Seeking to augment and maintain his power, Carías at times opposed US policy in his country and at others championed it. When Carías ceased to be a source of volatility and became a source of stability, the United States supported his regime from behind

[8] Leonard, p. 107.

[9] Leonard, pp. 107-126.

the shroud of the Good Neighbor. Carías earned US military and moral aid through a sophisticated and multifaceted campaign to gain US favor. Although Carías derived some of his presidential power from the United States, he independently reached the presidency and was unrivaled in power, popularity, and prestige in his country. He was a loyal supporter of the United States in economic and foreign policy issues, but there were limits to his faithfulness. He was unable to perform as the US government wished when Washington sought to settle Jewish refugees in Honduras. He was also unwilling to give up his employment of US pilots in his military operations, which all observers believed was one of his greatest sources of power. Carías's career during the eighteen years of this study indicate he was a man capable of defying, manipulating, and influencing the United States to fit his own needs. Far from a compliant puppet, he exhibited a number of characteristics of someone who, for good or ill, influenced his own and his nation's destiny.

# APPENDIX A

## A WORD ON SOURCES

Any historian who has attempted to study Honduras or its Central American neighbors knows locating and accessing primary documents in these countries can be difficult, yet they are an essential part of writing a balanced history. The Honduran collections available for this study are all incomplete and often lack utility for the historian of US-foreign relations. One apologetic Honduran archivist told me:

> We just don't have a culture of writing or keeping records. We never have and probably never will. The records that were kept from Carías's time were probably destroyed to protect the regime from criticism. What Carías's henchmen didn't burn probably got wet and moldy, was lost, got eaten by rats, cockroaches, worms, or termites, or was used for kindling for cooking fires.

Although this somewhat embarrassed yet extremely helpful archivist exaggerated his point for effect, he did touch upon several challenges. Nevertheless, even though I was told to keep my expectations low and warned at every turn about not being given access to essential archives, I was pleasantly surprised with what I found and was given complete admission everywhere I went. What I found confirmed some of the data revealed in the US archives, and added to the limited number of verifiable Honduran perspectives from the period available in the United States.

The bulk of the communications between the US government and Honduras are found in Record Group 59 in the United States National Archives (NARA) in College Park, Maryland. These files contain regular correspondence between US posts and internal office memos. The 815.00 file deals with the general political conditions in Honduras and US-Honduran relations. The Post Records of the United States Legation in Honduras are contained in Record Group 84 and provide a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the relationship, but files begin only in 1936. In Honduras, Honduran diplomatic correspondence from the 1870s can be found in the

archives of the Cancillería (Foreign Ministry) in Tegucigalpa. The documents from this study's period are well-organized and surprisingly complete. Although most of the communication on key issues between the US and Honduran governments during the 1920s and 1930s took place in Tegucigalpa and therefore limited the countries' dialogue in Washington, there were regular letters and telegrams sent from the Honduran Foreign Ministry to the Honduran Legations in the United States. Unfortunately for this study, the vast majority of the Foreign Ministry's documents deal with somewhat mundane representational procedures such as individual immigration and legal issues. Access to the archives of the Honduran Foreign Ministry is granted on an individual basis, and anyone hoping to conduct research there should possess patience and an understanding that the rest of the world does not always operate according to US customs and norms.

In addition to diplomatic records, this dissertation includes research from both countries' military archives. The records of the United States' War and Navy Departments proved valuable resources that helped shed light on Carías's relationship with his military, the United States' opinion of Carías and Honduras in general, and the perspective of Carías's political opponents. At NARA Record Group 38 contains the Office of Naval Intelligence archives, including correspondence with US naval missions in Latin America from 1922-1942, issues relating to the Lend Lease program in Latin America, 1941-1946, the records of the Director and Assistant Director of Naval Intelligence, national summaries of current conditions from 1940-1943, communications with naval attachés, reports relating to Central America between 1923 and 1949, records of US naval attachés in Central America from 1929-1933, and records of the Latin American Defense Section Plans Division between 1941-1945. Record Group 80 holds the General Records of the Navy Department and offered a number of fruitful files, including the

Records of the Offices of the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Record Group 165 contains sources from the War Department, including the files of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) and specifically the reports of the Latin American Branch from 1940-1946, and the records of the Foreign Liaison Branch of the MIS.

Honduran military files can be found at the Archivos de la Escuela Militar de Aplicaciones in Tegucigalpa. This archive contains volumes of contracts, financial data, and a limited number of military reports from the first half of the twentieth century. Some of the more interesting files deal with Honduras's early attempts to develop an air force before 1923, Carías's efforts to dominate the skies during the 1930s, and the *Memorias de Guerra, Marina, y Aviación*. For those wishing to access this archive, I would first recommend developing Honduran contacts who might be able to assist you in getting past the reluctant military officers who manage the archive.

The most useful general Honduran collections consulted in this study were the Biblioteca y Archivos Nacionales and the Biblioteca y Archivos de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH). The Biblioteca y Archivos Nacionales contains periodicals from the period including the magazine *Tegucigalpa*, and limited documents from various ministries organized on a yearly basis. UNAH possesses the most complete collection of newspapers from the 1920s and 1930s and a number of secondary sources difficult to find elsewhere.

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