This study offers an account of the presidency of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920), concentrating on the political, social and economic aspects of his régime.

Following the 'Liberal' inheritance of the Justo Rufino Barrios years (1871-1885), Cabrera is a significant figure in the trajectory of autocratic régimes in Guatemala, which, with few interruptions, stretches from Rafael Carrera (1844-1861) to the present day. Cabrera inherited some of the techniques of Guatemalan dictatorship, but he was also an unorthodox and controversial ruler, remarkable for his sustained retention of power and for the methods he used.

The historiography of nineteenth and twentieth-century Guatemala is not generally rich and the Cabrera period as one which has been neglected. Although the United States' and several other diplomatic archives were examined in order to complete this study, it must be stressed that it does not try to explain Guatemalan history through U.S. foreign policy; rather it seeks to focus on the man, and the people who kept him in power for twenty-two years. Diplomats and travellers wrote informative reports which often give frank assessments of character and motive, as well as commenting on internal and external matters in reports which supplement local sources. Secondary sources have also been examined, as well as what remains of Cabrera's private archives, contemporary letters and documents. Furthermore, oral sources added much information.

This dictatorship is intrinsically interesting, given the peculiarities and unusual transformations which Cabrera instituted in his government and in national life so as to retain power. This study of Cabrera hopes to enable the reader to appreciate better how such autocracies have propagated themselves in Guatemala and what strains and pressures they were under, and may even afford some pointers for more recent times.
ABSTRACT

Mary Catherine Rendón, Merton College

"Manuel Estrada Cabrera, Guatemalan President 1898-1920"

D.Phil. Thesis submitted Trinity Term 1988

My D. Phil. thesis offers an account of the presidency of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1857-1924, President 1898-1920), considering the political, social and economic aspects of his régime.

The thesis is divided into five main sections, two of these in two parts, followed by an epilogue. The first two chapters set the scene and are intended to provide the reader with the necessary background to subsequent events. Chapter Four, 'El Señor Presidente', describes the political workings of the régime and the emergence of cabrerismo. Chapter Five, 'The Decline and Fall of Don Manuel', deals with his final years in office and explains how cabrerismo lost momentum and thus how Cabrera lost power. The Epilogue attempts to present a glimpse of the state of government and the nation in the aftermath of Cabrera's downfall in 1920.

The first chapter describes the social life of the capital - and, to a lesser extent, of the smaller cities - at the turn of the century. In addition to describing the religious calendar which had come to dominate the republic since the Spanish conquest, it attempts to show that much of the social and political patterns had changed little from colonial times despite Barrios's liberal anti-clericalism of the 1870s. It also attempts to show that although Guatemala continued to be colonial and insular in many ways - because of its geographical and political isolation - it nevertheless kept up to date with the social, political, and literary trends of Europe and America.
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Under Cabrera Guatemala came to have a lively cultural life, even if this was sometimes limited by political circumstances. This chapter also describes the education system and the famous fiestas de Minerva which became the hallmark of the Cabrera régime. Were these as wonderful as adulators made them out to be, or were they in reality demeaning and repressive? What purpose did they serve, and what effect did they have on the generation of students who grew up during the administration? These are the questions I set out to answer.

There can be no doubt that as Cabrera's dictatorship wore on his education policy became more militarized. This is partly because he placed military officers in charge of the school system, and expected strict disciplinary codes to be instituted. Yet in spite of this it was in his schools, especially the Instituto Nacional Central de Varones, that the values of young Guatemalans were formed. Their schooling and later experience of politics shaped their outlook towards government. Finally some consideration is given to the re-establishment of the Escuelas Prácticas, which were aimed at that sector of the population which benefitted more from acquisition of a practical skill rather than general knowledge. Thus, while not perfect, nor as well-organized and well-funded as Cabrera's propaganda machine would have us believe, his education system changed many people's lives for the better.

The presence of different well-known literary figures - José Santos Chocano, Rubén Darío, Porfirio Barba-Jacob - undoubtedly resulted from Cabrera's attempts to lure intellectuals and writers for his Minervalías and I have tried to show their interaction and impact on the local literary scene as well as on student circles of the time. I also introduce the little-known literary figure, the Catalan Jaime Sabartés, who not only
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brought the first Picasso canvases to the American continent and influenced a large circle of artists at the time, but also subsequently wrote two novels about the dictatorship. Another characteristic of the period is that there was a literary renaissance in the country, producing many important writers in what have since become known as the generación del 10 and the generación del 20. The most famous of these was Miguel Ángel Asturias, whose novel about the tyranny won the 1966 Nobel Prize for literature.

Chapter Two examines many basic aspects of the Guatemalan economy immediately before and during Cabrera's régime. The state of government finances, government expenditure, the sources of revenue, government loans, the rôle of national and international banks, the issue of paper money and its consequent depreciation, inflation, the flight of silver and the deterioration of the exchange rate will also be considered. Guatemala's external debt with the Council of Foreign Bondholders and the diplomatic problems it posed is also examined. Some attention is given here regarding Cabrera's interference in Central American politics as this involvement was in many ways intended to disrupt U.S. financial schemes for Guatemala and eventually contributed to his downfall.

The third chapter deals with the biographical background to Cabrera, as well as outlining his rise to power, and it describes his political antecedents, and the atmosphere in which he took power. It attempts to clarify many of the questions which remain unanswered regarding President Reyna Barrios's death on 9 February, as well as Cabrera's alleged involvement in this incident. Many critics of his dictatorship feel that he was behind his predecessor's death. However, conversations with several historians and people with personal memories of these years lead me to
believe that he was not behind Reyna Barrios's murder, but simply used this episode to seize power by invoking his entitlement as Vice-President. I have tried to show how Cabrera's previous experience as Minister of the Interior helped him to bring about an immediate and systematic alteration of the local bureaucracy. Larger and more important reforms followed, but these are not examined until Chapter Four.

Chapter Four, entitled 'El Señor Presidente', deals with the workings of Cabrera's political system. The first part of Chapter Four describes how many Liberal institutions were modified, improved, or transformed from the political system Cabrera inherited, in order to strengthen his own position. It also explains how cabrerismo evolved out of this system of corruption and complicity, and was sustained for so long. This includes an examination not only of the established institutions such as the National Assembly and law courts, but also of the army, police force, spy network, prisons and newspapers, all of which contributed to making this one of the most repressive governments of the region.

Part Two of Chapter Four takes the reader chronologically from Cabrera's first re-election in 1905 through the increasingly repressive times of the 1906 war with El Salvador to the well-known abortive assassination attempts of 1907 and 1908 and ends with Cabrera well established in power in 1914. Here I have attempted to show how Cabrera directed all the institutions at his command – the army, the law courts, Congress, the press, and the public – to serve him unconditionally, irrespective of truth and justice. I also try to convey the fear and collective complicity which resulted from this atmosphere, and which allowed Cabrera to continue in office.

Chapter Five, entitled 'The Decline and Fall of Don Manuel', is also
divided into two parts; it describes Cabrera's final re-election and his last years in office (1917-1920). Part One deals with the many extraneous events which affected his régime, such as the First World War, the earthquakes of 1917-1918, mounting inflation, and U.S. government dissatisfaction with his régime, and how this led to the establishment of the Unionist Party. Some attention is given to how this, the only fully-fledged opposition party to exist during his long term in office, came into existence, and what sort of people formed its directive and base of support. The question of how the Unionist Party was legalized and was able to win over the army and Congress is discussed. The rôle of the U.S. government in the development of events is also examined.

Part Two of this fifth section takes us into Cabrera's final weeks in office, when his government was no longer recognized by the people and had been replaced by the Unionist Party. The background of the events of the 'Tragic Week' is given, as well as an account of the circumstances under which Cabrera finally resigned. There is also a description of Carlos Herrera's first months in office as provisional president, and the changes which were taking place within the Unionist Party at this time.

Chapter Six, the Epilogue, discusses the contributions and shortcomings of the little-studied Herrera government (1920-1921) which temporarily replaced Cabrera's dictatorship. It also examines the roots of the cuartelazo of December 1921 and tries to show how subsequent governments were a continuation of the system Cabrera had instituted during his twenty-two years in office. The first two successors of cabrerismo were Generals José María Orellana (1921-1925) and Lázaro Chacón (1926-1930), who had been educated and trained under Cabrera's régime. Their administrations are briefly examined, as are their weaknesses and the
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difficulties they faced. Finally the emergence of Cabrera's real successor
- Jorge Ubico (1931-1944) - is briefly discussed and conclusions drawn.

Most existing material specifically pertaining to Cabrera derives from
contemporary sources and tends to be contentious, as not surprisingly this
president always provoked much controversy. The majority of writings
consist of memoirs and accounts by members of his cabinet, political
rivals, clergymen, visiting dignitaries, etc., but fictionalized versions of
the régime also exist as well as political essays. Whilst most of these
sources tend to be highly partisan in nature, nevertheless they provide
some revealing insights, particularly into disputes and conflicts of the
period, and must therefore be taken into consideration. For example, El
señor presidente by Miguel Ángel Asturias, perhaps the best-known novel
based on the Cabrera years, offers an unusual vision of the use of terror
as an instrument of policy over almost twenty-two years.

To try to establish objective facts about Cabrera and his
administration, or at least to try to arrive at more reliable analyses and
opinions which are untrammeled by fear or prejudice, as well as defining
the major rôle of certain influences in almost every aspect of Guatemala's
political life, I have turned my attention to U.S. and European diplomatic
records, which have proved a rich vein of original primary sources for the
period. During my researches I have consulted the British Foreign Office
Papers and Consular Reports in the Public Record Office, Kew; the National
Archives and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; the Spanish
Consular Reports in the archives of the Ministerio de Relaciones
Exteriores, Madrid; and various French diplomatic accounts at the Archives
Nationales and Quai d'Orsay in Paris.

Ambassadors and consuls, always jealous of their respective country's
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best interests, wrote informative reports back to their ministries, commenting on internal and external political and economic matters, giving frank opinions of character and motive, and even recounting anecdotally the more out-of-the ordinary incidents in Guatemala City and the countryside. A fair proportion of these analyses and commentaries supplement the local sources alluded to below; using the domestic and foreign points of view, it seems possible to arrive at a much more accurate and full account of the period than has previously been available.

Furthermore, I have worked with the various printed Guatemalan sources and secondary material - such as travellers' accounts and business reports - which were available to me in the libraries and universities of the countries I visited. The best of these collections is held by the Latin American Library at Tulane University in New Orleans where I was able to find many rare sources, such as the Dieseldorff Papers, and their large collection of Central American printed ephemera (CAPE), in addition to an excellent collection of secondary sources.

In Guatemala itself I was able to examine the vast newspaper collection at the Hemeroteca Nacional under the guidance of its Director, Don Rigoberto Bran Azmitia. The Archivo General de Centro América in Guatemala City also proved a rich and inexhaustible source of documents. These have not yet been fully classified and through the help of the Archivo's excellent staff I was able to examine many boxes of material salvaged from Cabrera's personal archives, as well as the official government correspondence to and from various ministries and jefaturas políticas, and letters from individual citizens.

The high point of my researches was being able to spend much time in the company of a number of Guatemalans who remember the Cabrera days and
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relatives of the persons quoted and mentioned in my thesis, who shared not only their libraries and ideas with me, but also their memories.

As far as form and methodology are concerned, the history of post-Colonial Guatemala has, in general, been approached by concentrating on its part in the Central American Union and the development of its 'banana-republic' status. Recently, however, an excellent monograph has been devoted to one of Cabrera's most notorious successors, Jorge Ubico (President 1931-1945). K.J. Grieb's Guatemalan Caudillo (Athens, Ohio, 1979) is, then, one of the first serious studies to be centred on an individual Guatemalan leader. The only significant scholarly book-length work specifically treating the Cabrera years is D.H. Dinwoodie's doctoral dissertation 'Expedient Diplomacy: the United States and Guatemala, 1898-1920' (University of Colorado, 1966). Taking a cue from Dinwoodie, I have myself gone over many of the U.S. sources he consulted and broadened my survey to include and take account of the principal European countries at the time. Like Grieb, however, I have focussed basically not on a history of relations between the two countries but rather on the president and his politics, proceeding from there to analyze and assess his régime and some of his dealings with foreign powers.

The historiography of nineteenth and twentieth-century Guatemala is not, in general rich, and the Cabrera period is one which has been particularly overlooked and neglected. I believe that this dictatorship is intrinsically interesting both internally - for example, given the peculiarities and unusual transformation which Cabrera instituted in his government and national life in order to maintain himself in power - and externally - on account of the growth and shift of foreign interests and periodic American and European intervention. A study of Cabrera should in
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addition enable us to appreciate better how such autocracies have tended to propagate themselves in Guatemala, what strains and pressures they were under, and may even afford some pointers for more modern times. I believe that this doctoral thesis provides a detailed, thorough and searching account of Cabrera's presidency, something which to date has been noticeably lacking in the literature of the area and the period.
MANUEL ESTRADA CABRERA
GUATEMALAN PRESIDENT 1898-1920

by

Mary Catherine Rendón

Merton College

Submitted for degree of D. Phil.

Trinity Term 1988
To

My parents and Jonathan
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...Es apático y costumbrero; no concurre a las citas, y si lo hace, es siempre tarde; se ocupa de los negocios ajenos un poco más de lo que fuera necesaria y tiene una asombrosa facilidad para encontrar el lado ridículo a los hombres y a las cosas. El verdadero chapín... ama a su patria ardientemente, entendiendo con frecuencia por patria la capital donde ha nacido; y está tan adherido a ella, como la tortuga al carapacho que le cubre. Para él, Guatemala es mejor que París; no cambiaría el chocolate por el té ni por el café... Le gustan más los tamales que el vol-au-vent, y prefiere un plato de pipián al más suculento roast-beef. Va siempre a los toros por diciembre, monta a caballo desde mediados de agosto hasta el fin del mes; se extasia viendo arder castillos de pólvora; cree que los panetes de Quezaltenango y los brichos de Totonicapán pueden competir con los mejores paños franceses y con los galones españoles; y en cuanto a música no cambiarían los sonecitos de pascua por todas las óperas de Verdi. Habla con un castellano antiquísimo: vos, habís, tené, andá; y su conversación está salpicada de provincialismos, algunos de ellos tan expresivos como pintorescos. Come a las dos de la tarde, se afeita jueves y domingo, a no ser que tenga catarro, que entonces no lo hace así le maten; ha cumplido cincuenta primaveras y le llaman todavía niño fulano; concurre hace quince años un tertulia, donde tiene unos amores crónicos que durarán hasta que ella o él bajen a la sepultura. Tales son, con otros que omito, por no alargar más este bosquejo, los rasgos principales que constituyen al chapín legitimo...

CHAPTER ONE
FIN DE SIÈCLE GUATEMALA

This chapter will examine many aspects of Guatemalan society during the Cabrera years. It will describe life in the main cities, their architecture, and the social, political and religious calendars affecting all those living in the country. Education, which became Cabrera's hallmark, will also be examined here: the shortcomings of his system as well its benefits. While considering education, it is necessary to analyze the unusual 'cult of Minerva', which is one of the best remembered aspects of this presidency. Throughout Cabrera's twenty-two years in office the fiestas de Minerva or Minervalias were both a successful form of cabrerista propaganda and an effective method of social control. Through these celebrations Cabrera exported his image as an 'enlightened despot' to the United States and to Europe, and hoped to inspire confidence in future investors and dreams of panamericanism; at home the fiestas helped to ensure public order and allegiance to his person.

Guatemala is a small country of 42,042 square miles. The Sierra Madre, which runs diagonally across the republic from northwest to southeast, makes up about one-third of its total area, and contains the majority of the population. The principal cities have always been in the western highlands and this area has remained consistently urban since Spanish colonial times. Also since colonial times, Guatemala's principal crops have been cultivated in the fertile southern belt and western regions of the republic.

Martínez Peláez estimates that Guatemala's population in 1824 was one million, and it remained at about this level for most of the nineteenth century. Indians remained the ethnic majority - around two-thirds of the
I. FIN DE SIECLE GUATEMALA

population - between 1885 and 1921, although there were marked regional variations. The smaller ruling group became known as ladinos, the term for Spanish-speaking Guatemalans of mixed descent and eventually for Indians who adopted western customs. Between 1885 and 1921 Guatemala's population nearly doubled, from 1,224,602 to 2,004,900.

During the final decades of the nineteenth century, Guatemala City remained a quiet capital. Its business was interrupted at regular intervals by religious and national holidays and occasionally by earthquakes or military uprisings. By the late 1880s Guatemalans no longer felt so inadequate in comparison to Porfirio Díaz's Mexico because railroads, telegraph lines, a good postal system, and modern machinery had arrived, as well as telephones. Reyna Barrios's administration introduced the more cosmetic aspects of modernity: concerts, horse-races and international exhibitions. By this time several newspapers were publishing translations of French novels and reported for example, on the development of the Dreyfus affair and other European scandals. These seemed to epitomize this president's culture. Reyna Barrios's extravagance resulted in a worsening of the national economy, but national pride overlooked much of this and a certain internationalism seems to have resulted. However, despite the up-to-date fashions and a greater awareness of current events beyond Central America, Guatemalan society naturally remained insular in many ways.

Fin de siècle Guatemala was a small and intimate world where much could be learned about a person's background from the clothes he wore, the house he lived in, the churches and schools he attended and of course from his name. Many, like the Aycinena, Batres, Beltranena, Garcia Granados, Montúfar, Pifiol, and Villacorta families, could trace their roots to the early days of the colony when they had been appointed as administrators.
representing the Spanish Crown. Others, like Bouscayrol, Castillo, Herrera, Novella, Sinibaldi, and Ubico made their fortunes during the modernization schemes begun by Barrios in the 1870s. Another group made their reputations through the setting up of factories, the establishing of import-export houses, and the growing of coffee during the late nineteenth century.  

Some foreigners also joined the ranks of high society. Coffee planters like Dieseldorff in Alta Verapaz, bankers like Stahl, and many Spanish and Italian immigrants with businesses. Professionals, like the Bianchis, who had been asked by Barrios to come and teach at his newly founded schools and at the universities, and those educated abroad, were also highly regarded.  

It cannot be said that the upper-class was entirely apolitical or completely conservative in its outlook, as one of the leaders of the 1871 liberal revolution had been a distinguished criollo, General Miguel García Granados. Besides, during the liberal period many from the upper class and professional élite became members of the National Assembly. Through the establishment of the Escuela Politécnica, the military also came eventually to wield a great deal of power - one of García Granados's aims had been to create a military élite, but not all its members were drawn from outside the upper class. Often, younger or problematic sons of established families were sent to the Politécnica and completed their studies. One of the best known of such upper-class graduates was Jorge Ubico, who went on to become president in 1931. Thus, military links also helped the upper classes to guard their interests. All the same, most coffee-growers and businessmen believed that as long as the country was functioning more or less normally politics were best left to others.
A small number of Guatemalans travelled to Europe and the United States and some were educated abroad. Some of those who returned from such séjours did not merely bring back the latest fashions from Paris and London, but came back with modern ideas of government. One such group were the Rodas and Echeverría brothers, who were dismayed by the tyranny they found upon their return in 1906. In 1907 they attempted to kill Cabrera by placing explosives under the road where his carriage was expected to pass. They failed and were among the early martyrs of the resistance.

The upper classes owned land in the provinces and sometimes had businesses in the capital or main towns and often belonged to the same clubs. The most important of these in Guatemala City were the American Club, the Club Guatemala, the Lawn Tennis Club and the Polo Club. They also felt strong links with the Catholic Church as most had received a Catholic education. For many the Church continued to be an important institution, as it seemed to represent and uphold many colonial privileges and values. If pressed, this group would have defined their political outlook as conservative, although most recognized the obvious advantages of liberalism to their businesses.

Despite some modern innovations in the country, Guatemala City and its provinces struck many visitors as quaint. The Peruvian poet, José Santos Chocano, described it as:

...una ciudad de Castilla la Vieja, colocada entre barrancos abismados y crestas sorprendidas. Hay en toda esta ciudad un ambiente solemn, místico, nobiliario. Los templos de pesada arquitectura, las casas de aspecto solariego, los portales vetustos, los balcones arcaicos, los aleros, las gaolas, los santos eapatados en las esquinas; todos los detalles de esta ciudad de hijosdalgo, la reviste de un carácter anacóronico y, por lo mismo, sugestivo, e interesante para mi espíritu de poeta...

Los exponentes máximos de tal ciudad extáctica y suntuosa son en 1900 el reposo pétreo de su florida catedral y la lentiud parsimoniosa de sus
grande carruajes de paseo,
El alma de la ciudad esta hecha para la oración profunda y para el paseo grave.
Las damas llevan el devocionario, en las manos y los caballeros visten de levita y chistera, Guatemala, cuando la conozco sigue sintiéndose un poco 'Capitania General'.

Throughout the nineteenth century much of the capital's appearance continued to be colonial and its layout was based on a grid system with streets (calles) running from east to west, and avenues (avenidas) running from north to south. Each street and avenue had a number, as did every house in every neighbourhood. Many streets continued to be known by their colonial names: Callejón del Judío, del Conejo, de Escuintilla, del Rey, de Santa Teresa, del Sol... The pavements were sometimes almost indistinguishable from the flagstones or cobbles which made up the streets. Some avenues sloped towards the centre for drainage, while most streets remained dirty until the rains came. During the rainy season it was sometimes impossible to get an ox-cart through the mud as rivers of water ran down the streets. In some neighbourhoods little wooden bridges were set up so that people could cross the roads. 'Where bridges were lacking', Hugh Wilson explains, 'patient Indians waited under their ponchos and carried you across on piggyback for a couple of cents'.

Many colonial architectural features remained in the capital, especially the barracks and the local comandancias. The best known of these was the usefully-named La Rápida, near the presidential palace. In the evenings night watchmen known as roderos and serenos kept watch. The two entrances into the city were closely guarded and records kept of all those entering or leaving the capital:

Había dos entradas a la ciudad, la de Guardia Viejo, que estaba protegido por el fuerte de Matamoros, Había en la ciudad la Guardia de Honor, en el sitio donde ahora se encuentra el Parque Centenario, del lado de la Plaza.
I. FIN DE SIECLE GUATEMALA

In 1900 Guatemala City was divided into four main parishes: San Sebastián, El Calvario, La Parroquia and El Sagrario. The city was also divided into neighbourhoods, commonly referred to as cantones. Many of these were named after former presidents, such as Barrios or Barillas; others after concepts such as Independencia, La Libertad or La Paz, while others merely described their function or location: Exposición, El Centro, Tívoli, Las Charcas, Guarda Viejo, Villa de Guadalupe or Jocotenango, Pamplona, La Parroquia. During Cabrera's presidency many parks, schools and neighbourhoods took his name, as did the cantón of Guarda Viejo, which became known as Ciudad Estrada Cabrera. After the earthquakes of 1917-1918 new settlements like El Gallito and Colonia Abril were formed, changing the appearance of the city.

The wealthier neighbourhoods had better streets, better lighting and a better sewage system compared to the barraca-filled quarters. Electricity was not widespread and houses were mostly lit with candles or kerosene lamps. In the central districts the streets were lit by electrically powered carbon-arc lamps. The city's main water supply came from a water tank known as 'la Habana', located between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, not far from the Central Railroad Station and the bull-ring. Telephones were used by foreign legations and important government officials as well as by those citizens who could afford them.
Fashionable neighbourhoods tended to be in the centre of town near the Cathedral or the jacaranda-lined avenue leading to the race track. In 1902 Cabrera commissioned Francisco Vela to make a relief map of the republic. The hippodrome had been built during Reyna Barrios's time in the barrio of Jocotenango and in 1901 Cabrera built an enormous Greek temple in its centre which became known as the Temple of Minerva. This temple and others like it were the stage for the elaborate ceremonies honouring teachers and students every October and November. It was a popular meeting place for promenades at all times of year. Nearby one could find the famous Italian restaurant, 'Carissimi'; other popular restaurants were to be found in the city.

The city's many parks provided pleasant outings. From the Cerro del Carmen the city looked like an enormous garden divided by whitewashed walls and church towers. Built in the valley of the Ermita, Guatemala City was full of low buildings, most of which had brightly coloured façades. Most houses were only one storey high; by 1909 there were no more than one hundred two-storey houses.5

Most people travelled on foot. Some had bicycles, others carriages, while fewer still had automobiles. The most common form of transportation was the ox-cart. These could be found crossing the country with goods, while individual travellers might travel with pack-mules or on foot. In the cities, those who could afford them used cabriolets, and in Guatemala City there was a tram system. During Cabrera's administration cars and carriages were forbidden to travel along any of the streets facing the presidential palace. He was equally suspicious of aeroplanes, even though he founded Guatemala's first air force. During 1911 the few families who owned cars paraded slowly down the Sexta Avenida, formerly the Calle Real.
to the Avenida de la Reforma in the late afternoons or after the races. Most citizens considered it a luxury to travel on the trams which afforded them the opportunity of seeing some of the city's grander buildings. The gardens at Pamplona were also considered a wonder, particularly by schoolboys:

Mangos, jocotes de corona, nisperos, limas, pomarrosas, aguacates, matasanos, anonas, duraznos, cerezas, naranjos, mandarinas, acerolas, guayabas, cinconagritos, granadas, piñuelas: ¿qué no había entonces en Pamplona?  

Those with cars or carriages could visit the baths near the Castillo's finca El Zapote beyond Jocotenango. There they could also see the Castillo's modern bottling factory where carbonated drinks and beer were produced. The elegant residence of the British Minister could also be glimpsed on land belonging to the finca El Bosque. Other cities, like Quezaltenango, also had their attractions:

Que muchachas más bonitas y elegantes, lujosos chalets rodeados de bien cuidados jardines; que de coquetas y mimosas chacaras entre frondosas enramadas... Fui invitado a conocer los baños termales de Almolonga de propiedades medicinales reconocidas y solo distantes de la población unas dos y tres leguas respectivamente y en el mismo camino... Conoci la gran fábrica de mantas y otros géneros de hilo, movidas por la corriente del río del mismo nombre, en cuyas orillas observe multitud de inscripciones y rastros de los primitivos habitantes... Ya de retorno y pasada la planta eléctrica y el gran molino harinero movido por la electricidad, atravesamos un arroyo, en donde vi una manada de indias lavando en pelota,...

As in the capital, most social life in provincial towns revolved around the Parque Central or Plaza de Armas.

Horse races were popular among the wealthy; the U.S. chargé d'affaires in 1911, Hugh Wilson, describes them:

Cash prizes were posted, and were deductible from gate receipts. Another deduction had been sanctioned by custom, champagne for the Judges, who could be recognized as such by their top hats. There was always some
uneasiness among horse owners in the last races lest the gate receipts should be exhausted and the cash prizes in forfeit. The largest owner was one Schuman, incidentally the proprietor of the livery stable. He usually had two or more entries for each race, ... he tried cancelling once because the judges were drinking too much. Among the judges was an Englishman, Edward Bellingham (later Sir and baronet), who stood out like a rock against the casual rulings of the local judges. He rigidly upheld the best traditions of the English turf...

Bull-fights, and to a lesser extent, cock-fights, were a popular pastime. Guatemala City's Plaza de Toros, built in 1818, remained the centre of this sport until 1918 when it was destroyed by earthquakes. Every January a group of Spanish and Mexican bull-fighters would come to the capital and perform with their renowned 'Piedras Negras' bulls. Well-known fighters like Alcalareño, Machaquito and Mazzatini also performed. Mazzatini, the most famous of these, sold out the plaza during his 20 January performance in 1905. There was even a woman performer simply known as 'Lolita, la matadora'. Bull fights tended to be more light-hearted in small towns, where a section of the main plaza was roped off to serve as a ring. Here the corridas were held 'a la criolla' and bulls were rarely killed.

Other annual feasts maintained colonial customs. The most famous of these were Holy Week and the feast of Corpus Christi, but the August fair, held on the day of the Ascension on 15 August was also well known, not only because one could buy the best guitars in the country then, but also because it was:

...una de las fiestas más típicas, populares y alegres de la capital. Los beracones embaderados donde se instalan las cantinas; las ruletas a cuyo rededor se agolpan los tentadores de la suerte, los cuales siempre salen con las manos en la cabeza y jurando en falso no volver; la rueda de Chicago y los caballitos con sus mareantes aovientoos, la plataforma del diablo, los juegos de dados, las rifas, cuyas papeletas, siempre premiadas, ofrecen chucherías; las orquestas, las marimbás, los pintarrajeados rosarios de rapadura, los pitos clásicos, los puestos de frutas, de dulces y bebidas,...
More frequent entertainment came in the form of Sunday concerts in most town plazas. Small towns, too, had their public concerts and band leaders, who often composed tunes inspired by the surroundings or inhabitants of the place. One such person was the municipal band leader of Chiquimula, Polo Ramírez. Some towns had organ-grinders who carried their instruments in what were known as carretones de Novl.

Arévalo describes the marvels of a curious combination of nineteenth and twentieth century entertainment he experienced as a child in the capital:

En el centro del Parque boscoso, el kiosko en forma de polígono destinado a la Banda Marcial, que venía todos los domingos, desde las seis de la tarde, y a veces a las once de la mañana a ofrecer conciertos que la gente escuchaba religiosamente, amotinados sobre las partes pavimentadas del Parque. Para los entendidos era aquella la segunda banda marcials del mundo; solamente le aventajaba la de México... que nunca habíamos oído...

Cuando no era la Banda Marcial, era la marimba 'Azul y Blanco', de los hermanos Quiroz, la que congregaba el público desocupado y melómamo.

Ejecutaban en la puerta del Teatro Principal, en la primera cuadra de la Sexta Avenida Sur, desde una hora antes de que empezaran las 'tandas' del cinematógrafo. En la primera cuadra edificada de la Sexta Norte nos atraía el Teatro Excélsior; allí tocaban los Hermanos Betancourt y amenizaban la función de cine. Eran los tiempos de 'El Peligro Amarillo', película en episodios, con el famoso detective Justin Clavel. Los tiempos de Max Linder, el cómico alemán, y de la primera versión de 'Quo Vadis'. Fue también la época de la primera versión cinematográfica de 'Salambo', en un cine de Barrio, por la novena Avenida Sur, pasada la quince calle..."

From the time of Barrios's presidency, travelling troupes of operetta and zarzuela companies had visited and toured the country. Municipal theatres subsidized these in order to bring European entertainment to their cities. For the most part, these travelling troupes were not of a high standard and they sometimes proved disappointing, especially to those accustomed to better things:
The first year I bought a box for the opera season, but when I had used it a couple of times I was ready to surrender it to any enthusiast who could live through the dullness of the performances. It was quite a job giving the tickets away. I would send out a messenger, with a list of half a dozen people who I thought might accept. By the time the messenger got back a couple of other messengers had arrived at my house offering me somebody else's ticket.

During the early years of this century a Spaniard, Francisco Relaño, attended an opera performance in Quezaltenango and was more impressed by the public than by the music: "Sorprendido quedo de ver tanto lujo" he wrote, 'en joyas y flores, salidas de teatro semejantes a mantos reales, palcos lujosamente amueblados y decorados, que por ser propiedad particular rivalizaban en los adornos." As the second largest city, Quezaltenango had a rich cultural life. During 1910-1911 the Colombian actor León Franco appeared at the Municipal Theatre.

In small villages, entertainment was simpler and perhaps more effective: travelling groups known as 'húngaros' or 'los volantines' would arrive one day in their carts and perform strange tricks. Many considered them gypsies, as they dressed oddly and spoke a language never before heard by the town's inhabitants. These unannounced visitors would soon pack their belongings and continue on their way. Circuses, on the other hand, were announced by paper fliers and newspapers before they arrived. These were more popular, with their clowns, acrobats and animals. Although the acts performed were international, the marimba music which heralded them could only be Guatemalan:

En la puerta que servia de entrada 'oficial' al circo, ardian grandes candiles que despedian mas humo que luz. La marimba de Chema Cuzo (José María Ramírez) repasaba todo su repertorio y el penetrante blin-bline-blin-bline de la madera sonora, alcanzaba hasta los últimos ranchos del pueblo."
In general, however, most literate citizens favoured things French, whether porcelain, novels, hats or perfume. Although Guatemala City had nothing comparable to Haussmann's great boulevards, it nevertheless tried to imitate its ideal of Paris with its National Theatre, tree-lined Paseo de la Reforma, and Gran Hotel. The city's most expensive and frequented brothel, Las Francesas, had a certain 'cachet' because of the French girls who once worked there. The favourite architect of public buildings, Louis Fontaine, born in Buenos Aires of French parents, was much admired and his derivative designs filled the capital with the monumentality and elegance which was expected of him. The flamboyance of 'art nouveau' could be found in private residences and public shops: lamps, vitrines, looking-glasses and its distinctive 'look' became so popular that even in remote village newspapers primitive imitations of this style appeared.

Belgian and French teachers reorganized the republic's schools. A French military mission headed by Commandant Louis Chaigné was in charge of the formation of the military elite at the Escuela Politécnica, while the country's best school, the Instituto Nacional de Varones, was run by a Belgian, Jules Connerrotte. French history was so highly regarded that it was not only studied in Darío González's popular text book, but also formed part of the reading-matter for ladies in smart magazines. Epaminondas Quintana remembers that so fashionable were French things that even:

\[
\text{En las barberías de la ciudad, como en las del pueblo, admirábamos, embobados, las litografías colgadas en la pared, en las cuales lucían los soberbios cuadros de las batallas de Napoleón, en las que detrás de los arqueados y esbeltos cuellos de los corceles, caían desmayados los soldados enemigos, mientras el Emperador divisaba a lo lejos, con sus gemelos de largavista, el curso de la batalla...}^{16}
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Despite francophile tendencies, Guatemala City remained essentially
I. FIN DE SIECLE GUATEMALA

Spanish in character. Although during the 1870s Barrios expropriated Church properties and converted monasteries and convents into schools, post-offices and banks, religious architecture still abounded in 1900. The Metropolitan Cathedral continued to dominate the Plaza de Armas, otherwise known as the Parque Central. The Cathedral, with its bishophric, lay across this square from the presidential palace and next to the Central Market.

The city was full of churches and each neighbourhood could boast at least one colonial church. Among these were: La Merced, with its golden-tiled cupola; Santo Domingo; Santa Clara; San Francisco, where in May 1919 Bishop Piñol y Batres was to preach against Cabrera; La Recoilección; El Calvario and El Cerro del Carmen. Other well-known churches in town were those of Capuchinas, Beatas de Belén and Parroquia Vieja.

Chocano's impressions of the colonial influence in religion and architecture on this Central American capital are reminiscent of earlier accounts of Guatemala City, particularly during the conservative and cachureco rule of Carrera and Cerna, 1839-1862. If one takes into consideration Barrios's systematic dismantling of the Church's wealth and power and his government's liberal rhetoric against its influence, it is surprising to discover how powerful the Church continued to be, or at least, how religious Guatemalans remained. Many citizens grieved when Barillas exiled Archbishop Ricardo Casanova y Estrada in the late 1880s. Despite his expulsion, the traditions of the Church continued. President Reyna Barrios was more tolerant and in 1896 allowed the Archbishop to return. This led many liberals to attack him as a cachureco, a conservative.

There were few incidents or signs of anti-clericalism throughout the 1890s and Archbishop Casanova y Estrada meddled little in the country's
affairs. In September 1905 he succeeded in convincing Cabrera to recognize the feast day of Saint Toribio of Mogrovejo. During the celebrations of this obscure saint, a Spanish priest, Padre Gil, gave a series of sermons at the Cathedral. Their content was surprising since Cabrera had just been re-elected for a further six years. Padre Gil compared the dictator to a modern-day Nero and scolded the citizens for their servility. Padre Gil's sermons anticipated the nine sermons which Bishop Batres y Piñol was to give fourteen years later at the Church of San Francisco. As will be seen in Chapter Five, Batres y Piñol's activities were crucial in bringing down Cabrera from power. Like Gil, Piñol y Batres would criticize the adulation, corruption and hypocrisy which maintained this régime.

Little is known of Cabrera's own religious beliefs. There are accounts, notably by General José Maria Letona and Prince William of Sweden, which tell of his private chapel at La Palma and the unusual ceremonies which took place there in company of the presidential guard of Momostec Indians and their shamans. This may belong to the mythology surrounding Cabrera, but should not be ignored as it is generally accepted that this president was a superstitious man. Syncretism between the Catholic faith and Maya religious beliefs is widespread in Guatemala. Cabrera's childhood and background make his knowledge of folklore, as passed down by his mother, a woman of Indian extraction, natural and likely. Although saints days and religious festivals dominated the calendar, local superstitions also affected daily life: fears of the evil eye, and the presence of animal spirits. In his later years Cabrera became devoted to Jesús de la Candelaria.

Most ladinos followed a strict social calendar which revolved around a combination of religious holidays and national feast days. The year began
with Epiphany and culminated in the elaborate processions of Holy Week. There was Corpus Christi in June, the day of the Virgin's ascension in August, All Souls' Day in November and Christmas.

The liberals had tried to legitimize their position and create their own legends through new feast days commemorating their coming to power on 30 June 1871, and celebrating their material exploits. Cabrera used many of Barrios's ideas to celebrate his own government's achievements. Every 30 June Cabrera's portrait would go up alongside that of the Reformador. Cabrera competed against both Barrios's contributions and the Church's pomp. His followers used many of the Church's artistic traditions to honour Cabrera. Although the inauguration of railway lines, maternity homes, schools, hospitals, asylums and theatres was impressive, it was not enough to make Cabrera a distinctively memorable leader, to distinguish him from his predecessors.

The president was fortunate to have an original advisor in the writer, Rafael Spinola. Spinola had served in Reyna Barrios's cabinet during the 1890s and had come to know Cabrera during that time. In 1899 he conceived the idea that students and teachers should be collectively recognized and rewarded at the end of each academic year. This celebration was to take place within the portals of a Greek-style temple honouring the goddess of learning, Minerva. Thus began the fiestas de Minerva or Minervalias. Most of the persons the author spoke with during 1986 who could remember the early years of this century recalled these extravagant celebrations with fondness. Through Spinola's idea the goddess Minerva, education and a concern for youth were to become Cabrera's particular hallmarks. In some ways the Minervalias were similar to France's fêtes révolutionnaires and they used much of the same didactic technique to instil a sense of
national pride and purpose in the people.

FIESTAS DE MINERVA

The first Fiesta de Minerva took place on Cabrera's forty-second birthday, 21 November 1899. Provincial jefe políticos, commanders in arms, judges, public figures and prominent citizens sent their congratulations in writing and, where possible, attended the inauguration. Minervalias took place thereafter at the end of each academic year, usually on the last Sunday of October. They generally lasted several days and established Cabrera as the Protector de la Juventud Estudianta, the undisputed Benemérito de la Patria. Sometimes the festivities would be extended until 21 November so that they would end with the president's birthday.

Within a few years of the creation of this national holiday, all important towns and villages had their own Temple of Minerva. These temples were mediocre imitations of what anonymous architects imagined Greek structures to be like. They were usually constructed of local materials, with zinc roofs or tiles, and did not always weather well. In 1934 Aldous Huxley travelled by train from the Atlantic coast to the capital. En route to Guatemala City he noticed several dilapidated Greek-style temples. One that struck him as particularly incongruous was the decaying temple in the desert town of El Progreso.

During Cabrera's two decades in office, these temples were the centre of many social events. Just as in colonial times each village or town had its church and relic, now each town erected its own Temple of Minerva. The richer cities built the larger and more splendid structures, while in poorer departments, jefe políticos were often forced to tax citizens and recruit Indians to construct these civic temples. Soon, however, many
realized that the more they contributed to these fiestas and reminded the
president of their allegiance, the more likely they were to be left alone.
Letters of admiration and congratulations abounded, with hundreds of
signatures on every possible occasion. In 1911 a group of society ladies
in the capital held a lunch in honour of Cabrera and published a small
pamphlet containing a copy of the speech given by Mrs María Teresa V. de
Azurdia and with the signatures of all those present. This in itself was
unusual since women, particularly the wives of upper-class citizens rarely
ventured into the realm of politics.

This custom of adulation and adhesion became more exaggerated as the
years passed. For years after the assassination attempts of April 1907 and
April 1908 letters became endemic. Minervalías also permitted this
unnecessary adulation to continue. Letters would arrive on the birthdays of
Cabrera and doña Joaquina, and at any other excuse which citizens, jefe
polítics and others deemed important. This subservience reached such
extremes that in Chiquimula a parrot belonging to doña Bonifacia Bonilla de
Valladares was reputedly trained to say: ¡Viva el Benemérito de la Patria,
don Manuel Estrada Cabrera! 

The yearly Minervalías combined all the magnificence of the
processions of Holy Week with the allure of Greek mythology in fin-de-
siècle style. As in Holy Week, where certain families were allowed to carry
particular parish saints, so too during the fiestas de Minerva certain
schools were given privileges other schools did not receive. Minervalías
brought everyone down to the same level: grown-ups and children were an
equal audience and class-differences appeared minimized, though clothes,
transportation and deportment distinguished Guatemalans from one another.
There was also an element of competition between schools which gave many
students a sense of pride. Minervalias became social occasions, like the races, but with a difference: they were political.

In Guatemala Chocano found what he called his 'idearum tropical':

La América tropical..., estaba en 1900 - y continua todavía - en condiciones elementales, como los de las repúblicas griegas, obligadas a escoger, muchas veces, entre la tiranía, la oligarquía y la demagogia.

Como los tiranos griegos, que buscaban el apoyo de las clases populares, para exterminar a la oligarquía, Manuel Estrada Cabrera, en 1900, es ya el tipo clásico del despotismo radical que, anulando todos los privilegios nobiliarios y plutocráticos, ejerció el Poder Público con evidente abuso, pero en sentido 'democratizante',

To the majority of adulators, like the journalist Joaquin Méndez, writing for La Frensa in 1902, these fiestas appeared the height of good taste and sound ideology:

Estamos en presencia de algo verdaderamente conmovedor y extraordinario, se halla la población engalanada como para una festividad sin precedente, sus edificios empavesados, sus calles cubiertas de flores, siguiendo a los escolares bajo sobervios arcos de triunfo, sobre alfombras de hojas y corolas de nuestros plácidos vergeles y es ésto como una hermosa minervalia a la que dan tintes de satisfacción purísima, la luz que es la alegría de los orbes, la infancia y la juventud que son la alegría de la vida,... La fiesta de Minerva ha triunfado en la conciencia Pública, y ya constituye una solemnidad nacional,

The nature of the language used in describing Minervalias was not dissimilar from the adulation which filled the newspapers daily. There was an elaborate propaganda machine at work here which established certain phrases to refer to the president, his work, and the country. The theatricality, the show, involved in Minervalias, was not unlike that used in Holy Week processions or medieval passion plays where moral issues were expressed through allegories or re-enactment of biblical scenes. In this way, repentant thieves would offer themselves to be crucified on Good Friday in order to atone for their sins and gain salvation. Likewise, the
prettiest, or sometimes the kindest girls might appear in elaborate
costumes as a living allegory of 'Truth in Pursuit of Wisdom' or 'The Good
in the face of Adversity' before an impressionable public.

The visual element was all important. In an era when the silent film
was just beginning, these elaborate scenes with romantic floral arches and
trompe l'oeil backdrops were available to everyone; not only ladies who
could afford foreign magazines, but also those persons who never had been
to a theatre performance in their life. The same was true for the young
protagonists. Many of them could never otherwise have afforded the glamour
these shows and costumes gave them.

The servility which emerged was not always voluntary. Several
compulsory acts resulted, such as Decree 604 which ordered workers to
march in a parade during the Minervalias. Those who failed to comply would
have to work on building roads in the capital or countryside. The wealthier
the citizen, the more subtle his homage. Mona Ouzoff, who has written
about the eighteenth-century 'fêtes révolutionnaires' says many things
which can be applied to Cabrera's own brand of propaganda:

L'élaboration de la fête, lieu où se nouent le désir et le savoir, où
l'éducation des masses se plie à la jouissance, marie la politique à la
psychologie, l'esthétique à la morale, la propagande à la religion... la
fête est un sûr témoign...23

These celebrations in honour of learning were also an act of allegiance,
witness to a peculiar form of American fealty. While Minervalias
purported to form and consolidate the values of a self-respecting and
upstanding society, the form of government in operation was in reality the
opposite of this. Servility, hypocrisy and humiliation were integral to the
political system. This did not keep many from enjoying Minervalias, but
behind the pomp of the festivities there was a darker, less innocent and optimistic side to the régime. This repressive side will be discussed in Chapter Four.

During the early years of the fiestas de Minerva Cabrera himself would preside over the celebrations. They often began at dawn, and children would be given breakfast before marching down to the parade grounds in the neighbourhood of Jocotenango. The itinerary was always the same:

Los desfiles se iniciaban en el Callejón del Conejo, sexta calle, cerca del Parque Central, De ahí para Jocotenango o Hipódromo del Norte, Al llegar al Templo de Minerva se detenían los estudiantes para dar paso al poder Legislativo y Consular, y a la comitiva del Presidente. En el Templo de Minerva se efectuaban las premiaciones, Había bailes de las escuelas, que danzaban al compás de la banda marcial y trenzaban el asta con listones de colores diversos.  

Guest speakers, often well-known literary figures, would recite poetry or deliver speeches on the benefits of an educated society or on Cabrera's philanthropy. One of the first inaugural speeches was given in 1901 by Latin America's leading Parisian bohemian, Enrique Gómez Carrillo. José Santos Chocano spoke on behalf of Central American newspapermen at the 1909 Minervalia. Another writer, Maximo Soto Hall, also delivered many speeches before the fiesta de Minerva crowds.

Minervalias were also a showpiece for visiting dignitaries, and a prize for school children at the end of another academic year. Some children, like Martínez Durán, were indifferent to the parades and prizes, but for most students these fiestas often meant a new uniform, attention, entertainment and a free meal. Eduardo Miguel Jiménez Castillo remembers how a few weeks before the Minervalias he and his classmates were given a new uniform: 'era crema con rayas azules y gorra de vícera negra, marchaban con armas de madera.' General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, later
to become president of the republic, found that these celebrations awoke in him an interest in Greek mythology and history. For him the parades were an unforgettable experience:

Teníamos que marchar con fusil y desde allí partíamos hasta el templo de Minerva. No podíamos movernos, rascarnos, ni nada, sólo marchar, y había miles de muchachos. Al llegar al templo, se premiaba a los mejores profesores y a los mejores alumnos. Pronunciaban discursos. Después llegaba nada menos que el poeta Chocano, hacía un poema o declamaba... Después repartían comida... La fiesta era para los niños y al terminar regresaba el desfile. Por la tarde hablamos carreras de caballos en el Hipódromo del Norte. Llegaba don Manuel en su coche... me regalaron un diccionario copiado de los franceses, llamado Larousse ilustrado, no con colores, y este diccionario me sirvió a mi aprenderme desde la 1 hasta la 2. De esos regalaban como 200 libros, Regalaban lapiceros, cuadernos, de todo; pero por lista; y estaban o estan las estatuas de las señoritas de Belén uniformadas, y las profesoras con unos enormes sombreros de plumas de aquel tiempo, plumas de avestruz...  

Each school had its distinguishing mark and some schools, like the Instituto Nacional de Varones (INCV) or the National Hospice were more prominent than others. The students of the latter:

...llevaban un uniforme azul, cuatro cañones de calibre 42 y tenían a su cargo el saludo con salvas. Tenían su propia banda, Las Hermanas de Caridad se encargaban de ellos. Los dirigían maestros capacitados y los educaban con disciplina militar. Los colegios se lucían. En la primera calle de la zona 2 estaba el Liceo Joaquina dirigido por la hermana del General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes. Las alumnas tenían uniforme blanco, con sombreros lineños; blusa con cuello marinero y corbatita; falda blanca y zapatos del mismo color.

No expense was spared, particularly when it came to exporting the idea of an 'enlightened despot'. This was done through the publication of fine albums, known as the 'Albums of Minerva', which commemorated the events of each year. Most souvenir books contained poems and musical scores by local artists, as well as several photographs of local scenes, Minervalía parades, and allegoric tableaux vivants of ladino girls dressed in white gowns.

Poems and quotes from well-known writers, politicians or public
figures also appeared. Some of these refer directly to Cabrera's effort to promote education, while others are quoted from contemporary writings or speeches elsewhere. A typical souvenir of the day might be a photo-collage of the president, in white-tie, surrounded by beautiful children under the porch of a Greek temple with a large globe of the world before him.

Many critics felt Cabrera's education policy was excessively militaristic. By 25 May 1899 most primary schools were teaching military tactics and ordenanzas. A decree of 16 June 1900 made them compulsory. In May 1907 military instruction was introduced at the University of San Carlos. Rifle-carrying and marching by students during national holidays and Minervalias was the rule. Many directors of educational institutions were in fact military officers. Many career pedagogues, like the Connerotte brothers, eventually left the system because of their politics and were replaced by military officers. Some believed there was an educational dictatorship in the country, and as Cabrera's own dictatorship wore on this assessment became increasingly true.

From 1903 Cabrera appointed several military men to educational positions in order to keep them from military conspiracy. The militaristic drill given to students was in many ways window-dressing, a façade of order and progress. It was no more than a poor imitation of contemporary European martial ostentation, a spectacle to keep his domestic audience malleable.

Furthermore, Cabrera's fear of assassination was so great that even members of the army had trouble obtaining old or new weapons. The French Minister in 1918 reported that most of the latest armaments were kept under lock and key and that cartridges were filled with a mixture of
It is clear that most of the weapons which were used for public functions were little more than models.

Just as the cadets of the Escuela Politécnica had been Barrios's favourites, so it could be said that the students of the Instituto Nacional Central de Varones became Cabrera's pride. The INCV stands out from other schools in the country, not only because it produced many talented graduates who went on to make their mark in different spheres of national life, but also because its students were among the few who were able to challenge presidential wishes without suffering reprisals.

In March 1912 Guatemala prepared for the official visit of the U.S. Secretary of State, P.C. Knox. One evening during his stay in Guatemala City a parade of 10,000 Indians honoured him in their most elaborate attire. Schools, too, were to participate in a grand march, comparable to those of the fiestas de Minerva. When the students of the INCV were asked to join in the waving of the red, white and blue, they refused.

Their refusal came as a surprise to their director, Jules Connerotte, and to Cabrera himself. Not wishing any scandal to mar Knox's visit, and particularly one attached to the student body of which he wished to be thought the particular benefactor, Cabrera ordered Guatemala City's jefe político to deal with the boys. Dr Carlos Padilla Matute had no success, so on the following day the Minister of Education, Licenciado Eduardo Giron, tried to win the students over. The students remained resolute: '¡No marchamos!' they cried. Connerotte took their side and the students did not have to participate in this political extravaganza. Nevertheless they all went to the Temple of Minerva to watch:

La fiesta allí fue fantástica: escuelas y colegios, banderas, músicas, flores, champaña, discursos y damas elegantes, levitas, chisteras y apretones de manos, etc., fueron tan profusos y tan vistosos, que Knox y sus
acompañantes no podían menos de reconocer y admirar la 'alta cultura' y el
desvelo del Gobierno por la educación; así como su inmenso amor por la
juventud estudiosa,...

Pero los cuatrocientos instituteros alojados en el 'Salón de la Derecha'
del Hipódromo - sin que nadie hubiese aconsejado - en el momento oportuno
quebraron aquella solemnidad, protestando de una manera estruendosa con un
enorme y multiplicado gritos;
¡No, no Knox!
¡No, no Knox!
¡No, no Knox!... 

Al escuchar aquello y gritar nosotros mismos, sentimos el vértigo y
cosquilleo que se apodera de los hombres en los trascendentales momentos de
su vida. Sabíamos sí, que con aquella actitud nos jugábamos la vida; pero
era necesario que nuestros corazones se desahogaran y que el pueblo se
diera cuenta de que la juventud estudiosa de don Manuel, no comulgaba con
ruedas de molino. 31

After this demonstration parents and other citizens were deeply concerned
about the welfare of the boys, their families and their teachers. In fact,
the only victim of this episode was the much-loved director of the
Institute, Jules Connerrotte, who lost his post. After Knox's departure life
continued much the same as always for the students at the INCV and the
matter was not mentioned again. The blue-eyed General Enrique Arís was
unofficially made the new director of the Institute in 1913 and remained
at this post until 1918. This in itself was an unexpected appointment,
since Arís had been suspected of having been involved with the cadet plot
at the Politécnica in 1908. By 1915, however, he had proven his loyalty and
been promoted from Brigadier to General.

Why did the president not take reprisals against the students of the
Institute as he had done against the students of the Escuela Politécnica
four years before? Instead of threatening his life through a badly
organized plan as the cadets had done, these students had been courageous
enough to stand for a sense of national dignity. Cabrera knew (as he had
told Hugh Wilson, U.S. Chargé d'affaires, in 1911) that it was vital for him,
or any other Central American leader, to maintain a good relationship with
the U.S. in order to survive; nevertheless, he approved of his students' courage in voicing such an opinion. Although the outburst of these adolescents might have momentarily embarrassed him, he perhaps felt there was some usefulness in this demonstration. The relationship between the students of the INCV and Cabrera continued to be a good one, as can be seen below in Arévalo's account of the 1917 Minervalia.

Arévalo participated in one of the last Minervalias in 1917 when he was studying at the Institute. That year the students requested permission from General Arís to carry real weapons instead of the wooden ones traditionally carried by most students. General Arís agreed to allow them to carry shotguns, which the boys later regretted as they weighed more than the wooden rifles:

Cuando llegamos frente al Templo, el propio General Arís, militar y pedagogo, orgullosa de sus juveniles huestes, recorría las filas sonriente y alógioso, asegurándonos que habíamos sido los mejores. Allí lo tuve un rato muy cerca y le vi el famoso párpado caído. Nos ubicamos entre el Templo y el Mapa en Relieve. Nos permitieron descanso unos minutos. Nos corríamos la gorra para atrás nos secábamos la frente con pañuelos limpios, de repente, otra vez '¡Firmes!', El himno nacional, '¡Presenten... armas!', Se escuchan aplausos y vivas. El Presidente Cabrera había entrado al Templo de Minerva. '¡Descansen... armas!', Un gran silencio. Se desata un orador declamando su discurso al Jefe Supremo, Benemérito de la Patria, Protector de la Juventud Estudiosa. Se refería al mismo personaje que nosotros estimábamos 'el segundo genio político del mundo.'

Arévalo's account is interesting because it illustrates Cabrera's confidence in Arís and his students, particularly after the Knox visit and the fate of the students from the Politécnica. It also shows how the impressionable youths were led to believe that Cabrera was one of the world's greatest statesmen. Below we shall examine the school system - its students and staff and the effect education had on their lives.
By 1900 there were at least thirty-eight private schools in the capital. When Cabrera came to power he opened those schools which had been closed during Reyna Barrios's final years in office. The most popular sort of private school was that run by religious orders. There was also an English and a German school, both of which were aimed at accommodating the children of European immigrants. The English school took day boys and boarders. The American Institute of San Agustin (founded in 1881) was also one of the best attended boys's schools in the capital. Nor was there a shortage of girls's schools. One of Cabrera's daughters, Joaquina, attended the International School for Young Ladies run by a widow, doña Natalia Gorriz, while the señoritas Pineda Montt ran another well-known finishing school and the señoritas Rosemberg ran the Colegio Belem. Martinez Durán explains how just as neighbourhoods and clothes distinguished people socially, so did the schools they attended:

Nuestro colegio reunía a los niños del barrio, fácilmente seleccionado. La estructura clásista de nuestra sociedad agrupaba determinadas familias en determinados colegios. El nuestro pertenecía a reducido grupo de los que se auto-llamaban bien nacidos. Aristocracia que se remontaba a auténticos o dubiosos pergaminos o bien a cercana afluencia de dinero que había permitido ofrecer una educación esmerada.

Through the Minervalias Guatemala came to be considered throughout Latin America and Europe one of the more educated of the Central American republics. There is no shortage of numbers quoted to travellers and in government publications of schools in Guatemala. In 1913 Domville-Fife reported that there were no less than 1262 schools in the republic. This figure seems high and it is impossible to discover how many of these schools actually functioned. Furthermore, literacy figures for this period
are poor and what figures exist are on the whole unreliable. In 1902 the Chilean government even sent a delegation to inspect the local education system, with a possible view to implementing some of their methods in Chile. The Chilean representatives soon discovered that most of the schools which had been quoted as existing were no more than a corner-stone of an unfinished building.\textsuperscript{35}

In the Indian regions, mainly in the highlands, teachers were sometimes accused of not teaching children to read and write, but forcing them to work in the fields instead. More often, children never got to school, particularly in the harvesting season when they were needed at home. Most Indians remained unfamiliar with the Spanish language, except for a few necessary phrases. Often local government officials doubled as teachers since no one else wished to do the task and they found it a way to earn some extra income. Teachers were generally badly paid and often had to turn to other occupations in order to make a living. National reports on education are to be read with B. Traven's Mexico in mind:

\begin{quote}
The school appeared in the annual statistics as a village school of maximum efficiency, to which was added the note: 'Ages from seven to fourteen. No illiterates.'

Hundreds of Indian villages which were situated at distances of between eighty and four hundred kilometers from the nearest railroad were awarded an equally flattering mention in the returns; for no jefe politico was so lacking in zeal as to yield the first place to another. Not even Denmark could boast such statistics, and the dictator's fame as the educator of his people and a zealous protector of the Indian race was assured for all time. For the statistics were carefully printed on the best of paper and splendidly bound, and were dispatched to the governments of every civilized nation.\textsuperscript{36}

In the larger, more affluent centres private and public schools could be found. In his autobiography, ex-president and pedagogue Juan José Arévalo gives an account of his primary school education in the small
village of Taxisco, and his attendance at several boarding schools in the
capital before entering the National Institute for Boys in Chiquimula and
later in the capital. Arévalo's account is typical of the experience of
many ladino boys.

Arévalo describes how at the age of six his parents sent him from the
small cattle town of Taxisco, in the southern department of Santa Rosa, to
boarding school in Guatemala City. There he had been accepted to study at
the Escuela Normal Central de Varones, which in 1911 had merged with the
Normal de Indígenas, formerly known as the Instituto para la Educación de
Indígenas. In 1906 this school was run by Jules Connerotte and was located
in the distant neighbourhood of Pamplona. Arévalo only remembers two
Indian boys studying there when he arrived. Both Indians, from Nahualá,
found the atmosphere so different from what they were accustomed to that
they soon returned to their native highland homes.

In 1914 Arévalo was transferred to the Salesian school Domingo
Saravia. In January 1915 Commander Mariano Arévalo took his son to visit
the director of the best school in the country, the Guatemala City INCV,
whose acting director, General Enrique Arís, was an old friend. Arís
claimed he had never heard of the Domingo Saravia school, but set Juan
José several maths problems while he gossiped with Arévalo about political
nominations in Santa Rosa and Jutiapa. When Juan José was unable to
complete any of the problems, Arís told Arévalo to try again at a later
date. Commander Arévalo was furious, but his son was pleased as this
allowed him to remain at home in Taxisco for the year.

In Taxisco young Arévalo was put into a private school run by an
outsider, namely don Chon (Visitación) Chamo. Don Chon was an Indian and a
graduate from the Escuela Normal de Pamplona. Although a simple man, don
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Chon made an impression on his students. His was the typical one-room school house and lessons consisted of basic arithmetic, Central American history, geography and reading.

Cabrera re-established and improved many institutions started by Barrios during the 1880s. The INCV was modelled on liberal lines and between 1906 and 1912 benefitted from the modern ideas of its Belgian director, Jules Connerotte and his brother, Leon. Jules Connerotte was considered a modern educator as he included pedagogical psychology in his approach to teaching. Anyone able to pass the entrance examination was given a place at the INCV. The INCV provided the final years of schooling before University. These three years, the 4th, 5th and 6th, were known as complementaria and were not taught at all national institutes. The capital's INCV offered a rich cultural life and often had better teachers.

Another interesting aspect of the INCV is the mixture of students who found themselves together. While most boys had attended neighbourhood schools with fellow students of similar backgrounds, at the national schools these same boys mixed with students of different origin. The class historian of the distinguished student body of 1920, Epaminondas Quintana, describes this environment:

Allí, en el golfo educativo de Connerotte, se juntaron tres ríos; los que venían de la montaña con el pelo de la dehesa; los que llegaban del valle, los señoritos de la ciudad con trajes de casimir y sombreros Stetson. Allí se enfrentaron y llegaron a la unidad los Marroquines, los Pintos, los Letona, los Rodas, los Maldonados, los López, los Cruces, los Barillas, los Chapafones, los Amleu, etcétera, a los chuchones, los Fallas, los Viteris, los García Granados, los Asensios, los Olivero, los Ayaya, los Villacorta, los Ramírez Llerena, los Barnoya, los Larraondo, los González Sierra, los piloros Beltrameña, etc.

Y había un tercer río que venía de más lejos; los de Hibueras y no pocos de Chiapas, México.38

This was the case not only in the capital but also in the provinces.
Although Arevalo finally succeeded in being admitted to the capital's INCV, he was forced to continue his studies at the Instituto de Occidente in Chiquimula after the earthquakes of 1917–1918. This institution also had a high reputation and many distinguished teachers. The First Inspector, don Ernesto Lara, was a favourite with the boys: ‘…nos encantaba con sus anécdotas sobre los generales de Napoleón con el mismo éxito con que Tía Chepa nos hablaba de brujos y aparecidos.’

The Director of the Institute was Adrián Zapata, a graduate of the Escuela Politécnica, and a strict disciplinarian. Unlike their counterparts in the capital, the students at the Instituto de Occidente did not have a chemistry laboratory or a physics cabinet; nevertheless they studied Langlebert’s textbooks on chemistry and physics, Fuentes’s Castillian grammar, and Rivas’s universal geography. The student body may not have seemed as sophisticated as their contemporaries at the INCV, but a large number of students of other Central American nationalities studied there:

‘El material humano que componía el alumnado mostraba cierto sello regional. Con excepción de algunos capitalinos, de ropas y maneras más pulcras, y de los salvadoreños y hondureños, todos los demás éramos provincianos y hasta aldeanos, semicultivos cuando no cimarrones, por la ropa, por el pelo, por la manera de andar, por la manera de echar saliva al suelo, por ciertos giros expresivos ya se podía haber logrado una clasificación de niveles educativos entre nosotros. Desde las Verapaces hasta Escuintla, pasando por Izabal, Zacapa, El Progreso, Jalapa, Jutiapa y Santa Rosa, venían a Chiquimula muchos adolescentes ariscos y ásperos, de pelo hirsuto y camisa tosca, amigos del juego violento, bullangueros y glotones.’

Among his classmates, three boys particularly impressed Arévalo: Brigido Acevedo, Jordán Gordillo and Braulio Cuestas. Acevedo was not only precocious, but a voracious reader. Arévalo once discovered him secretly reading a book expressly forbidden by the government: Vargas Vila’s Los Césares de la Decadencia. Gordillo, a well-to-do zacapateco, stands out
because he was the only student at the Institute who could afford a lamp. In the evenings he would allow a select few to study with him under its light. Finally, Arévalo liked the Honduran, Cuestas, not only because of his fine memory, but because when the armistice was signed in 1918 a group of students decided to have a football match. Many of them continued to side with the Germans and those made up a team which played against those calling themselves the aliados. Indifferent to the teams' ideologies, Cuestas simply played pretending the football was Cabrera's head.

The Institutos Nacionales were predominantly filled with ladino youths and those bright enough to pass the entrance exams. Most of their graduates went on to university or to fill important posts or continue family businesses. It might seem that Cabrera's education policy was principally aimed at the predominantly ladino and upper classes. These groups benefitted from the state schools and the celebrations at the end of every academic year. Cabrera, however, also contributed something to the lower sectors of society through the continuation of schools of manual arts.

During the 1870s and 1880s Barrios had established a number of Escuelas de Artes y Oficios. These had disintegrated for lack of government interest and insufficient funding. In 1906 Cabrera re-opened many schools of technical teaching and these became known as Escuelas Prácticas. Most principal towns had such a school offering a three-year course in a variety of practical and technical skills. The Escuelas Prácticas were divided by sex and taught different trades: some taught brick-laying and carpentry while others taught pastry-making and sewing. At the end of the three-year course the pupils would leave with credentials to teach or work.
Although many graduates of the Escuelas Prácticas were sometimes used as forced labour by the government to make uniforms or construct buildings, the majority of graduates were grateful for their newly acquired skills. Enrique de León Cabrera remembers:

,,un señor de apellido Recinos, cuyo trabajo era la carpintería, y en el sótano de su casa vi muchas puertas, varandas y otras cosas de madera él trabajaba y estaban hechas con gran perfección, como por un ebanista de promera. Al ver esto, le pregunté cómo lo había aprendido y él me respondió que todo lo aprendió en la Escuela Práctica de Estrada Cabrera, que él era originario de Retalhuleu y que allá había aprendido la carpintería en la Escuela Práctica 'Estrada Cabrera', y que esto se lo agradecía a ese Presidente al que se le había echado tanto lodo en su administración, y que, en realidad, en el aspecto educativo había hecho mucho bien a la juventud..."'

Finally, an attempt was made to assimilate the large Indian population into national life. To this end, the Instituto Nacional de Indígenas was established in the capital and smaller schools were founded in the provinces. These, however, were badly attended and poorly funded. There were exceptions, like don Chon Chamo, who graduated from the Escuela Normal in Pamplona and went on to start his own school in Taxisco. There were undoubtedly other Indians who became integrated into national life through education, but overall, the Indian's possibilities remained limited as he was generally regarded as a hindrance to national development and was seen as being more useful in manual labour.

INTELLECTUALS IN FIN DE SIECLE GUATEMALA

Cabrera did not concern himself so much with University students and teachers as he did with school children. This seems strange, as he put so much emphasis on the importance of education. A larger percentage of school leavers pursuing a university degree would have been a mark of the
success of a truly liberal government since it would have allowed a larger national professional class to emerge. But few statistics exist regarding the number of students attending the two universities, the University of San Carlos in the capital and the University of Occidente in Quezaltenango.

The University of San Carlos attracted most students since it was the older of the two, founded in 1676, and had more faculties and facilities. The University of Occidente, founded in 1877, was best known for its Law Faculty. Many Central Americans came to study at the University of San Carlos and took lodgings with other students from the provinces. Cabrera placed spies in the classrooms, cafés, and boarding houses to find out whether there were any plots afoot against his régime. An impression of what student life was like in the capital at this time can be gleaned from Arevalo Martínez's novel Honduras.

A large percentage of graduates from the Escuelas Normales went on to do University degrees, in Guatemala and abroad. Again, the majority of those attending university were middle or upper-middle class ladinos. Among University students there were also a number of persons who, like Cabrera, were able through education to rise in society. Although there are no known attempts on Cabrera's life by University students he distrusted this group. He was particularly wary of student opinion. Every year, around Holy Week, University students had a parade in which they would parody politicians and popular personalities. These processions were known as huelga de dolores, the 'sorrowful week', because it was celebrated the week before Holy Week. In 1903 a student by the name of Lemus was killed when police opened fire on a group of students.

After this incident students were closely watched and in some cases became victims of government repression during periods of unrest. In 1907
Cabrera introduced military instruction to the University of San Carlos. This was not welcomed by students. Furthermore, from 1912 onwards officers from the newly formed Military Academy were able to study at the university's Engineering Faculty. In April 1917 Cabrera attempted to establish another national University, like the one in Quezaltenango, with the difference that this one would be named after himself. This suggestion proved unpopular. Owing to a lack of funds and more pressing matters, the University Estrada Cabrera never came into being.

Despite the lack of good facilities and government support, university students living in Guatemala City during Cabrera's régime enjoyed advantages: cinema, theatre, and many literary visitors. Many well-known Spanish American writers arrived as a result of the Minervalias and of Cabrera's reputation as a patron of the arts. Guatemalans, especially those young enough to have been brought up under the system of fiestas de Minerva, had a high regard for literature and things literary. Arévalo's account of his literary tastes as a teenager is not unlike that of most men of his generation who went on to university:

*Casi todos poseíamos un cuaderno de lujo, al que, con propia y esmerada letra, íbamos pasando los versos de moda, los que preferían los declamadores de ambos institutos [the INCV and the Instituto de Oriente]. Allí estuvieron, con todos los honores, Díaz Mirón, Manuel Acuña, Juan de Dios Peza, José Santos Chocano, Gutiérrez Házera, Julio Flores, José Asunción Silva, Mánolo Soto Hall, Lola Montenegro, Calderón Avila, los Díazquez Olaverrí, Fuga y Acal, Ismael Cerna, y claro que Rubén Darío. Aprendíamos de memoria toda aquella colección de piezas románticas y modernistas y el alma adolescente se alimentaba de ese raro embrijo que penetraba por los ojos y tenía mucho que ver con los oídos.*

To many - students and intellectuals alike - the visits of well-known writers to their country brought a welcome opportunity to discuss their own ideas about what they read and to hear first-hand accounts about
persons they only knew in print, and all those things they were eager to learn about: impressions of Paris and Madrid, of Mexico and New York, what writers thought about each other's work, and naturally, what they thought about Guatemala.

Guatemala had a long tradition of welcoming writers to its shores. During the nineteenth century the Cuban poets, José Martí (1853-1895) and José Joaquin Palma (1844-1911) spent time there. During his stay Martí taught at the University of San Carlos and also in certain secondary schools. Their presence influenced not only the contents of newspapers, but also the intellectual development of the local youths.

José Santos Chocano (1875-1934) also influenced many, especially Cabrera. The unexpected visit by the Colombian writer and poet, Ricardo Arenales, better known as Porfirio Barba Jacob (1883-1943), in 1914 inspired Rafael Arévalo Martínez (1884-1975) of the generación del 10 to write what is perhaps his best-known novel, El hombre que parecía un caballo (1922). The next generation of intellectuals, the so-called generación del 20, is perhaps better known. Its most famous names are those of Miguel Ángel Asturias (1899-1974), César Brañas (1900-1976), Luis Cardoza y Aragón (1904- ) and David Vela (1901- ).

Enrique Gómez Carrillo, Guatemala's first internationally known writer, owed much of his success to Rubén Darío. Darío recognized Carrillo's talent and obtained funds from President Barillas for the young writer to travel to Europe in 1890. In his autobiographical novel, El despertar del Alma, Carrillo tells how his generation was brought up on the novels of Galdós, Pereda, Pardo Bazán and Clarín. Those growing up during the Cabrera years were to be more familiar with French literature and French literary genres thanks to Carrillo and other Latin Americans who chose Parisian literary
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conventions over those of Madrid.

From the outset Carrillo shocked. As an adolescent his affair with a French diplomat's wife caused a sensation. In Europe his affairs continued to attract attention, particularly his liaison with the ballerina Mata-Hari and the Spanish singer, Lola Montenegro. An opportunist and a snob, Carrillo's easy prose was nonetheless admired even by those who disliked his personality. By 1900 he was said to be publishing an article a day in the Madrid newspaper, El Liberal. Carrillo's writing consisted of the then popular crónica:

Nothing shows more clearly than the crónica, as practised by Gómez Carrillo, how much modernism was in reality a tacit celebration of the insertion of Latin America, the historically invisible continent, into the international economic and cultural networks, by those who nonetheless adopted the world-weary pose of the spiritual aristocrat in an age of merchants. It was a genre virtually unknown before the 1870s and effectively dead by 1930. No modernist was more eagerly read than Gómez Carrillo, purveyor of the mildly intoxicating, titillating but stylish literary gossip, and none more quickly forgotten.44

Carrillo wrote little about his homeland, except for spurious articles attacking Cabrera, written under pseudonyms so that he could write flattering articles in defence of the president under his own name. This, he discovered, was a lucrative line in literature. Carrillo met Cabrera during his early years in office and interviewed him for several favourable articles:

Cada entrevista que tenía con Estrada Cabrera dejaba un saldo en este de interés por el brioso escritor, en quién veía una de las plumas del régimen que estaba empezando a imponer a su país. Gómez Carrillo trataba de hacerse grato a quién, por el momento, no parecía ser todo la Calígula que pronto sería; pero Estrada Cabrera no era don Crisanto Medina [Guatemalan Minister to Paris] para dejarse dominar por el embrujante atractivo de su interlocutor, sino que, al contrario, comprendía que esta necesitaba más de él. Sin embargo lo trato con una suavidad sedeña, diríase paternal, inspirándole una confianza casi familiar, Dícese que en una visita,
In 1898 Carrillo was made Consul General to Paris, where he soon became known in café society and spent most of his salary on entertaining and journeying to fashionable holiday resorts. He only returned to Guatemala twice after 1890. During 1901 he participated in the Minervalias and edited a pro-Cabrerista newspaper known as La Idea Liberal. Although for many years Carrillo survived on his income as consul in Europe, he ultimately rejected Guatemalan nationality. He adopted first Spanish and later Argentinian citizenship, though at heart he considered himself a Parisian.

While Carrillo gave the French a taste for the exotic, many eccentric writers visited Guatemala. One of the first to arrive during this period was the twenty-six-year-old Peruvian, José Santos Chocano:

ASI, una mañana dominguera del mes de junio de 1901, Chocano apareció por las calles de Guatemala, acompañado del Dr. (Ramón A.) Salazar y del Licenciado (Manuel) Valle. Nosotros los vimos esa mañana en la peluquería 'Londres', 'rendez vous' de la época, a donde se acudía principalmente los domingos, en una como iniciación de distracciones del día. Vimos al personaje extraño, vestido con excesiva elegancia; un levitón color de tabaco, con terciopelo en el cuello, pantalones ampulosos de la misma tela del levitón, el cuello de la camisa alto y tieso que inmovilizaba la cabeza del dueño, una corbata ancha de lazo, unos zapatos de color y un enorme crisantemo en la solapa del levitón...

Poco después, le vimos en la 'parada', la famosa parada de las diez, en donde a pretexto de asistir a la revista de las guarniciones de la capital, se reunían en el parque central los muchachos que presuñian, las asistentes a la misa de Catedral y las niñeras, la codiciada conquista de estudiantes...

"¿Quién era aquel personaje que nos parecía tan extrafamiliar?"*

Chocano's flamboyant personality was admired as was his talent for declaiming his own poetry. He soon found himself embroiled in Central
American politics and by 1905 was named Peruvian consul to Central America. In 1906 he was an envoy to El Salvador where he claims to have averted war. In 1912 he married the only daughter of the distinguished Batres Jáuregui family, Margot. This marriage assured his entry into Guatemalan society and also cemented his friendship with Cabrera. Between 1915 and 1918 Chocano spent a lot of time in Mexico where he was known as el verbo de la revolución. He was also the sometime secretary of Pancho Villa. For Chocano, Villa represented ‘el tipo de caudillo legendario representativo de una época y de una raza’. Cabrera, on the other hand, was an American Machiavelli: also necessary for the sort of governments Chocano felt Latin American countries needed:

\[
- \text{Los autócratas y yo tenemos la misma talla; por eso nos buscamos - decía - : hemos nacido para poseer la tierra, más allá del bien y del mal. Sólo hay dos formas de gobierno: el gobierno de la fuerza y de la farsa. En nuestra América tropical tiene que escogerse entre el gobierno de la fuerza organizadora y el de la farsa organizada. Hay que decidirse por todo menos por el ridículo.}^{47}
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During his time in Guatemala Chocano embarked on a series of dubious business ventures ranging from mining in 1909 to the monopoly of refined sugar in 1918, which made him many enemies. Although he published two collections of poems during this time, Chocano wrote with less and less frequency. He had a great ability to dazzle his public, and the poet José Vicente Martínez nicknamed him el caballero de los espejos. In Arevalo Martínez’s novel Honduras, the protagonist, Alfonso Celada, is taken to meet the poet, who has great literary plans for the republic:

Mañana te presentaré a Chocano; ojalá que lo encontremos en una de las pocas ocasiones en que todavía compone versos, porque – ¿no sabes? – Chocano ahora es negociante, nada más. Hace una semana me contó que va a ser enormemente rico explotando el aceite de cocodrilo para curar la tuberculosis; ayer proyectaba crear una empresa editorial que absorbara la producción de libros de la América y publicara su mayor periódico:
Chocano's controversial behaviour made him unpopular among certain sectors. Chocano and Cabrera's close friend, Lic. Francisco ('Pocho') Gálvez Portocarrero, on whom Asturias based his character, Cara de Ángel, were: '... hombres a los que, entraran a dónde entraran, pidieran lo que pidieran, nunca se les cobraba, porque gozaban de 'la tarjeta' del Señor Presidente, y esto naturalmente iba enviciando a los individuos, los iba arruinando.'

And yet when the young journalist, Federico Hernández de León, was imprisoned in 1915 for writing unfavourably about the régime, Chocano went to visit him despite presidential orders.

When Guatemala City was devastated by earthquakes in 1917-1918 Chocano wrote a poem entitled La Ciudad arruinada which brought him close to the people once again. The poet compared the devastation undergone with the tragedy of the World War. Cabrera was so jealous of this success that he asked Chocano to write a better poem for him which he was to recite in public. Chocano then wrote the following verse:

Me cuentan de una noche
que fue tu noche triste
en que, desde lo alto,
con ojos tristes viste
rodar y quebrarse cual si fuera
un castillo de naipes
una ciudad entera,
entonces, cual Josué,
paraste la Tierra con el pie..."
indigenista, criollista and regionalist themes. During his stay he published two collections of poems: *Alma América* (1906) and *Oro de Primicias de Indias* (1909). Chocano's literary merit lies in his recognition of native American themes.

Despite his talents and title as poeta de América Chocano could not compare with Rubén Darío, who revisited Guatemala in March 1915. By this time Darío was already a legend, but he was to die less than a year later in his own Nicaraguan homeland. Both Soto Hall and Chocano had asked Cabrera to help Darío when he was destitute in New York, and it was under Cabrera's auspices that the Nicaraguan travelled back to Central America. Darío's arrival caused a great sensation. He was lionized and visited by admirers and those curious to see him because he was, after all, a celebrity; fellow Nicaraguans, too, were anxious to meet him. These went to him:

...en demanda de las más elementales prendas para cubrir su desnudez; zapatos, calcetines o las más elementales viandas y alcoholes para saciar su hambre y su sed. Esa gente bohemia a veces esperaba horas enteras a que Rubén descendiera de sus paraísos artificiales para poder comer las sobras de los alimentos profusos que conducía a su cuarto el malhumorado dueño del hotel.

Si para los poetas de todos los colores Rubén era el dios supremo, para el dueño del hotel sólo era un cochino señor que le ensuciaba las habitaciones, que vomitaba sobre sus tapices cuando estaba embriagado, que tiraba las cáscaras de las frutas en el suelo y que sobre todo recibía una gentuza aún más destructora. Students, too, flocked to his hotel to see him. For them Darío was a god. When Miguel Ángel Asturias and his friends went to visit him Darío was at first apologetic regarding his presence and circumstances in that dictatorship. When he realized that these students had come to talk to him about his writing he warmed to them:
I. FIN DE SIECLE GUATEMALA

Rubén, que estaba recostado, se puso contento, se sentó, pidió un coñac, que se fue tomando paulatinamente, y nos dijo: 'bueno, ustedes escriben?' Le dijimos que no, que estábamos acabando nuestro bachillerato y queríamos hablar con él. Entonces se entabló un diálogo en el que era el quién hablaba y, generalmente, de asuntos nostálgicos. Nos dijo que había estado en Guatemala en la época de su primera juventud, acabando de salir de Nicaragua, 'Fui invitado en este país florido, aquí estuvo Martí. Aquí estuvieron grandes poetas...' Indudablemente que la presencia de él nos enmudeció. Le saludamos, le dimos la mano y nos retiramos.  

Darío was frequently visited by government officials who demanded that he write a poem in praise of his benefactor, but 'el poema no se escribía jamás; la noble musa de Darío, que había cantado al cangrejo, al sapo y otros bichos, no lograba cantar a Cabrera'! Darío's failure to comply with presidential wishes resulted in his having to leave the Casa de San Marcos and move to a more humble posada. With little money and few material possessions to attract a flock, Darío met only with true devotees. By this time his second wife, Rosario Contreras, arrived to take him home.  

Darío was not the only writer who failed to please Cabrera. In 1914 the Colombian poet, Miguel Ángel Osorio, or Ricardo Arenales as he was known then, arrived in Guatemala. Arenales subsequently became better known as Porfirio Barba Jacob, a name he adopted during his stay. Soon after his arrival Carlos Wyld Ospina, whose maternal family had emigrated from Colombia in the nineteenth century, organized a literary evening at the Teatro Colón. The Colombian's style was admired, and he made a deep impression on Arévalo Martínez.  

Barba Jacob's perversity appealed to some, insulted others, and ultimately ensured him a free passage out of the country. During his stay he captivated several young students with his bizarre behaviour and ideas of a filosofía de lujo. Asturias remembers the neologism acuanimántima Barba Jacob invented and how he would base entire poems around this word.
His play on words and love for turning things upside down was so great that once when he appeared before a group of University students he challenged them to insult him: whoever came up with the most obscene insult would win a dozen ties. Arevalo Martínez tells of Barba Jacob's inventive use of language:

In order to survive Barba Jacob sought work with the newspaper La República. Another able writer, the Mexican journalist Guillermo Prieto Yeme, was given the position. The director of La República, Dr. Eduardo Aguirre Velásquez, chose Prieto Yeme because Barba Jacob demanded that the paper be updated and improved and this would have entailed great expense. Without work or income, Barba Jacob no longer enjoyed the good wines at the Hotel España. Instead, he took to drinking the local aguardiente and dining in cheap fondas. Soon many neighbourhood bars were serving strange concoctions of inexpensive liquors known as arenalinas.

During his early days Barba Jacob met several artists from Quetzaltenango and at their suggestion decided to move to that city. Xelajú boasted a large artistic community including young painters like Carlos Mérida and Humberto Garavito and the sculptor, Rafael Yela Gunther.

Wyld Ospina believes that Barba Jacob contributed articles to the local newspapers El Comercio and El Diario de los Altos. While in Quetzaltenango, Barba Jacob began a book about Guatemala entitled Tierras de Canaan. The local press of Muñoz Plaza printed several of the early chapters of this work, but when their content was seen to ignore Cabrera's exemplary
qualities its printing was stopped. Barba Jacob's credit failed and he was finally so poor that he could not even pay for a ticket to the nearest border. When asked to speak before a group of finqueros he therefore conceived an idea which would ensure his expulsion from the country. He would insult Cabrera's economic programme thus solving many of his own financial problems and freeing himself from an environment which had begun to bore him:

¡No ve que estoy preso como en el fondo de un poso de lisas paredes en este agujero que se llama Guatemala?,... donde nadie puede ganarse la vida de ninguna de estas tres maneras decentes: haciendo periodismo, haciendo política o estafando; voy a decir esto al gobierno que los rige para obligarlo a que me traslade gratis y en medio de dos soldados fuera del territorio patrio; es el único modo de liberarme."

Barba Jacob left for Cuba in March 1915 just as Rubén Darío made his way to Guatemala. The Catalan, Jaime Sabartés (1881-1968), who was also to influence a generation of young artists, may have reported Darío's arrival in the Quezaltecan newspaper El Comercio and seen Barba Jacob leave. Sabartés himself had arrived in 1904 and worked for an uncle during his first years in the country. Accustomed to the literary and artistic circles of Barcelona and Paris, Sabartés soon formed part of the intellectual set. His friendship with Picasso and family ties with Miró made him much sought out by young artists. Arévalo Martínez considered him talented but a dilettante, since he did not give himself completely to any art form. Sabartés painted, sculpted and contributed fiction to the literary magazine Juan Chapín. He also briefly directed the Quezaltecan newspaper Diario de los Altos. By the time Santiago González, who housed the most important tertulia for artists, died in 1909 Sabartés's home was already a popular rendez-vous. Here, young painters like Carlos Valenti (1884-1912), Carlos
I. FIN DE SIECLE GUATEMALA

Mérida (1891-1982?), and Agustín Iriarte (1876-1962) were able to see their first Picassos.

Sabartés wrote two novels about life under this dictatorship. Others who lived through these years - Arévalo Martínez, Asturias, and Wyld Ospina - also wrote about it. The most famous novel about this period is Asturias's *El Señor Presidente*, (1932); Asturias won the 1966 Nobel Prize for literature. Asturias's style launched a new school of literature, not only in Guatemala, but in all Latin America. Arévalo Martínez's study of Cabrera's tyranny is entitled *¡Ecce Pericles!* (1945) and is the best historic account of the period. Arévalo Martínez's short work *La oficina de paz de Orolandia* (1925) is also an attack on the extremes reached by the bureaucracy under Cabrera. Wyld Ospina's short and succinct *El autocráta. Ensayo Político-Social* (1929) is also excellent and gives a personal but accurate overview of local political history from Carrera's time to Cabrera's. Sabartés's two novels are entitled: *Don Julian* (1947) and *Son Excellence* (1949) and have only been published in French.¹

Both Sabartés's novels are interesting for their details of everyday life. Unlike Asturias, who chose the dramatic and especially dark side of the dictatorship, Sabartés shows the uncertainty of the times in a prosaic, almost dull, but inevitable pace. He also shows that, despite certain repressive qualities of dictatorship, life continued as usual and that art continued to be discussed and enjoyed during this time. *Son Excellence* is rarely seen, but as in Asturias's novel, his presence is all pervasive.

Sabartés summed up Cabrera's ability to control and govern a people when he wrote:

*Ce que l'on exigeait, au plus haut point, de ce gouverneur, c'était la soumission, par nécessité ou par intérêt, par fidélité au besoin, ou mieux encore, par complicité. Les intrigues, qui nous devenaient pas tarder à se*
The Minervalias were more than good press for Cabrera. They were a palpable demonstration of his hold over the people. In this chapter we have tried to show that although Guatemala remained colonial and insular in many ways, it was not a complete cultural backwater. Some of this may be due to Cabrera's efforts to promote education and attract foreign intellectuals. Although schools and public life became highly militarized during his administration, students and writers were able to congregate and discuss art and literature. Most of them were safe, unless they openly discussed politics or criticized the régime. In Chapter Four we will be examining the political system in detail. This will enable us better to understand how Cabrera was able to maintain himself in power and the effect this had on Guatemala's future political life.
CHAPTER TWO
THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898–1920

This chapter will examine many basic aspects of the Guatemalan economy immediately before and during Cabrera's régime. It will begin by looking at the foundation of banks in the country and at the fiscal climate in which they were created. The state of government finances, government expenditure, the sources of revenue, government loans, the rôle of national and international banks, the issue of paper money and its consequent depreciation, inflation, the flight of silver and the deterioration of the exchange rate will also be considered. Some attention will be given here regarding Cabrera's interference in Central American politics as this involvement was in many ways intended to disrupt U.S. financial schemes for Guatemala and eventually contributed to his downfall. The second half of this chapter will examine its external debt with the Council of British Bondholders, as well as the diplomatic problems it posed. The retooling of the national economy and government machinery for coffee will not be examined here as this subject has been adequately analyzed elsewhere.

THE FOUNDING OF BANKS IN GUATEMALA

Banks were not established in Guatemala until the 1870s. Previously the Church had survived as a major money-lender in the republic. During Carrera's presidency, and particularly in his first years when the public treasury was exhausted, that dictator on occasion ordered his troops to be paid from Church funds. Subsequently Carrera restored the payment of tithes to the Church, which in turn replenished its coffers. The Church
offered loans at about 6% interest, generally for mortgages against farms and property. It was not only the Church, however, that made loans of this kind; indeed many merchants with capital to spare lent on mortgage.

In 1873, two years after the Liberal revolution, Justo Rufino Barrios had decreed that all ecclesiastical holdings and property be confiscated. It was on the proceeds of this expropriation, valued at two million pesos, that the first bank was founded. The Banco Nacional de Guatemala was authorized by the government to carry on regular banking business, including issuing and circulating bank notes. Until this time, most Central and South American currency was accepted in the country, as were U.S. dollars and British pounds. Although the notes or billetes de tesoro issued by the Banco Nacional were accepted as legal tender and were guaranteed by the government, within three years this bank lost its official status. None of the secondary sources examined give reasons as to why this occurred, but the bank continued to be much used, especially by the coffee-growers.

Coffee-growers constituted Barrios's principal political support, and required capital and government backing. From the outset, coffee production was seen by many as a main administrative concern, particularly by the president. Bulmer-Thomas puts it succinctly:

"The establishment and the development of the coffee trade would not have been possible without strong state support. Government expenditure was needed to provide incentives and establish essential infrastructure; at the same time, a rising level of trade could generate the increase in government revenue needed both to finance the increase in government expenditure and to overcome the danger of political instability, which always afflicts revenue-starved governments."

Banks were now recognized as indispensable, and further foundations
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898-1920

followed. In 1877 the Banco Internacional was founded and a year later the Banco Colombiano began operations in Guatemala City; in 1881 a third bank, the Banco de Occidente, was established in Quezaltenango. All three banks were permitted to issue their own notes. Subsequently three more banks were set up: the Banco Agricola-Hipotecario in 1894; the Banco Americano, and the Banco de Guatemala, both in 1896. All these banks were authorized to issue notes, redeemable on demand. Indeed, from the time of the founding of the Banco Internacional in 1877, all of the banks mentioned periodically issued bank notes; these, with few exceptions, continued to be redeemable until 1897.

THE FISCAL SITUATION AND CURRENCY PROBLEMS

Guatemala, like most Central American republics, based its currency on silver. During the 1870s President Barrios abolished the use of macacas, the base silver coin used throughout Spanish America since the Conquest, making Guatemala one of the last countries on the continent to do so and signalling the end of the legacy of colonial currency. Thenceforth, as mentioned above, silver pesos were the national currency, although other 'hard' currencies were accepted. However, it was also about this time that Guatemala's silver-based currency began to suffer and continued to do so, with minor exceptions, thereafter. The gold value of silver continually fell while the exchange rates of gold-standard countries continually rose. It was also during Barrios's presidency, in 1874, that the Guatemalan peso was placed on parity with the U.S. dollar.

With the increase in the issue and use of bank notes in the 1880s, silver currency rapidly began to leave the country. The government had to take harsh measures to keep what silver there was in Guatemala so that it
would remain in circulation. In January 1898, President Reyna Barrios prohibited the export of silver coins, but these continued to vanish until in November of that year Cabrera granted a premium of 10% on silver which was imported. However, by that time most silver currency (with the exception of small denominations) had disappeared. The increase in paper money and steady depreciation led to the total disappearance of silver currency by 1905, except in remote Indian villages where silver continued to be valued.

Cabrera's predecessor, Reyna Barrios, was notoriously extravagant in his use of public funds. He aimed to be the most cosmopolitan of Central American rulers, so much so that the French Consul-General commented on his evident desire to rival Mexico's Porfirio Díaz in his attempt to modernize Guatemala. Reyna Barrios spent enormous sums on building boulevards, fountains, and parks in his capital, and even held a Universal Exhibition there in 1897.

The régime of unconvertible paper money which Reyna Barrios inaugurated, coupled with excessive government expenditure, the continuing fall in the price of silver and coffee, and the threatening revolutionary forces of Próspero Morales and Daniel Fuentes, further exacerbated his position. Mr Pouqueville, a French official explained to his Minister of Foreign Affairs Hanotaux, that this rebellion was not simply a reaction to Reyna Barrios's self-declared dictatorship, but also a response to the worsening financial climate and to a loss of wealth amongst the landholder class:

*En présence du Trésor vide, et son crédit entièrement épuisé, le Gouvernement n'eut plus d'autre ressource que celle de recourir aux expédients; il décréta donc le cours forcé; et cette mesure, tout naturellement, eut pour résultat, en portant les changes à 190%, de paralyser les affaires et les transactions commerciales et d'augmenter encore le malaise et le mécontent.*
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1899–1920

général, On ne se gêna plus de lors, pour critiquer l'administration de Reina Barrios et ses dépenses exagérées; on l'accusa même de n'avoir recherché dans tout ce gaspillage que des occasions de réaliser des bénéfices personnels peu licites.

,,Personne ici, n'ignore que Daniel Fuentes et Prospero Morales, tous deux perdus ces dernières années ne pouvaient suffire à couvrir la coûte d'entreprises dont l'utilité par quelques unes au moins, est contestable.

Du reste, il n'a pas hésité a y mettre un terme et du réduire au strict minimum les charges ordinaires et extraordinaires du budget, et grâce aux économies, qu'en resulteront il espère, ainsi qu'on le décret d'ailleurs, rendre aux banques la possibilité de reprendre les paiements en argent dès le ler janvier prochain, époque à laquelle on se croit assuré d'avoir remboursé les 2/3 de ce nouvel emprunt."

Furthermore, Reyna Barrios was faced with the mounting cost of completing the railroad to the Atlantic which his uncle Justo Rufino had begun. In May 1897 he borrowed one and a half million pesos from the five banks to cover these expenses and pay government salaries, which were about five months in arrears. The loan bore an interest rate of 1% a month and was to be repaid within a year's time. The French Consul General Challet described the situation as follows:

,... Il a aperçu un peu tard, que les revenues de l'État avaient une limite et que les excédents des années dernières ne pouvaient suffire à couvrir la coûte d'entreprises dont l'utilité par quelques unes au moins, est contestable.

Du reste, il n'a pas hésité a y mettre un terme et du réduire au strict minimum les charges ordinaires et extraordinaires du budget, et grâce aux économies, qu'en resulteront il espère, ainsi qu'on le décret d'ailleurs, rendre aux banques la possibilité de reprendre les paiements en argent dès le ler janvier prochain, époque à laquelle on se croit assuré d'avoir remboursé les 2/3 de ce nouvel emprunt."

During Reyna Barrios's last year in office all banks were authorized by his government to postpone any payments to their creditors in gold or silver until 1 January 1898, at which time the moratorium was to end and coin payments were to be resumed. In the meantime, all bank notes were to be accepted as full legal tender for all transactions undertaken in the country. In addition to this, the government took it upon itself to redeem.
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898–1920

any notes, should any banks fail to do so. Thus the decree of 21 May 1897
is considered to mark the beginning of irredeemable paper money with the
status of full legal tender, although Young points out that some time
before this date the notes were already in effect irredeemable. 3 Challet
described the people's reactions to this event:

L'alarme au premier a été grande, surtout parmi les populations indigènes,
qui ont cru au papier monnaie et se sont précipités aux guichets des banques
pour échanger leur billets. Les banques qui n'ont point en besoin de
recourir, comme elles y sont autorisées à une nouvelle émission de billets
et qui, par conséquent, n'ait pas modifié leur bilan, ont eu la sagesse de ne
se point refuser aux échanges de petite valeur et, de ce fait ont un peu
calmé l'irritation de la foule. Le monde des affaires envisage la situation
avec assez de calme. . . .

Guatemala's fiscal situation steadily deteriorated and the Reyna
Barrios government did little to improve its position with regard to the
banks, its foreign creditors and the public. In December 1897 the
government issued another decree which set out to redeem all
denominations of bank notes in silver coin within the next few months.
Although this redemption programme was begun, it was interrupted by Reyna
Barrios's assassination in February 1898.

On assuming the presidency Cabrera found himself confronted by
serious financial difficulties. Throughout Reyna Barrios's six years in
office the price of silver had continued to fall in terms of gold. In 1895
it averaged about 65 cents (U.S.) an ounce as against $1.04 an ounce in
1890 and $1.32 an ounce in 1872. 11 The mounting outflow of silver money
and rising government expenditure forced Reyna Barrios to issue large
amounts of paper money. Although he attempted to complete several
worthwhile projects, he had badly misjudged the Treasury's resources and,
as has been mentioned above, borrowed extensively from banks. The most
immediate consequence of the increase in bank note circulation was a steady rise in inflation; by 1909 note circulation had increased about 600% over what it had been in 1896.\textsuperscript{12}

In order to deal with the serious financial situation which he had inherited and to inspire public confidence, the provisional president established the so called comité bancario. This committee consisted of a representative from each of the banks and two government officials. Its main aim was to control the republic's money supply and assure creditors, both at home and abroad, of the new government's goodwill and intention to pay its outstanding debts.

Like most institutions to emerge during Cabrera's long years in office, the comité bancario was in fact never representative of the different bodies with whose interests it was said to be concerned. In practice, the comité was an institution dominated by the president. It provided a legal façade for the government to continue the issue of unsecured paper money. Soon after Cabrera took office in September 1898, 6 million pesos worth of comité bancario notes were issued. These were to be used by the new government to repay its internal debts and immediate public sector expenses. However, the debts were never cleared, and Cabrera continued to borrow further from the banks, always on advantageous terms, the most important of which was that the government should pay interest at 5% per annum in current money (paper issue).\textsuperscript{13}

The government laid down a small reserve provision behind the new comité bancario to support the nation's entire bank note circulation. At the same time, the government loans drew in part on the banks' reserves which contributed to guarantee the comité's bank note circulation; in return banks were once again relieved of their obligation to redeem their
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898-1920

notes in silver. Soon there emerged the same temptation to which Reyna Barrios had succumbed: with the lifting of silver redemption, the floodgates of issue of irredeemable paper money were opened.

Although certain government revenues were earmarked for the comité with a view to reducing the national debt and accumulating a reserve either in gold or silver, these plans proved futile. The reserve failed to amount to the 30% which the committee had stipulated it had to reach in order to begin redemption of the whole paper currency. Further issues of bank notes were made in the manner already described above until the amount in circulation reached over $200,000,000 (paper pesos) in 1919. Before the outbreak of World War I, the paper peso was worth 5¢ (U.S.) in gold. In August and September 1914, its value fell to 2¢ gold. By 1919, its value had risen back up to approximately 4¢ gold.

In June 1898 the banks held about 2,800,000 silver pesos as reserve behind their paper issue. Within a year this fell to 1,750,000 pesos and by 1921 the financial situation had so deteriorated that only 324,000 pesos worth of silver remained. According to Young:

The circulation on the latter date (1921) was about 356,000,000 pesos, and the metallic reserve thus less than one tenth of one per cent, a negligible amount... This is estimating the paper peso as the equivalent of the silver peso, if the paper peso has a value of two cents gold, and the silver in the silver peso is worth forty-seven cents in gold (silver at sixty-five cents per ounce troy), the reserve would amount to a fraction over two per cent.

In general, the serious inflation consequent upon this vicious circle of paper issue and non-repayment was further exacerbated by the instability of Guatemala's silver-based currency (See Table 1), and the country's dependence upon a mono-export crop. This unhealthy climate was viewed with apprehension by creditors, who did not wish to be repaid in
worthless national currency. Although foreign trade suffered to some extent, the brunt of this depreciation imposed a very low standard of living upon the majority of the population. This was because wages did not rise in proportion to the decline in value of the peso. On the other hand, coffee-growers benefitted from the exchange rate since they continued to pay their labour in pesos, but received gold currency for the sale of their goods.

From Table 1, it is noted that the percentage variation in exchange rate for each year tends to narrow from the early to the middle years of Cabrera's presidency, and increase again from 1914 onwards. Furthermore, the rate itself tended to increase in favour of the U.S. dollar throughout the period 1899-1922.

Although a relationship of mutual convenience had evolved between the government and banks, banking establishments were nonetheless coerced into 'lending' money to the government whenever it was required. Thus, the
money owed to the banks created much the largest part of the republic's internal debt. By the end of 1917, this was said to amount to $1,103,000 (U.S. dollars payable in gold) and $144,746,000 payable in paper pesos making the total internal debt approximately $7,000,000 in gold (U.S.$).13

The U.S. government and many American businessmen viewed the fluctuating rates of exchange and financial instability as matters for concern which justified intervention in the country's politics. Although U.S. companies had invested in railways, the fruit trade and mining, the U.S. government was all the same more concerned in preventing any sort of European intervention in the region. From 1903 particularly, when the construction of the Panama Canal was begun, U.S. foreign policy took a fiercer anti-European stance. As will be discussed below, the U.S. State Department was not only intent upon maintaining peace on the isthmus, but keen to allow its bankers and businessmen to repay many Central American debts to those creditors represented by the Council of Foreign Bondholders, and subsequently to reorganize local currencies and financial institutions.

GUATEMALA'S SOURCES OF REVENUE

Guatemala's sources of revenue were limited and tended not to reach the National Treasury. They were little changed from colonial times and consisted primarily of customs duties, the rum and tobacco monopolies and road taxes. More recent sources of revenue were the postal and telegraphic services. None produced much, with the exception of customs duty, which despite corrupt officials was the largest source of government income. It nevertheless remained insufficient to cover government debts and the additional cost of government projects.

Few accounts of the republic's sources of income during Cabrera's
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898–1920

régime can now be located. The figures and tables which appear below are due to D.G. Munro and J.P. Young. Munro prepared a report on the republic's financial standing in 1919 for the U.S. Department of State and was sceptical of most of the official sources he consulted at the time. Although Munro did not think that these were honest or reliable, his figures are nonetheless used here in order to provide contrast between internal and external national debts.

Table 2 presents Munro's findings of the country's total revenues and expenditures based on the official Memorias de Hacienda for the years 1903 to 1918. The figures given are in Guatemalan national paper currency which fluctuated between $11 and $20 paper pesos to $1 gold (U.S.) from 1903 to 1914, and which fell dramatically to $40+ paper to $1 gold from 1914 to 1919.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>GROSS REVENUE</th>
<th>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</th>
<th>DEFICIT</th>
<th>BALANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>17,586,884</td>
<td>23,201,000</td>
<td>(5,614,116)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>30,315,413</td>
<td>39,906,529</td>
<td>(9,591,116)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>34,058,169</td>
<td>45,392,383</td>
<td>(11,334,214)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>30,500,772</td>
<td>45,732,987</td>
<td>(15,232,215)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>35,297,822</td>
<td>44,560,222</td>
<td>(9,262,400)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>37,335,957</td>
<td>44,929,752</td>
<td>(7,593,795)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>49,239,723</td>
<td>70,554,261</td>
<td>(21,315,538)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>51,571,440</td>
<td>45,959,410</td>
<td>SURPLUS</td>
<td>5,612,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>62,047,475</td>
<td>69,161,969</td>
<td>(7,114,494)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>71,014,726</td>
<td>76,682,916</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>(5,668,190)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>83,644,025</td>
<td>46,463,582</td>
<td>SURPLUS</td>
<td>37,180,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>82,399,824</td>
<td>48,735,805</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>33,664,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>85,007,704</td>
<td>67,841,283</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>17,166,421</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>134,935,121</td>
<td>91,753,289</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>43,181,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>135,471,585</td>
<td>131,413,228</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>4,058,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>110,937,325</td>
<td>77,666,023</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>33,271,302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 20
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898–1920

Although it appears that Guatemala had a surplus ranging from $750,000 to $1,000,000 gold between 1913 and 1918, these figures were arranged to present a more prosperous picture of the country to prospective financiers. By 1913 Cabrera's government had become notorious for leaving the greater part of its obligations unpaid. British creditors insisted on their due that year, and the U.S. began its attempt at 'dollar diplomacy' in Guatemala.

Despite the chronic shortage of government funds, Cabrera inherited a coffee-producing country with a modest communications network and a strong system of debt-peonage. The strong ties which had emerged between the coffee oligarchy and central government offer some explanation as to how Guatemala was able to function when its government expenditure greatly surpassed its income, and how it succeeded in gaining new loans. Cabrera showed an ability, without great government wealth, to continue the expansion of the national infrastructure, maintain peace and an orderly and sufficient labour force for the security of the coffee crop.

The cultivation and marketing of coffee offered more than one source of revenue for the government. Cabrera continued to use the pre-existing system of labour in coffee. The system of debt-peonage provided an income for most of the persons involved; from recruiting agents, jefes politicos or army officers, to coffee plantation exporters, and ultimately to the government. The labour recruiters were satisfied by keeping the greater part of the peso wages promised to the Indian workers, while the majority of plantation owners profited by paying their labour force in paper currency and selling their crop on the gold market; the government benefitted directly from the gold as export duty, and indirectly from customs duty.
In 1889 coffee accounted for 96% of national export earnings and it continued throughout this period to serve as the major source of revenue for servicing of government debts and guaranteeing further foreign loans. In 1900, most Guatemalan coffee went to London, Le Havre, and Hamburg, with Germany taking 60% of the shipments. As will be seen below, coffee export duty was repeatedly used as security for new loans, although technically it was pledged to British bondholders for servicing Guatemala's older external debt. From 1903 to 1912 $1.00 (U.S.) gold was charged per quintal, and thereafter $1.50 gold was collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DOLLARS</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DOLLARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>810,816</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>788,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>684,420</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>741,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>901,995</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1,313,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>569,731</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>1,247,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>881,626</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>1,163,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>664,550</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>1,311,076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table 3 offers further government sources of revenue, mainly customs, monopolies and other taxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1916</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUSTOMS</td>
<td>3,353,853</td>
<td>2,425,974</td>
<td>1,476,518</td>
<td>2,498,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONOPOLIES</td>
<td>459,336</td>
<td>340,610</td>
<td>242,478</td>
<td>385,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER TAXES</td>
<td>265,421</td>
<td>217,537</td>
<td>144,022</td>
<td>174,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>4,076,610</td>
<td>2,984,537</td>
<td>1,863,018</td>
<td>3,158,349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures do not include the revenue from the postal and telegraphic services.
The combination of low wages and inflation forced many citizens to seek additional sources of income. In January 1919 a French Officer, Cavalry Major Contresty, Commander of the French military mission reported to the Minister of War:

La vie ici a plus que triplé depuis mon premier séjour en 1912-1914. Pour une petite maison en bois, composée de 4 pièces et 1 cabinet, en pleine campagne, à 3 kilomètres de la ville, je paye 80 dollars (440 francs par mois). Autrefois, je payais 35 dollars pour une très belle villa en plein centre sur une des principales promenades de la ville. Le reste de la vie augmenté dans de proportions encore plus fortes.  

The increase in the paper circulation of the national currency was not the only reason for this inflation. On New Year's eve 1917-1918, Guatemala experienced one of its worst earthquakes for fifty years. The devastation which resulted, particularly in the capital, forced the government to take action. Although the country received large amounts of medical aid from the U.S. Red Cross, Cabrera did not bother to reconstruct much of the destroyed capital. This resulted in many citizens needing to move out of the city, as did Major Contresty, and the emergence of shanty towns.

In the same letter to the Minister of War, Contresty voiced some concern over his salary and that of his men:

O'ailleurs il y a lieu de remarquer que les appointments donnés aux étrangers, ici, sont toujours beaucoup plus élevés que le nôtres. Dans l'aviation par exemple, le mécanicien (un déserteur français) qui n'a guère que le nom de mécanicien, touche 300 dollars par mois, tous comme les capitaines de la mission. Le pilote, un turc qui se dit américain, qui n'a pour lui que son absolue nullité en tout, et surtout en matière d'aviation touche également 300 dollars par mois. Naturellement ces individus volent et trafiquent par tous les moyens et s'enrichissent.  

Contresty and the French military mission were experiencing what
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most civil servants already knew: that government salaries were insufficient to live on. By 1919 important officials, such as supreme court judges and cabinet ministers, were receiving salaries of $40.00 or $50.00 gold a month.27 Less important civil servants received considerably less, and usually in national paper currency. Cabrera's régime thus actively encouraged graft at all levels of government and society. Consequently, all-pervasive complicity emerged that was to become one of the principal hallmarks of his presidency - as well as providing the means of the country's economic survival. One of the most flagrant examples of this is provided by the president's Minister of Protocol and chief of the secret police, Mario Monteforte di Divisa. This Italian amassed a fortune through the sale of stolen jewelry, blackmail and confiscations. Smaller misdemeanours were more usual, especially in the provinces where it was common practice for judges and jefes politicos to receive bribes for their good offices.

The president himself was not above using similar methods for gaining additional wealth, although it should be pointed out that his ultimate aim lay in increasing his power, rather than his wealth. When Cabrera was taken from his La Palma in April 1920, enormous sums of money were found in the form of cash and cheques in his private study, reputedly for services provided to foreign entrepreneurs and wealthy nationals.28 Therefore, whilst graft allowed Cabrera to maintain low salaries for his civil servants, whose supplement of their income by graft was endemic, it did nothing to alleviate or solve the service or repayment of the internal or external debt.

During the final decades of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century, foreign capital was again attracted to Latin American
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economies. However, Guatemala and most of Central America had until then
been considered by many to be an economic backwater: remote, corrupt, poor
and not worth the effort involved in exploiting its markets. The
acquisition of the Panama Canal by the U.S. coupled with generous Central
American concessions in the early 1900s changed this.

Guatemala's financial record, especially with regard to the Council of
Foreign Bondholders, national banks, as well as its limited resources and
undiversified economy, discouraged many investors. Nevertheless it was not
without its share of foreign interests willing to make loans or offer
their services to the government. Immigrants too contributed to the
development of the republic: most infrastructure had been primarily built
and funded by U.S. and German entrepreneurs. Although it is impossible to
ascertain whether many companies operating or starting projects during
Cabrera's régime had to resort to bribery and corruption in order to win
contracts and profit from their completion, it is certain that he made on
poor terms many of the concessions which might otherwise have provided
considerable revenue for his impoverished Treasury.

By far the most prominent national group in Guatemala at this time
was the German colony. By the turn of the century German finqueros in the
Verapaces had established an efficient method of shipping their coffee
from Cobán to Panzós on a private narrow-gauge railroad line, and thence
by launch and steamboat through Lake Izabal to the Atlantic ports of
Livingston and Puerto Barrios, thus avoiding much central government
bureaucracy. German ascendancy in the region was looked upon with
apprehension by other foreign communities operating in the country, and
this became apparent during the World War I as will be seen in Chapter
Five.
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At this time trade with European countries became increasingly difficult owing to a shortage of shipping and the closure of many markets. On the other hand, the U.S., which already played a major rôle in the supply and transport of goods to Central America, was able to attain dominance in those areas.

During the early years of the twentieth century U.S. interests had steadily increased on the isthmus. Between 1903 and 1906 export-import trade with Central America had doubled, although it remained only a fraction of the U.S.'s overall foreign commerce ($3,000,000,000): in 1906, the value of trade with Central America reached $36,026,000, one-sixth of this amount being with Guatemala. Direct private investment in the region was proportionally high in Guatemala and Costa Rica, where together it amounted to $40,000,000. According to Dinwoodie the greater part of the $20,000,000 of U.S. capital outlay in Guatemala was invested in the Central, Western, the Ocós, and the incomplete Northern railroad, and a lesser part in the expanding banana industry.

Although the U.S. replaced German ascendancy in Guatemala, particularly with regard to trade, German interests nevertheless remained strong. As has been mentioned before, in 1906 Europe, (principally Germany) took 60% of all Guatemalan coffee exports but by 1920, 83% of all coffee shipments arrived in U.S. ports. By 1921, however, German interests were recovering and German nationals were to remain the largest foreign colony in the country until the eve of World War II.

In economic terms the effect of World War I on Central America was one:

...,which was felt in the geographical redirection of trade rather than a reallocation of resources towards new activities. Whereas in 1913, the United
States accounted for 55% of all imports into Central America and nearly 40% of all exports from Central America, by 1920 the figures were 70% and 80 percent respectively. In both cases, the adjustment was made principally at the expense of Germany.

RAILWAYS

The geographical proximity of the Central American isthmus, its strategic importance, its commercial potential and the resources of U.S. business all contributed to U.S. ascendancy in the region. In Guatemala the construction of the railways offered the means through which to enter into local affairs and consequently into another principal sector of Central America's economy, the cultivation of bananas.

For Cabrera, like his predecessors, the railroad continued to be the quintessential 'emblem of progress' and a panacea for the republic's economic difficulties. On several occasions the French, German and Spanish governments were approached by the Guatemalan government for railway loans and for names of possibly interested investors. In 1894-1895 a loan was made by the Hamburg bankers Müller and Thompsen to Reyna Barrios to continue the funding of the Northern railway. The following year a French engineering company under the patronage of Baron Cottu received a concession to continue building this line. However, fear of U.S. competition, internal unrest, and insufficient economic incentive caused them to pull out.

The railroad route to the Atlantic progressed slowly and in November 1896 it finally reached Zacapa. In 1897 the management of the railway changed hands twice, finally being transferred to a North American engineer named May, who had been working on the railway since 1884. In a short time, however, May went bankrupt: by August 1898 his credit was
exhausted. In September the train crews, which consisted mostly of U.S. citizens, went on strike because they had not received their wages. As soon as Cabrera was instated as president on 25 September 1898, the railroad reverted to the government. May was deprived of his position as manager and forced to settle his accounts. He was forced to remain in the country a further two years in order to repay his debts to the government. As the National Treasury was exhausted, the construction project virtually came to a standstill.

In 1903 Cabrera approached the Spanish government with proposals that they cover Guatemala's outstanding and internal debts in exchange for a generous contract with the Marquez de Comillas to complete the Northern railroad. However, the president simultaneously offered the same contract to the U.S.-based 'Central American Improvement Company'. The latter finally agreed to undertake the task of repairing the old line and of finishing the railway from El Rancho (near Zacapa) to the capital. At the time their demands may have seemed considerable to Cabrera: they asked that they be given the right to operate the line for ten years, the receipt of large tracts of land for timber and other plantations, and the sum of 4 million gold pesos in Guatemalan bonds upon the completion of the line.

Cabrera's dual dealings with the Americans and the Spaniards may be viewed partly as the result of his usual vacillation when it came to making an agreement with foreigners and partly as economic shortsightedness. He may in fact have been playing off these two parties in the hope of obtaining a more advantageous deal for his Treasury or private purse. Furthermore, the republic's critical foreign debt and his re-election were important considerations at this juncture, especially in view of growing concern in the U.S. with peace in the region.
The Spanish government was unable to find entrepreneurs willing to invest in Guatemala, whilst their recent experience with the U.S. in Cuba may have also influenced their decision. The Márques de Comillas, having little expertise in railroad building, also declined the concession, leaving Minor Keith, already prominent in Central American railroads, to take over. The Central American Improvement Company found itself unable to extend the line owing to the mountainous terrain and a shortage of funds, and therefore forfeited its agreement. Keith and his partners Farquhar and van Horne recognized the difficulties and expense involved in completing this line but nonetheless they pursued the government for a new concession.

Under the Farquhar-Flamenco treaty of 1904 Keith and van Horne agreed to reconstruct the original railway, renew the equipment (which consisted of old Baldwin locomotives), replace the decaying wooden sleepers and complete the line to Guatemala City, all within three and a half years. In exchange, the Cabrera government guaranteed interest on 4½ million dollars at the rate of 5% for fifteen years, and furthermore granted the contractors 168,000 acres of land in addition to ceding to them the railway for a period of ninety-nine years after the date of its completion. Furthermore, Cabrera exempted Keith and Co, from paying port duties, fiscal and municipal taxes, and any import or export taxes.

The Farquhar-Flamenco treaty undoubtedly offered overly generous terms to Keith and guaranteed the establishment of a monopoly for his affiliate, the United Fruit Company (UFCo), in the production and transportation of bananas in Guatemala. Until then the export of bananas from Guatemala had developed far more slowly than in neighbouring Central American and Caribbean states because of difficulty in recruiting Indian labour to work in the unhealthy lowlands, inappropriate railroad and port
facilities, and the government export tax of 10 cents per bunch. In 1906 Cabrera signed a further contract with UFCo permitting it to establish banana plantations on Guatemalan territory. In 1908 the French Minister d'Avril described Keith's banana operation as one:

qui réalise aux États-Unis, en y vendant des bananes, un bénéfice annuel de 10 millions de dollars. Pour le moment, on a déjà planté une superficie en terrains de bananes suffisante pour permettre d'exporter environ 40,000 régimes par mois. On espère, à la fin de l'année 1908, en exporter plus de 100,000 et, avant dix ans, atteindre un chiffre d'exportation égal à celui de Costa Rica, soit dix millions par an.

By 1910 UFCo had achieved a buying monopoly on Guatemala's banana production, and had the advantage of Keith's pre-existing monopoly on transportation (railroads and the 'Great White Fleet') and port facilities. By 1919 the U.S. Vice-Consul to Puerto Barrios, W.C. Hutchinson, described Guatemala's Atlantic coast like this:

This consular district is practically a banana plantation of magnificent proportions, extending 66 miles along the line of the International Railway of Central America and comprising 23,600 acres in cultivation, which produce annually more than 3,000,000 bunches of bananas. An area of 3,000 acres more were to be placed in cultivation during 1919. The plantation is divided into tracts of 1,000 acres, each of which is called a 'farm'. Each 'farm' has a manager and a time keeper, whose duties are to superintend the cleaning of the land and the cutting and delivering of the fruit. About 4,500 hands are employed.

Upon completion of the Northern railway in 1908 Keith set out to acquire the remaining railroads in the country. These included the Central railway from San José to the capital; the Ocós railway from Ayutla to the Pacific coast at Ocós; and the so-called Panamerican extension connecting the latter two tracks. Given that Thomas H. Hubbard of the Central railway was also a prominent stockholder in the Keith-van Horne company, the two
railroads soon merged.\textsuperscript{42}

In 1912 the International Railways of Central America (IRCA) company was formed in order to take over the existing Guatemalan railways. Later that same year the new company purchased a short line in El Salvador which was eventually extended and connected to the Guatemalan network. By 1913 IRCA owned 360 miles of track, making Guatemala the republic with the most extensive railroad on the isthmus.\textsuperscript{43} Thus, the joint contracts of IRCA and UFCo provided for unlimited use of land for twenty-five to ninety-nine years, access to important resources such as water, and a number of fiscal exemptions already mentioned.

U.S. supremacy in the sphere of transportation of goods and passengers in Central America was not new. As far back as 1898, the French Consul General Mercellin Pellet had complained:

\textit{... Ces deux lignes (The Pacific Mail Cie, and the Panama Railroad & Steamship Line) correspondantes de vapeurs américains, grâce à leur monopole, fixent le prix du fret selon leur bon plaisir, et se permettent toutes sortes de vexations envers les voyageurs; mauvais installation des steamers, lenteur de la marche, (9 à 10 nœuds à l’heure), nourriture ‘déplorable’, grossièreté du personnel,.. arrêts interminables sous un ciel torride d’un ou deux jours à toutes les escales où il y a quelques sacs de café à charger,... exploitation cynique des voyageurs à l’embarquement et au débarquement dans de rades ouvertes où l’on descend les passagers dans des cages au bout d’une verge pour les remonter de la même façon,... Les exportateurs de café du Centre Amérique, souffrent autant de ce monopole que les importateurs Européens ou Américains, d’autant que les chemins de fer allant de la côte du Pacifique à l’intérieure, toutes aux mains de financiers américains, marchent sur les traces de leur armée, la société Colón-Panama et ne redoutant aucune concurrence, imposent à leur clientele forcée des tarifs exorbitants."\textsuperscript{44}}

By 1908 this maritime monopoly was transferred to UFCo’s ‘Great White Fleet’, although the German ‘Kosmos Line’ continued to operate on a regular schedule from Hamburg until 1914. By 1917–1918 of the 340 vessels which entered Puerto Barrios, 336 of these were under charter of UFCo.\textsuperscript{45} By this
time the UFCo already held docking rights to Puerto Barrios and was entitled to charge $25.00 for each ship entering the port.

IRCA too was able to charge high fees for the transportation of goods and merchandise from the interior and the Pacific port of the country to the Atlantic. Thus U.S. controlled maritime and railroad transport further impoverished the state. So too the banana industry, which might have offered a shift in the country's mono-export economy, failed to increase the country's export earnings. Cabrera's concessions proved so complete that the price paid to the national growers of bananas by UFCo was fixed and not a free-market price.\textsuperscript{46}

Taken together Guatemala's two principal exports, coffee and bananas, averaged a very high percentage of the total foreign trade, but, as mentioned above, bananas unfortunately gave little return to the national economy. Whilst both national and foreign entrepreneurs and landowners were able to make handsome profits from their businesses, many invested their earnings abroad and put little back into the country. Enormous disparities of wealth continued to exist, whilst urgent need for labour deprived the large Indian population not only of its freedom, but also much of their communal lands. Furthermore, transportation networks and mooring rights might also have provided much needed revenue for the central government, had they not been ceded to U.S. companies.

In retrospect Cabrera's deals may appear shortsighted and at times even desperate, but it should be remembered that to him and his contemporaries these business transactions were seen as the only way for a republic such as their's to achieve modernity. Furthermore in a country which had little experience of international commerce, and in an era where U.S. expansionism protected its own business interests abroad, Guatemala
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and other Central American republics were made largely impotent as a result. Although Cabrera recognized the importance of sound relationships with the U.S., and furthermore understood the relative weakness of his country, he felt a patriotic desire not to be manipulated by his influential neighbour and also was not adverse to making best advantage of circumstances wherever possible. Undoubtedly Cabrera profited personally from many of these transactions. He believed that by maintaining a friendly relationship with the U.S., and by allowing U.S. ventures to flourish in the country, he could ensure his own dictatorial powers. But Guatemala's repeated issue of fiduciary money and what to many appeared as the president's hypocrisy in diplomatic matters, particularly in his reluctance to carry out the expropriation of the most valuable German properties after the World War, had angered the U.S. government by 1920. His attempts to undermine U.S. plans for Central American republics, and interference in the politics of certain of these countries, further weakened his popularity with the U.S. Department of State. This is further discussed in Chapter Five.

It is necessary to give some background to Cabrera's Central American policies here since in many ways these were motivated by economic considerations and added to the list of failures and frustrations the State Department faced in Guatemala during his régime. Like many other local leaders Cabrera found it necessary to support friendly neighbouring governments in order to minimize any opportunity his opponents and influential exiles might have to band against him. This can clearly be seen in the development of events in the War of the Totoposte of 1906 where many Guatemalan exiles joined forces with the Salvadorean General Tomás Regalado in the hope of toppling Cabrera from power. The events of this
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war are discussed in detail in Chapter Four and need not concern us here, except in that the peace treaty signed aboard the U.S.S. 'Marblehead' launched a series of U.S.-inspired programmes aimed at maintaining peace and expanding American business interests in the region.

The rôle of 'mediator', which the U.S. government now took on as part of President Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbour' policy, hoped to extend American influence in all spheres of Latin American life. Cabrera and Zelaya saw this as a form of intervention and did not welcome it, although it was sometimes to their advantage. Many Central American presidents viewed the desire of the U.S. to re-finance their debts and reorganize their economies, as well as to minimize regional altercations, as just another form of interference: a programme to 'domesticate' the region and make it as trouble-free politically and economically, in order for U.S. companies and interests to flourish.

Among the Central American leaders who did not welcome U.S. intervention in the region was President José Santos Zelaya of Nicaragua, who as early as 1902 had tried to establish his own version of a Central American treaty without success. Zelaya refused to participate in the signing of the historic Central American 'perpetual' treaty of friendship and commerce aboard the 'Marblehead' in 1906, and from then onwards, until his demise in 1909, he dedicated himself to fomenting disorder and political commotion in the area. His battle ground was Honduras where he destabilized and, in 1907, succeeded in ousting President Manuel Bonilla and placing his own choice of Miguel Dávila in the presidency.

The Honduran presidential question continued to cause problems in Central American politics, especially as Cabrera soon became embroiled in the business of overthrowing Dávila, and placing ex-President Manuel
Bonilla back at the helm of government in order to discredit his Nicaraguan rival and install a sympathetic ally in his stead. This led to complaints in the Central American Court of Justice by Honduras and Nicaragua against Cabrera's activities. It was to be one of the court's first trial cases, and the fact that Guatemala and El Salvador were absolved of responsibility for the Honduran revolt confirmed the suspicions of many that this was an inefficient and biased entity which should not be relied upon. Many felt that exoneration only encouraged Cabrera to continue meddling in regional intrigues. For example, Cabrera was believed to have planned to assassinate the Nicaraguan Minister to Guatemala in February of 1909, while in 1908 many felt he had suspected the Honduran diplomat Miguel Oqueli Bustillo of being involved in the April 1908 'Cadet' plot, along with the Mexican government.

Throughout 1908-9 Cabrera and Zelaya continued to threaten each other through their respective allies of El Salvador and Honduras. Zelaya's fierce anti-American stance - his attempts to negotiate a loan with a British syndicate and to make a contract with the Japanese for a Nicaraguan canal - made him unpopular with the State Department. When revolution broke out on the east coast of Nicaragua in October 1909, the U.S. government found a pretext to expel the troublesome despot; the deaths of two American citizens, the filibusters Lee Roy Cannon and Leonard Groce, was sufficient to oust Zelaya. Although the Mexican government tried to intercede on his behalf, no amount of diplomacy could change Zelaya's fate. He was exiled to Europe and everyone hoped that peace would return to the isthmus.

With Zelaya's fall Cabrera became the uncontested 'strong-man' of Central America. He nevertheless continued to feel menaced by U.S. plans to
re-finance foreign debts in the region, and therefore made plans to disrupt the imminent loan project in Honduras. Here too Cabrera continued to see danger in President Dávila, whom he viewed as a being sympathetic with U.S. designs. Cabrera therefore decided to attempt to re-instate his friend Manuel Bonilla in the Honduran presidency, and hired the American filibuster Lee Christmas to help launch a successful insurrectionary force.

Although Bonilla and Christmas succeeded in taking Trujillo, and many other towns on the north coast of Honduras in early January 1911, they were unable to overthrow Dávila. However, when on 31 January the Honduran Congress voted against a U.S.-inspired financial convention, Dávila felt obliged to resign. Although Dávila tried to choose his successor, U.S. mediation aboard the U.S.S. 'Tacoma' at Puerto Cortez on 21 February resulted in the provisional presidency of moderate bonillista Francisco Bertrand. Elections were duly held later that summer, bringing with them Bonilla's long-awaited victory.

Having installed Bonilla in power, financial considerations were briefly forgotten with Cabrera now beginning to plot against President Manuel Araujo of El Salvador. Cabrera felt Araujo's plans for a Central American Federation could undermine his position; furthermore Araujo was an open enemy of Bonilla's and relied on the services of the former Honduran Vice-President, General Dionisio Gutiérrez. Cabrera's aggressive stance towards El Salvador resulted in growing tension along the Guatemalan-El Salvador border. In early 1913 however, before the U.S. was able to offer its good offices, Araujo was assassinated. Some historians believe that there is evidence that Cabrera was behind this death, although this has not been proven.40

By 1913 the U.S. viewed Cabrera as the most 'uncertain and dangerous
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1896-1920

element in Central American affairs', and he was carefully watched for causing further isthmian problems. As will be seen below, his dealings with the British Minister, Lionel Carden, were also not well seen in Washington. Yet by 1914 - despite several contretemps by Cabrera - Secretary of State Knox felt he, Knox, had achieved a reasonable level of stability in the region through his military intervention in Nicaragua and President Wilson's occupation of Vera Cruz. These troop landings, in 1912 and 1914 respectively, were intended to show Central Americans, as well as foreign observers, that the U.S. was serious and intended to stay. Cabrera seemed to have taken a cue from these warnings and was momentarily at his best. So much so that he was among the few who did not join the protests against the Bryan-Chamorro canal treaty with Nicaragua.

However, when in the summer of 1915 President Bertrand of Honduras made plans for his re-election, Cabrera decided that he would prefer to see General Máximo Rosales in power. On learning that Honduran rebel troops were assembling in Guatemalan territory Secretary of State Lansing asked the U.S. Minister to Guatemala, William Leavell, to warn Cabrera not to participate any further in isthmian affairs. Once again, Lee Christmas was recruited and this time joined General Rosales on the Guatemalan border near La Ceiba. Leavell, who had by this time become close friends with Cabrera, denied all allegations of Cabrera's interference in the matter and informed the State Department that the dictator's energies were solely dedicated to his next re-election.

Perhaps because Wilson too was involved in his own plans for re-election, the State Department did nothing on this occasion to reprimand Cabrera. It also came to light that another U.S. businessman, Sam Zemurray of Cuyamel Fruit, was interested in expanding his banana plantations along
II. THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898-1920

the Guatemalan-Honduran border. By 1915 Zemurray's banana empire extended its railroad network towards the Motagua, the traditional dividing line between both countries, forcing Cabrera to place troops along the border in order to protect his territory. As in the case of the Guatemalan-Mexican border, there was a long-standing dispute going back to Spanish colonial times concerning the unresolved nature of the true association between the two countries. Various attempts at arbitration had already been made between Guatemala and Honduras (1895, 1908, 1910, and 1914) but none of these had reached a satisfactory conclusion.

Zemurray's continued efforts to extend a railroad along the Guatemalan-Honduran border in 1917 prolonged and exacerbated the conflict at a time when the State Department was more concerned with the wider implications of the World War in the region. During 1917 Cabrera continued to place troops along the border, in his efforts to obstruct Cuyamel expansion. Although the U.S. tried to offer its good offices once again in 1917 to diminish the possibility of internecine fighting, Cabrera was determined to establish a boundary line without U.S. intervention. To this end he began negotiations with the Bertrand government in September 1917.

When both governments were unable to agree upon a suitable boundary line, the U.S. stepped in. A team was sent to investigate the area in question in January 1918, and they found Cabrera's troops sitting in the middle of Cuyamel's half built railroad. Secretary of State Lansing then instructed Walter Thurston, the U.S. Chargé d'affaires to Guatemala, to ask Cabrera to remove his troops since this was seen as obstructing '...the production of food products so essential to the winning of the war.' Zemurray, too, tried to put pressure on the State Department to intercede on his behalf but without success. The boundary question between Honduras
and Guatemala thereafter became of secondary importance at a time when the U.S. was concentrating all its efforts towards acquiring German-owned properties in the region, and was not resolved until 1933. Guatemala's repeated issue of fiduciary money, and what to many appeared as the president's hypocrisy in diplomatic matters, particularly coupled with his reluctance to carry out expropriation of valuable German properties after the World War, contributed to his losing U.S. support. The importance of this support and its consequences on the events which developed within Guatemala during 1919-1920 are fully explained in Chapters Five and Six.

THE GUATEMALAN FOREIGN DEBT

Guatemala's foreign debts date back to 1825. At that time the Central American Federal Republic, to which Guatemala belonged, contracted a loan of £1,428,571 at 6% in London. In 1838 when the Federal Republic divided, Guatemala inherited five twelfths of this debt, or the equivalent of £67,900. The Carrera government, however, paid no interest on this obligation until 1856 when the debt was transformed into a new 5% loan of £100,000. At this time the principal fell to £54,433 and the outstanding interest reduced to £45,567. At the time, the Guatemalan government hypothecated 50% of customs duties for this loan.

Seven years later (1863) another loan, this time of £11,300 at 5%, was issued privately in London theoretically for the construction of roads, piers and bridges. In 1869 Thomson, Bonar & Co. of London issued a further loan of £500,000 bearing 6% interest, with a 3% cumulative sinking fund. This time, the government pledged the republic's import duties as security.
In 1876 Guatemala defaulted on the 1856 and 1869 bonds. In 1887, after a default of eleven years, the government undertook that a portion of maritime duties was to be paid to a committee representing the creditors. In 1893, however, the government again defaulted, and in 1895 a new arrangement was made. By this contract it was agreed that the export duty on coffee, fixed irrevocably at $1.50 gold per quintal for 10 years, was to be assigned to the bondholders with the full consent of the National Assembly, as a security for the payment of the debt. Thus the 1895 external and internal debts were consolidated into a new 4% external debt of £1,600,000.

The bonds of the old external debt, with one and a half years accrued interest, were exchanged at the rate of £75 of the new issue for £100 of the old; and those of the internal debt at the rate of £75 of the new issue for 500 Guatemalan pesos (equivalent to £80) of the old.

By an arrangement made the following year, Reyna Barrios's government pledged to give the warrants representing the tax on coffee directly to the Banco de Guatemala and the bondholders' agents, who in turn were to hold these warrants and provide the sums required from the proceeds of their sale, and to remit it to the Deutsche Bank, London.

In the 1895-1896 period the government borrowed £39,275 from the Hamburg firm of Thomsen and Müller for the construction of the Northern railroad. This loan was also secured by the coffee export tax. The total amount of the warrants by which the coffee tax was paid was given to Thomsen and Müller, and they were expected to service the Guatemalan debt for two years.

In December 1897, however, Reyna Barrios's government entered into a further contract with the 'New German Syndicate' also of Hamburg, without
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consulting the bondholders. This transaction required an advance on the security of the coffee warrants, which were still pledged to the bondholders. The Syndicate undertook on its part to set aside, out of the proceeds of the sale of these warrants, such sum as might be required for the service of the external debt. In April 1898, when decree number 440 was passed, by which the Cabrera government reduced the duty on coffee by two thirds, from $1.50 gold to $1.00 silver, the German syndicate stated that it would be unable to continue to provide for the servicing of the external debt. Decree 440 caused a general reaction of outrage among diplomatic circles.

In May 1899 Mr Jenner, the British consul to Guatemala wrote to the Foreign Office:

_I have long feared that this Government would not be able to resist the temptation of paying off by means of an issue of bonds of the Internal Debt, the obligations wastefully, if not fraudulently incurred by the last President. The country during the eighteen months Mr Manuel Estrada Cabrera has held office has undoubtedly been much hampered by the existence of those obligations. The fall of the price of coffee was necessarily followed by the reduction of the export duty on that important product and by a great falling off in importation of goods paying duty. Those causes combined, have reduced the revenue derived, from customs in the current years by fully 50 per cent, as compared with 1896._""

The issue of large quantities of irredeemable paper money and high costs in government and military expenditure further affected the ailing national economy. Moreover, decree 440 forbade the conclusion of any contract without the inclusion of a clause which stipulated that the foreign firm would not have recourse to diplomatic intervention in case of any irregularities or need for arbitration. This greatly angered the representative of all legations in the country as their principal duty was to protect their nationals' interests in Guatemala. Mr Jenner explained
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this government measure to Lord Salisbury in the following manner:

...it is evident that the President is fully conscious that the situation is so desperate as to require desperate remedies. His proposal deliberately invites diplomatic intervention to be backed up if necessary by more forcible means in the case of His Excellency's or any future Government should attempt to deprive the bondholders of their position...”

In a letter to Villiers on the same date Jenner also suggested that the only satisfactory guarantee Guatemala could offer the bondholders would be to give them control of the customs houses. Jenner felt that Great Britain could take advantage of the new 'open door' policy and explained his plans for the financial rehabilitation of Guatemala as follows:

Briefly stated, it is proposed to raise a loan of some three millions sterling among the United States, the German and British financiers. The whole of the Customs-Duties would be assigned to the payment of the Interests and the Sinking Fund. All debts, external and internal, might be included; special arrangements being made with the Bondholders. The Customs Houses would be made over to the Syndicate of the Debt to manage in the interest of the creditors, the balance of the revenue after the payment required for the interest and sinking fund to belong to the Government. The Customs Houses to be under the exclusive management of the Syndicate until the whole Loan is paid off.”

Jenner found that the German legation was supportive of the project and felt that they would benefit most immediately from such an agreement since at the time their investments in Guatemala amounted to a figure approaching £15 million sterling. In the case of the Americans, Jenner only mentioned the interests of Mr Huntington, (of the Southern Pacific Railway), who sought the concession for the Northern Railway, as he already owned a large part of the Central Railway from the capital to the Pacific port at San José. In the end, however, the project never materialized owing
to a combination of factors.

Once again a further arrangement was made between the Guatemalan government and the bondholders. This contract reduced the external debt for a period of three years from 4% in cash to 2% in cash and 2% in certificates, and the guarantee of a banking house approved by the council of British bondholders. At the time, the amount required to pay the interest on the external debt was reduced from approximately £75,000 per annum to £30,000. In 1901 these coupons would finally be exchanged for bonds bearing 4% interest, at which time payments for interest and amortization were to be resumed.

The bondholders' coupons for 31 December 1898 were met as agreed on the contract of 1898, but those of 31 December 1899 and 30 June 1900 had not been paid by March 1901. Moreover, no arrangement was known to have been made to provide for the coupon of 10 December 1899. On the other hand, it became known that a sum of money, levied for the security on the coffee crop of 1899, and deposited in the Deutsche Bank pending the settlement of a point under arbitration between the German Syndicate and the Guatemalan government, was handed over to the Syndicate in September 1900. The coffee warrants for the crop of 1900 were then sold to the Banco de Occidente, although in accordance with the contract of 1896, they should have been deposited in the Banco de Guatemala to meet with their obligation to the bondholders. Jenner felt it 'an act of downright spoliation on part of the Government to consolidate their just debts'.

In March 1901 the Council of Foreign Bondholders urged upon the Marquess of Lansdowne that the British government should press claims upon the Guatemalan government. The only country which declined joining this group was the United States. The U.S. Minister in Guatemala, Dr Hunter,
had earlier informed the British chargé that he had been instructed not to intervene 'except in the case of actual discrimination against U.S. creditors of the Guatemalan Government as compared with other creditors'.

Despite the fact that a large part of the bondholders' interest was held in the U.S., the British strongly felt that U.S. nationals received preferential treatment, and were only second to the native banks and government officials, especially with regard to arrears in salaries.

The new bonding laws of the government further vexed the British who felt that these had all the appearance of Cabrera's subtle contrivances devised in order to allow him and his government to 'exercise a free hand in paying its creditors according to its own caprices and without regard to the justice of its obligations towards all'.

Although the Cabrera government increased the coffee export duty in 1900 to $5.00 paper, and to $1.00 gold in 1903, the revenue made was used for other purposes and no payments were made on the external debt. This went on for thirteen years despite a number of diplomatic threats from the British and German governments. In 1897, and also two years later, the German cruiser 'Geier' entered Guatemalan waters, and soon after H.M.S. 'Leander' moored at Ocós. In 1902 the French ship 'Protet' also entered a Guatemalan port. Cabrera repeatedly broke his promises to his creditors although new arrangements continued to be made between them and his government. This was particularly the case with the British bondholders, who repeatedly revised their contract in 1902, 1903, and 1904. In each case, however, Congress, entirely under Cabrera's control, refused to ratify any of these arrangements.

In November 1902, during Cabrera's yearly Minervalías, a serious earthquake occurred in the western provinces, one of the richest coffee
growing districts, which alarmed many, especially as 300,000 quintales of coffee had been lost in that year's crop. It was also believed that over 1,000 persons had died. When the details of the events became clear in the capital, Maxwell Traynor, the British Chargé, wrote to the Foreign Office:

...financial panic resulted and three of the Bank managers being British subjects, two of them called on me to see what could be done to safeguard their interests. The rate of exchange had risen at a bound from 800 percent to about 1300 percent premium, inflammatory articles had appeared in the Press against foreigners in general and against the Banks in particular, and the Government had issued orders fixing the price of necessaries of life such as flour and meat.

The Diplomatic Corps, alarmed at this demonstration of xenophobia, agreed that their doyen, the U.S. Minister Dr Hunter, should speak to the president. After this interview Traynor informs us that the immediate situation greatly improved, food prices returned to normal, inflation going down to 900% and foreigners no longer being threatened.

By May 1903 the overall economic climate had not improved. At that time, Cabrera endeavoured to arrange for a metallic reserve behind the paper issue and issued a decree (number 634) which declared that the amount of bank notes without metallic guarantee should be limited and that all future issues should be secured by coin payment to the extent of 10% the first year, 20% the second, and 30% the third year. At the time of this decree, as has been mentioned above, the government retained the previous provision that in order to issue new paper notes the banks should first obtain the approval of central government. Nevertheless the government itself disregarded all its own rules and when there was a shortage of money it simply printed more. The state of affairs worried the U.S., especially as they viewed any irregularities on the isthmus with concern.
The growing importance of the Panama Canal made the U.S. government wary of pending European debts in Central America, particularly British ones. The occurrences in Venezuela (1902-1903) and Santo Domingo (1902-1904) convinced the U.S. that European intervention was not to be tolerated in Latin America. Roosevelt's successor, President Taft, continued a policy of intervention, but one which set out to promote stable regimes through economic progress. President Taft and his Secretary of State, P.C. Knox, felt that the establishment of customs collectorships and the refunding of debts owed in Europe by American republics was essential for maintaining peace in the region as well as maintaining control. This emphasis on financial reform became the principal objective of the U.S. government's Caribbean policy during the early decades of the twentieth century. Therefore between 1902 and 1920 the U.S. government attempted to have European-held bonded debts refunded by loans floated in New York banks or at least to allow U.S. bankers to make gain from these international operations, while simultaneously maintaining many Latin American governments in check. This was particularly the case with Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Haiti.

As early as 1905 during the Dominican Republic crisis, the U.S. Chargé to Guatemala, Leslie Combs, recommended that the State Department encourage U.S. bankers to assume a financial trusteeship over Guatemala. Combs argued that the reorganization of fiscal structure would relieve the 'intolerable conditions within the republic and prevent any violation of the Monroe doctrine by European creditors'. Combs's advice was ignored by the State Department since other matters in Central America seemed more pressing at the time.

Cabrera, however, continued to approach different governments for
funds and in 1903 the Spanish Minister, Carrera Lembeye was able to provide the Guatemalan government with £6,000 interest free. This in turn 'sirvio a este Gobierno para cubrir los apremiantes atrasos de sus empleados y las exigencias de las fiestas de Minerva'. The president was more successful in securing loans from the Californian banker Adolfo Stahl, whose banking interests were to be linked with Cabrera throughout the latter's dictatorship.

Stahl had been taken on by Isidore Schwartz, founder of Schwartz and Company, Importers, Exporters and Bankers in 1880, as a partner. In 1896 Stahl acquired the Banco de Guatemala, a bank with note-issuing privileges. In the early twentieth century Schwartz and Company personnel were afforded the status of 'fiscal representatives of the Guatemalan government' by Cabrera, and exercised control through corrupt practices until Kemmerer succeeded with the establishment of an institutional banking structure and revised monetary system in 1925.

In 1903-1904 Combs reported that Stahl made several short-term loans of $3,000,000 and $5,000,000 to Cabrera. Stahl was reported to have received 20% on this, a fact which further annoyed republic's creditors. Throughout 1903 the coffee duty was diverted to cover this obligation with Stahl and no interest was paid on the country's external debt.

Nevertheless, the Bondholders' Annual Report for 1904-1905 noted a 'very remarkable appreciation in the market value of Spanish American securities' and indeed the price of Costa Rican and Honduran bonds more than doubled that year. The Council felt that this rise was mainly due to the Roosevelt corollary and the refusal of the U.S. to tolerate any Spanish American republic's attempt to evade payment of debts to any of their foreign creditors. Despite all this the Council continued to have its
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suspicions of U.S. policy in the Caribbean, particularly after the U.S. government failed to pay the money owed them after the U.S. take-over of the Dominican Republic's customs houses in 1904 and 1905.

In Guatemala British bondholders felt that overly generous concessions had been made to Keith and van Horne through the 1904 Farquhar-Flamenco treaty to complete the Northern railway and that this could well jeopardize their future position in the country. Moreover, Cabrera had declined to approve the agreement signed by his agent with British bondholders in July 1904 but went on to make other arrangements for two loans amounting to 3½ million dollars with an 'American Syndicate', possibly Stahl. These loans were secured as always by the usual revenues, principally coffee warrants and import duties, which were already mortgaged to the British. The British bondholders were upset not only by this but also by the fact that a duplicate of the loan contract was said to have been deposited at the U.S. legation in Guatemala City, where the American Syndicate was to have the prerogative to 'solicit the protection of the United States against any violation' of the 'stipulations' of its contract.74

The Thirty-third Annual Report of the Council of British bondholders (1905-1906) concentrated on the other effects of the Roosevelt corollary. The council noted that as the U.S. became more influential it had a propensity to take advantage of its position as watchman of the hemisphere under the Monroe doctrine and this 'naturally caused it to be regarded with dislike, especially by those nations who had invested large sums in the Latin American Republics'. The Council adds:

"It became evident that in order to evade payment of their obligations the dishonest Republics were taking deliberate advantage of the hostility displayed by the United States Government towards the attempts of European
Governments to obtain redress for their subjects. It was contended, therefore, that the position assumed by the United States... carried with it obligations and responsibilities towards those to whose interference they were so strongly opposed. That this contention was well founded has been admitted by the present distinguished President of the United States...

In Guatemala although a customs collectorship was not seriously contemplated until 1909-1910, as early as 1906 the U.S. bankers J. and W. Seligman & Co. had presented the government with a plan for refunding foreign debt and for re-organizing the republic's national currency. The market conditions and lack of support on the part of the U.S. government undermined the Seligman refunding scheme at the time. In 1908 Seligman & Co. revived this project through the U.S. banker and personal friend of the president, Adolfo Stahl. However little is known of the subsequent progress of this plan.

At the same time Minor Keith presented a separate project in view of his effort to consolidate and extend the railroads in Guatemala as well as his banana interests in the republic. Secretary of State Knox seemed more interested in these projects in 1908 than his predecessor Root had been in 1905-1906. This may have been because Knox felt that it was essential to add Guatemala to the list of Central American republics soon to be under U.S. financial trusteeship.

In 1909 Keith and UFCo attorney, Bradley W. Palmer, discussed their plan to refund Guatemala's foreign debt and reorganize her currency with Cabrera. Keith had already been involved in refunding British loans in Costa Rica in 1885 and was to continue the same in Costa Rica in 1910 and Honduras during 1911-1912. Keith sought the support of the U.S. government, particularly in the case of any controversy which might result and in case of default. Keith's plan for Guatemala was an ambitious one
and Professor Kemmerer's 1919 report was similar in many ways. One of the principal provisions of Keith's plan was to provide for the refunding of external debt as well as for the construction of port facilities at Puerto Barrios through the issue of $17,500,000 in 5% bonds. Dinwoodie describes the rest:

A national bank would be established to act as fiscal agent for the bond sale and as a customs agency. The agency would have first charge on the essential export duties, thus securing payments on the new issue. When the receipts warranted, an additional $12,500,000 in obligations would be floated to reorganize the currency on the gold standard - with the monetary unit appropriately named the 'Estrada' - and to pay a subsidy of $7,5000 per kilometer on the railroad to El Salvador.\(^{26}\)

Although the Keith-Palmer plan was designed to further their own business interests, the U.S. government felt that it would promote the economic progress and therefore they provided willing support. In early 1910, soon after Keith and Palmer left Guatemala, a third party, the Windsor Trust Co. of New York, made Cabrera an offer. The Windsor Trust Co. was primarily interested in securing mine concessions for a group led by a New York representative, William Sulzer and the former Lt. Governor of Montana, A.E. Spriggs.\(^{77}\) The Windsor Trust Co. proposed a loan for $10,000,000 to $12,000,000 to the government, but when they heard that Cabrera was considering a large bond issue they proposed a more generous plan.

It appears that none of the three groups gave the State Department much information about their plans, nor did they all immediately seek their government's assistance. The State Department, however, was pleased to learn that both the Seligman and Keith projects allowed for U.S. involvement should arbitration be needed. In February 1910 when the State
Department's plans for financial reform in Honduras and Nicaragua were beginning to develop, the Department declared that it wished to be consulted about Guatemalan projects. Secretary of State Knox is said to have written to all three parties informing them that the U.S. government was interested in the proposed loan, particularly in view of its participating in the security of such a loan. Furthermore, Knox stressed that the government would not later support any syndicate making a loan unless 'it were convinced, after examining the terms, that the arrangement was equitable and beneficial and protected American vested interests in Guatemala'. Between 1910 and 1913 active efforts were made by several U.S. banking groups to assist Guatemala in rearranging her financial affairs and refunding her foreign debt. The three U.S. syndicates and groups mentioned above ultimately showed themselves willing to lend $30,000,000 for this purpose and each made its offer to the Cabrera government. The negotiations, however, were consistently prolonged on some pretext or other and it eventually became obvious that Cabrera would resist any effort to change his country's financial obligations or currency.

In November 1910 the German government demanded a renewal of an expiring commercial treaty between the two countries. Guatemala had several outstanding debts with German interests at the time and sought U.S. support in this instance against German pressure. When the U.S. Minister to Guatemala, R.S. Reynolds Hitt, discovered that Cabrera was hoping to rely on U.S. protection against German demands, Hitt suggested to his superiors that this might prove the necessary incentive to coerce Cabrera into accepting a U.S.-based loan as well as a lever to force him not to meddle further in Central American politics. Percival Dodge, chief of the Latin American division at the State Department agreed:
It would seem to me an excellent thing for us if the Germans should manage to
give President Estrada Cabrera some concern, and I think we should do nothing
to hinder them provided they did not go too far.80

With President Wilson's approval, Minister Hitt was instructed to remain
aloof from any requests made by Cabrera's government at this time.

Although this tactic may have forced Guatemala to accept a new
commercial treaty with Germany in April 1911, it appears to have had a
minor effect on any advancement with those plans for a U.S.-based loan and
currency reform programme. Cabrera's announcement to the National Assembly
concerning the resumption of the refunding proposals were soon forgotten,
particularly after the trade agreements with Germany had been signed.

It was also during the Guatemalan-German controversy that the new
British Minister to Guatemala, Lionel Carden, brought up the matter of the
republic's defaulted external debt which had not been paid since 1895.
Although the State Department viewed the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute with
some apprehension during 1910-1911, they were more concerned with the
factional conflict taking place in Nicaragua and the explosive situation in
Mexico. Nonetheless, Cabrera sent a special envoy to Washington D.C.,
Joaquin Méndez, to attempt to gain assurance that the U.S. would come out
on behalf of Guatemala should any conflict arise. All that the State
Department representative was able to do was to pledge the possibility of
trade concessions as a lever for a refunding scheme if all else failed.

In late 1911, another opportunity arose in which delegated coercion
might serve U.S. interests in Guatemala. At the end of 1911 the Council of
Foreign Bondholders had assented to the government's $3,000,000 loan
scheme, when at the last moment Cabrera decided against signing the
contract. At this point the British Foreign Office lost its patience with
the president and instructed Carden to demand that Cabrera re-establish
the coffee duty to the debt service within a month, or submit the dispute
for arbitration. An article appearing in the London-based South American
Journal expressed some support for U.S. intervention in this case: 'No one
would object, in the interests of the world at large, if the United States
were to clear out, neck and crop, this financial brigand, Estrada
Cabrera'.

The U.S., however, did not decide to vindicate the British; instead it
opted for financial gain for its banks and businessmen. In this manner the
government was persuaded once again to come to an agreement with U.S.
bankers. The British, however, insisted that Knox should meet with Carden
in Guatemala City during the course of his 1912 goodwill tour of Latin
America in order to discuss the need of U.S. recognition of the importance
of the British bondholders' claims against the Guatemalan government.

On 16 March 1912 Carden and Knox met to discuss the fate of the
British bondholders and Guatemala's external debt. The British Foreign
Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, had instructed Carden to acquire U.S. support
for the resumption of service of the debt. Carden offered Knox 'a thorough
accord with England (which) would very greatly facilitate and expedite the
task which the United States have taken upon themselves of pacifying and
developing Central America' in return for their help in reaching a
settlement.

Unfortunately both Carden and Knox failed to understand one another or
to agree on several basic issues. Carden for his part ommitted to
elaborate on the nature and extent of British contribution to U.S. designs
in the region; whilst Knox felt that those concessions Britain asked for
were basically antagonistic to U.S. aims. Moreover, the U.S. government was unsuccessful in reaching a loan agreement between an American bank and the Guatemalan government.

During the summer of 1912 Cabrera was able to stall and object to all drafts which were presented to him and therefore no settlement was reached. On 28 August the British embassy in Washington informed the State Department that the Foreign Office could wait no longer and that it was seeking the good offices of the U.S. government in order to arbitrate its debt dispute with Guatemala in accordance with the Knox-Carden talks in the Spring of that year. \(^{53}\)

This demand took the State Department by surprise since it was unaware of this understanding with Great Britain. Furthermore, the seemingly imminent conclusion of a loan agreement between the Seligman-Speyer group and Cabrera made the State Department intercede on behalf of Guatemala rather than Great Britain at this point. The British were then persuaded to withhold any action for 20 days until 17 September, at which time if a total financial agreement were not complete, the U.S. would be 'absolutely unwilling to intervene' on behalf of Guatemala again. \(^{54}\)

The 17 September arrived with no settlement having been reached between the U.S. bankers and the Guatemalan government, and once again the State Department asked the British government to postpone their demands so that an agreement might be reached. Lord Bryce and the bondholders, however, were not prepared to change their demands either on restitution of the coffee revenues to the bond service, or on the question of arbitration, but they did wait a little longer. By December 1912 the British were becoming very impatient with the delay whilst the U.S. seemed to have reached an agreement and were about to conclude it. The question
of the right of U.S. intervention on behalf of the customs agency, however, became a contentious issue between the Seligman-Speyer bankers and the Guatemalan government and so the contract was not signed.

The U.S. Minister in London was instructed once again to try to gain further support and cooperation from the bondholders and the British government. He was also to tell the Foreign Secretary that the U.S. government would abstain from further involvement in Guatemala if after another twenty day period the situation had not changed. The British Foreign Secretary showed some concern over the inconsistent policy of the U.S. towards British interests in Guatemala and decided against making any recommendations to the bondholders. By February 1913 it was obvious that Cabrera would not accept the Seligman-Speyer contract or, indeed, any other. Cabrera continued to find all the proposals unsuitable for his requirements.

It must have been clear to Knox at this point that the State Department’s dealings made with the British government in order to force Cabrera to refund his foreign debt and reorganize Guatemala's national currency had failed. As there was less than a month left of the Taft administration there was little Knox could do to change matters and in Guatemala City Minister Hitt was advised to take no further action. With the U.S. seemingly no longer interested in the country's finances, the British government and its bondholders felt able to pursue their original plan.

At the end of April 1913, Carden presented Cabrera's government with an ultimatum warning him of forcible intervention if the coffee revenue was not restored to the bond service. On 10 May a British warship entered Belizean waters and the government resumed service of foreign debt.
Under the arrangement entered into, the government was to deliver to the bondholders' representative warrants for payment of the coffee export tax up to an amount sufficient to pay the coupons for the current year, and was to admit no other warrants in payment of duties until these had been exhausted. In 1912 the coffee export tax had been raised to $1.50 gold. The certificates issued in lieu of interest from 1898 to 1901 were to be exchanged for new bonds bearing 4% interest, with coupons from 1901 attached. The unpaid coupons from 1901 to 1913 were to be exchanged for deferred certificates bearing no interest. On 1 July 1917 payments were to be resumed, and Guatemala was to deal with the bondholders in regard to amortizing the deferred certificates.

Between 1913 and 1917 payments of interest were made on a regular basis. Most of the time money for this purpose was given to the bondholders' representative by as much as a year in advance. It appears that this was in order to avoid the need of turning over the coffee warrants directly to the British. No attempt, however, was ever made to provide for the principal debt. Sinking fund payments were not resumed in 1917, nor was any arrangement made for amortization of the deferred certificates.

Although Knox's plans for refunding Guatemala's external debt and reforming her currency failed, the State Department nevertheless continued to press Cabrera for a settlement on these two issues. It is clear that the president did not wish to be under U.S. control, which would be the case should a customs agency and a national bank be established by an American group. Furthermore, he did not wish to antagonize those supporters - coffee planters, merchants and government officials - he had made by cracking down on the corrupt economic system which had developed.
in his time and by reducing inflated domestic prices from which this group benefitted.

The outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 offered new opportunities for the U.S. government to become further involved in Central American affairs. In July 1914 the German Minister left Guatemala and less than six months later the treaty of commerce and friendship between the two countries expired. In 1916 both Wilson and Cabrera were re-elected and the Bryan-Chamorro treaty was signed between Nicaragua and the United States. This agreement, which conceded land to the U.S. for the construction of a canal, and for naval stations in the Gulf of Fonseca, led to formal protests by neighbouring states and ultimately led to the dissolution of the Central American Court of Justice.

In April 1917, the U.S. declared war on Germany and Guatemala closely followed suit. Although the U.S. government was pleased by Cabrera's act, they were concerned about rumours that he was encouraging and aiding the Tinoco brothers to overthrow the U.S.-backed government in Costa Rica. The deteriorating financial condition of Guatemala also continued to be a matter of great concern to the State Department.

By December 1917 Guatemala's internal debt was reported to be $1,102,872 payable in gold and 144,745,771 pesos payable in national currency (paper). Munro calculated the total internal debt to be approximately $7,000,000 gold. This figure did not take other claims against the government into account, such as the $1,250,000 to $1,500,000 gold being claimed by IRCA, which the government refused to recognize.

Surprisingly depreciation of the currency did not affect the position of the Cabrera government as badly as might have been expected. This was probably because when the depreciation of the currency began, the
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government adopted the practice of compelling payment of a portion of the nominal duty, first at twenty, then at thirty, and finally at fifty % gold, which in turn became the largest part of the country's receipts. The other reason which has already been mentioned, was the benefit for exporters of coffee of a high exchange rate. Nevertheless, public discontent within Guatemala was growing and the devastating earthquakes of December 1917 to January 1918 sparked off much popular resentment towards the regime as will be seen in Chapter Five.

In 1919 D. G. Munro wrote of this period:

Owing to the depreciation of the currency and the oppression of the officials, the standard of living has become lower and their general situation worse during the last twenty years. Public and private morality have been corrupted by a long period of terrorism, and the financial administration has been thoroughly demoralized by graft and mismanagement of every conceivable kind.  

By 1919 the State Department was more convinced than ever of the need to reform Guatemala's currency since they felt that this was the only way to improve financial, commercial and political conditions in the country. Therefore in the summer of 1919, E. W. Kemmerer, an economics professor at Princeton, was sent to Guatemala to make an in-depth study of the country's financial situation. The worsening political climate, however, made further consideration of a loan difficult, especially as Cabrera remained reluctant to enlist the interest of U.S. bankers and rejected Kemmerer's report. Moreover, Cabrera further displeased the U.S. government by his uncooperative behaviour especially as regards liquidating German-owned properties under the U.S. inspired Enemy Expropriation Act.

In 1918 the U.S. War Trade Board named Edward Ames as Special Agent...
to advise Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua on the treatment of German-owned properties in these countries. Initially Cabrera had bowed to State Department pressure in the hope that the funds secured by the sequestration of German property might serve as security for a loan.\[33\]

Even though he agreed to liquidate German properties, in Guatemala most German assets were not affected. It is true that German utility companies and the Verapaz railroad were sequestrated, but the main German holdings remained intact. In the summer of 1919, the U.S. Charge, Walter Thurston, received a listing of all other German properties in Guatemala; these consisted for the most part of the best coffee plantations in the country. Their worth was estimated at $7,700,000.\[34\]

By the end of 1919 the State Department felt that little or no action had been taken by the Guatemalan government in this matter. They had received reports that Cabrera was not only placing obstacles in their way, but was secretly negotiating the return of many of these properties to their German owners. Dinwoodie describes the U.S. government's reaction to this behaviour:

The Department moved to frustrate the covert negotiations by further promoting public sale of the property. On December 26, 1919, Thurston was instructed to suggest that the Government set a definite date for bidding. Estrada's reaction was the customary legal cooperation but 'de facto' resistance.\[35\]

In January 1920 Cabrera issued a decree inviting the receipt of bids. The president, however, never disposed of any German properties with the exception of the Empresa Eléctrica, which was sold to a U.S. firm only days before his overthrow in April 1920. This seems to have been the only concession made by the government regarding the settlement of German
CONCLUSION

The financial condition of Guatemala during Cabrera's presidency should be assessed with regard to three separate influences, and any judgement as to the quality of his financial stewardship should attempt to disassociate the relative importance of these on the ultimately observable parameters by which overall economic climate is gauged. These influences are:

a) The financial condition of the country which Cabrera inherited from Reyna Barrios in 1898.

b) The influence and actual effect of external forces beyond Cabrera's immediate control on the country's economic development. By this is meant the willingness or otherwise of other governments or institutions to loan money to Guatemala or conduct business with her, the effect of the First World War and natural events such as the 1917-18 earthquake, and the evolving world around Central America before and during Cabrera's presidency.

c) Cabrera's own decisions and actions that might, in themselves, have played a defineable rôle in the country's economic fortunes.

Some 'observables' are inevitably blurred to a greater or lesser extent by the usual confidentiality which surrounds monetary transactions, even with the benefit of access to contemporary records. The tendency either not to record the details of a deal, or to reveal spurrious or partial information makes the job of analysis more difficult. Thus the historian is biased towards the gross economic indicators such as exchange rate, discount rate and fiscal system, and away from less-easily determined
factors such as internal and external debt figures and the extent of black marketeering, at whatever level within the social or administrative hierarchy.

Taking the exchange rate as a basic guide, Table 1 showed the depreciation of the peso against the U.S. dollar from 1897 to 1922 by a factor of about twenty. The Guatemalan currency was tied to a mixed gold and silver standard in 1878, but between the 1870s and 1890s silver depreciated 50% in relation to gold, causing gold coinage to disappear. The government granted right to six banks to issue notes continued to permit redemption against silver until 1897, despite continuing depreciation of this metal. Thus the years immediately prior to Cabrera's taking of power saw a considerable reduction in the value of the precious metal reserve because of the decision of the Reyna Barrios government to maintain, at least in part, a silver currency standard. The U.S. dollar was tied to a gold standard from the 1870s, and this contributed to the pesos's depreciation in the later years of the nineteenth century.

The years from 1892 to 1898 saw President Reyna Barrios institute several costly reforms and construction projects, which necessitated substantial borrowing by his administration from the banks. Some of these loans comprised the silver collateral against the peso, which when the administration defaulted on repayment, provoked the calming response that the banks were no longer obliged to repay notes in silver. The phase of construction, largely concentrated upon railway building, which saw six new permanent ways come into being during this period, in addition to new docks at Puerto Barrios in 1891. With a currency not fully guaranteed by metal reserves, Cabrera was probably forced to confirm the inconvertibility of the peso, which he did on 9 June 1899.
Starting the presidency with the inheritance of internal debt, and a weakening currency, Cabrera was presented with the dichotomy of needing to maintain expenditure on infrastructure projects that would increase his stature, and which might, in time, produce additional revenue through increased trade, and the reality of static revenue from coffee export duty. He not unreasonably chose the bold path of economic expansion and turned to external sources of cash. Thus the European and American traders and growers who were the mainstay of the coffee and, less importantly, the fruit businesses were supportive of his approaches to the banks of their respective nations with the reassurance that they would be favoured by virtue of associated creditor status and allowed to continue their gold earning trade with bearable levels of taxation.

The volumes of coffee exported for Cabrera's years show a fairly constant level of around 700,000 quintales annually on average, with short term fluctuations. With the sole change of duty from $1.00 to $1.50 in 1906 the revenue of Guatemala from this source stays in the $0.7m ($700,000) to $1.2 million gold range throughout his presidency. However, external borrowing to fund Cabrera's administration, including his increasing dependence on the military, saw a capital repayment and interest burden that progressively outstripped these revenues, and steadily devalued the peso.

During the early years of the century Cabrera found sources of money largely in the U.S., and efforts by his creditors to maintain a schedule of repayments were repeatedly flouted. The coffee export revenue had been contracted in 1895 as guarantee to loans from early nineteenth century, and which amounted in 1900 to about $1.05 million through repeated default. Cabrera did not honour this contract, and used coffee revenues
to service new loans made by an American banker and merchant in Guatemala Adolfo Stahl.

These loans amounted to some $3 million to $5 million, and Stahl commanded an interest rate of 20% on the debt, additionally seeing the money deposited in his bank and used to purchase weapons and other commodities supplied by his other businesses. Despite disapproval by the Council of Foreign Bondholders, based in England, of European loan default, and a delegation led by Great Britain in 1901-1902 to secure promises of repayment from Cabrera, he continued to ignore any agreements he had made.¹⁰⁰ Fears subsequently arose of European intervention, and U.S. Secretary of State Knox listened with interest in 1909 to a plan for American banks to assume financial trusteeship over Guatemala.

The plan was that of Minor Keith, and looked to refinance Guatemalan external debt and construct port facilities by issue of $17.5 million in 5% bonds, thereby allowing the U.S. to remove the thorn of European influence and look towards a Guatemalan currency based on the gold standard. This plan was cold-shouldered by Cabrera, and a second similar plan was proposed by Seligman later that year with equally little result.

Increasing pressure by the European bondholders in 1911, represented by British Minister Lionel Carden, finally coerced Cabrera in 1913 into resuming the service of foreign debt by pledging coffee revenue to interest payment. From 1913 to 1917 this agreement held, but thereafter no effort was made to repay the capital sum. At the time, the War had caused a severe loss of confidence in the major currencies, and the gold standard was temporarily suspended. Furthermore, the devastating earthquake of 1917-18 within Guatemala itself would have caused a significant loss of morale amongst rich and poor alike, and probably contributed to the more
irresponsible attitude toward financial control in Cabrera's last years.

After the War Cabrera's days were numbered - through pressure from both within and without the country. Cabrera's stubborn and dilatory treatment of the various attempts by the U.S. government to institute loan projects and currency reform programmes led Guatemala to eventual bankruptcy. It also frustrated a long series of attempts by the State Department to establish their policy of dollar diplomacy in Guatemala. The Guatemalan dictator not only tried their patience, exhausted their resourcefulness and confidence, but also caused some ill feeling between the British Foreign Office and the U.S. State Department.

Furthermore his involvement in Central American politics and the growing opposition to his régime within Guatemala further undermined his position with the U.S. government. His reluctance to comply with U.S. demands regarding German properties and refinancing the economy, turned the Wilson administration against the dictator and contributed towards U.S. support of an opposition party. Nevertheless the State Department continued to hope for refinancing the Guatemalan economy in order to confirm their supremacy in the region. To this end Professor Kemmerer visited Guatemala in the summer of 1919 with a plan for examining the financial standing of the country and restructuring its economy. Although the State Department may have anticipated a negative reaction from Cabrera, their determination to reform the currency and thus solve the debt crisis overrode these concerns.

Kemmerer's 1919 efforts may be seen as an overture in the quest by the U.S. to institute these reforms, which upon his return in 1924 at last saw success. Despite resistance by President Orellana to the Kemmerer plan of monetary reform, decree No. 890 of February 1925 placed the newly-
named Guatemalan currency, the quetzal, on par with the U.S. dollar.

In conclusion, Cabrera's administration spanned the transition from an inflating silver-based currency, with large European loans inherited from his predecessors, to a currency strongly backed by U.S. credit and about to adopt the gold standard. Through his time, the president's consuming desire to remain in power directed his financial judgement to this sole end, and inexorably led to Guatemala's increasing indebtedness, and consequent increasing concern to, its wealthy neighbour. The First World War drew the developed world's attention to the problems that profligacy by governments of poorer nations could bring, and brought about sustained efforts to control issue of credit to such countries. Cabrera's end was perhaps hastened by these changes of attitude.
Manuel Estrada Cabrera was born in Guatemala’s second largest city, Quezaltenango on 21 November 1857. It is not certain who his father was: Cabrera would have us believe it was Pedro Estrada Monzón, and Chinchilla, Valladares Rubio and one of the ex-president's daughters, doña Joaquina Estrada viuda de López, are certain this is the case. However, Batres Jáuregui and Arce Valladares say it was the priest Raimundo Estrada, while Beltranena Sinibaldi does not think the identity of the father is known and feels that the surname 'Estrada' simply belongs to the family which took this foundling into their home. Arévalo Martínez, who has written the most complete account of the Cabrera years, assumes that Estrada Monzón was the future autocrat's father. He describes Estrada Monzón as a bookish and balding man from a respectable Quezaltecan family who was nicknamed 'el Padre Nuez' by the townspeople; a corruption of 'el padre no es' since he had long abandoned his studies for the priesthood. Throughout this work we shall refer to the president by his maternal surname, as there is no doubt about that relationship.

The future president's mother was doña Joaquina Cabrera. Quezaltecos say that her name originated because she herded goats in the hills surrounding the city, but she was better known for making tamales and selling sweets in the streets of Xelajú. She also earned her living by cooking in households such as that of the well-to-do Aparicio family, and by doing odd chores. The French Minister, Marcellin Pellet, described her as 'une marchande de quatre saisons', a jack-of-all trades. Her loyalty to her son and her hard-working nature were to make her a symbol of motherhood throughout the republic during Cabrera's twenty-two years in power.
The original birth certificate in Quezaltenango states that the child, Manuel José, was left in the doorway of the Estrada Monzón house. There is no record, however, of don Pedro ever acknowledging his paternity. Many years later, in 1912, President Cabrera asked the Archbishop, Julián Raymundo, to alter the certificate so that it would read that he, Manuel José, was the legitimate son of Pedro Estrada Monzón. Similarly, when doña Joaquina died in 1908 she was officially named doña Joaquina Cabrera de Estrada, a name she had never had in life.

The Estrada Monzón family took Manuel in and educated him as a young child. He learned to read and write with doña Bonifacia Barrios Villagrán, the aunt and godmother of none other than Justo Rufino Barrios. Cabrera’s school years were not happy ones, as he was ostracized and nicknamed ‘el bolitero’ because he sold his mother’s round sweets at school in order to help with the family income. All accounts of those who knew him as a child and adolescent describe him as a reserved and lonely person, who quietly resented those who had more than he. A Jesuit, one Padre Arrubla, noticed his serious temperament and, sensing that he could help the boy, got him a scholarship to study at the Colegio de San José, one of the best schools in Quezaltenango. He was a conscientious student, and took great pride in learning how to write an elegant hand, which was to become familiar to future generations of students during Minervalías. Cabrera was among the first to graduate from the Instituto Nacional de Varones and received his diploma from President Barrios in 1874. After leaving school, he went to work as a clerk for the Quezaltecan lawyer, Guillermo Marroquin, in the Second Tribunal of the Court of First Instance, since he could not then afford to study law at University. Later, when the Universidad de Occidente opened in 1877, Cabrera was amongst the first students to
graduate from its law faculty.

Cabrera began his career as a lawyer and notary public during the final repressive and cruel years of Barrios's dictatorship. Although Barrios had no clear Liberal credo when he came into office, he based much of his government policy on positivist writings and on social-Darwinism. These were used to justify generous concessions to foreigners in the hope of 'europeanizing' a highly Indian population, and simultaneously diversifying the country's agriculture and economy. The Liberal Reform (1871) of Barrios and García Granados broke the fifty-year long Conservative stronghold over Guatemalan politics and brought the republic further into the world economy through the modernization of its infrastructure and a shift to coffee production. This resulted in the strengthening of a new social class, those elements who wanted to liberalize the economy and broaden somewhat the political base of government. In many ways Barrios personified provincial sectors who resented the Conservatives (also known as the serviles), an élite that had generally been based in the capital and which supported the Church and believed in preserving colonial structures and privileges and in centralizing state power.

Barrios consolidated the power base of a wider social group, most of which had formerly only been on the fringe of decision-making: the ladinos. It is usually accepted that the ladinos began to participate in national politics during Rafael Carrera's long Conservative presidency (1837-1861). Barrios's emphasis on a professional army whose ranks consisted mostly of ladinos not only ensured Liberal hegemony, but practically guaranteed the political stability of the country through a succession of autocrats.

In many ways, Cabrera was an exceptional figure, as he belonged neither to the military élite nor to the entrepreneurial class. His entry
into the governing classes was achieved through education and a career in law. Barrios's belief in learning, and his founding of many institutions for higher education during his time in office, assisted Cabrera's education and provided him with opportunities he may not otherwise have had. Furthermore, Barrios's decision to appoint Cabrera Judge of First Instance and provisional jefe político to the department of Retalhuleu in 1882 gave him a direct presidential blessing as he entered the world of politics.

During the next ten years Cabrera followed a quiet career as a provincial lawyer. He became familiar with the workings of national politics on a small scale and learned to distinguish between the privileges bestowed upon civilian and military authorities. He also learned about the effectiveness of ministerial and executive power. During the mid-1880s Cabrera returned to Quezaltenango as Magistrate of the Fourth Court of Appeals. Little is known about him during this period, and as the only accounts of these years were written subsequently by adulators, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. It is clear, however, that he was an able litigation lawyer. During his years in Xelajú, Cabrera taught at the Law Faculty of the Universidad de Occidente and served briefly as its Dean.

During the Barillas government (1886-1892) Cabrera represented Quezaltenango as its congressman in the National Legislative Assembly. There he was able to observe the central decision-making apparatus and its participants at first hand, and to see the pervasive influence of corruption. The most notable features of Barillas's presidency were his creation of a General Staff of the Army, and his support for an army which was too large for the country, with its concomitant excessive cost. This was to leave a legacy of inflation for future governors.
Cabrera appeared innocuous to many, being neither liked nor disliked, but he was respected for his thorough knowledge of law and an impressive memory which was to help him throughout his career:

...Por lo vasta, bien ordenada y exacta su memoria era un registro de títulos, nombres, abuelos, fortunas, anécdotas y datos de toda laya relativos a los habitantes de Guatemala. Conocía los orígenes genealógicos de las familias, sus entronques de parentesco, sus opiniones íntimas, el estado de su hacienda, sus empresas económicas y aun las dificultades caseras que abrumaban al ciudadano, en todo lo cual intervenía.

In 1891 he was elected mayor of Quezaltenango. This position gave him experience of managing various functions of a city: its water system, electricity, police force, schools, prisons and liquor sales, as well as dealing with all strata of society. Although he had now earned the respectful titles of 'don' and 'licenciado' he still felt looked down upon by many citizens. Nevertheless, during his year in office he effectively maintained public order and consolidated his own power base.

In 1892 Justo Rufino Barrios's nephew, General José María Reyna Barrios, won the presidency against the Conservative candidate, Dr José Llerena. Another Liberal candidate, Próspero Morales, agreed to cede his votes to Reyna Barrios on condition that he be given a ministry in the new government and be assured of winning the 1896 elections. By the 1890s the Liberal Party had supporters throughout the twenty-one provinces of the republic and even had a growing number of carpenters, smiths, tailors and workers in its ranks, along with land owners. Reyna Barrios was popular within the army as he had seen active service at the battle of Chalchuapa in 1885, while his travels abroad made him equally popular among sophisticated civilians. His government was welcomed after Barillas's uninspired policies. The journalist, Hernández de León, described these
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years thus:

Los primeros cuatro años de gobierno del general Reyna Barrios, fueron sencillamente brillantes. Recuerdo la alegría, el bienestar, la cordialidad que existía en la familia guatemalteca, no obstante el reciente tramo de lucha electoral y choque de partidos. El Presidente sorprendía cada poco con obras de progreso material; la libertad se sostenia en todas sus manifestaciones; se apreciaba un impulso a las fuerzas industriales; una legión de hombres de empresa, nacionales o extranjeros, creaban nuevas fuentes de trabajo; se marcaba una tendencia a la liberación del indio; se dijera que Guatemala era la Tierra Prometida, las pasiones daban sensaciones de recogimiento y un caso de malquerencias se acentuaba en todas las ordenes sociales. 

In the early 1890s the coffee price was high. Reyna Barrios's cabinet consisted of faces and names familiar to the citizens of the country, the only 'unknown element' being his Minister of the Interior, Licenciado Manuel Estrada Cabrera. In the capital the press asked: ¿quién será ese señor? for little was known about the man who was in charge of public order and had, under the president, full control over the legal system. There was gossip, however, about how Cabrera came to be chosen. Some sources state that General Reyna Barrios had originally elected Cabrera's better-known half-brother, Licenciado Francisco Cabrera, to serve as his Minister of the Interior. Francisco Cabrera had not only handled Reynista propaganda in the western highlands, but was also an obedient follower who would have represented an important sector of provincial support in the capital. Some believe Cabrera poisoned his half-brother in 1892 in order to replace him, but these allegations remain unsubstantiated.

During the next five years he was to be involved with the drafting of laws, deciding appointments to political and military posts in the departments, naming judges, dealing with the police, maintaining order and keeping the republic's rudimentary health system up to date as well as attending to countless other details of government. His thoroughness soon
made him aware of individual allegiances, secrets and problems, which in many instances gave him power. The archives containing his official correspondence during this time are full of denunciations, routine reports and accounts from spies concerning all sectors of society. The knowledge he gained made him aware of the great and increasing power at his disposal.

At the time, Cabrera seemed an ideal candidate for the cabinet, for there were few complaints against him and he seemed to show no overriding personal ambition. During his early years in the Ministry of the Interior, Cabrera attracted little attention. Naturally, he came to know fellow ministers and had frequent dealings with the Minister of Finance, don Salvador Herrera, who belonged to one of the wealthiest families in the country at the time. From the outset he was shrewd in his personal dealings with the president, fellow cabinet members and subordinates. Some may have underestimated his abilities, but others began to fear him despite his modest appearance:

_Vi al que entraba. Un señor con toda la fachenda del licenciado de la época, metido en una severa levita cruzada, cautó en el caminar, de mirada escudriñadora, de bigotes caídos, mata la color y de saludar ceremonioso que se concretaba a inclinar brevemente la cabeza y expresar una sonrisa fría, No se detuvo a dar la mano a ninguno hasta que se plantó frente al general Reyna, con quién se cruzó un rápido saludo, Sueltas las manos, dio la vuelta y se perdió entre el abigarrado conjunto de invitados,"

Another of Cabrera's talents lay in his use of legal terminology to convey the legitimacy of the Reyna Barrios government. As Minister of the Interior he learned to emphasize those issues which gave him a philanthropic image and which made for good press. His yearly reports to the National Assembly are full of the rhetorical language which was to become so familiar less than a decade later. His concern ranged from the
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interests of the aged, the orphaned and the sick to the installation of sewers and the making of laws which would serve the finca owner.

It has commonly been argued that Cabrera was the instigator of many of the ills which befell the country during Reyna Barrios's presidency, but this may not be entirely so. It is true that he was involved in drafting and passing many unpopular laws which were to have a vital impact on the country's national life. An examination of the decrees issued by the Minister of the Interior shows that through this department Reyna Barrios himself instituted many changes which, differently expressed, would probably have been unacceptable. Undoubtedly Cabrera's legal know-how ultimately helped Reyna Barrios to proclaim himself dictator in 1897, although it is important to remember that the 1879 Constitution had been written with an autocrat in mind. The dissolutions of the National Assemblies in 1893 and 1897 certainly served to limit, if not to violate, basic civil rights. Cabrera may in fact have masterminded the dissolutions of the Constituent Assemblies in 1893 and 1897. He was accused of having conspired to rid Congress of many Cabinet members during August 1897 when Reyna Barrios declared himself dictator. Finally, he helped pass Decree 527, which governed the issue of paper money and was to have long-term economic consequences.

All the qualities Guatemalans had admired in the cosmopolitan Reyna Barrios during his first five years in office - his interest in architecture and the arts - were forgotten with the worsening of the economic climate. The extravagance of the 1897 Central American Exposition was estimated to have cost 5 million pesos and resulted in a rise in inflation which further exacerbated the economic difficulties. The trust citizens had previously been willing to give Reyna Barrios was lost with
the spread of internal repression reminiscent of his uncle's régime.

Those who resented Reyna Barrios's dictatorship the most were the presidential hopefuls. They were Próspero Morales, José León Castillo and Daniel Fuentes Barrios. All three were Liberals. Morales had begun his political career under Barrios and had expectations of being the next president. Castillo was a Liberal favourite and protégé of the aging Liberal thinker, don Manuel Montúfar. As a student in 1887 Castillo had founded a newspaper called *La América Central*. He represented the department of Quiché in the Legislative Assembly when it was dissolved in 1893. His disapproval had been so strong that he had been imprisoned for saying: *Excito Señores Representantes para que no salgamos de aquí, si no es empujados por las bayonetas de la tiranía.* During his period as mayor of Guatemala City Castillo had refused to sign a decree authorizing the issue of water bonds, despite Cabrera's attempts at coercion. Finally, Fuentes Barrios was distantly related to the president and considered by many, especially in Quezaltenango, to be the legitimate Liberal successor.

Castillo's support came from students and intellectuals, whilst Morales was backed by some sections of the army, both officers and men, and Fuentes Barrios by what many felt were opportunists. Fuentes Barrios was the least capable of the three; he was not as honest as Castillo nor did he have Morales's practical political experience. Fuentes Barrios's followers typified the worst qualities of the 'politically aware' population. Gramajo, editor of *La Guillotina*, a pro-Fuentes Barrios publication, and secretary of the Quezaltenango club, described them as:

...todos aquellos que habían descubierto en él una mina fácil de explotar, ya que todo el dinero del Banco de Occidente estaba a su orden, dada la fe que en él tenía don Juanito Aparicio (manager of the Bank). Recuerdo bien que mucha gente del oriente del país llegaba a San Marcos, se inscribía en los libros, pedía
Reyna Barrios tried to out-manoeuvre his adversaries by posting them to remote _jefaturas políticas_, a ploy which served simultaneously to occupy them and to keep them under control. Castillo was made _jefe político_ in Chiquimula, the traditional _castillista_ headquarters. Morales was sent to the distant capital of the department of San Marcos near the Mexican border. Fuentes Barrios was appointed to the department of Quiché, and was the only aspirant to have refused the position. He felt he could do more for his candidacy if he remained in the capital. All three men were strategically posted far from one another - the Quiché lying towards the north, while San Marcos lay towards the west and Chiquimula towards the east. Had they been less self-centred they could have attempted to surprise the president's forces in a concerted effort to overthrow him at this time. Their personal differences, however, only magnified the divisions within the Liberal party itself. Castillo chose not to take advantage of the large following he had in the eastern provinces and after briefly serving as _jefe político_ he left the country for a self-imposed exile in neighbouring El Salvador. Morales, too, preferred to leave for southern Mexico where he began to organize rebel forces.

In El Salvador Castillo met with one of his strongest supporters, the former Congressman, Rosendo Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz had been in the National Assembly with Cabrera during Barillas's final year in office and had strongly criticized that president's mismanagement of state funds and his strengthening of the army. With Santa Cruz's support, Castillo launched what has come to be known as the 'revolución de oriente' in September of 1897. This incursion coincided with an attack from the
Mexican border by prosperista and fuentista forces which had also been joined by Licenciado Feliciano Aguilar, president of the recently dissolved National Assembly. Their troops took the plaza at San Marcos with cries of "¡Viva la revolución! ¡Abajo el tirano!" All prisoners were freed, the telegraph office was seized and several government offices were plundered. Castillista and moralista troops failed to agree on a strategy or even to join forces despite the presence of capable military leaders on both sides. Furthermore, the triumvirate of Morales, Aguilar and Fuentes Barrios on the western front was not a successful combination. President Reyna Barrios hoped to counteract the attack on the plaza of Quezaltenango by ordering the arrests of Juan Aparicio and Sinforoso Aguilar on 8 September 1898. He could not have foreseen the consequences of this action, but was able to lure Fuentes Barrios to his side, persuading him to betray his fellow conspirators.

Fuentes Barrios may have calculated that if he helped Reyna Barrios eliminate mutual rivals, he would have only the president to contend with at a later date. The choice of prisoners in Quezaltenango and the announcement that they would be executed should rebel forces attack the plaza there is significant. Both Aparicio and Aguilar were highly respected members of Quezaltenango's society and each had offered to support Fuentes Barrios's candidacy. Aguilar had offered the use of the newspaper, El Guatemalteco, which he directed, and Aparicio offered financial support. Without Aparicio's funds or Aguilar's influence, Fuentes Barrios knew he had little chance of winning, and therefore he did his best from within the rebel headquarters to ensure that no harm would come to them. He forbade General José María Lima to attack the plaza at Totonicapán, a prohibition which proved to be a serious tactical error. This blunder was further...
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complicated by General Socorro de León's defection from the moralista forces, and contributed to their final defeat. Within a few days the insurrection had been quelled and all real or suspected castillista and prosperista supporters had either fled the country or gone into hiding.

During the days of this revolution news of the Aparicio-Aguilar imprisonment and possible executions led to pleas from friends and relatives. As Reyna Barrios's mother was distantly related to the Aparicio family and perhaps because he recognized the injustice of his order, the president agreed to rescind it. The order had originally been sent to Quezaltenango's jefe político, Roque Morales, by Cabrera as Minister of the Interior. It is widely believed, although there is no substantive evidence, that Cabrera sent another telegraph commanding Morales to execute both men, despite having presidential orders to revoke the original order.16

Cabrera had begun a personal vendetta against the Aparicio family during his year as mayor of Quezaltenango. Arévalo Martínez reports that the root of this grudge was an incident in the 1860s, when a member of the Aparicio family accused doña Joaquina of having stolen cutlery from their household.17 During 1891 Cabrera had begun to discredit the Aparicio's electric company and succeeded in turning their clientele against them and finally forcing them to sell their assets. Most of Cabrera's orders in Quezaltenango were carried out by the former director of the capital's police force, Roque Morales.16

In 1892, as Minister of the Interior, Cabrera had suggested that Morales be named comandante en armas of Quezaltenango. Since that time Morales had followed Cabrera's instructions to eliminate any opposition to him or the president in that province. Morales's timely appointment on 12 August 1897 resulted from the growing unrest in the western provinces and
made the Aparicio-Aguilar shootings on 13 September possible.

These two deaths, which took place next to Xelajú's church of San Nicolás, added to Reyna Barrios's unpopularity. Cabrera's repeated failure to follow orders startled the president and led to his temporary removal from the Ministry of the Interior. On 22 September the official newspaper, *El Diario de Centro América*, announced that Cabrera was being sent on a special mission to Costa Rica. It was never announced what his mission was in San José and it was generally believed that this was only a measure to curtail his powers and distance him from national politics. The Minister of Education, Licenciado Mariano Cruz, was provisionally to replace him as Minister of the Interior. This was to be Cabrera's first and only journey out of Guatemala during his lifetime. No records exist of his impressions of the neighbouring Central American republics and of the persons he met there.

When he came back from Costa Rica in October 1897 Cabrera did not return to his former government post. At the time, he lived modestly on the Calle del Sol with his mother and a half-sister who ran a *tienda botada*. This was a 'corner shop' which sold charcoal, firewood and other basic household items. Hernández de León described the shop as being so simple that it did not even have a counter. It is not clear what Cabrera did during the subsequent months, whether he returned to law practice or was able to subsist on any savings he may have acquired during his five years in office. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he does not appear to have used public office to line his pockets; in January 1898 he borrowed 2,000 pesos from Rafael Villela Guzmán.³⁹

Many of Cabrera's critics believe he used this sum for paying an assassin to kill President Reyna Barrios the following month. Lizardo Díaz
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claims that Cabrera was seen with Zollinger, who was later to kill the president, in El Salvador when he was returning from his mission and may have hired him at that time. Pineda reports a meeting between the two men in Costa Rica. The unusual circumstances of Zollinger’s subsequent death and rumours of his having been poisoned are not without interest, as many of Cabrera’s future rivals were to be eliminated by poison throughout his régime. The French Minister, Marcellin Pellet, wrote about the affair on 26 July 1898:

It will probably never be known whether Cabrera was directly involved in Reyna Barrios’s death on 8 February 1898, especially as so little is known about the assassin, Zollinger. He is generally believed to have been of German origin, though Mr Pellet reported that he was a Scotsman born in Dublin. His motive is generally ascribed to his promise to avenge the death of his young master, Juan Aparicio, although there are those who state that his crusade against Reyna Barrios was the result of the president’s wish to expropriate a relative’s property which was adjacent to a presidential finca. Zollinger appears to be a victim in this affair and in the employ of persons unknown. Reyna Barrios had many enemies, including the three Liberal candidates who continued to scheme against him.
from abroad. As late as his birthday on 24 December 1897, he had discovered a Conservative-backed plot and been able to stop it.

The Zollinger assassination was well organized. On the morning of 8 February 1898, Reyna Barrios had received two anonymous letters warning him of the imminent danger, so he was more prudent than usual. Nevertheless, when he received a telephone call from a Spanish actress named Josefina de la Rocca asking him to come to her rooms as had been his habit, he agreed. As a precaution he wore a black cape and hat and surrounded himself with more bodyguards than usual. As she lived not far away from the palace he went on foot. On his return from de la Rocca's he was assailed by Zollinger who fired four shots at him. Some people believe that several officers accompanying Barrios also turned on the president and shot him. This may explain the deaths of several of those officers present on the evening of 8 February. Emilio Ubico gained the nickname of 'matamuertos' when he continued to shoot at Zollinger's already dead body. Could there be any truth in the allegations that General Félix Flores gained a jefatura política for his discretion about the events of that evening?

Soon the news that 'Reyna ha muerto' ran through the streets and citizens stayed close in their homes and waited. By Decree 360 of 24 April 1897 Cabrera had been named First Designate, or Vice-President. That evening he maintained that this decree made him the legal successor to Reyna Barrios and that although he no longer held the post of Minister of the Interior, his position as Vice-President was still valid. Cabrera argued that the decree might have been revoked during the forthcoming sessions of the Legislative Assembly in March 1898, but as this crime had interfered with chronology he was still the legitimate successor to the
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presidency. Cabrera had won what Wyld Ospina called 'la lotería del poder'.

The accounts regarding Cabrera's assumption of power on the evening of 8 February are not without contradictions and an element of myth. Cabrera was collected from his home by Commander Francisco Perdomo and hurried to the presidential palace in the company of this officer and his fourteen-year-old son Diego. These two remained behind when he arrived at the palace and after identifying himself he was allowed to join the cabinet members already present. Unarmed, he quietly entered the room where Reyna Barrios's ministers were deciding whether the Secretary of Public Works, Feliciano García, or the ex-Minister of Finance, Salvador Herrera, should be provisional president. They had apparently forgotten about Cabrera and the legality of his claim. Cabrera's composure and determination to succeed the dead General resulted in their finally signing a document declaring him provisional president until elections could be held.

Cabrera lost no time in reorganizing his cabinet and stayed up all that night giving orders. On 9 February the newspapers published the edict signed by all former ministers proclaiming his position as provisional president. He had few civilian or military supporters but was able to count on the collaboration of the Second Designate, General Manuel Soto, and of General Daniel Marroquín. On that same night Cabrera learned what divisions lay within the army and which officers supported his presidency, or at least were willing to take his side. One of his first orders was to replace General José Nájera as commander of the capital's military garrison, appointing General Marroquín in his place. The resultant fighting has been seen by many as a struggle between Conservative and
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Liberal forces.

'Barbaroux' (Felipe Estrada Paniagua) described the occurrences in detail. He believes that the Conservative conspiracy was based at the 'Club Guatemala' and was led by the following civilians: García Salas, Raúl and Salvador Herrera, León Bolaños, Abraham Montiel and Joaquín Asturias Arroyave. They relied on the military support of Guatemala's 'comandante en armas', General Nájera, and of the 'mayor de plaza', Commander Salvador Arévalo, as well as that of General Miguel Enriquez, Colonels Hipólito Ruano and de Arzu y Zepeda, and the Spanish Lieutenant Colonel José María Bustamente. General Salvador Toledo, the Chief of Staff, was also suspected of siding with the Conservatives, but as he found himself in the presidential palace and closely watched by Cabrera he was unable to take action. Toledo wrote a reply to Barbaroux's accusations in a pamphlet entitled 'De Mentis' in which he refutes Barbaroux's account and attempts to clear his name.

It appears that General Nájera and Commander Arévalo conspicuously opposed Cabrera from the outset and refused to take orders from anyone except the Minister of War, General Gregorio Solares, who at the time of Reyna Barrios's death was on the Pacific coast. When Marroquín arrived to replace General Nájera, the latter refused to step down from his post and summarily shot General Marroquín when he tried to assume it. Nájera sent for a battalion from the nearby village of San José Pinula and set about taking several important forts throughout the city. Cabrera managed to counteract the Nájera-Arévalo plot by keeping the other generals under surveillance, closing all telegraph offices and surrounding the main garrison with government forces. By dawn of 10 February, Nájera and Arévalo forced the General Paymaster of the Army, Lieutenant Colonel

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Augustín Estrada Contreras, to give them $60,300 pesos from the Treasury and fled for the border of El Salvador. Nájera subsequently tried to recruit an anti-cabrerista force, but met with little success and disappeared from the political scene shortly thereafter.

The ex-president's funeral ceremony was indecorously hurried over on account of Cabrera's fears. Shouts of allegiance for Cabrera were, nevertheless, heard in the chapel where Reyna Barrios's body lay surrounded by mourners. A manifesto was published that day directed at the army and the new president used well-respected members of the army to legitimize his position of power. The former moralista General, José María Lima, became one of his most ardent supporters. On 20 July 1898 he spoke before the Third Battalion and soon its officers also offered Cabrera their allegiance.

A state of siege was declared, suspending all personal guarantees and allowing for the arrest of many suspected prosperistas and moralistas. On 12 February Cabrera issued Decree 572 which offered political amnesty to all those in exile or in hiding since the 1897 revolution. Prisons were emptied and public schools, which had been closed during Reyna Barrios's last years for lack of funds, were opened. In his campaign to appear benevolent, Cabrera returned many properties which had been expropriated during his predecessor's presidency and announced that elections would be held in August of that year. Cabrera insisted that his administration would be brief and repeatedly expressed his concern and respect for the law.

On 21 March Castillo's return to Guatemala was announced. Soon Morales and Fuentes Barrios joined Castillo; all hoped that fair and free elections would be held and thus they began to campaign. Cabrera's goodwill and political tolerance was so widespread that it permitted one of the earliest
recorded University student processions to take place. This subsequently became known as the *huelga de dolores* as it coincided with the Friday before Holy Week. This tradition, which continues to this day, provided a stage for social and political satire as well as for written criticism of government affairs. Freedom of the press was allowed for several months preceding elections, but many anti-cabrera publications were short-lived, such as *La Ley* which published a total of twenty-six issues. In one of its earliest issues, the castillista newspaper, *Pro Patria*, foresaw its own fate:

_Hoy por hoy Estrada Cabrera nos tolera, pero cuando la indiada - los 700,000 indios que ahora están aprendiendo a decir 'Vas a botar Cabrera' - haya depositado sus votos, entonces las bayonetas triunfadoras sabrán callarnos._

This newspaper was systematic in its criticism of Cabrera. Its contributors greatly feared the uses of legality in the hands of such a man. They complained about the general amnesty that had been given to long-standing prisoners and about the unfair treatment given to private citizens, especially those supporting Castillo. Furthermore, Cabrera's decree of 23 June that no person should be allowed to carry a weapon - even a walking-stick - was seen as further proof of his campaign to intimidate innocent citizens. It was widely reported that votes for Cabrera were being bought at the price of four _reales_. Both *La Ley* and *Pro Patria* accused the provisional president of using government funds for financing his own propaganda, with agents in Mexico and the United States promoting his supposively 'irreproachable' reputation.

When Cabrera came to power there were ten independent newspapers in circulation in the capital and eleven in the main provincial cities. These
were gradually replaced by cabrerista publications such as La Idea Liberal, directed by Mariano Bancos and El País directed by Enrique Arís and Samuel Piedrasanta. Other cabrerista publications which appeared at this time were: El Sufragio, La Metralla, El Clarín, El Torpedo, and El Volcán. Many of these were to disappear after the elections and to reappear briefly during future electoral periods.

Cabrera launched a comprehensive campaign to ensure that he would win the August elections. Liberal clubs were established throughout the republic to advocate his candidacy and to counteract the many castillista clubs already in existence. There were at least five of these in the capital and no less than seventy in the provinces. Castillo's popularity and well-organized political programme had to be beaten. Liberal clubs sprung up in little towns like San Miguel Petapa and San Juan Atitán. In Guatemala City alone there were eleven cabrerista clubs. Sometimes they carried the name of the barrio or town where they were located but more often than not they had names which embodied Liberal virtues: Club Los Hijos del Trabajo, La Juventud Guatemalteca, Porvenir de Guatemala, La Paz, La Democracia, La Verdad, La Constitución, and others. The Ecuadorean writer, Nicolás Augusto González, reported that 200 were established throughout the republic in 1898 to support Cabrera's candidacy.

Pamphlets to promote Cabrera's candidacy were published in Indian dialects, mainly Quiché and Cackchiquel, even though most Indians were illiterate. Many women were also involved in advocating Cabrera's nomination even though they had no right to vote. A leaflet appeared on 9 July signed by the women from the cantons of 'La Libertad' and Barrios in Guatemala City stating:
The women of Zacapa voiced similar feelings in June. That same month, Señorita Magdalena Barrera of Jutiapa spoke at the club 'La Rosa de Oriente' where she said:

Nosotras también en Nuevo San Carlos Sija, un grupo de señoras y señoritas se reunieron para formar una sociedad lírico-literario... y olvidando el arte acordaron trabajar por la candidatura de Licenciado Manuel Estrada Cabrera.²²

Castillo's motto 'por el pueblo y para el pueblo' was soon superseded by Cabrera's concise 'Paz, Legalidad y Progreso'.

Fourteen jefe políticos were removed from their posts for refusing to support his candidacy and government employees continued to be shuffled or fired from office. Cabrera demanded to read all incoming and outgoing telegrams, particularly those relating to the Ministry of War. He also ordered that all ammunition and arms be brought from provincial garrisons to the capital. The French Minister described the rôle played by many civil servants, particularly in the provinces, at the time:

Les 'Chefs Politiques' (préfets) ont organisé ouvertement dans toutes les villes et jusqu'au fond des derniers pueblos (villages) indiens des clubs cabrèristes, et malgré les menaces de l'arbitraire gouvernementale, on osa imprimer que les prisons ont été ouvertes pour fournir au Président des agents électoraux. Des officiers généraux et supérieurs, dont le nombre ici est infini, parcourrent le pays aux frais du Trésor pour distribuer des circulaires et des bulletins. Plusieurs du reste de ces agents trop zélés ont déjà été assassinés.²⁴

Among those who appear to have been assassinated were the jefe político of Quiché, General Manuel Aguilar and the Municipal Secretary of Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa, while the entire municipal staff of Totonicapán
was reported to have been imprisoned during this time. In the provinces castillista leaders were beaten up by local thugs and most of them were imprisoned by order of the regional jefe político. The editors of La Ley, devoted castillistas, paid for their support with their lives. A twenty-three-year-old law student, José María Urbizo, was shot for writing on behalf of Castillo's candidacy. As elections approached repression grew and cabrerista mobs took greater liberties in bullying castillista and moralista supporters. Licenciado Francisco Lainfiesta and Ignacio Molina, editors of Pro Patria, had the windows of their homes smashed. Arrests became a daily occurrence both in the capital and in the provinces.

Although Cabrera felt he had most of the political machinery under control he had few genuinely loyal followers. Since 1871 citizens had learned to adulate their rulers, but such political submissiveness was often forced upon them. For many this servility provided a means to rise through the social hierarchy, while to others it gave hope of guaranteeing their property and their family's well-being. Morales and Castillo soon realized they stood little chance of winning the presidency through democratic means, so both fled the country once again.

As early as April Morales tried to overthrow Cabrera. This attempted coup went virtually unpublicized and few details can be given about it. On 25 July Morales attacked Guatemala from Chiapas once again. He is said to have had the support of Mexico's dictator, Porfirio Díaz, who did not wish to have another strong president next door who might undermine his own position. The prosperista forces were estimated at 1500 and were armed with the latest Mauser rifles. Although Morales's troops soon took the garrison at San Marcos, they did not proceed to take the plaza at Quezaltenango as had been expected. Instead they made for the port of Ocós.
on the Pacific coast where they sacked U.S. and German coffee repositories. The provincial garrisons were ill-prepared for a military attack, especially since most of their arms (even if outdated) had been taken to the capital by order of Cabrera in March of that year.

Once again Cabrera was faced with deciding which general to put in command of his forces. He hesitated between assigning the ex-Minister of War, General Salvador Toledo, General García de León (head of artillery) or the former president, General Lisandro Barillas. He finally decided to appoint the fifty-eight-year-old Barillas to the post:

During the three weeks which this revolution lasted the press was forbidden to publish any news of the uprising and all telegraphs were intercepted. Minister Pellet commented on the campaign of disinformation regarding matters of importance in the capital during August and mentioned Cabrera's cautious behaviour and the new sombreness which filled the palace:
Beyond the palace walls the public read that government troops were ten to twelve times stronger than the rebel forces. The only source of information available during those days came from government pamphlets and bulletins which were distributed in the streets and which pointed an accusing finger at the Mexican government's involvement in the insurrection. The U.S. Minister, Mr Godfrey Hunter, also accused the Mexican Minister, Mr Lera, of supporting the rebels. Mr Lera was outraged at the accusations made against him and his government in the official newspaper, *El Guatemalteco*, and demanded reparations and apologies.

As in the previous year, when Morales had attempted to launch a coup against Reyna Barrios's government, his inferior number of troops and lack of decisive action led to his defeat. The arrival of the British ship H.M.S. *Leander* at Ocós at the beginning of August, further undermined his confidence. By 17 August, Morales and his followers had to give up and flee. Later that month, Morales was caught by cabrerista forces not far from San Marcos, where he had been hiding in the inhospitable Cuchumatán mountains with two companions. Morales, who was already in delicate health and suffering from fever, fatigue and hunger, died before reaching San Marcos.

During Cabrera's first months in office several important generals also died under unusual circumstances and there has been speculation as to whether Cabrera was responsible for their deaths. The French Minister, caught up in the intrigues of the times, wrote to his superiors in Paris on 6 August 1898:
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Le Général Calixto Mendizabal, Major Général de l'armée, ancien Commandant en chef des troupes gouvernementales dans l'insurrection de juillet dernier, qui remporta la victoire de Quezaltenango sur Prospero Morales, grâce surtout, il est vrai, à la trahison de Général Fuentes, étant mort subitement d'une angine de poitrine à la suite d'une discussion très vive avec M. Estrada Cabrera, l'opinion accuse celui-ci de l'avoir fait empoisonner. La mort du Général Mendizabal a été pourtant très naturelle, de l'aveu de médecins non suspects. On affirme aussi que le Général Florentino González, qui allait rejoindre l'armée d'Occident très à contre-cœur, aurait été assassiné en route par son ordonnance payée pour accomplir ce crime. Mais je répète qu'ici toutes les nouvelles sont sujettes à caution.

All were cautious and no one felt safe anywhere. The massacre of whites by Indians whose lands were being infringed at San Juan Ixcoy in July further alarmed citizens, especially the foreign community. That month the German Minister's coachman was badly beaten and robbed by drunken soldiers. Crime increased every day and citizens stayed at home because of the release of many questionable criminals. The police ignored many of the misdemeanours and concentrated on intimidating the local population. During H.M.S. Leander's stay in Guatemalan waters, many were reassured. Furthermore, reinforcement of the capital with 7,000 men on 7 August maintained order until elections were held later that month.

Despite castillista abstention from the urns, Cabrera was elected by 310,000 votes. This number was extremely high: even the 'Reformador' himself, Barrios, had never claimed to receive even half that vote. On 22 September the suspension of guarantees was lifted and three days later the National Assembly declared Cabrera the 'popularly elected' president. A lavish dinner was held at the palace to celebrate the occasion, with the Diplomatic Corps, cabinet members and officers as guests. This was the first time the president had appeared in public since February of that year, for he had been absent from the dinner held in honour of H.M.S.
Leander's Captain Fagen and his crew as well as the dinner commemorating the military victory over the prosperista insurrection. Cabrera's presence came as a surprise to everyone as he so rarely made a public appearance. Pellet describes the impression the new ruler made on him that evening:

"Le Président a même mangé, ce qui a surpris tout le monde, car il ne touche depuis six mois qu'aux plats que sa mère lui prépare à son domicile, et qu'on apporte au Palais deux fois par jour dans une caisse de tôle cadenassée, escortée par un piquet de soldats, sans le moindre mystère d'ailleurs."

In six months Cabrera had eliminated some of the most dangerous elements in the army: Nájera and Arévalo were in exile, while Mendizábal, Gonzáles and others were dead. Those who remained were under surveillance or sent to isolated posts where they were constantly watched by fellow officers. A purge of the army had begun. Two of his most dangerous political rivals, Próspero Morales and Rosendo Santa Cruz, were dead. Castillo and Fuentes Barrios posed little threat from their exiles in neighbouring countries.

As the new president had kept a low profile during his years as Reyna Barrios's Minister of the Interior the press knew virtually nothing about him and were able to create an image for this new Central American dictator in what became one of the most sophisticated propaganda campaigns on the isthmus. It was to serve him well during the next two decades. Cabrera was also to commission well-known writers to promote his administration, as was seen in Chapter One. In this, his first campaign, Cabrera enlisted the support of women and Indians, bringing them into an area usually reserved for literate, white males. Although these two groups had few rights it is significant that he attempted to mobilize them, or make them appear as if they were involved in the electoral process.
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Cabrera showed remarkable skill in handling the different factions contending for his position and in appeasing former cabinet members and government appointees. He also demonstrated his ability to coordinate the elements at his disposal. As Minister of the Interior Cabrera had learned how provincial posts could serve as a strait-jacket to some, and how a well-managed police force could serve to keep the population meek and pliable. He also knew that he must be vigilant at all times and trust no one. His presidential period was to begin on 15 March 1898 and to end on the same date in 1905.
Nobody pretended to believe that whisper; the whole story of the Great Conspiracy was hopelessly involved and obscure; it is admitted in Costaguana that there had never been a conspiracy except in the diseased imagination of the Tyrant; and, therefore, nothing and no one to betray; though the most distinguished Costaguanero had been imprisoned and executed upon that accusation. The procedure had dragged on for years, decimating the better class like a pestilence.'

Cabrera's notorious reputation is now principally due to a novel. Most educated Guatemalans are familiar with Asturias’s El señor presidente, as are many other Latin Americans and some non-Spanish speakers. This novel placed him on a par with some of the most notorious autocrats of the region: Zelaya of Nicaragua, Gómez of Venezuela, the Ezeta brothers of Costa Rica, and later Trujillo of Haiti. In El señor presidente Cabrera appears as a nameless shadow whose will dominates every aspect of life and the fate of every citizen. His administration is seen as one where repression and corruption are the only policies. Few appreciate his efforts to promote education and diversify agriculture since these are often regarded as self-promoting and short-sighted. That Cabrera was able to organize and administer the republic for so long under many difficulties is in itself remarkable and deserves better explanation.

Historians have overlooked this administration even though it has been the longest dictatorship of Guatemala to date, and though sources for the period are many and varied. Domestic newspapers, pamphlets and government publications are generally flattering and sycophantic. There were exceptions, but even these tended to be edited by Cabrera himself to show that freedom of expression existed, though some were produced by journalists
like Hernández de León who were prepared to suffer the consequences of differing. Articles were also written by foreign journalists, poets and authors. A good view can also be formed through the examination of diplomatic reports from various European and American observers. Although national prejudices and concerns are present, these reports attempt to assess the situation with perspicacity and honesty. Furthermore, one's sense of the veracity of an event, or the sense of 'this probably happened this way', is reinforced by similarities in the descriptions sent by different ministers to their respective foreign offices.

For the historian of Latin American dictatorship Cabrera is of interest for the way in which he refined the legacy he inherited from his liberal predecessors, and for how this affected subsequent governments and political attitudes. Most existing histories of Guatemala merely mention the most negative aspects of his administration, without considering the crucial question of how he managed to remain in power for twenty-two years.

In this chapter we will examine how Cabrera modified the political system he inherited in order to meet his own needs - principally to perpetuate himself in office. It is clear that he was not in the business of politics for money; rather, it was power that attracted him. Some writers have argued that the longer he remained at the helm of government and the more adulation he received, the less possible he found it to step down. Cabrera himself told Hernández de León in 1920 that this had been the case. From the outset, Cabrera made great efforts to gain the approval and total subservience of the national assembly in order to legalize his position. He also refined an antiquated police system with which to control the populace. Secret agents, at home and abroad, ensured his dominion over
friends and enemies. Finally, he came to dominate the army, without whose organization he could not have guaranteed a regular labour force for the coffee planters, built roads and railroads, maintained order in the provinces or fought wars.

Poor economic conditions affected the government treasury and the well-being of the nation. Civil servants' salaries were in arrears and foreign debt in default, yet somehow the country continued to function. Corruption, which was not new to the region, became essential for the machinery of politics to work. 'Turning a blind eye' too, became fundamental to the survival of the régime.

Many who participated in Minervalías, signed their names on the yearly letters of congratulations and fêted the Benemérito de la Patria regarded Cabrera as the absolute sovereign and master of all life and property in the republic. He created a web of power, with himself at the centre, which reached into almost every aspect of life. The liquor monopoly, property transactions, every public meeting, newspaper article or parade - all these were controlled by the dictator. Even aspects of life which many would consider out of the reach of government and law were regulated by the system which emerged. This was achieved through the use of intimidation and by Cabrera's meticulous attention to detail.

Más que activo fue laborioso. Tuvo siempre fama de ser un gran trabajador, meticuloso y temático. Cuando a mí me habló de su laboriosidad, ya recluido él en su celda de prisionero, en mayo de 1920, lo hizo de una manera pintoresca: 'Yo soy como los carpinteros de Totonicapán, Señor Ospina, que trabajan mucho aunque hacen malos muebles. Toda mi vida he tenido la costumbre de levantarme de la cama a las cinco en punto de la madrugada...y a la tarea!'

He was always careful not to appear to break the law, though many like Rodríguez considered the Constitution a practical fiction:
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La Constitución y las Leyes son irrisorias. La voluntad del autócrata no reconoce límites ni cortapisas. Con la mayor frescura da una orden de envenenar, de fusilar o de matar a palos; de encarcelar, atormentar o deportar; de expropiar, sin trámites ni indemnización; de impedir que alguno salga del país o desembarque en un puerto; de prohibir que se verifique un contrato, o de obligar a que otro se lleve a cabo; de que una sentencia sea favorable a determinada persona, o contraria a otra; de que un criminal sea absuelto, o que un inocente salga condenado. Al mismo tiempo se ocupa de minuciosidades, mandando que tal artículo se publique en un periódico, o que otro sea suprimido; que fulano sea vigilado por la policía secreta; que la correspondencia de zutano sea interceptada; que a tales presos se les permita una hora de sol, o que a cuales se ponga incomunicados, o al contrario; que se pongan en libertad tales y tales reos, que estaban condenados a muchos años de prisión...³

Many of Cabrera's private papers and his copies of government documents at La Palma were destroyed during the earthquakes of 1917-1918; much of what survived disappeared before La Palma fell in April 1920; and the little that remained was collected by individuals when La Palma was sacked. Many witnesses remember how some of the president's correspondence could be bought on street corners of the capital.⁴ According to Manuel Valladares Rubio, Cabrera had bought the national post office so that he could receive copies of all letters of importance, including many to diplomatic legations, on a regular basis. When General Salvador Toledo returned after Cabrera's fall and an absence of fourteen years, he found all his correspondence - in its original form or in duplicate - in the private archives of La Palma. This implies that Cabrera also had persons working on his behalf in foreign post offices, particularly in Mexico.⁵

It must be said that the dictator was always careful not to write any incriminating evidence against himself. One has only to look at his pleas of defence, written during his imprisonment, to realize that throughout his long administration he never overlooked a detail and was careful not to
appear to break the law. Cabrera orchestrated others to carry out his plans, and it would appear that the majority of his most important commands were given by word of mouth to his most loyal followers, rather than in writing.

The extraordinary events which brought him to power were explained in Chapter Three and show that he trusted no one and was, in turn, not above suspicion. Cabrera's methods for attaining and remaining in power can certainly be described as machiavellian. He allowed elections to be held during his sixth month as provisional president but made sure that, by that time, most of his opposition was divided, exiled or dead.

During his first months in office Cabrera maintained a close watch on provincial government and concentrated on eliminating his opposition. One of the first to unmask his questionable methods was the Scandinavian, John Leets. He had come to Central America with a view to helping to establish a united Central American federation. In an article which appeared in Santa Ana, El Salvador, in 1899, he tells how he was taken to the president's office and asked to frame the former representative of Quiché, Rosendo Santa Cruz. There Cabrera is reported to have said:

Yo lo haré feliz, agrego; yo, además, le arreglaré las cuentas que Ud. tiene pendientes con el Ferrocarril del Norte; y le situaré en Zacapa por medio del jefe Político Fulgencio Rivas, ocho mil pesos. Ud. pasará a Livingston a ocultar cierto número de armas, denunciando en seguida a Rosendo Santa Cruz, como ocultor de ellas, hecho en que hará aparecer complicado al Lic. J. Francisco González. Esto de enter; acuerdo con el Coronel Rivas.

De todo me daré cuenta por Correo, valiéndose de esta Clave que le entrego, (La cual conservo en mi poder.)

Rivas le proporcionará el número de soldados de la guarnición que necesita para la correspondencia, pues no tengo confianza en los partes telegráficos. Las cartas las dirigirá Ud. a Casimiro D. Rubio."
Despite the president's generous offer and assurances for his safety, Leets chose to help Santa Cruz instead. Cabrera's Minister of the Interior, Juan Barrios M., always maintained that if Santa Cruz had not been killed then Cabrera would never have been able to remain in the presidency that first year. Leets was henceforth persecuted by government agents and did not return until 1906, when he fought Guatemalan troops alongside Salvadorean forces. Leets's description shows how Cabrera recognized and exploited men's weaknesses, using money, favour, and occasionally blackmail to obtain their co-operation. His spy network provided a wealth of information on all citizens, and on foreigners. With the information amassed from a series of sources Cabrera could find every man or woman's price.

Although Cabrera used more than one person to carry out such plans he was careful not to include too many - his strategy remained simplicity. But he did take risks, as with Leets, who preferred to have no part in this plot. In many such cases Cabrera eliminated those who would not co-operate or took reprisals against their property and families.

During his early years in power anyone suspected of supporting castillismo or of being a prosperista was imprisoned, exiled or assassinated. Rosendo Santa Cruz, José María Urbizo and Próspero Morales were dead by 1900. In 1900 General Plutarco Bowen, an Ecuadorian radical adventurer, was kidnapped from Tapachula where he had been drugged by a French agent of Cabrera, Hipólito Lambert, and taken to San Marcos where he was shot.

There were more victims: the names of some are known, while others are now forgotten, but by 1902 a sufficiently large number of persons had 'disappeared' or been killed for others to be prudent. It is impossible to
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PART I

establish how many of the deaths actually took place, as some accounts are imbued with natural outrage at the deed, while others simply relate the occurrence. Castillo's and Toledo's exile may have removed an immediate threat to Cabrera's position but as long as they still lived they continued to threaten his supremacy. He also felt that he could not cease to punish innocent citizens for fear that they might think him too lenient and take advantage of the remaining civil liberties. Many members of the professional classes, particularly lawyers and physicians, were arrested during this time, and indeed arrests continued throughout his presidency.

Valladares Rubio writes of the damage caused within society as a consequence of the prevailing fear: *Nunca peste mortal causó más desolación en torno de un hogar que la persecución política: ni amistad ni gratitud ni sangre, nada valía...*°

Cabrera's private correspondence during these early years is full of information about local magistrates and *jefes políticos* who were unsympathetic to his government. All these letters were carefully kept, classified by province, and were to accumulate over the years. Some of the informants asked for favours in return for their observations, while others gained a regular position for their trouble.

In this chapter we will examine the Constitution, personalities, institutions, domestic and to some extent international politics. At times it may appear that the focus is on individuals, and most specifically on one individual, namely Cabrera. It is in the nature of this subject to retain such a focus: studying a twenty-two-year dictatorship necessitates an explanation of how power was gained, established and maintained.
IV. EL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE

PART I

GUATEMALA 'OPEN PRISON'

For many the prisons of Guatemala became a symbol of the collective penance paid for the subservience of the republic's people to this dictator. Admirers of cabrerismo called Guatemala the Switzerland of Latin America; its critics compared it to Poland. What citizen did not have an uncle, brother, father, son or daughter who had suffered some reprisal from the authorities? And what Guatemalan, particularly in the provinces, could say he had never been unfairly threatened, if not arrested, by a jefe político when money was needed for a future cabrerista celebration or a few signatures were required for an electoral campaign? Was there a child who did not know the verbs cubetear and apalear? Scarcely less well-known was the carrera de baquetas, mercilessly inflicted on some male prisoners. It is correct therefore to describe Cabrera's administration as a tyranny, since he made unnecessarily cruel use of the power at his disposal.

Rodas called Guatemala an 'open prison'. Lainfiesta agreed:

En la república, todos vivimos como prisioneros; ninguno puede ausentarse del país, ni moverse de un lugar a otro sin previo permiso de nuestro gobernante; y esto es tan rígido, que hasta señoritas han sido impedidas de embarcarse en San José y regresadas a la capital 'de orden superior', como sucedió con la señora de don Antonio Barrios, [son of Justo Rufino Barrios and one time Minister of Reyna Barrios] que se proponía ir a reunirse en México con su marido. Pero ¿qué más?...

Muchos dueños de fincas en los departamentos, pero residentes en la capital, hubieron de pasar largos períodos sin visitarlos, por no permitirlo la 'orden superior'. A este salvaje capricho estuvieron sometidos, entre otros, el licenciado Emilio de León; don Luciano Barrios; don Bernardo Rivera; don Salvador Herrera; el general Socorro de León; don Ignacio Saravia, atétera, por supuesto, sin que a ninguno de dichos señores se les hiciese algún cargo, que pretextase tan duro proceder.

To the casual tourist or visiting foreigner it may even have seemed picturesque to have some ragged-looking character in a sombrero following them on their rounds of the capital; indeed, many would have been
disappointed had they not been able to glimpse some dark but harmless facet of the prevalent repression. For the resident expatriates - for the Dieseldorffs, the Hodgsdons, the Halls - it was another matter. Although many of them depended on the protection of their diplomatic legations, their nationality did not make them immune nor guarantee their security. Those immigrants who set up coffee plantations or began small businesses often required presidential approval for a great many aspects of their concerns. Land titles, transactions, the importation of machinery, exportation of crops, and need for a large labour force required not only money but also administrative co-operation. Men like Guillermo Hall, grandson of the former British Minister to the region, not only familiar with the international code of diplomacy but also versed in the ways of Central American politics, sometimes found the dictator's demands too onerous. For Guatemalans it was worse.

Arbitrary imprisonments abounded; during the early 1900s political prisoners became more common than petty thieves or murdererers. Throughout these years it was customary for legal suits to be brought against all prisoners. These were called procesos falsos and became one of the most powerful weapons of the dictatorship. Cabrera usually formulated his complaint against these domestic enemies:

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Por regla general, el presidente de la republica, que es a la vez el acusador secreto, el fiscal y el magistrado que falla, ha condenado desde el principio a su victima a cierto numero de meses o de anos de prision y ordena al juez que busque los medios para retardar la marcha del juicio tanto como sea posible."
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He also chose all judges for the Superior Court as well as magistrates for the many courts of appeal. All judges could then name their secretaries, clerks, porters, and helpers, but needed the presidential seal
of approval. Every judge was dependent on Cabrera and had to do as he was instructed, even if it meant breaking the law. He was also instructed to make his trials seem as legal as possible. On those occasions when there was no orden superior or recomendación a lawyer could choose whatever results were most beneficial to him. This usually meant that the highest bidder for his services won the case. It is therefore not surprising that the sixth court of appeal, or sala sexta de apelaciones, came to be known as the court of apalaciones, or beatings.

All judges had their special agents who looked into those cases where they could make a profit. These agents were instructed to offer prisoners their freedom for a fee. This would guarantee their prompt release through the loss of their case records, which would happen to 'disappear', or simply through bribery. However, when an orden superior so dictated, no amount of money could purchase a prisoner’s release.

In this way many guilty men gained their freedom while innocent citizens, who had been singled out by the president, could do nothing to gain their release. The courts and the prison system were the most striking evidence of the corruption and complicity which ruled Guatemalan life during these years:

Cualquiera que haya frecuentado aquellos mal llamados ‘tribunales de justicia, en el ramo criminal’, habrá visto a no dudarlo, sentados en las bancas de los corredores, algunos individuos mal vestidos, de rostros inmroles y de apariencia sospechosa y tal vez se habrá preguntado en su interior; ¿qué harán aquí estos tipos? Pues esos hombres frecuentan los juzgados en ejercicio de su infame profesión. Avergüenza decirlo; son testigos que permanecen allí a la orden de los jueces, para dar sus declaraciones en el sentido que convenga. La mayor parte de estos perjuros son reos que han obtenido su libertad a trueque de dar un testimonio falso cada vez que se les ordene. Otros de ellos son picaros de oficio, hombres sin ocupación alguna y sin medios de subsistencia, que están a lo que caiga y que están dispuestos declarar contra sus mismos padres si así se los exijiese el juez. Cada declaración, según la importancia del reo, se
Cabrera also created a new position, that of auditor general de guerra. It was possibly created especially for Licenciado Adrián Vidaurre, one of Cabrera's most useful followers, who held the post for many years. Provincial auditores de guerra were also named. Vidaurre was generally in charge of giving political prisoners a trial and cross-examination before following Cabrera's final instructions on their fate.  

Wyld Ospina believes that the false prosecutions and lawsuits which these men helped to establish were among the most important instruments of the régime. It was not a new system, since as early as 1884 Barrios used these techniques to eliminate 200 suspects after the first "bomb" conspiracy. By 1900 Cabrera had so perfected the system that few ever escaped legal proceedings. A popular refrain heard during these years was that everyone owed something to the president, so all-pervasive was his power:

Puede decirse que cada guatemalteco tenía el suyo, Como Estrada Cabrera fue un fanático de las formalidades legales, estos procesos siempre estaban de acuerdo con la letra de los códigos, aunque sus orígenes fuesen más falsos que una moneda de plomo. Algunos de ellos reputábase como obras maestras de la habilidad abogado del benemérito, que nunca retuvo a un hombre en la cárcel ni lo enviado al patíbulo sin su correspondiente legajo justificatorio bajo la axila.  

Those who fell out of favour faced prison sentences of uncertain length. They also knew that they would undergo many types of torture before dying or being allowed to go home or die. Prisoners were classified into two categories: políticos and normales. Sometimes prisoners arrived with the proviso bien recomendados, which meant that the president had
recommended them to the overseers for particularly brutal treatment. Political prisoners stood little chance of ever seeing their families again. Valladares Rubio summed up the dictator's philosophy:

*Cabrera dijo que 'los muertos no hablan', y esa espeluznante expresion fue maxima de su gobierno, que hacía desaparecer a los enemigos...*.¹⁵

In the central penitentiary, the most notorious of prisons, the section known as callejón No. 2 was for 'political' prisoners. In Guatemala City alone there were at least six other prisons. Most political prisoners were eventually sent to the penitentiary, where they underwent punishment. In the provinces prisons were makeshift and sometimes were part of the local military barracks.

The penitentiary, like many of Guatemala's more recent institutions, was begun during Barrios's time. Theoretically, cells were twelve feet long and eight feet wide, with high ceilings and brick floors. Most cells, however, were much smaller and prisoners were exposed to damp, dark, and dirty surroundings. Prisoners placed *incomunicado* could be in a cell from eight days to a fortnight, a month, three months or longer. These inmates were ignored for the length of their stay, and could not receive messages from home. For many of those who survived the many tortures of prison life this was considered the worst punishment.

When prisoners were finally able to leave their cells they might join other political prisoners in the maintenance of the prison. In the centre of the penitentiary there were large washing *pilas* and a large patio with a few trees where prisoners were sometimes allowed to take exercise. More often than not, however, it was here that they were forced to carry buckets of water or filth in the classic punishment of *cubetear*. Prison guards overseeing the bucket-bearers' progress were required to whip and
scold them throughout the length of their journeys. Montúfar described how no one was exempt from the suffering or humiliation of the cubeteo:

He visto hombres respetabilísimos, algunos ya ancianos, con la cubeta agujereada de adrede, para que al filtrarse el agua las mojaría las piernas y los pies, vaciando sus trastos en aquellos inmundos lugares, con un ‘encargado’ atrás, que los obliga con la ‘verga’ al trabajo. Personas honorables he visto barriendo aquellos pisos, aquellos calabozos subterráneos, donde el agua no tiene salida; con los pies metidos dentro y después obligados a sacar aquella agua sucia con las mismas cubetas y sacarla afuera a arrojar, teniendo que subir los resbaladizos escalones, sin temor en consideración su edad, el estado tal vez delicado de su salud y menos que todo, su condición social y la humillación que se les infería, sujetándolos a tales faenas, Y al par de todo esto, los capataces brutales encima de ellos, apurándolos con la infamante ‘verga’.

Furthermore, political prisoners were not allowed a bed or mattress, although they were permitted to sleep on a grass mat, a petate, and sometimes allowed sheets. Through bribes, special favour, or government design some prisoners were sometimes allowed to receive meals from home. Accounts exist of how prison guards usually kept the best bits and were accused of making food disgusting. Many others, too, preferred to starve rather than eat their food for fear of poisoning.

The prison day began at five in the morning when bugles and drums would wake all the prisoners. The keeper of the keys, nicknamed San Pedro, would then open all the cells of those prisoners who were going out to work at La Pedrera, el Cielito, or the Asilo Estrada Cabrera that day. Other prisoners might be sent to work for the director of the penitentiary in his orchards, brick factories or stables. There was a group of men known as los gritones because their job consisted in shouting the names and assignments for all those present. Their voices were at first incomprehensible and frightening, but as the days, months or years passed, inmates got to know their pattern:
Para el novicio, aquellos gritos tienen algo de fantástico; 'los gritones' procuran hacerlos lo más discordantes posible; alargan las silabas lo más que pueden y el oído no ejercitado aún encuentra difícil a veces entender lo que dicen. 'Esos apartados de los juzgados', 'Esos apartados a la fiscalía', tras estos gritos viene una larga serie de nombres de presos. Al concluirse la larga serie de nombres continúan los gritos,'\textsuperscript{7}

The gritones were low on the prison hierarchy. They followed orders given to them by their superiors, but even the head of the penitentiary received orders from the president himself. The jails were full of different personalities who came to be known. One of the best-known in the central penitentiary was 'Tata Juan' who was considered the dean of that institution. He had served under Barrios and Barrundia, and would regale all those who wished to listen with tales of torture and cruelty. Juan Mejicanos, originally from Amatitlán, was a much-feared segundo encargado general in 1908. He was illiterate and Montúfar writes \textit{ignorante hasta el exceso; pero astuto e insensible, gozaba con hacer sufrir, mofándose de toda dureza y empleando un lenguaje soez y mortificante... Algunos le llamaban Calígula, otros Nerón.}'\textsuperscript{8} Guayabilla, a tailor and the son of a tailor, was in charge of the second block of cells while an old soldier, Tiburcio Turcios, ran odd errands. There was also a man known as el cadete, whose true name was Alfredo Reyes, but who brought books to some of the inmates so that they could read. Unlike the secret police, which was vast and ambiguous for obvious reasons, a clearer hierarchy existed in prisons. Hall described these:

\begin{quote}
Todo el personal de la penitenciaria, excepción hecha del alcaide, del director y de la guardia (que son criminales de otro especie, contra los cuales no se sigue ningún proceso) está compuesto de presidiarios. El más feroz entre ellos, por sus crueles instintos, obtiene el título de ‘encargado general’ y goza de prerrogativos envidiables. Es el jefe de
\end{quote}
Many prison officials were able to supplement their meagre incomes through bribes received from prisoners' families for special services rendered — for allowing them to receive clean clothes and fresh food; Cabrera nevertheless changed these men on a regular basis so that no one became too accustomed to taking or giving liberties. The system was such that prison employees, just like all other civil servants, observed corruption at work all around them and were indeed encouraged to imitate, exploit and benefit from this order. The extent of individual complicity in the national system of corruption guaranteed that anyone who fell out of favour could be accused of felony or any number of authentic legal offences.

There thus emerged an unspoken constitution which was to govern national politics for many years. This was not the 'legal' and orthodox Constitution which Cabrera liked to quote, but one which was as complicated in its structure and rules. Anyone wishing to remain in politics without falling prey to the arbitrariness of the period had to learn how to strike a balance between recognizing when not to abuse government prerogatives and knowing when and how to abuse the law. In most cases this law seems to have been the president and therefore tended to be unpredictable and therefore dangerous. It was typical for civil servants to be uncertain about their futures; this was particularly the
case for lesser government officials.

One wonders how it was possible for this state of affairs to continue when the fear experienced by so many - particularly fear of displeasing higher authorities - might have resulted in congressmen and educated citizens wishing to prevent any further deterioration of legal institutions. Had this been the case they might have paralyzed, or at least limited, further political intrigue; the opposite, however, was true. The government continued to gain adherents from a growing army of cabreristas. Throughout the dictatorship different sectors had different interests: the army in maintaining its status, the coffee-planters in having a constant labour supply and beneficial government concessions, ordinary people in improving their lot. Few seemed averse to benefitting from or contributing to the system of graft which emerged, since each sector felt it could further its own interests in this way.

Complicity grew out of people's willingness morally and financially to support government abuses in order to maintain a status quo which protected their interests. This willingness to turn a blind eye to most matters was not limited to any specific social sector and affected everyone. For this reason people of all classes could be found informing, beating, or lying about one another. Little good resulted from this, the prevailing ethos, and although individuals may have gained favours in return for questionable actions many ultimately suffered reprisals.

It was not surprising then that many unscrupulous types should fill the rank and file of prison and other government posts, although there were many respectable citizens involved as well.
Spies were not new to Guatemala. Barrios had relied heavily on a group of informers to maintain his position. In Cabrera’s time the secret police was everywhere, its members known as orejas, oidores or plain spies. They were unrecognizable since they had no uniform, no particular trade, and could be wealthy or poor, man, woman or child. Foreigners, like U.S. Minister Sand, noted that spies could be found in the plazas, marketplaces, theatres, cafés, and restaurants as easily as they could be found in the home. Spies were not excluded from other police activities: many had the power to arrest persons, search homes, offices, or fincas, they could provoke trouble and even kill. Cabrera came to control a disparate band of men who served him loyally.

Felipe Márquez became one of the most notorious officers of the secret police throughout the dictatorship. Other dreaded names among the secret police hierarchy were Manuel López, alias el chulo, ‘pretty face’, Eduardo Anguiano, Juan Viteri, and a man simply known as el de la perita because of the type of moustache he wore. Juan Viteri belonged to the cream of society and although his father and uncle had been tortured and killed by the government he was one of the régime’s most loyal supporters. Wenceslao Chacón, who came to represent the police force, was a long-time spy. During the early 1900s Chacón was inseparable from the dictator:
Chacón's mysterious death and disappearance would indicate that he fell foul of Cabrera. Some said that his successor, Jorge Galán, was a Spaniard but there were rumours that he was Cabrera's son. There was a Spanish chemist, one Antonio Macias del Real, who was said to concoct many of the fatal poisons used on the president's foes. Real was finally able to leave the country and settled in Buenos Aires where he told of the terrible crimes he had committed in the name of Cabrera. He lived the rest of his days in fear of poisoning by Guatemalan agents as many of these were sent abroad to eliminate enemies. There was a case as far away as Barcelona where Trigueros's death shocked physicians.

Other foreign adventurers joined the ranks of this most powerful institution. There was the one-eyed Scot, Colonel Drummond, who was said to be an admirable Greek scholar, several United States citizens like Leland, Green and General Lee Christmas and the Italian Mario Divizia di Monteforte - alias Divizia Vitorio or Mario de Merlo.

Although Monteforte seems to have been generally disliked because of his cruel nature he succeeded in marrying the sister of Dr Toledo Herrarte, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Although Toledo Herrarte was against this marriage, he relented - some speculate that perhaps he was blackmailed. Monteforte was later to use Toledo Herrarte's high position to gain further information on national politics and he succeeded in being named Minister of Protocol. This gave him the entree he needed to infiltrate different foreign legations. The British representative, Sir Lionel Carden, protested on several occasions about the effect of
Monteforte's schemes and went so far as to produce a certified copy of Monteforte's Mexican trial in order to convince Cabrera to remove him.23

Nevertheless, Monteforte came to be in charge of immigration, and later of the domestic and international espionage system. By the mid 1910s the spy network improved the efficiency of the ordinary police force not only by complementing its activities with its information services, but also through its intimidation techniques. Secret agents do not seem to have been responsible to any agency except to the president himself. Throughout his years in office Cabrera came to rely heavily on his spy network. He appears to have had a prodigious memory for detail and often astonished his own spies by knowing more than they did.

Wyld Ospina reports a case related to him by Lic. Mariano Cheves y Romero. It seems that Cabrera asked the director of the penitentiary to make a list of all prisoners held there. The director then asked two prisoners, Cheves y Romero and the journalist Hernández de León, to help him write up the list since he was afraid of missing a name. He then personally took the list to Cabrera who said:

'Falta el nombre de un preso, y es fulano de tal' (un prisionero común, de ninguna significación política ni social).

Estrada Cabrera era un vesánico. Al director de la penitenciaria preguntaba diariamente por los detenidos políticos y luego le entregaba una nomenclatura de martirios que él mismo formulara...

Fulano de tal; encerrado en su bartolina,
Zutano; sin visitas,
Mengano; sin ropa limpia,
Ferensecho; sin barrersele el calabozo.24

Galán's period as director of the police shows that there was some interaction and shuffling between the official police force and the army of spies which functioned throughout the republic. Many members of the spy force may have indeed worked at some time in the police force or in the
country's prisons, and vice versa, but it is clear that Cabrera permitted interaction between the two institutions so long as they were efficient.

Each year of Cabrera's administration contains lists of arbitrary arrests, beatings, poisonings, accounts of torture and cruelty, and deaths. The lists are unusually long during times of crisis, as during attempted coups d'état (1899, 1906, 1915), and during war time. Another bad time was during the months, and sometimes years, following a conspiracy against the dictator's life. This was the case between 1907 and 1908, when there was not a family, particularly among the upper class, which did not suffer a loss. As a result of the growing repression a more efficient police system emerged, which ensured that political prisoners, or all those discontented with the government, would be kept in line like ordinary criminals.

As early as 1872 Barrios and García Granados had felt the importance of establishing an organized police force. Their Conservative predecessors, such as Carrillo, had relied on local Indian militias to maintain order. The liberals based their new police system on the lines of Spain's Guardia Civil. This original plan, however, was not very successful and in 1881 Sergeant Joseph H. Pratt was asked to reorganize the institution. Pratt modelled the 150-man force on his own old corps, the New York City police. A special tax was created to finance these changes. Officers were expected to dress in frock coats, and only use clubs or revolvers when absolutely necessary. Pratt's manual with its high moral tone was ignored by this badly-paid and little respected organization. When Cabrera came to power Pratt's teachings had all but disappeared.²⁶

In 1899 Cabrera contracted a Washington policeman, Gustavo Joseph, to reorganize the existing police force. By 1900 Joseph had divided the city into four large areas which were each to be patrolled by a corps of
officers, replacing the less reliable system of individual beats. Telephones were a modern addition, and were installed in the centre of each area in order that officers might communicate with their headquarters at all times. The main office, too, could check that its officers were carrying out their duties by contacting the local commanding officer. A mounted police force was also introduced to the remoter cantons of Guatemala City and was used to patrol the capital. One section of mounties traversed the city from the Golfo to the Villa of Guadalupe; another from the Paseo de la Reforma to Guarda Viejo; while a last patrol went from the general cemetery to the fashionable quarter of Jocotenango. In the provinces there were no rurales, as in Mexico, but policing remained the responsibility of the local commander in arms and of the jefes políticos. By 1920 there were 215 local command posts with 88 garrisons in the larger cities and ports.

Like his North American predecessor, Joseph had high moral ambitions for the metropolitan police. He felt that petty offenders like prostitutes should be trained in useful skills like cigar-rolling, sewing and cooking, while male law-breakers should be taught carpentry, tailoring and brick-laying. Joseph ignored the less commendable side of such schemes in his report: the recruitment of artisans for government needs by the arrest of innocent citizens. His idea of establishing a mandatory list where all household servants were registered at the local police station was welcomed; it not only reduced the number of thefts but, more importantly, provided the government with a list of names of possible spies.

Joseph also felt that his officers could establish themselves comfortably on their twenty-five paper peso salary a month and to this end established a savings bank for his men.
By 1905 policemen were earning thirty-five paper pesos a month; this was insufficient for feeding their families, let alone for buying a house or opening a small business. The police, like other public servants, therefore survived on a combination of bribes, fines and favours. Uniforms were scarce and were described as being made out of blue cotton or denim. Many policemen were involved in theft rackets, as Pinto's interview of Vela will confirm.

A policeman's most feared weapon, however, remained his arbitrary use of the phrase *de orden superior*, which allowed him to stop anyone, anytime, for anything. It was his passport to the use of unlimited powers to fulfill a government demand or gain a personal privilege. They could ask to see certificates for military exemption, or the receipts for road building taxes. Policemen could be found on every train arriving or leaving the capital, where they would check each passenger's papers and keep a record, which was then sent to the president's office. They were also to be found on roads leading to and from the capital.

Police were also known to take artisans from their place of work when they were required for government business. If a house or public building had to be completed, masons would be arrested and taken to the site. If uniforms were needed for the army or police force, tailors would be brought in to make them in government sweatshops. Such arrests became a common occurrence and citizens went in fear that they might be arrested and forced to work for months on end. This happened to two innocent
workers who recorded their story.

One was the brick-layer, Hipólito Rivas M., and the second was the tailor Silverio Ortiz, who was to become a leading Unionist spokesman in 1920. Rivas reports having been arrested one afternoon for no apparent reason, except that it was *de orden superior*. He was taken to the nearest police station where he was booked before being placed on a building site. There were other workers there, few of them criminals. He soon learned that a nameless general wanted the house completed by the end of the month and for this reason he and other labourers were forced to work long hours. They were paid nothing and were given appalling food.

Ortiz's experience was similar. He was taken from his tailor's shop to a local police station. Again, no explanation was given and he was sent to a government sweat-shop where he discovered many men sewing uniforms. After a few days there a policeman brought him his 'Singer' sewing machine from his shop so that he could work faster and more efficiently. With his fellow tailors he lived in squalor during this time. Even old men, like the seventy-seven-year-old Vicente Pérez, were not spared the cruelty of these conditions:

> Así trabajamos tres meses. La tarea estaba calculada para 18 horas, es decir, de las cinco de la mañana para las once de la noche y seis horas de descanso en cada veinticuatro del día. El rancho era pésimo. Unos lo recibían en botecitos que habían sido de salmón y otros comprábamos guacales que hacía el maestro jornalero, que estaba también trabajando gratuitamente. En dichos trastos se nos servía un cucharon de frijoles, uno de caldo con un pedazo de hueso y tres tortillas todo revuelto, peor que si hubiera sido para perros, y dormíamos en el suelo en los corredores.29

Although Cabrera set up schools and other benefits for artisans he also took reprisals against this group. In December 1900 Manuel E. López, president of the *Sociedad El Porvenir de los Obreros* was killed. López was
visited in his tailor’s shop on Fifth Avenue and West Fourth Street by Wenceslao Chacón and his thugs, who eventually beat him to death. His murder was thought to have been a consequence of his having divulged some information about the violent death of Dr José Montoya. His death served as a reminder to apolitical and hard-working men to steer clear of politics.

PRISON TALES

If innocent citizens were badly treated it was far worse for those involved in real plots and those who for some reason or other displeased the dictator. The cases cited below range from the famous to the obscure and can be said to be typical of the period.

Most victims failed to write of their experiences if they survived, but William Hall wrote one of the fullest and best accounts of prison life during this time. Chronologically too, he was one of the first to undergo the punishments which later became so familiar. Guillermo Hall, the grandson of the British Vice-Consul, William F. Hall, was also one of the first victims to make his story public. Born in Honduras in 1858, Hall remained in Central America for most of his life. He not only used the Spanish Christian-name Guillermo but also married a Guatemalan. In 1900 he became a bank manager for the Banco Agricola Hipotecario. There he encountered some trouble with the Bolaños brothers, who had a large debt outstanding.

Although the bank tried to give them reasonable interest rates the debt remained unpaid. Under presidential pressure the bank was forced to give them a further loan, which was subsequently illegally sold to the government. In this manner the outstanding debt remained unpaid by both
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parties. Hall criticized this and was personally threatened by León Bolaños in front of the Club Guatemala on 26 July 1903. Bolaños continued to pursue Hall. Finally, on 5 August 1903, Hall was forced to shoot Bolaños in the hand in self-defence when the latter attacked him with a cudgel. Hall was imprisoned but released on bail (500 pesos, about £68.00). Hall then sought Cabrera's protection in this matter and received his word: *No tema nada que aquí quien manda soy yo.*

Hall's subsequent defence of Alejandro Pretice on 29 January 1904 - Pretice was one of the bank's best managers but a strong critic of Cabrera's monetary plans - led to his own imprisonment. Cabrera wished to replace Pretice with a malleable Spaniard, one Antonio Macias del Real. In order to punish Hall the Bolaños incident was brought up again on 8 April 1904. Under presidential orders the Minister of Foreign Relations, Lic. Juan Barrios, who had also been responsible for Santa Cruz's death, arranged to frame Hall. The latter was imprisoned once again, though he was treated well because of his nationality. Hall was only allowed out on bail after he had paid the excessive sum of 40,000 pesos (£550.00). The case went on to gain more publicity because of Bolaños's activities and the participation of many of Cabrera's closest associates: Lic. J. Antonio Godoy, Benjamin Gómez Urruela, and Luis Dardón. The British Minister Herbert Hervey commented:

> There is no doubt that the sentence has been dictated under orders from higher quarters, and that the judges have not dared to apply the law in accordance with their consciences... The sentence can only be altered or a pardon granted through the President, as the Supreme Court has given its final decision.

Some members of the tribunal who reduced the bail to 500 pesos were accused of prevarication and corruption before the National Assembly and
forced to resign. Lic. Adrián Vidaurre was one of the harshest critics of this case and accused Hall of buying off the lawyers in order to gain his freedom. Hall was bullied, harassed and finally lost his job to a Cabrera appointee, Carlos Zepeda. The elaborate trials which ensued were a mockery and led ultimately to Hall's imprisonment in the penitentiary on 2 March 1905.

Once in the jail of La Merced, Hall was tried on several occasions and was finally sentenced to five years imprisonment. His wife felt that five years in a Guatemalan prison would mean her husband's death so she planned his escape. The plan was carried out when a group of his friends went to visit him and Hall put on a false moustache to disguise himself and left the prison in company of a distinguished older woman. His wife remained in his cell and was subsequently imprisoned among the prostitutes and other female prisoners of the city. In the meantime Hall hid in the capital for three months before escaping to Honduras in company of the Nicaraguan Cuadra.  

Although a prisoner, Mrs Hall was visited by the cream of the capital's society, while a few days after her arrival the female director of the women's penitentiary was fired for having shown her too much courtesy. The government took steps to force the confiscation of all the Hall property. Mrs Hall was forced to surrender for £3,000 her husband's interest in the distillery business, which was estimated to be worth about £30,000. All of Hall's properties were sequestered: five houses in Guatemala City, two plots of land, and thirteen shares in the Guatemalan Telephone Company, worth one thousand Guatemalan pesos each. The Halls sought intervention from the British government to regain these but without success. They returned to Guatemala after Cabrera's fall.
The case of Rafael Montúfar, son of the distinguished Creole lawyer, Dr Lorenzo Montúfar, is somewhat different. The Montúfars were an educated family who had opposed dictatorships throughout their existence in Guatemala. Dr Lorenzo Montúfar had nonetheless drafted the 1879 Constitution, which guaranteed the continuation of a dictatorship, as will be seen below. His other son, Rafael's brother, José, was a general and a castillista who had opposed cabrerismo from the beginning. Rafael's marriage to the sister of the Costa Rican politician Tobias Zuñiga Castro undoubtedly affected his outlook on Central American politics. A further spell in the United States further widened his political views. Throughout his stay in the United States Rafael was carefully watched by two fellow countrymen — the physicians, Doctors Yela and Bengoechea. Cabrera also monitored José Montúfar's movements carefully. In 1908 Montúfar was arrested without ostensible reason. His arrest is partly explained by his brother's anti-cabrerista activities and his sympathy with them as well as his marriage to an Aparicio, Cabrera's old enemies. Like all political prisoners, Montúfar was finally taken before the autocrat. He was astonished not to be permitted to speak, since Cabrera seemed to have already decided Montúfar's fate.

- Tengo todo su correspondencia. Usted y su hermano son responsables de lo que pasa en Centro América. Han dicho que soy un despota vulgar y voy a confirmarlo. He comenzado a salir de unos y saldré de los demás, hasta acabar. He prometido a usted que lo fusilaría, y voy a hacerlo para bien de Guatemala y de Centro América. Lo cumpliré sin que me importe lo que se diga. Estoy sobre un volcán; lo sé; pero no retrocedo. Aquí no hay garantías. Se hace únicamente lo que yo mando. Estamos en la ciudad del palo que tan buenos resultados me ha producido. Ya usted lo sabe...
- En todas partes habría estado usted a mi alcance. Ya se lo he dicho. Soy hombre de resoluciones, y tengo el propósito de salir de usted. Piensen mandarlo al Gallito; pero antes necesito saber todo lo que ha pasado, y saber quienes han dado el dinero para la revolución. Debe usted decírlo, voy a leer su correspondencia para que conteste sobre ella lo que me parezca conveniente; y yo mismo voy a constituirme en juez de usted.
Instead of being shot, Montúfar was freed by Cabrera and assigned to the embassy in Mexico City. This was no favour as the dictator knew that the Montúfar family was disliked in the Mexican capital because of their criticisms of local politics and would face many dangers there. Montúfar refused this post and remained at home without incident until 1919 when he became involved in the Unionist Party.

Journalists suffered the consequences of the dictator's dislike if they published criticisms of his régime. There were many such cases and we will limit ourselves to two examples here. The first deals with the young idealist Joaquin Rodas M., who was a product of Cabrera's Escuelas Normales. Rodas began his studies in his native Chimaltenango and went on the the Escuela Normal in Antigua. There he met the Costa Rican Indalecio Rivera who convinced him of the importance of a Central American union. Upon his graduation from this school Rodas wrote an unusual piece based on the writings of Dr Lorenzo Montúfar, Lainfiesta, Dr Policarpo Bonilla and Lastarria. After a spell as a book-keeper, teacher and director of the Escuela Nacional de Varones of Chichicastenango, Rodas decided to start a newspaper. It was called El Peregrino, 'The Pilgrim'. Rodas wanted his paper to differ from the official newspapers then published in the country because of its Unionist slant.37

The newspaper only had five issues and Rodas's journalistic career lasted only five months before he was imprisoned. News was leaked from the telegrapher's office in Quiché that Cabrera had sent orders to the local jefe político General Echeverria to find Rodas. Rodas was warned in time and went into hiding. Echeverria's orders that Rodas be found, dead or alive, resulted in great activity by local spies, and they soon found him on one of his father's properties at Chinique.
After three days of marching under Captain Manuel Mendez's armed escort Rodas arrived in the capital. Hardly had he arrived when he was taken to see Cabrera. The president looked the young and dusty man over before he spoke:

- ¡Y Ud., con esa planta es el editor de este periodico? - interrogo, mostrándome al mismo tiempo la colección de 'El Peregrino' que tenía a la vista...
- ¡Cómo!... ¿Ud, director de ese periódico? - No me engañe, porque se pierde, y pierde a su propia familia...
... Ud. tiene que darme aquí mismo los nombres de quienes lo han impulsado a esa empresa, y de los que escriben en ese periódico de que Ud. no es más que su pantalla que oculta a mis enemigos y refleja a la vez sus pensamientos. Porque Ud. no tiene ni planta, ni edad para periodista, por lo que, si no quiere perder su pobre vida, debe confesarme pronto la verdad. ¿Quiénes son estos que lo han empujado y que escriben allí, en ese periódico subversivo?

Cabrera was convinced that Rodas was working for his enemies and felt that the union of Central America was simply a pretext to oust him from office. Rodas refused to say what the dictator wished to hear and only spoke the truth. After much pressing, Cabrera decided to send Rodas to the penitentiary where he was beaten.

Rodas was once again taken before the autocrat, who continued to believe that the young man was being used in a sophisticated propaganda conspiracy against his government. He demanded to know the names of the persons behind the paper, and offered to help Rodas begin a university career if he so desired - but on the condition that he give Cabrera names and information. Rodas's faith in the sacred ideal of Central American union of the isthmus infuriated the president, who was certain that anyone wanting such a thing could only be considered a personal enemy. Rodas was returned to the penitentiary but was released in 1909 when a group of young cadets were given amnesty.
Upon his release Rodas was not allowed to leave the capital and was to report to an officer every morning. Cabrera had arranged for Rodas to live at the Hotel Germania at government expense. This ploy was not a new one and has been described elsewhere, as in Arevalo Martinez's novel Honduras. There the young student is placed in a guest house after his release from prison and meets other students like himself. However, he does not realize that there is a spy among them who has been assigned to trap him again. Rodas escaped, though, and went on to participate in several Central American unionist events outside his homeland.

Another journalist who suffered from Cabrera's demands was the veteran Rafael Villela Guzmán. Guzmán had written on Cabrera's behalf during the first re-election campaign, but when he was asked to write a false article about the death of ex-President Barillas in 1907 he preferred to write an expose on the Guatemalan dictator instead. Guzmán was to clear General Lima and Cabrera as the instigators of this crime and blame General Toledo. Villela Guzmán was to ascribe Toledo's motive as the wish to become the undisputed chief of the anti-cabrerista faction. After professing his loyalty to Cabrera, Guzmán was given the details for this propaganda campaign:

..., se me encargó que dijese forma al pensamiento para hacer una campaña en la prensa extranjera que el Gobierno quería confiarme, sobre todo en México. Haciendo una campaña brillante en dicho sentido, se me dijo que yo prestaría un importante servicio al Gobierno, que serviría a este para justificarla ante los Estados Unidos. En cambio de eso el Gobierno me haría rico, me colmaría de honores y me prestaría todo su más firme y decidido apoyo para hacer triunfar mi reclamación de España. Aún resuenan en mi oído aquellas sesiones aterradoras como espectro de un crimen, y me horripila pensar que yo iba a prestarme a una cosa semejante.
The military paymaster found Guzmán and gave him 3,000,000 pesos. After this the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Juan Barrios M., gave him a further U.S. $2,000.00 (in gold) for his travel expenses. Guzmán acknowledges having received these sums and not having written the articles which were expected of him. For this reason he was unable to return to Guatemala again and lost all his property. This consisted of two houses and two pieces of land in the department of Escuintla. The jefe político of Escuintla, Rafael Yaquian (later head of the police), appropriated Guzmán's house in Escuintla and did not pay rent for many years. Guzmán finally justified his keeping all the money in exchange for the loss of these properties.

Hernández de León was another young journalist who was imprisoned by Cabrera for honest reporting. He remained in jail for five years and was among those journalists who spoke to Cabrera when he himself was a prisoner in 1920.

After 1905 repression, which had always been part of government, began to be felt more than in previous years. Even the Church, which had managed to keep a low profile, began to get involved in politics. This involvement mainly concerned individuals like the Spanish priest, Gil, and the younger priest, Piñol. Gil, as we saw in Chapter Three, was imprisoned and then allowed to leave the country after doña Joaquina interceded on his behalf. In 1907 Piñol, son of a distinguished creole family, was dramatically arrested by about one hundred men under Jorge Galán's command at the family finca Las Charcas. Again doña Joaquina interceded, this time by telling her son that he and his family would be cursed for seven years if Piñol were not set free. Early on the morning following his arrest, Piñol was taken by Galán to see the tyrant. A familiar monologue seems to have
Cabrera suspected his Congressman Batres Jáuregui of being behind this young man's movements, but gave the young man a passport, asked him what port he planned to leave from, and finished lecturing him by telling him that it was best to separate from his parents in this way, rather than to lose his life. Piñol set sail for Spain where he began his studies among the Jesuits. He was not accepted into that order, but eventually returned a bishop. We will speak about Piñol's rôle vis-à-vis the dictatorship at greater length in Chapter Five, as he played a significant part in the events leading to the dictator's downfall.

There were scores of innocent citizens arrested during these years, mostly without explanation. During 1905 three important men left before they were arrested or summoned. They were: ex-President Barillas, the well-known lawyer Manuel Diéguez, and General José Montúfar.

An epidemic of yellow fever broke out in August 1905 in Zacapa and Gualán and the government sent help and supplies to the area. A physician in those days commented that cabrerismo was like a virus no one was immune to, because everyone was susceptible to it and few could escape its symptoms: Cabrerismo fue una enfermedad que nos dio a todos.
In the provinces policing was mainly under the jurisdiction of military officers, who were appointed as jefes políticos or comandantes en armas by the central government. As with other aspects of the administration, this was an inheritance from the Barrios years. Jefaturas políticas and comandancias en armas were established during the 1870s in order to replace the colonial corregimiento. From the outset jefaturas políticas were closely linked to a new geographical scheme devised by General García Granados. He had subdivided the republic into twenty-one administrative departments with eight military zones. The army, though not yet a professional body, was nevertheless essential to the efficient administration of the country. A large number of civil and military officials were needed to fill the many posts created in order to establish a more efficient state.

Each main town therefore came to have not only its jefe político and comandante de armas, but also a municipal mayor, telegraphist, secretary, treasurer, market administrator, primer and segundo regidor, sindico and later teachers. Originally the post of jefe político was given to a civilian, while the comandante en armas was usually a military officer. Together these two men represented the main agency of control in the region and were expected to maintain public order, protect life and property, issue and inspect passports, and collect taxes. Their most important rôle, however, remained to recruit mozos and brazos - Indian labour for the coffee harvests and road building. They were also responsible for recruiting soldiers for the army and used many of the same techniques to gather the Indians for either purpose. This was a lucrative business and jefes políticos could earn anything between fifteen and
twenty pesos a day per mozo during the harvest season.

From the 1870s provincial politics was largely dominated by men who had some experience of military life. Barrios rewarded many of his supporters with government posts. Many of these men believed in liberal ideals and participated in the building up of a modern state through their efforts to establish good roads, improve crops and to aid Barrios's desire to diversify the country's agriculture. During these years many *jefes políticos* distributed coffee plants, sugar cane and cotton. By the 1880s they were involved in making decisions at the local courts, collecting taxes, enforcing laws on public education and promoting any industrial or agricultural ventures the government might desire. Barrios also ordered them to gather complicated census statistics every four years. The first census of this kind appeared in 1880, but no regular series followed.

Since Independence politics had been dominated by military types but never in as organized a fashion as during the Liberal period. Prior to the 1870s army officers tended to come from the ranks of ordinary soldiers, *militares de línea*, although there remained a creole élite. General García Granados came from that élite and sought to establish the first military academy, the *Escuela Politécnica*, in 1874. Its aim was to produce a new breed of officers - 'officer gentlemen'.

Reyna Barrios straddled the old system and the new and was a good example of this new breed. The son of a captain, he had served as a drummer-boy in Tacaná during the Carrera years and entered Guatemala City with the victorious columns of his uncle, General Barrios, and General García Granados in 1871. After a brief spell in Central American diplomacy he was named chief of the artillery corps in 1881 and was busy writing and translating articles on the proper use of artillery. His close
IV. EL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE

PART I

association with the French Colonel Bruandet, an instructor at the military academy, brought him into contact with many young officers. In 1884 he was promoted to the rank of Colonel and the following year he emerged from the war with El Salvador as a Brigadier General. Under General Barillas's government he was not only made a General de división but also named Undersecretary of War. His subsequent resignation and travels in the United States and Europe completed his military and diplomatic education before he took up the presidency in 1892.

His predecessor, General Barillas had relied almost entirely on the army to maintain his position and was criticized for swelling its ranks and its budget to the detriment of other important government matters. To some extent this continued to be the case with Reyna Barrios, although his efforts to build boulevards and transform the capital into a cosmopolitan centre resulted in overspending. Reyna Barrios's declaration as self-elected dictator in 1896 disappointed many of his followers and seemed to be a return to military impositions. By the late 1890s internal military intrigues resulted in several abortive coups. The ruano and prosperista conspiracies eliminated many strong contenders for the presidency. After Reyna Barrios's assassination, too, Cabrera succeeded in eliminating several generals like Najera, who did not acknowledge his new status. Many others also refused to recognize him and many, like Generals Salvador Toledo, José Montúfar and the ex-President, Barillas, preferred to go into exile.

During Cabrera's time the jefes políticos and comandantes en armas came to be merged into a single post. This was ostensibly to save money, but effectively established military networks which provided the central government with a strong military presence in each region which would provide local landowners with a constant labour supply and at the same
time guarantee order. Many considered these changes to be part of a new militarization scheme. Cabrera’s elimination and cutting down of civil authorities in provincial politics resulted in a series of mass promotions of schooled officers and militares de línea. He wisely protected himself by achieving a balance in which the gentlemen officers of the military élite were held in check by the rank and file, and vice versa.

Furthermore, he checked the powers of potential leaders by appointing them to high positions in his own vicinity or in the provinces where they could be controlled by the proximity of rivals. Cabrera was aware that many of the best officers were his contemporaries and graduates of the Escuela Militar, the military equivalent of the institutos, escuelas normales, and universities through which he had made his career. For this reason he was careful to name the old, and some say senile, General Luis Molina (who died in July 1909) and later José María Lima as Minister of War, while creating special commissions in which to control and observe the others. There also was much reshuffling of provincial posts in order to counteract any possible coups.

The dictator’s need for constant checks on provincial politics may have influenced his decision to make all employees of the national telegraph and telephone service subject to military law through decree 595 of 8 June 1899. They were also to enjoy all the benefits of military law and were carefully appointed. The Politécnica, too, was not overlooked and in September 1899 Captain Louis Chaigné arrived at the head of a new French military mission.

In 1900 the Ministry of War reported that the active army consisted of 2,555 officers and 6,884 troop members, with 137 battalions on active duty and 79 on reserve. A Junta consultativa de guerra was established in
order to update and change military rule. As early as 1900 a military commission was created in order to ensure that retired officers received their pensions. Other distinguished officers were chosen to be the military representatives of the republic's many law courts, a custom which was to continue throughout the administration and gave it a further hallmark of a military dictatorship. There were also many appointments for officers as *audatores de guerra* with a monthly salary of one hundred pesos, who were required to report on the activities of officers under their geographical jurisdiction. There were also appointments which might have seemed like nepotism, such as the designation of Colonel J. Gabriel Estrada Monzón, reportedly another half-brother of Cabrera, who was named commander in arms of Suchitepéquez in January 1900. There were also Inspectors of Troops, like Colonels Enrique Aris and José María Lima who were sent out to see that all was in order in military zones during 1899, with a fee of 260.00 pesos to cover expenses.

Between July 1899 and December 1900 there was a total of 852 promotions in the army with 11 brigadier generals; 12 colonels; 37 lieutenant colonels; 35 *comandantes*; 137 captains; 188 lieutenants; and 432 sub-lieutenants. During 1903 promotions continued with 40 colonels; 94 lieutenant colonels; 157 *comandantes*; 330 captains; 467 lieutenants; and 312 sub-lieutenants - all in an army of no more than 6,000 men.

Cabrera over-extended the size of the army and this made it necessary for him to fill most provincial posts with military officers. Salaries were poor and usually in arrears, forcing many to seek alternative jobs or hope for appointments which would allow them to break even:

*Los jefes y oficiales de línea, la mayor parte de notoria pobreza, enfrentando agudos problemas económicos, agravados con lo tardío - ¡hasta*
Those who remained in office and climbed the administrative hierarchy were carefully chosen. Military appointees to provincial posts, particularly to that of jefe político, often became to those below them a law unto themselves, though always careful not to forget their patron.

Many of the accusations made against jefes políticos and other government officials were true. There were, of course, extreme cases, such as an incident which occurred in the village of Maguey, Baja Verapaz during the Minervalia celebrations on 26 October 1902, when the local comisionado militar, Toribio Solguero, killed a man ... bajo la sombra de las armas nacionales. Government appointees were given seemingly unlimited powers:

Cada Jefe Político es un déspota de su Departamento, a imitación del que domina todo el país, y a quién únicamente obedecen, ejecutando sus órdenes, por arbitrarias que sean; pero cometiendo además multitud de abusos en su propio beneficio, como lo han repetido los mismos periódicos semi-oficiales, sin que Cabrera se dé por entendido, ni trate de evitarlo. Exacciones, multas indebidas, prisiones, vapulaciones, exacciones, multas indebidas, en acusaciones, multas indebidas, prisiones, vapulaciones, hasta fusilamientos, todo está dentro de sus facultades abusivas, unas veces de orden superior y otras motu propio, valiéndose de cualquier fútil pretexto, como por ejemplo; para edificar o reparar escuelas, para componer un puente o camino, para fiestas de Minerva o de cumpleaños; etc. Se llaman contribuciones o suscripciones 'voluntarias', pero a cada uno se les asigna la cantidad, y se castiga severamente a los que no la aprueban. Algo se emplea en mejoras, que debieran hacerse con los productos de contribuciones legales; pero la mayor parte queda en sus bolsillos, o se divide con el Jefe Supremo.

Comisionados, too, were seen as little caciques who oppressed their charges with similar abuses. Both the military and civil departmental commanders
looked down upon all other provincial civil servants, particularly mayors and municipal authorities.

There was also the question of race. In the provinces most political positions were held by the ladino hierarchy. This structure of authority occurred both at a regional and national level. In this manner a network emerged in which the ladinos dominated and defined the values of society. Anthropological studies such as Carmack's and van den Berghe's show how many Indian functionaries - officials or *principales* within their own communities - found themselves converted into 'political clients' of a ladino order. The ordinary Indian population, too, found themselves forced to adopt and assimilate ladino values through their abduction into the army and to a lesser extent through their recruitment into coffee harvesting. The military order was organized in such a way as to ensure that the system of *mandamientos*, which guaranteed a constant supply of Indian labour, continued to function properly, and at the same time it was the use of a predominantly Indian army that made this possible. Whereas Indian labourers found little future in a system of debt-servitude, those Indians who found themselves in the army at least stood a chance of improving their lot, albeit at the cost of losing their cultural identity.

Carmack's anthropological study of Momostenango in the department of Totonicapán shows in greater detail how this system worked. He tells of the Cienfuegos family - presumably the Cifuentes - who dominated the town's politics from the days of Reyna Barrios. It appears that all posts which carried a stipend and other rewards as well as prestige tended to be reserved for ladinos. Even posts with little or no remuneration, such as those of *primer* and *segundo regidor* and *sindico*, were specifically given to ladinos. In the predominantly Indian regions of the western highlands,
however, there existed specific ranks for Indians. These were those of alcalde segundo and sindico segundo. While it was true that these positions offered no salary, local prestige might be gained from them.

The only place where this strict social and political stratification was partially ignored was within the military. The great mass of the army consisted of Indians. Although uniforms were scarce, those Indians who had attended the Politécnica or received some other form of military training could be recognized by their use of corporal’s stripes. These men were known as galonistas. In Momostenango six Indians had attained the rank of colonel and were only outranked by General Cifuentes himself.

Teodoro Cifuentes, whom Cabrera reportedly nicknamed 'ese General Indio', dominated politics in Totonicapán for over two decades. He is an example of a ladinoized Indian who rose in society through the military hierarchy and became a local cacique who was able to survive several changes of government through a strong and shrewd use of power. Cifuentes rose in rank from captain in 1892 to becoming involved in government administration in Totonicapán. In March 1899 Enrique Arís wrote to Cabrera, telling him about his special qualities:

Amigo de la justicia como soy, cumplo a mi deber participarle que el Comisionado Político de Momostenango, Comandante Teodoro Cifuentes, es un empleado del que puede usted sacar mucho partido. He venido estudiándolo desde mi llegada a esta y puedo decir con especial gusto, que es un empleado modelo, activo como el que más, honrado, de buen juicio y de especiales razgos de carácter, Tengo para mi que de él podría formarse un buen Jefe Político haciéndolo recorrer diversas escalas para darle la experiencia necesaria.

Me sería muy agradable tenerlo de Mayor de Plaza para que estudie el mecanismo del servicio militar y vea la marcha de la Jefatura, seguro que con el trascurso de unos meses ya tendría usted un hombre entendido para el servicio de este o cualquier otro Departamento. El Teniente Coronel Juárez que está actualmente de Mayor es un buen muchacho, pero por su falta - de carácter nunca pasará de ser un 'buen muchacho'. Me permito estas explicaciones por que comprendo la conveniencia de que los suyos vayan formándose hoy, para que pueda, si así lo crea usted bien, ir saliendo de
Cifuentes became one of Cabrera's most loyal supporters and the troops of Totonicapán made up his personal guard and were his most trusted troops. Cifuentes - like Generals Aris (Quiché), Enrique Haeussler (Sacatepéquez), José Maria Orellana, Doroteo Recinos (Jutiapa), Jorge Ubico (Alta Verapaz), Generals J. Claro Chajón, José Félix Flores, Miguel Larrave, José María Lima, Luis Ovalle, José Reyes, and Lieutenant Colonel Santiago Perdomo, and Rafael Yaquían (Escuintla) - became one of the many fixtures of provincial politics of the Cabrera years. Arís's 1899 letter to the president shows that Cabrera knew the sort of person he wanted in these posts and what was expected of them. He allowed a certain level of freedom and manoeuvre to his provincial commanders even though he expected total loyalty.

Many of these men were granted different favours - whether in the form of business concessions, or land titles. It is not clear whether Cabrera took a cut from their earnings, particularly when they prospered, or whether he demanded such subservience in order to demonstrate that they were all dependant on him.

Cabrera achieved his control of the army through a balance of cunning, coercion, psychology and force. By offering rewards to some he soon established a relationship of mutual profit with many regional politicians. As will be seen below, Congress finally had to allow and accept his remodelling of the 1879 Constitution, a move which resulted in Cabrera's undisputed position as dictator. This triumph, in shaping the liberal constitution to suit his personalistic style of government, coupled with his hold on the army, destroyed whatever hopes there might have been for the evolution of a democratic government in the republic.
Before he was able to dedicate himself to the matter of his greatest concern - his first re-election - Cabrera had to deal with the aftermath of the earthquake at Santa María in 1902 and some fighting on the Salvadorean border. As a lawyer, Cabrera could not resist the legitimacy that a simple alteration of the 1879 Constitution would give him. It is widely believed that he had been one of the principal movers of the dissolution of the 1893 and 1897 Assemblies which led to Reyna Barrios’s dictatorial declaration. Furthermore, a series of articles criticizing the Constitution, which appeared in the then recently founded paper, *El Congreso*, are generally ascribed to Cabrera.¹ There is no doubt that as Minister of the Interior Cabrera designed many laws which established him as an able law maker.

Although the machinery of the 1898 elections had only to be resuscitated, Cabrera recognized the importance of a legal blessing from the National Assembly in order to justify his perpetration of the greatest unconstitutionality: the legalizing of re-elections. The Constitution of 1879 was considered the liberal bible, and any modification, particularly if seen as conservative in inspiration, was viewed as a betrayal of the party’s ideals. His legal and practical acumen, acquired during his years as a provincial lawyer and cabinet member, were especially important for that first re-election, where he was able to make unashamed use of respectable citizens to alter the law and make a mockery of legal impediment. It must be remembered that this was a parliament composed of many of those same representatives who had condemned Reyna Barrios’s legal affront in the
PART II

1990s, though most had later accepted him. Many of them, too, had known
the man for whom this Constitution had been written: the great liberal
dictator, Justo Rufino Barrios.

Throughout his long rule, but especially during those first years,
Cabrera was never short of decrees and legal rituals. He always took care
to appear mindful of the law, especially on paper. Cabrera’s concern for
legal forms remained one of his hallmarks, but his desire to dominate all
three branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial) was
greater. His government came to resemble earlier governments, in particular
the conservative government of Carrera which García Granados had
criticized in his Manifesto of 8 May 1871.

Queremos, que, en vez de gobierno dictatorial y tiránico, como el presente,
se establezca otro que no tenga más normas que la justicia; que en vez de
atropellar las garantías, las aceate y respete, y en una palabra, que en vez
de gobernar según su capricho o su interés privado, sea simplemente un fiel
ejecutor de las leyes, sumiso y jamás superior a ellas. Queremos que
desaparezca la llamada Acta Constitutiva, que no es sino un documento
informe y absurdo, fraguado con la mira de establecer una dictadura, de la
cual sacan partido algunas pocas personas que les sirven de agentes y
satélites; queremos que haya una verdadera representación nacional
libremente elegida y compuesta de hombres independientes que tengan celo
por el decoro nacional y el cumplimiento de la ley; una Asamblea en fin,
que no sea como la presente, un conjunto, con pocas excepciones, de
empleados subalternos del gobierno y de seres débiles y egoístas que no
miran por el bien del país y sí sólo por sus intereses pecuniarios o
privados... 2

However, all that was to be condemned in conservatism, as described by
García Granados, did not disappear with the dawn of liberalism. General
Justo Rufino Barrios, who succeeded him in the presidency in 1873, required
many of the same dictatorial powers as his conservative predecessors in
order to modernize the republic. Many recognized that he would be unable
to do this without a strong centralized power base. Dr Lorenzo Montufar,
the man chosen to draft a new Constitution which would reflect liberal
virtues and distinguish it from the unlimited and unprogressive powers of conservatism, understood perhaps better than anyone what this entailed. Montúfar knew that Barrios was a strong and autocratic personality who would not respect a law if it interfered with his will. His control of the military could undermine the law at any time and it was therefore ingenuous to think that a new constitution would curtail his powers.

Montúfar faced a dilemma. He recognized that a truly liberal constitution was out of the question since it could only help critics demonstrate that liberalism was far from established; while a 'liberal' constitution with the reactionary requirements needed by Barrios would only seem an apostasy. Montúfar preferred to write what he considered a tailor-made Constitution for this reform-conscious tyrant, to serve his needs provisionally until he was replaced, at which time a new Constitution would be adopted. Thus, the constitution of 1879, originally considered a temporary measure, continued to serve and influence presidents throughout the rest of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Barillas respected it, but was unable to use it to his advantage though he wished to continue in power; Reyna Barrios tried to do the same, but failed. It was a lawyer, and not a general who was finally able to use the Constitution and coerce his assembly into complying with his wishes. It was not replaced until after Cabrera's fall in 1920. Cabrera, like Barrios, was a tyrant, but it is worth quoting Montúfar's letter of 3 November 1882 to Barrundia, to see the main differences between the two men:

...Aquella Coasión palpaba que el General puede compararse a un León africano, que es imposible se contenga dentro de una jaula de hilos de seda y se quiso que la jaula constitucional fuese muy grande y con una puerta vasta para que el león pudiese entrar y salir sin reventar los hilos... La Constitución fue decretada y la experiencia ha venido a demostrar la prevision de los legisladores de 1879, Barrios no observa la ley.
Besides the obvious - that Cabrera was not a military man - Montúfar's observations show the differences and similarities between the two dictators. Barrios appears as the more noble of the two. He remains by any standards a key figure in the recent history of Guatemala, as he brought in liberalism with his strong anti-clerical stance and his rule was marked by a zealous desire to bring modernity to agriculture and industry. It is perhaps because of this that his faults are often overlooked. Many would interpret the fact that he chose to remain within Montúfar's 'constitutional cage' as a sign of his goodwill. Barrios's disregard of these laws was only due to the difficulties of establishing a working infrastructure which would facilitate the export of coffee and other crops to a rapidly changing world market. On the other hand, Cabrera's study of the law makes his defiance of the 1879 Constitution seem particularly cynical, highlighting his rancorous outlook towards society. Along with the ambitions and motivations of these two dictators one must consider the people who allowed them to remain in power. But let us turn now to Cabrera's handling of the 1879 Constitution.

On 12 July 1903 he called together an extraordinary session of the National Assembly which changed article 66 of the Constitution, thus allowing him to hold office for six years and enabling him to renew his presidency through elections. Congress's President, José Pinto, was joined by career liberals from Barrios and Barillas's time. They were: Francisco Anguiano, Arturo Ubico, Francisco Fuentes, Vicente Sáenz, Adrián Vidaurre, Ramón A. Salazar, José María Andrade, Rafael Ponciano, José Barrios E.,
Domingo Morales, Mariano Cruz, and José A. Beteta. Many of these men were highly regarded in their professions besides being respected as decent people. Their complicity in changing Guatemala's _magna carta_ was not to be forgotten:

...¿Qué fe, qué confianza puede despertar el partido liberal, si sus más grandes hombres son los primeros en quebrantar los principios básicos del liberalismo? Para la juventud observadora, son anomalias que no acepta ni puede dejar pasar en silencio. Las doctrinas son unas y los procedimientos otros. Aquel atentado, consumado en la _Carta Fundamental_, sirvió para que Estrada Cabrera se sintiera fuerte, inmovible y el oprobio de su administración se prolongara a través de más de cuatro lustros angustiosos, todos llenos de los recuerdos más dolorosos.

It is remarkable that so many distinguished 'liberals' and previously upstanding citizens should support a man no one liked. How had Cabrera managed to coerce these worthy citizens to alter the 1879 Constitution in such a flagrant way? The answer must lie, in part, in the fact that many of these men feared losing their homes, property and possibly their lives (or those of their families) should they disagree with the president. They and their fellow citizens came to feel that it was preferable to lose their dignity and their freedom, provided they continued life relatively undisturbed. More importantly, many of these men belonged to families with substantial coffee interests, who benefitted from the stability and continuation of a system which a dictatorship could best provide.

During this administration these deputies came to be known popularly as _fantoches_ - marionettes or men of straw. Carlos Herrera, Antonio Batres Jáuregui were among the _fantoches_, and may have played the subservient part to gain favours, to protect the status quo, or because they had few options. The president knew that he was feared and therefore he could make whatever laws he wished through the use of his parliament. Rodríguez tells
how the dictator enjoyed himself advising one camp of representatives to argue a certain viewpoint, while telling others to oppose it. Ultimately, all votes would be the same, but this little game went on in order to give a façade of legality to the outside world, though everyone knew that it was all prearranged by presidential decree. Cabrera would also use this method to test his followers or get rid of deputies whom he no longer found useful or amusing. Thus, the opening of parliament with all its pomp and elegance came to be regarded, like elections, with some disdain. Likewise the yearly ministerial Memorias or reports, along with the presidential message, were seen as platforms for further sycophancy.

After gaining the amendment for Decree 66 of the Constitution, Cabrera was recognized as the chief of the Liberal party. This position had previously belonged to Lorenzo Montúfar, who had chosen José León Castillo as his successor. Castillo, however, feared for his life, despite offers of general amnesty for all political exiles, and remained in El Salvador. Soon Cabrera's key supporters, mainly jefes políticos and deputies, began to organize demonstrations of popular support for his candidacy. Their civilian counterparts in the capital, ministers and congressmen like Juan Barrios M. and Juan J. Argueta launched political clubs in the capital. Government writers like Casimiro D. Rubio and Felipe Estrada Pantáagua wrote complimentary pamphlets for this re-election, while composers dedicated works to the Benemérito. Wenceslao Chacón and Jorge Galán, Cabrera's trusted chiefs of the secret police, also pledged their allegiance.

After Cabrera's ascent to power long lists of citizens' names from each province appeared in the letters which he received at every possible occasion. There were letters of genuine praise, as for the completion of
the 81-kilometre road from Huehuetenango to Quezaltenango in 1901, but for the most part these, like the Memorias, were full of blandishments. As time passed, these letters became de rigueur for all those wishing to be noticed for their fidelity or for those who hoped that by signing their names they would be exempt from reprisals. Foreign representatives and expatriates also stooped to this 'tradition' of flattery in order to maintain Cabrera's goodwill.

Cabrera rightly felt that he must also be recognized as the supreme commander of the army. He was never to be called 'General', although he gained a series of titles from the National Assembly, the public and the army. In 1900 he was given the title of Benemérito de la Patria which was followed by: ilustre mandatario, primer magistrado de la nación and protector de la juventud. After the border skirmishes with El Salvador in February of 1903, letters of congratulations were sent to the capital from all parts of the republic, praising specifically the dictator's military abilities. The military high command had no choice but to acknowledge his authority. Many of his officers and their regiments sent their congratulations to him and an anonymous hoja suelta from San Marcos read:

\[\text{Nada valen terremotos, ni erupciones volcánicas; aquí solo anima el llamamiento que dirijisteis al Ejército para defender la integridad nacional.}^6\]

By 1904 every battalion and every village felt the need to let it be known that they supported the re-election. As the date of voting approached, jefe políticos and cabinet ministers re-organized liberal clubs and took up 'voluntary' subscriptions in order to fund the operations of these clubs and of the local press. The Club Central 2 was founded by Dr Francisco Anguiano, who first suggested that Cabrera be re-elected to the
National Assembly. New clubs, like the aptly named Club La Reelección of the cantón of La Independencia in Guatemala City and the Club Alerta of Concepción, set the pace. Cahabón, Chicacao, Ixhuatan, Salcajá, San Pedro la Laguna, and San Lucas Tolimán were among the dozens of cabrerista clubs which were founded in the predominantly Indian areas. Cabrerista fervour went so far as to lead to the formation of children's clubs - Amigos del señor presidente.

One of the most important clubs which appeared in the capital during this first electoral period was called La Democracia. Among the many advantages of belonging to this particular club was the receipt of free drinks:

...todos los miembros de ese club y los de sus dependencias tenían derecho a embriagarse en cualquier establecimiento de licores, por cuenta de 'alguien'; tenían derecho a portar toda clase de armas y el de escandalizar a las gentes, a insultar a los que no gritasen con ellos ¡Viva Estrada Cabrera!«

Cabrera's victory was not only due to the establishment of these clubs, the work of jefes políticos and other civil servants, but also to newspapers. His former motto, Libertad, Paz y Progreso was replaced by the letters S.P.C. de la R., Señor Presidente Constitucional de la República on electoral posters and provincial hojas sueltas. A newspaper called El Diario was launched at this time and became one of the most effective propaganda vehicles of the electoral campaign. Short-lived newspapers also appeared in this interim period. Sololá's La Centinela and Mazatenango's El Alacrán described themselves as radical, while El Cronista of Guatemala City described itself as liberal. In Patulul, the cabrerista club slogan announced: La Paz y el trabajo garantizados - peace and work guaranteed - though the president's private correspondence for these years,
particularly 1905, shows letter after letter from civil servants asking to be paid.

Freedom of the press hardly existed and most critical articles were written and published anonymously. The only non-cabrerista newspaper was Rómulo Alfaro's *La Campana*, which was admired not only for its articles but also for its excellent cartoons by the caricaturist Moncrayón and the humourist Enrique Hidalgo.

In April 1903 such a sheet appeared in Jutiapa, curiously entitled 'Luz Donde Hubo Sombras'. Its anonymous authors accused the departmental jefe político, Doroteo Recinos, and his departmental aid, Vicente M. Lemus, of aiding rebel forces, of exploiting the good faith of the people by charging them unusually high taxes and of other crimes:

Enemigos del Gobierno aquí han sido y son Recinos, Lemus y empleados a sus familiares, se las han encubierto infinitos crímenes para explotar las arcas; Lemus porque se hurtó dos cajas de parque y las regaló los facciosos del 2 de diciembre; al suegro de Lemus ¿por qué se hurta la herramienta de la Dirección de Caminos? y cambia los boletos por maíz, arroz, frijol, y hasta por chiles; los cuñados de Lemus. ¿porque obsequiaron a los mismos facciosos, los fusiles y cartucheras que habían sacado del Cuartel? Se estuvieron con ellos y los abandonaron cuando los vieron perdidos; Recinos, ¿porque se hurtó instrumentos de la obra del agua, y regaló una paja con la cañería necesaria al 'Tio Chicho', siendo nacionales, Recinos y Lemus, ¿porque se empeñaron en obtener autorización para fusilar y apalear? - ¿porque en todos sus actos han puesto en ridículo a la Administración Pública?'

Neither Lemus nor Recinos lost his post that year. Both men went on to participate in the war of 1906 and remained cabreristas until 1920. Cabrera made use of the letters of denunciation of public officials and private citizens which filled his private archives whenever he found it necessary. Through this treasury of intimate information Cabrera and his subordinates could compile devastating articles about almost any citizen. The appearance of such articles could either be seen as direct attacks on
Throughout the dictatorship the press remained an influential means of controlling the public. Articles like 'Será Buena o no la Reelección?' written by Jutiapa's Francisco Javier Moreno were aimed at the less sophisticated voter who might actually ponder the question. Anti-cabrérista literature was sometimes more effective when published abroad, although it must be remembered that there, too, Cabrera had his authors, publishers and public. Prejudices, however, are easy to discern.

In June 1903 another hoja suelta printed in Nicaragua was circulated in Guatemala. It was signed by eighteen nationals, each of whom gave not only his name, but his home province. The directness of its content contrasts dramatically with the fawning and florid prose of the official propaganda machine:

¿Cómo creer que un pueblo pida la reelección del que ha erigido un sistema; el robo, el asesinato, el envenenamiento, el palo y todo lo que destruye, denigr y extermina, para infundir terror, apareciendo entre sus gobernadores como la imagen fatídica de la muerte? Centenares de inocentes fusilados sin formación de causa; el cadáver levantado, aun para los soldados razos que discrepan en política, la propiedad violada y los legítimos propietarios a merced de la violencia; las vías de comunicación y todo el servicio público en completo abandono; miles de esbirros espiando hasta las intimidades del hogar y un pueblo sufrido, desarmado trabajando para que coman y beban los canallas,

¿Será posible que una situación así se prolongue por seis años más?

The first re-election was held in early July 1904. The machinery for this first re-election is impressive and demonstrates Cabrera's command over large and important sectors - mainly the civil servants and the ladino majority. Colonel Aris, then jefe político of Guatemala, had begun collecting signatures of support as early as March 1904. His production of the signatures of two members of a distinguished and conservative creole family - Rafael and Francisco Aycinena - gave him added worth. Aris asked
Francisco Aycinena to preside over one of the voting tables during elections. Another distinguished creole, Francisco Lainfiesta, was asked to do the same, but declined on account of his age. 10

On 1 July 1904 all voting stations were opened but no conscientious citizen approached these of his own volition. The people who were seen to vote were mainly Indians and other innocent citizens unable to avoid the local authorities and therefore escorted by official agents. In the provinces this was in the realm of the jeñaturas políticas while in the capital it was in hands of the police. On 7 August the National Assembly declared Cabrera the popularly elected candidate. He won by a total of 550,000 votes in a country with 1,500,000 inhabitants. Of these 1,500,000, only 750,000 were men (and therefore eligible to vote) and it should not be forgotten that many of these males were under eighteen and illiterate. Lainfiesta believes that the only reasonable figure which could be acceptable would be that of 350,000 votes, which makes at least 200,000 of the official vote a fiction. 11 This second term was to last from 15 March 1905 to the same date in 1911.

Cabrera's second cabinet consisted of many of the same men who had been with him during his first term. Important names at the time were those of Dr Francisco Anguiano, who was First Designate; Lic. Francisco Alarcón, General Mariano Serrano Muñoz, Juan Barrios M., Dr Matías J. López and General Manuel Duarte temporarily served as figureheads for different ministries. In January 1908 the following were named ministers, most of them to last in office for the remainder of the dictatorship: General Luis Molina, Ministry of War; Juan Barrios M., Foreign Relations; Guillermo Aguirre, Treasury; Angel M. Bocanegra, Education; Joaquín Méndez, Public Works; J.M. Reina Andrade was named Minister of the Interior. Three other
important individuals were also named at this time: Adrián Vidaurre as president of the legislative committee; Carlos Herrera as head of the finance commission; and José A. Beteta, in charge of the section of public works. Beteta, Herrera and Vidaurre all came from rich and distinguished families and their presence in Cabrera's cabinet ensured an alliance favourable to their interests and his desire to remain in power.

Most members of this cabinet belonged to the upper class and although Guillermo Aguirre was not entirely typical of this group he was described as todo un gran señor like many of his fellow ministers. In the late nineteenth century Aguirre had owned a foundry near the Gran Hotel. It was sold during the 1890s, at which time he went into banking. When Reyna Barrios was assassinated Aguirre offered his services to Cabrera and was rewarded with the post of Minister of the Treasury. He remained a permanent member of Cabrera's cabinet throughout his régime. Hernández de León described him as follows:

Hoy se le tendría por archifeudal. Siempre vivió en granja; su casa estaba situada en la séptima avenida y tenía todas las comodidades que podían disfrutarse en la época. Los paseantes oían sonar de las bolas de billar; las visitas eran numerosas; las mesas que se servían si no pantagruélicas, eran del mejor y más refinado gusto. Don Guillermo tenía los mejores troncos de caballos; fue el primero que empleó coches con ruedas engomadas; se vestía severamente de levita cruzada y era habitual el empleo del sombrero de copa. !

The National Assembly was by this time a docile body which did as it was told. Despite all the bogus demonstrations of a free press, freedom of expression and political amnesty, repression had already begun. In the remote village of Texpanaco, in the department of Santa Rosa, the local municipal alcalde was deported from his town to the capital on foot. In the principal penitentiary he was treated like a common criminal, no reason
being given for his arrest, and placed incommunicado in a penitentiary cell until elections were over. He later learned that someone had reported he lacked enthusiasm for the dictator when he failed to shout "Viva Estrada Cabrera! at a municipal meeting."

An historian basing his analysis solely on the contemporary Guatemalan printed output might think that Cabrera's landslide victory was the result of popularity. In reality, it was due to a skilful manipulation of many instruments which guaranteed his victory and ensured a docile population. Guiot, the French Minister in Guatemala at the time, observed:

Une première élection est toujours œuvre assez délicate à conduire; la seconde est au contraire un jeu d'enfant. En six années d'un pouvoir absolu le Président a eu tout le loisir d'aplanir devant lui la route; il a occupé par ses créatures tous les points stratégiques de l'organisme administratif; l'opinion a été unifiée et définitivement figée par quelques attentions flatteuses à l'égard des uns, par la menace de la prison et de la bastonnade à l'égard des autres; la fortune personnelle du Chef de l'État, mieux assise, lui donne plus de moyens d'action, plus d'audace aussi pour préparer un renouvellement de mandat qui doit permettre de nouveaux accroissements; enfin, l'armée a pu être confiée à des mains sûres, l'artillerie rajeunie et pourvue des derniers perfectionnements; et avec pareilles cartes dans son jeu, il faudrait pour perdre des interventions quasi surnaturelles.

Despite Guiot's certainty of Cabrera's electoral victory, his second term was to prove Cabrera's most difficult. Although he appeared to control the National Assembly and most of the army, he still faced many dangers. The price of coffee, on which the national treasury depended as its main source of revenue, fell from U.S. $11.60 a quintal in 1899 to $4.50 in 1905. The increase of paper peso emission from twenty to fifty million in the course of seven years had brought about a serious devaluation of the national currency; the exchange rate rose from 4.50 pesos per U.S. dollar in 1899 to 12.50 per dollar in 1905. His political enemies, mainly exiles like Barillas and Castillo, as well as foreign rivals like Porfirio Diaz of
Mexico, Tomás Regalado of El Salvador, and José Santos Zelaya of Nicaragua, also threatened his security.

By Cabrera’s seventh year in power fear and secrecy had become the norm. There was a great deal of unhappiness in the country. Hernández de León described the atmosphere:

Eran días crueles, Más de siete años tenía Estrada Cabrera de estar en el poder. Ya por esa época, todo era asunto de ocultamientos y reservas. Las noticias no se podían dar, sino a resguardo de la aprobación dictatorial. Ni la escasez de granos, ni el aparecimiento de las plagas, ni las enfermedades de los ganados, ni la sequía en determinadas comarcas, ni las epidemias, eran asuntos que se podían referir ni comentar, aún en el secreto de los hogares, Estrada Cabrera extendía su voluntad sobre todas las voluntades. Cualquier ciudadano que se aventurara a dar una noticia, sobre lo que el tirano llamaba ‘alarmismo’, la pagaba muy cara, y los escarmientos se citaban crueles y repetidos.

La muerte segaba las vidas a diario, y el misterio se mantenía, por órdenes del autocrata.¹⁵

Thus although literary topics could be discussed, ordinary matters—such as the price of food or any subject vaguely critical of the régime—became dangerous.

THE WAR OF THE TOTOPoste, 1906

The war of 1906 is commonly remembered as the war of the totoposte. The word is from the Aztec and refers to the common toasted maize tortilla which was the main staple of the army. This is the only war fought against a foreign republic during this administration. It is often confused with the fighting which preceded it in May 1906 when Guatemalan exiles attacked Guatemalan territory from Mexico. Historically, relations between these two countries were poor. Internecine wars were common to the region and in 1890 and 1903 there had been skirmishes between the two.
In May 1906 dissident Guatemalan forces, numbering between 200 and 500 men, attacked Guatemala across the Salvadorean border. This disturbed the already tense relations between the two republics. On 27 May barillista forces attacked Ocós and eastern Guatemala. For years Barillas had been planning an invasion and he had arranged to pay the Governor of Chiapas, Rafael Pimentel, one thousand pesos (gold) if he could have a force of 1,500 to 2,000 armed men at the border waiting for him. Barillas went so far as to buy a ship on which he loaded 2,500 rifles and two million cartridges in order to supply this force. Engineer Manuel S. Ayau had gone to California where he acquired the funds to make this possible. Ayau nevertheless discovered that the jefe político of Tehuantepec, Manuel Bejarana, was not planning to help Pimentel as had been arranged. This meant that the exiles were to attack Guatemala on their own, despite Porfirio Díaz's verbal support. Díaz had already given Barillas's men some rifles and asylum.

Rafael Ayau led barillista forces on 27 May against the comandancia at Ocós. Ayau and his men found themselves outnumbered and had to return to Mexican territory suddenly, leaving 60,000 cartridges and sixty Winchesters behind. Castillo was expected to reinforce Ayau from the port, where he was to arrive aboard The Empire, but he went past Ocós and disembarked at Acajutla in El Salvador. General Salvador Quimiché Toledo was successful in capturing the capital of Jutiapa at Asunción Mita. Many Guatemalans joined Toledo's small force at Mongoy, where they awaited further military supplies promised by the Salvadorean General Regalado. The Guatemalan general, León Bolaños, who was in charge of delivering this armament, intentionally got lost near Chalchuapa. He may have been instructed not to deliver the goods by Regalado, who had learned that Díaz was already
helping Barillas. In any case, their betrayal proved disastrous for the movement and on 10 June Toledo was forced to leave Guatemalan territory.  

Although Castillo’s forces enjoyed temporary victories, they were ultimately defeated for lack of sufficient force and poor strategy. As in 1899 when Barillas and Morales attempted to overthrow Cabrera, Barillas and Castillo failed to plan a joint strategy which might have resulted in a victory for their common cause of deposing Cabrera. Furthermore, Regalado might also have achieved his goal had he given his whole-hearted cooperation to both men. Instead he preferred to wait and wage his own personal war against the tyrant.

Although the national newspapers hardly mentioned Barillas’s foray, the Mexican papers did. In June 1906 the Diario del Hogar announced Barrillas’s incursion into Guatemalan territory from the Suchiate. They reported that he had a force of 4,000 men and ten million pesos at his disposal. The Guatemalan press made much of Cabrera’s symbolic spike-driving on the last stretch of the ‘inter-oceanic’ railroad which was to be completed in 1908. Hernández de León, however, tells us that despite his calm demeanour the president was frightened:

La congoja de Estrada Cabrera era horrible. El desgraciado hombre no comía, no dormía, a derechas, no reposaba un instante. Aprendió el manejo del manipulador telegráfico y vivía pendiente de la oficina particular que tenía al lado de su dormitorio. El telegrafista, entonces, Julio A. Silva, hombre honrado, reservado, laboriosísimo, nos dijo algo, en fuerza de mañana que pusimos para enterarnos. Sin embargo se agobiaba con el trajeín. A todas horas don Manuel se aparecía por la espalda del trabajador, a la una, a las dos, a las tres, en todos los instantes del día y de la noche, don Manuel pasaba por la oficina telegráfica, pendiente de los partes transmitidos y de los que llegaban...  

An opponent of Cabrera, General Regalado sympathized with Guatemalan
refugees living in his El Salvador, notably General José León Castillo, Dr José Llerena, Licenciado Manuel Diéguez and don Juan Francisco Ponciano. Regalado tried to help them as much as possible but as he told General Nicanor Fonseca of Santa Ana:

> A los refugiados puede darles trabajo, pero solo en el magisterio, pues si se les ocupa en lo militar, se roban el parque y las arnas..."17

Although he was not the president of El Salvador, he was more popular than President Pepe Escalon. Regalado had a tremendous reputation and was a hero of much folklore. He considered himself Barrios’s successor in attempting to unite Central America as a single nation. His notorious personal hatred for Cabrera stemmed from Cabrera forcing him legally to recognize the children he had had by a Guatemalan mistress. This may explain his willingness to fight on independently. He appears to have been a rough diamond:

> Los guatemaltecos lo consideraban como un militar dípsómano, muy valiente y adorado en su tierra, sobre todo en la ciudad de Santa Ana, donde había nacido. Jugaba gallos, se embriagaba hasta la locura y estaba pronto a exponer su vida y su hacienda a los azares de una partida de dados o de guerra; pero era un político versátil, poco inteligente y sin miras elevadas, aunque exaltado patriota. Le faltaban tres dedos de la mano izquierda y una parte de la oreja del mismo lado. Su habilidad en el tiro de revolver era proverbial.20

Regalado felt that Cabrera would be exhausted by the strain of the last two months of fighting on two fronts and accordingly placed his troops along the entire length of the Salvadorean border. He was accompanied by the Guatemalan Generals José Montúfar, Salvador Toledo, Custodio Porras, Mariano Montenegro, and Isidro Valdés. Nevertheless, by July 1906 Cabrera had two victories behind him. His jefes políticos recruited large numbers of Indians to serve in the rank and file and most of these were deployed
on the Guatemalan-Salvadorean border under the command of some of his most trusted officers. Communications between the Guatemalan battalions were poor or non-existent. The troops were untrained, underfed and unmotivated.

The war that ensued on this border has subsequently come to be known as the war of the totoposte. Not only were the soldiers untrained and badly equipped during this war, but many also went hungry. The former Dean of the Law Faculty, Licenciado Carlos Salazar, and the physician Dr Julio Bianchi, found themselves posted to the western front. Both were perturbed by the conditions they found and the lack of food. In Yupiltepeque there was only one single cow. The soldiers were hard put to live on the food they received:

La ración diaria de totopostes que se les servía en el sudado sombrero de palma, la sufrida tropa soplababa repetidas veces la ración para espantar los gusanos y en seguida echaban agua caliente para excluir el moho verde que ornamentaba la alimentación del ejército...21

As food became scarcer commanding officers sent their men to buy supplies in the neighbouring villages, knowing full well that the little there was to be found would not be for sale:

Yo, Decano de la Facultad de Derecho, Católico de Derecho Civil, es decir maestro de Justicia daba órdenes para la violencia y el despojo de gente miserable que ocultaba sus gallinas para que sus hijos tuvieran alimento...

¿Qué significaba aquel asalto realizado por gentes honrables y decentes? Pues significaba que la administración militar era nula e inicua y que la gente de tropa estaba en la miseria angustiada por el hambre...

...me di cuenta que nada, absolutamente nada, podía hacer ni disponer el General en Jefe, ni siquiera puramente técnico en la órbita de la disciplina. Cuando vi que en la iglesia parroquial, convertida en almacén de vituallas, se podría la carne - cocina - y se engusnavaba el totoposte, pregunté a Aguilar, por qué habiendo tanto que enviar a las tropas, estas sufrían hambre y privaciones inconcebibles, me contestó: 'no tenía orden para enviar esas municiones de boca',21
Salazar's discovery of stores of rotting supplies horrified him, as did General Aguilar's inability to distribute them. Cabrera's failure to respect or appreciate the abilities of his commanding officers resulted in growing dissension within the ranks. The dictator's fear of giving too much power to the military and thus losing his hold over them now expressed itself in his reluctance to feed his troops. Generals Toledo and Montúfar, two officers Cabrera had promoted and given important posts in the early 1900s, preferred to fight alongside Regalado against their fellow-countrymen rather than remain under Cabrera's command. The president therefore feared that their leadership qualities might affect his own troops.

From the outset Cabrera was cautious in his military appointments and used this war as a further opportunity for waging his own war on the national army. General José Antonio Aguilar was named Commander-in-Chief of the western troops and commanded the border with El Salvador to the limits of the river Paz. The veteran General Larrave also played an important role. General José Félix Flores was to command the section of Jalpatagua, further south of the river Paz near the lake of Güija, while General Manuel Duarte was stationed in the area near Metapán; finally General Villela was to control the remaining section of the border with Honduras. General Leopoldo Orellana was General-in-Chief of Chiquimula. The Battalion of Mazatenango was initially under the orders of Lt. Colonel Pablo González, until recently commander of San Bernardino, Suchitepéquez. Colonel Marcos Calderón was named head of the Plaza of Jutiapa. As the fighting became fiercer the battalions from Amatitlán and Alta Verapaz moved in. These were commanded by Colonels Salvador Alarcon and Teodoro Cifuentes respectively.
During this campaign spying was rampant and ordinary foot soldiers reported regularly on the activities of their commanding officers. Another of Cabrera's tactics during this war was to order that subordinate officers be answerable only to him and not to their military superiors as they had been traditionally. A notable example of this is the case of General Villela, who received notification from the capital that General Toledo had taken the plaza at Asunción Mita. Villela lost no time and ordered his aide-de-camp to telegraph General Manuel Duarte, the commander of the nearest government battalion, to attack Toledo's forces. Duarte replied that he was unable to do so unless he had Cabrera's authorization.

Insulted and outraged upon receiving this insubordinate reply, Villela telegraphed the president with his resignation:

Señor Presidente. - Si la Asamblea Nacional Legislativa, como representación del pueblo me hizo general de división, Si Usted, como Jefe del Ejército, me ha nombrado General en Jefe de esta Zona, ha sido, indudablemente, porque ambos encontraron en mí, capacidades para el desempeño de estos cargos. Veo con sentimiento que el papel que voy a desempeñar a la frontera es el de un infeliz fantoche; en esa virtud, sirvase Usted nombrar otra persona que me sustituya, que yo de aquí regresará a mi casa. -

Cabrera immediately telegraphed back to Villela telling him to calm down, that he had the greatest confidence in him and to do as he saw fit. Despite these expressions of trust Villela was unable to move Duarte from Concepción and stop Toledo. Duarte also faced problems with his men when Cabrera instructed him to move his troops to Chiquimula when Colonels Antonio Monterroso and Salvador Cuéllar refused to follow orders. The Politécnica-educated and well-respected General Aguilar also encountered indifference and disobedience from his men:

...nadie hacía caso del Mayor General. El sistema de delaciones, de
The fundamental weakness of this campaign, which could so easily have proved calamitous for the army, was that Cabrera, a man with no first-hand experience of active duty, gave orders from inexact maps to an army whose morale, hierarchy, and discipline he had undermined. As a result of this skirmishes were lost and soldiers deserted in droves. The army, like the National Assembly, found itself fearing the consequences of any insubordination or show of initiative before the president. They also faced humiliations, and in some cases tragedies.

A state of siege was declared and many opponents and critics of the régime were imprisoned. Most arrests were made by orden superior which, according to General Apolinar Ortiz, meant that these prisoners were placed on their own, incomunicado, completely cut off from the outside world. Many families lost relatives and friends in this manner and Salazar, who had been sent to the front instead, later learned that thirty-two lawyers were arrested. Among them were the son of the Independence movement leader, Molina, the Vielman brothers and Juan Viteri, one of the signatories of the 1871 Act of Patzicia.

Salazar, like many others, had been sent to the front for a particular
reason. Cabrera viewed him as a political threat and used the excuse that his law partner, José Vicente Martínez, had close links with Barillas's son-in-law. For this reason Martínez was imprisoned while Salazar was sent to the front. There Salazar was named judge of military prisoners and deserters. Salazar was given a companion and a letter to take to General Félix Flores, who was to give Salazar further instructions. As a lawyer and a careful observer of local politics, Salazar feared that he was carrying his death warrant with him, but proceeded as ordered. After a few days' journeying Salazar arrived at Flores's camp, where he was warmly welcomed.

Flores had been one of his students, like many other military officers then serving in Cabrera's army. Flores knew that Salazar was not entirely persona grata with the president, but preferred to entertain his guest with unaccustomed hospitality. First, he advised Salazar to fire his assistant, Captain Francisco Barrios, whom he recognized as a spy of the Minister of War, Adrián Vidaurre. The scout was dismissed and returned to the capital where he reported the welcome Salazar received. Flores then chose another companion for his former teacher and looked after him until Salazar had to leave in order to join the battalion to which he had been designated. Flores was to appear on several later occasions, as during the siege of the perpetrators of the bomb conspiracy, and he was among those lynched by Unionist crowds when Cabrera fell in 1920. His treatment of his former teacher, however, shows substantial personal valour. It also demonstrates that, although Cabrera could expect his followers to commit many crimes in his name, friendships or family connections could sometimes interfere.

Cabrera recognized that if he lost the war, his arbitrary reprisals against so many citizens, innocent or otherwise, would lead to his own
imprisonment or death. He therefore made preparations in case of possible defeat, arranging funds and transport for a safe passage from Guatemala. These plans were so secret that when the war was won, Cabrera chose to shoot those men who had been involved with arranging his finances. The official newspapers only reported the successes of the army, but in the streets of the capital people were not as optimistic.

Cabrera's troops were at a great disadvantage compared to those of Regalado, chiefly because the president did not trust his officers sufficiently to allow them to decide upon their own tactics. They therefore had to follow on his decisions, based on the information he received at the telegraphist's office in the capital. Regalado also faced setbacks. He discovered that his own president, Escalón of El Salvador, like the Guatemalan commanding officers, was telegraphing Cabrera regularly, keeping him informed on Salvadorean troop movements. Despite these contretemps, Regalado led his army into Guatemalan territory on 9 July 1906.

Many accounts say that Regalado had been drunk for several days before he attacked. His officers told him that it would be madness to attack El Sillón. He took Atescatimpa and continued towards El Entrecijo, which was considered by many a suicidal move. He found little opposition; his reputation had preceded him and in certain battalions, like that of Mazatenango, the soldiers and some officers deserted as they felt they would be slaughtered. Marroquin Rojas noted the change in many officers' attitudes:

*El entusiasmo y emoción de nuestros jefes, reflejados en sus mensajes a Estrada Cabrera, llenos de una pomposidad adulatoria inenarrable, en los principios de la revolución, se transformaron en algo desesperante. Casi era la derrota; las fuerzas desbandadas, tanto por la parte de Jutiapa como por Chiquimula, daban el espectáculo más triste y más sombrío. No había un solo jefe que guardara la serenidad y que se atreviera, como en 1885, lo*
General Larrave, chief of the western division, did not feel the same fear; he was discovered by the Salvadorean General Rodolfo A. Cristales fishing in the river Paz with some of his officers. Finding so little opposition, Regalado moved confidently into Guatemala from his headquarters at Santa Ana with an army of 700 men. Metapán was attacked and fell. Atescampa and Jérez also fell. Soon Salvadorean troops approached Yupiltepeque, a traditional battleground of the wars of Central America:

Yupiltepeque era un poblado que, durante 87 años de guerras civiles, había sido destrozado en su población, en su agricultura y en su educación. Este infeliz pueblo, como casi todos los de Oriente, ha sido devastado por las guerras, el saqueo, y la ola de exterminio de nuestras luchas insensatas y vandálicas.

The largest city near Yupiltepeque was Jutiapa. Regalado boasted that he would lunch there on 11 July before making his way to Guatemala City. From the capital, Cabrera ordered that Alarcón and Cifuentes move in with reinforcements, mainly the regiments of Amatitlán and Momostenango. The Indian soldiers of Momostenango were reputedly the best in the country and were devoted to the Cabrera. Reinforcements also arrived from Sanarate and Salamá. These two regiments wore blue-coloured uniforms which made them almost indistinguishable from the Salvadorean army. The drunk General Regalado may therefore have inadvertently entered Guatemalan-held territory thinking that his troops had preceded him. He, however, could be distinguished as a Salvadorean, especially as he appears to have been carrying his national flag as he rode towards El Jicaro.

Regalado's untimely death on 11 July, like that of Barrios in the
battle of Chalchuapa (El Salvador) in 1885, brought the war to an end. Opponents of the régime were disappointed at this outcome; but Cabrera and his troops were relieved. The death of this popular figure saddened many and even among the Guatemalan high command there were admirers who wished to keep something in his memory.

It was some time before the soldiers at the front knew of Regalado's death. Among those present when the dead General was recognized by Colonel Sánchez were Generals Lima and Chajón. Sánchez had spent time in El Salvador and was familiar not only with Regalado's two gold-capped teeth, but also with the missing fingers on his left hand - all unmistakable proof of his identity.

Rumours of Regalado's demise reached Guatemala City by eight-thirty that morning. There was general rejoicing in the city: church bells pealed, there were fireworks and military marches resounded in the parks. Cabrera was celebrating his victory and so were the people:

>...las calles colgadas, como por milagro, de guirnaldas de papel picado que cruzaban de acera a acera, y de miles de farolillos para la iluminación general de esa noche. ¡Ay de la casa que no adorne su frente, y del individuo que no manifieste entusiasmo!...

Cabrera was unable to exploit the military 'victory' as much as he would have liked, although he alarmed many Salvadoreans, particularly the General's mother, by threatening to keep Regalado's body. It was only through the intercession of the Mexican Minister Gamboa that she was allowed to come for her dead son. The war had been shortlived and there had not been excessive casualties on either side; in fact, the greatest casualties could be said to have been the political futures of Castillo and Barillas.
One tragic death was that of General Villela, the valiant soldier who had contradicted Cabrera earlier during the war. On 6 July General Villela was invited to lunch by the jefe político of Chiquimula, Colonel Policarpo López. The following day he was dead. It was rumoured he had been poisoned. General Luis Molina reported his death as being: ...por motivo de grave enfermedad natural y a quién sorprendió la muerte estando desempeñando el puesto de General en Jefe de las fuerzas expedicionarias que operaba en aquella zona. Naturally there is no proof of this. The only indication appears among the list of land grants in the Memoria de Hacienda. No. 110 of 20 December 1906 reads: Manuel Estrada Cabrera manda adjudicar a la viuda y herederos del General Francisco A. Villela, un exceso de un terreno en Purulha, Baja Verapaz, de 1 caballería, 16 manzanas, 6,253 varas cuadradas. It was not much of a recompense for the loss of such a man, but it might indicate a slight pang of conscience. Villela's death raises a question about General Calixto Mendizabal's demise, and that of Luis García León.

Cabrera's streak of cynicism and ruthlessness is evident in the decrement of valuable elements: time, energy, goodwill, and food. The rotting totoposte is not only an example of the waste of money, but also of the moral cost to the army and the people. Furthermore his lack of respect and trust for career officers shows a lack of vision: no responsible leader would risk losing any battle for the sake of embarrassing a few officers. It was foolish to ignore the expertise of those career officers who had practical experience in Central American warfare, and Cabrera was only saved from defeat by Regalado's early and unexpected death at El Jicaro. Had the Salvadorean general succeeded in reaching Jutiapa there is no doubt he would have taken Guatemala City.
This would have meant Cabrera's downfall and he must have known this.

All commanding and surviving officers were rewarded with medals and promotions for their participation in the war. In many cases it was loyalty which Cabrera rewarded, not courage. Land was distributed to many and concessions given to others. Mass promotions had by this time become part of the national militarization policy. As a result of this standards were lowered and trained officers found themselves taking orders from men they considered their inferiors in education and social standing. How could they be expected to respect the word of a man who could not read or write? Men who had earned their rank under Barrios no longer felt any pride. One such officer spoke to Marroquín Rojas:

Antes sentía orgullo de brasear gallardamente, para que se enteraran de que en mi boca manga, lucía un augusto galón de subteniente, porque pocos podían hacerlo. Ahora que llevo tres anchas cintas de coronel efectivo, escondo esas mismas boca mangas, para que no se enteren de que soy coronel. ¿Quién no es coronel, en este tiempo, mi querido amigo?

Despite the internal institutional anarchy created within the army, at the close of this campaign sycophants erected an arch near the Temple of Minerva commemorating peace and gave Cabrera a medal.

The war of 1906 established Cabrera as the undisputed head of the army. The fear that many high-ranking officers showed during this campaign, and their lack of initiative demonstrated his hold over them. The military learned that in order for them to survive and reap the benefits of cabrerismo they should join the ranks of the adulators and unconditional servants of the régime. They had seen the fate that befell dissident colleagues and had no wish to risk their lucrative and now relatively safe positions.
Mexico and the United States had viewed this war between Guatemala and El Salvador with some apprehension. Mexico wanted stability in the neighbouring countries which would not interfere with her increasing influence in the region; the United States' growing concern for stability hinged upon their interest in building an interoceanic canal through the isthmus. Both countries jointly offered mediation aboard the U.S.S. *Marblehead*, then anchored off the coast of San José, on 19–20 July 1906. A peace treaty was signed here between all Central American republics, with the exception of Nicaragua. In 1902 president José Santos Zelaya of Nicaragua had launched an isthmian treaty of friendship in hopes of advancing his ideals of a Central American federation. Zelaya viewed Mexico and the United States' involvement as interference in Central American sovereignty. All participating republics sent their foreign ministers to the *Marblehead* talks; Leslie Combs represented the United States and Federico Gamboa Mexico.  

There were several clashes between Combs and Gamboa, since the Mexican minister preferred to side with Honduras and El Salvador, while Combs took it upon himself to defend Cabrera. Clauses were drawn up which would provide for peace, control of exile activity and the future establishment of a Central American treaty of friendship and commerce. Gamboa was outraged by one of the Guatemalan delegation's demands respecting exiles. They suggested that governments should have the right to repatriate political refugees from the neighbouring countries on any occasion. Combs and the Guatemalan representatives felt that former disagreements should be arbitrated during the talks aboard the *Marblehead*.
while Gamboa and the other Central Americans thought that only future quarrels should be considered. When Gamboa found Combs's interests too one-sided and undiplomatic he asked to be put ashore. As a result of this request the Guatemalans and Combs agreed to yield to the demands of the others in order to save the conference. Despite these problems, the U.S. government considered the *Marblehead* talks a success because they felt it had established a spirit of 'co-operation' between Mexico and the states of Central America; furthermore, it extended their new 'doctrine of police power' for the region which had found expression in President Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe doctrine.

The *Marblehead* established a precedent for future U.S. diplomatic ventures. In September 1906 a 'perpetual Central American treaty of friendship and commerce' was signed. It was to be followed by a series of Washington-inspired conventions and institutions. Most of these were founded for the sole purpose of maintaining peace in the region and promoting U.S. business interests. Nevertheless, for all their planning, the U.S. government had not reckoned enough with the rivalries of Central American politicians. Although Regalado's death might have pacified the region, he was only replaced by another disturbing caudillo, the Nicaraguan Zelaya. Cabrera also continued to cause problems for the State Department while it was clear that in Zelaya they had found a champion of anti-American activity.

Soon Cabrera and Zelaya were plotting against one another and causing strain in the recently-repaired Central American balance of power. Throughout his administration Cabrera was always quick to call for U.S. mediation and eager to maintain an entente with this power. Zelaya appeared to be backing Guatemalan exiles in Mexican territory. Guatemalan
forces were therefore mobilized on the Mexican border in late 1906. This provoked the Mexican government, which considered this a breach of the recent peace talks. An American representative in Guatemala, one Brown, was instructed to request the president to recall his troops immediately. Cabrera already faced Gamboa's growing antagonism and as relations between the two republics were already strained he instructed his Minister in Mexico to begin a propaganda campaign on his behalf.41

All Cabrera's efforts to establish a good reputation for himself with the U.S. and Mexico came to nothing, however. Alarming rumours reached Washington that Minister Joseph Lee, one of Roosevelt's 'rough riders', was slowly being poisoned. W.F. Sands was sent to Guatemala on this occasion as a 'trouble-shooter' and discovered that these allegations might well be true although he could not prove them.42

Matters were made worse for Cabrera by ex-President Barillas's assassination in Mexico City on 7 April 1907. Barillas, sixty-six years old, was brutally stabbed on a busy central street by two eighteen-year-old youths. The Mexican authorities discovered Florencio Morales and his partner to be of Guatemalan nationality. Further inquiries led them to discover that both had belonged to Cabrera's rondas secretas and had links with several high-ranking government officials - principally General José María Lima and Captain Onofre Boné.43 The Mexican government demanded the extradition of both men, but Cabrera refused to acknowledge the events and did not comply with Díaz's wishes. This international squabble came to an end when a serious attempt on Cabrera's own life took place on 29 April 1907.
PART II

THE FIRST CONSPIRACY, 1907

For eight months a plot had been taking shape to bring about Cabrera’s death. By 1907, many felt that his autocratic rule with its social and moral corruption, and an ever-worsening economic situation, warranted immediate action. Some members of the army, too, felt humiliated after the war of 1906 and supported the plot. This conspiracy, commonly referred to as the conspiracy of the ‘bomb’, was not a wide movement, but the course of events involved many citizens, wittingly or unwittingly, in the developments. That the activities of those involved went unnoticed by the extensive spy network for all those months is in itself remarkable.

The plot began when a group of well-to-do young Guatemalans shared their hopes of changing the government. Hernández de León writes:

Se pensó en destruir al tirano, porque era una tiranía individual. Quitado del medio el sujeto, el régimen se derrumbaba. Los sayones que le rodeaban tenían que replagarse, al avance de las nuevas fuerzas, no era un partido el que gobernaba arbitrariamente; era un individuo, sobre el que debía descargar el rayo destructor."

Two of these – Drs Julio Valdés Blanco and Enrique Avila Echeverría – had travelled and studied abroad. They were appalled to find their country so bereft of optimism, economic opportunities and basic freedoms. Both had been sent to the Salvadorean front as physicians during the war of the Totoposte and felt their observations justified. Their friends – Felipe Prado y Madriñán, Jorge Avila Echeverría, Baltasar Rodil, Eduardo and Pedro Rubio Piloña, and Francisco Fajardo – soon became involved in their talks about plans to oust Cabrera. The young conspirators hoped to establish an interim government which would serve as a bridge until a more democratic type of government could be established. Don Francisco Anguiano and General Claro Chajón were rumoured to have been taken into the confidence
of this group. Juan and Adolfo Viteri supported the underground faction, but kept their distance since they were already under surveillance. Enrique Avila Echeverría, who had recently completed his medical studies in Paris, felt that this attempt should be made in the manner of European anarchists - through the use of bombs. The making of 'orsini' bombs meant buying dynamite, importing a 'blasting machine', and having arms, property from where the attack would be planned, labour, and above all maintaining silence.5

Citizens of diverse political colour were willing to support this group:

Era un movimiento nacional de salvación pública. Cabrera ha matado los partidos políticos: ya no hay ni liberales ni conservadores. Hay nada más cabreristas y anticabreristas. La conspiración estaba integrada por liberales y conservadores, unidos en el anhelo de derrumbar la tiranía y establecer un gobierno que tuviera por norma la ley y no el capricho de un Tiberio degenerado. Sólo así creíamos los liberales y los conservadores, poder fundar garantías personales para todos y políticos para los partidos.6

As early as February 1907 rumours of the conspiracy were circulating in the capital and the auditor de guerra Adrián Vidaurre reported having received an anonymous letter giving the names of all those involved. Suspecting this to be one of Cabrera's tests, Vidaurre was advised by Lic. Manuel Paz to show it to the president's private secretary, General Letona, in case it should turn out to be a trick. In church confessionals, particularly in those belonging to the Archbishop Riveiro y Jacinto and father Castañeda, priests gathered evidence of a plot, and although they reported it to the dictator he did not take any action.

Since 1905 Cabrera had become mysteriously reclusive and preferred to be as secretive as possible about his activities, only receiving
a few ministers on Thursdays. By this date he had made his home in the outlying farm of La Palma where he was surrounded by trusted guards and his family. He had begun to experience fanciful fears about his life and to this end sent empty landaus around the city with a military escort while he returned home in a simple carriage. One wonders why he did nothing to stop these rumours of conspiracy if he brooded and harboured the worst suspicions:

Although his Auditor General, Vidaurre, made his way directly to the president on the day of the explosion, Colonel Carlos Valdés and Jorge Galán of the secret police were asked to keep him under surveillance.

Cabrera's best spies - Jorge Galán, Emilio Ubico, Ricardo Sánchez and others - wandered the streets, revolvers in hand, in search of the 'assassins'. Everyone was a suspect:

Más de mil quinientas personas, entre ellas más de ochenta y noventa señoras y jóvenes de ambos sexos y aun muchos niños, fueron sepultados en las bóvedas subterráneas de San Francisco, en las fétidas mazmorras de la Penitenciaria, y en los calabozos oscuros de los castillos y de la Casa de Recogidas. Toda esa masa informe de desgraciados debía saber dónde se encontraban los conjurados, y se les apaleaba y se les martirizaba para arrancarles delaciones. En el martirio había desechados que creían suspender sus dolores declarando que habían visto algo: que los vieron escurriéndose por tal o cual parte; uno, dos, todos; huir de noche, algo indefinido que mostraba su buena voluntad de delatar; pero esto daba a entender que sabían más, y esto recrudecía los castigos; y los verdugos se encarnizaban precisamente en ellos, ¡ Nadie sabía nada! 

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The houses around the scene of the crime were thoroughly searched and the regulars at the local tavern of 'El Suchiate' were all interrogated. Clues were found, names disclosed and the search began.

Cabrera had always been superstitious about the month of April, and indeed it was during this month that the most dramatic events took place throughout his administration. The month was almost over and Cabrera decided to take his young son Joaquin (13) with him to see how work was progressing at the Escuela Práctica or the Asilo de Maternidad. The landau was prepared. Cabrera had many matters to think about: in a few days' time parliamentary sessions would resume and there would be new legislation to be considered. As usual a large entourage surrounded his carriage as it made its way to the open green environs of the city. Chief of Staff José María Orellana, who was later to become president, also accompanied him. The coachman, Patrocinio Monterroso, had been primed and bribed by the conspirators to pass by a certain corner (Seventh Avenue South between Sixteenth and Seventeenth Streets) under which a bomb had been painstakingly placed after months of digging. All was going according to plan that 29 April. When the sound caused by the explosion was heard in the old quarter of the city...

La sacudida fue grande; las casas vecinas sufrieron daños de consideración, una nube de polvo asombró la calle, y por unos momentos no se vieron más que piedras, pedazos de madera y toda clase de fragmentos, estrellarse contra las paredes de las casas cercanas. Entre aquellos fragmentos se movían cuatro o cinco sombras, siendo una de ellas la del propio Presidente... 

Cabrera was hardly bruised, while the coachman and one of the horses were killed. General Orellana was thrown off his horse and suffered injuries. Cabrera personally picked him up and with Joaquin the two made
their way on foot to the nearby Guardia de Honor. Cabrera's calm demeanour unnerved many of the plotters who remained nearby. One of these was Dr Valdés Blanco who rushed to the dictator to ask if he needed help. Once off the streets, Cabrera telephoned all military posts and police stations, instructing them to be on the look-out for suspicious characters and to make arrests. Provincial jefaturas políticas were also notified of the events and ordered to take action. Soon the names of the conspirators became known and a reward of 5,000 pesos per head was set.

With great aplomb, the president, who had not yet discovered Monterroso's rôle in the conspiracy, lavished honour on his dead coachman:

Su entierro fue una manifestación brillante del servilismo. Ministro de Estado y altos funcionarios condujeron su cadáver al cementerio; hubo hondas manifestaciones de dolor: lágrimas, discursos, disposiciones premiosas para asistir a sus familiares. ¡Era una víctima el deber! Pero al cabo de tales expresiones de pesadumbre se averiguó que el hombre estaba en conocimiento de la tragedia preparada y entonces se cometió la enorme vileza de desenterrarlo, de abruchar de las escenas desarrolladas y de abolir las pensiones y las gracias acordadas. Los altos funcionarios que habían llevado los cordones del féretro, se lavaron las manos, para quitarse las manchas...

A nationwide witch-hunt ensued. As on previous occasions, many innocent citizens were executed on the pretext of their involvement in this crime. In Zacapa, Cuilapa and Alta Verapaz jefes políticos Colonel Enrique Aris, General José Felix Flores and Colonel Jorge Ubico sent information, prisoners and their sympathy to the capital. Several government officials were imprisoned during this time.

In the meantime the Avila Echeverría brothers, Rodil, Prado, and Madriñán continued in hiding. They first stayed with Doña Amelia Saborío de Romaña before seeking asylum at the Spanish legation. Here they found Lic. Marcial García Salas who also feared government reprisals. Although
they were able to remain in the Spanish legation for three days, they were finally asked to leave by Minister Pedro Carrere y Lembeye’s wife, who was alone. When the Mexican diplomat Federico Gamboa was asked for advice he agreed with García Salas that it was unwise to harbour potential murderers so the five men left. The Colombian, Rafael Madriñan parted company with them here and is the only one to have survived.

In their quest for freedom they stayed for a few nights at the home of a former servant of the Avila Echeverriás, Francisca Franco. However, their friends the Rubio y Piloña brothers, Ernesto Matheu, and Padre Solís did not feel that this was a safe sanctuary and for this reason arranged for the outlaws to stay with the thirty-two-year-old Rufina Roca de Monzón. She lived on the corner of the Callejón del Judío and Avenida Central not far from one of the exits of the city. Rubio y Piloña hoped that, disguised as farm hands, his friends would be able to leave the city.

Although their future was uncertain the fugitives were well looked after, so much so that:

...los conjurados tuvieron un servicio de espionaje voluntario que les informaban de todos los pasajes del proceso y de los giros que tomaba, y de las detenciones que se verificaban. El heroísmo de ellos y el odio a la tiranía, les dio una multitud de simpatizadores, aun en los precisos momentos, especialmente en las oficinas del gobierno. Debido a estas indiscrecciones, el pueblo sabía lo que pasaba en los cerrados tribunales, donde se ventilaban los asuntos, y muchas veces esos extraños simpatizadores informaban a los perseguidos, desde las declaraciones, hasta los actos más secretos del proceso, y con ello se evitó que muchísimas personas fueran detenidas y ultrajadas. Como un detalle de esto, podemos afirmar, por haberla tenido a la vista, ajada y sucia, que una copia de la sentencia del Consejo de Guerra le enviaron –en forma anónima– a don Emetario Avila, mucho antes de que ella les fuera notificada a los enjuiciados.54

On 19 May, however, a maid of doña Rufina commented to her boyfriend about her patrona’s growing consumption of food and sudden secrecy. He was
an officer at the nearby fort of Matamoros. The girl was convinced her mistress was hiding a lover, but her boyfriend suspected the truth and informed Colonel Victor Rueda, his commanding officer. In the early hours of 20 May the Franco house was surrounded by soldiers under the command of Colonel Urbano Moreno. The four men, who were armed, held their ground for as long as they were able, but when defeat was inevitable they decided to take their own lives rather than face the sort of death Cabrera would inflict on them. Julio Valdés Blanco was chosen as executioner and shot his friends before taking his own life. Among the first to see the bodies were Vidaurre, Rafael Yaquian, Jorge I. Galán, and two recent law graduates León de León Flores and Bernardo Alvarado Tello. Hernández de León was also there:

Cuando se invadió la parte alta de la casa, los servidores de la tiranía encontraron cuatro cadáveres de cuatro hombres robustos, jóvenes y dos de ellos, hermosos. Tenían los rostros rasurados, los cuerpos vestidos con trajes blanco y calzados con alpargatas. Los cadáveres fueron puestos sobre la azotea y muchos tuvimos la miserable flaqueza de pasar nuestras miradas de curiosidad sobre aquellos pobres despojos.

General Félix Flores was in command of two battalions of infantry which, had the fugitives not killed themselves, would have stormed the house. Now his men were instructed to keep the curious away. The bodies of the four men were dumped in one of the ravines surrounding the capital but were later retrieved for burial. For Guatemalans these deaths symbolized the death of all their hopes; for Cabrera it was a signal for further purges.

An estimated nine hundred people vanished into the prisons in the aftermath of this conspiracy. Prison space became so short that churches, such as the monastery of San Francisco, were converted into jails.
Although a Council of War and Judicial Tribunal were established, they offered no guarantees; if anything they only ensured a certain death.

Among the many persons arrested in those days was the elderly engineer Eduardo Rubio Pilofía. While it is true that some of his relatives had been involved in aiding the fugitives, 'don Guayo' was innocent of any involvement in this conspiracy. Ángel Paz, brother of the lawyer and Congressman Manuel, was head of the first section of police. As a friend of the Rubio Pilofía family he took it upon himself personally to escort the engineer to the police station. Rubio Pilofía repayed this courtesy by shooting Paz dead. He then tried to make an escape but was betrayed by his neighbour, banker Máximo Stahl. Rubio Pilofía soon found himself in the crowded penitentiary. By this time there was so little space there that prisoners could not lie down and had difficulty sitting. Many starved and all of them witnessed things they never forgot. An anonymous source of Marroquin Rojas describes how he saw Rubio y Pilofía being beaten under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Inés Calderón:

...En el centro de la celda se hallaba tendido un anciano, boca abajo, sujeto por sus cuatro extremidades sobre sus carnes desnudas, fuertes golpes, con unas varas delgadas de membrillo, Tenía puesta una mordaza en la boca, y la debilidad de sus quaídos penetraban más profundamente en mi alma que si hubiese gritado con toda la fuerza de sus pulmones débiles. Un oficial contaba mecánicamente los palos, como un registro automático... ¡Ciento diez,...ciento treinta...,trescientos,...! Tenía las carnes reventadas y a cada golpe las varas iban tiñéndose de purpura, produciendo al incrustarse en el cuerpo del desgraciado, el fragor apagado de cuando se camina sobre el lodo. Cuando el oficial dijo; '¡quinientos!' pararon; y fueron a sentarse en un banco, porque aquellos dos soldados estaban sudando y muy fatigados, Presenciaban la escena el jefe de la Penitenciaria, cuya repugnante faz no he podido olvidar jamás, el teniente coronel Inés Calderón, de cuyas ferocidades ya tenía noticias, pero sin creer nunca que su crueldad llegara a flagelar tan horriblemente a un anciano venerable; más todo allí se ejecutaba de 'orden superior'. Entonces, lo soltaron, y con grandes esfuerzos se incorporó un tanto. Las lágrimas me produjeron un gran ardor en los párpados, al brotar de mis ojos, cuando conoci al desdichado. Era el ilustre ingeniero don Eduardo Rubio y Pilofía...
The Viteri brothers, Adolfo and Juan, and Francisco Valladares were other well-known victims from this period. After an unsuccessful attempt to escape government authorities they were also imprisoned in the penitentiary. Others who were considered to have played a part in this conspiracy were licenciado Felipe Prado Romaña, his brother Rafael, and Francisco Ruiz. All these men, including Rubio y Piloña, and many of their relatives, remained imprisoned for what they felt would be an indefinite stay.

In the aftermath of the 'bomb' conspiracy most citizens were frustrated by its failure. Persecution was rampant and órdenes de captura ran throughout the country:

...Se salía del hogar, con la certidumbre de que ya no se regresaría, la gente del campo, con el derecho de la vida sosegada que da el apartamiento y el retiro a cada momento se veía hostilizada por las escoltas que allanaban, o por las citaciones del tribunal inmediato que conminaban al pronto cumplimiento. Por las noches, la fantasía tingía ruidos y tumultos, y en la oscuridad y en el silencio, se percibían movimientos de muerte...

Pero a la llegada del incidente de los cadetes, el horror subió de punto. Las carceles se colmaron de desgraciados que caían en la lobreguez de las bartolinas, sin tener sobre su conciencia la sombra de un delito. Salieron de la hez social los esbirros; la putrefacción profesional dio jueces capaces de dictar autos de bien presos y sentencias aniquiladoras; los sabuesos de la tiranía husmeaban por todas partes y los pobres molinos de viento fueron, para la turba de savones, gigantes y guerreros,\textsuperscript{58}

In the colonial city of Antigua, many members of conservative families were arrested.\textsuperscript{56} On 23 April Pedro Cofiño and Ramón Palencia were shot. Julio and Salvador Herrera might have been killed too, had a group of friends not chosen to escort them on their way out of the city. Despite the fear these deaths produced business continued as usual.
In January 1908 Cabrera inaugurated the 'interoceanic' railroad with great pomp. The diplomatic corps were invited to travel over the most difficult section of this engineering feat and a special U.S. envoy, in the person of Colonel William Davis, also took part in the festivities. School children and grown-ups feted the completion of the railroad with the floral arches and army bands familiar from Minervalia celebrations. The completion of this line, linking the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, marked the consolidation of the successful export of bananas, until then a relatively unexploited crop. It also represented growing economic and political ties with the United States.

Although Guatemala may have seemed 'tranquil' to foreigners, particularly to those briefly visiting the country during this engineering triumph, new plans to overthrow Cabrera were already under way. Pockets of opposition continued to exist not only within military circles, but also among the well-to-do despite the ruthless purges of the year before.

During 1907 General Manuel María Aguilar, who had been named as Chief of the Jutiapa Division during the war of 1906, was asked to write a detailed critical account of the campaign. As one of Cabrera's most trusted officers he had served on many special military commissions, and been director of the Politécnica.

Aguilar's study was frank in its appraisal of the actions and strategic decisions taken by the chief of operations - the dictator - during the fighting against El Salvador. The autocrat was outraged by the report and told Aguilar not to circulate it among his colleagues. Nevertheless the work was read and admired because it cleared the army of many of the war's errors:
...no sólo limpiaba al Ejército de la vergüenza del desastre, sino que demostraba claramente que no todo estaba perdido con los soldados; que aún había quien dijera la verdad, con valor, a sabiendas de lo que podría acontecerle. 

Aguilar's document had become a declaration of independence for the army, who felt humbled by their treatment at the hands of President Cabrera, who had ridden roughshod over his commanders' wishes in a war they had providentially won.

In 1908 General Aguilar was asked to seek an 'audience' with the president. Like so many seeking presidential permissions or guarantees, to comply with protocol Aguilar was asked to wait. It was not uncommon to wait for hours, days or even months, before being permitted to see the tyrant. When Aguilar was finally shown into the autocrat's office the dictator again warned him that if he insisted on showing his work to others he would feel no compunction in having him summarily shot or locked up in the penitentiary.

Aguilar took this meeting to be a final judgement and felt his fate was sealed. On 19 March 1908 he did not go down the Avenida del Hipódromo to breakfast at the fashionable restaurant 'Carissimi' as was his custom. He had noticed a group of spies outside his home at 8:30 a.m. and feared they had come to arrest him. He dressed for the last time and then shot himself. The news of his suicide stunned everyone, particularly members of the army. There were rumours that his death was not suicide but the work of a government agent. It would appear, however, that Aguilar, who was familiar with Cabrera's modus operandi, preferred to take his own life. 

The processions of Holy Week were permitted to march near La Palma in April 1908 although Cabrera knew that there might be conspirators among
the many groups. Holy Week was full of biblical *tableaux vivants* with life-size pageantry of Roman soldiers, emperors, crucifixions and scores of *cucuruchos*. Plotters could easily lose themselves among the crowds without being identified or found. At the time it was also rumoured that military officers were involved. This Holy Week passed without incident, except for a brawl between some law students and cadets at the Hotel Imperial on Fourth Street.

This did not prevent the formation of other plans to rid the country of its tyrant. The cadet Roderico Anzueto, a suspect for the Holy Week-cucuruco plot, had told Dr Julio Bianchi, his physician about it. When it failed, Anzueto was neither discouraged nor discovered, and continued to speak to Bianchi about another plan. From then on, conspirators met in this doctor's waiting-room. His clinic lay across the way from the palace and was perhaps too near to the hub of government for anyone to suspect it as a centre for secret, anti-government meetings. Dr Julio Bianchi soon became treasurer of this new group and began to accept donations. He collected funds from the businessman Pedro Peláez (1,000 pesos), Dr Rodolfo Robles (1,000 pesos), Federico and Fernando Prado (500 each), while Enrique Muñoz contributed 500.57

A year after the first attempt against the tyrant's life, newspapers published articles of thanksgiving. On 15 April 1908 a commemorative medal was presented to the dictator to show the people's gratitude at the continuation of his benevolent rule. Publications abounded full of letters of adoration, sympathy and gratitude for his health and well-being – even families who had lost relatives and friends signed their names to these documents.58

No one would have thought it possible that a year after the tragic
outcome of the conspiracy of the 'bomb' that another attempt would be made. It was a daring plan, executed on 20 April 1908, the very day on which the recently arrived U.S. Minister, William Heimke, was to present his credentials to the president in the former palace of the Captain-Generals, not far from the garrison 'la Rápida'. The usual military command were replaced by the country's military pride, the cadets from the Escuela Politécnica. Most of the students at this institution belonged to the country's élite, although there were also scholarship boys. There was a marching band and a flag-bearing group, among whom was Victor Vega, the cadet traditionally named as the perpetrator of this second public assassination attempt.

There were others, but so well planned was the conspiracy that none of them ever knew who else was involved in this plot. As soon as Cabrera heard shooting he threw himself on the ground, pulling a flag down with him. His bodyguard, the German Baron Ernest von Merck, shot into the crowd as soon and as well as he was able. The gates of the National Assembly were locked.

Marroquín Rojas has written in detail about the events surrounding this plot. It is generally known as the conspiracy of the 'cadets', although it must be argued that very few cadets were aware of, or directly involved in, the events of 20 April 1920. Cabrera recovered quickly and used this opportunity to arrest further possible rivals, as well as the known culprits. The Auditor de Guerra, Vidaurre, suspected Colonel Francisco Orla of wishing to succeed Cabrera. Orla was not involved, and nor were many other high-ranking officers. Nevertheless, the army faced a thorough purge and many suspects were to report to the comandancia en armas every two days:
Don Manuel no se preocupaba de averiguar si a quienes se obligaba a permanecer en la ciudad, tenía de qué vivir. Eso poco importaba, lo indispensable era que estuvieran a la vista de la policía para encerrarios de nuevo, cuando algo anunciara una nueva condena. A estos pobres, los acosaba la miseria, porque ya puede imaginarse el lector, lo que significaba para una persona el peso de la enemistad con el señor Presidente. Nadie les daba trabajo, para no purgar el delito, porque delito era dar trabajo a quienes no eran del círculo cabrerista que estrangulaba la nación.\textsuperscript{66}

During the trials that followed many of Cabrera’s formerly trusted officers, like General Arís, were cross-examined and many were imprisoned until their loyalty had been proved. The powerful and high-ranking Auditor de Guerra, Adrián Vidaurre, also needed to prove his innocence, and for this reason may have served as one of the principal judges of this case.

The distinguished liberal, Rafael Montúfar, was imprisoned along with Lic. José Luis Quiñonez, the ex-president of Honduras, Dr Juan Ángel Arias, the Honduran, Colonel Manuel Lardizábal, and twenty-eight others on 25 April. Hernández de León sums up the atmosphere of those terrible days:

¿Cuántos fueron los martirizados en aquellos días? La estadística no lo ha determinado; pero podría afirmarse que no quedó una familia, una sola, que no se viera lastimada en uno de sus miembros. Porque a la hora de perseguir y de martirizar, nadie escapaba de las órdenes truculentas y sanguinarias, ni aún muchos allegados que, por estar cerca de la fiera, les alcanzaba fácilmente el zarpazo...

Los muertos fueron muchos... La juventud de la Politécnica, en lo que valía por su significación intrínseca, se segó a los mortales golpes, Estrada Cabrera manifestó su odio contra todo lo que proviniera o se relacionara con la Politécnica. Suprimió los pantalones rojos; derribó el edificio de la Escuela, y escaró sus cimientos, y, como si fuera un símbolo, los objetos pertenecientes a la gloriosa escuela los mandó depositar en una bóveda de la Penitenciaria.\textsuperscript{67}

In contrast to the vivid memory of faces and names the image of so many inanimate objects from this institution locked in the cellars of the Penitentiary may strike one as odd. This action adds to his reputation as a superstitious person: that of a man who believed that by placing these
things behind bars he would be free of the military threat, or that by razing the school's buildings he would forever be rid of their memory and power.

The death of the Politécnica and so many of its students is ironic when one considers Cabrera's efforts to promote education in the republic. He must have recognized the brutality of his actions but felt that they were justified by his need to remain in power and demonstrated that he was not yet prepared to leave the helm. By June of 1908 Guatemala was in national mourning because of the loss of sons, relatives and friends, in the aftermath of two abortive assassination attempts. Doña Joaquina's death, which followed on 3 July 1908, further upset Cabrera. For the first time he may have felt a sense of loss similar to that experienced already by all those who had lost friends and relatives throughout his administration. The nation was immediately plunged into official mourning for a woman few had known.

International commitments impinged upon the morose mood of that the eleventh cabrerista year. In August the Panamerican Medical Congress met in Guatemala City. Preparations for the now familiar re-election production had also to be made. Even those who had suffered great losses were well rehearsed and adhered to their local cabrerista club or toasted the Benemérito at gala functions. In the provinces electoral campaigns were a highly militarized business by 1910. There bugle calls announced the opening of electoral tables as jefes políticos inflated the vote-count with illiterate Indians.

Cabrera won his second term, with an overwhelming majority of 551,145, for the period of 15 March 1911 to 15 March 1917. When the National Assembly met in 1911 the dictator made one of his rare and most memorable
IV. EL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE

PART II

appearances. Wyld Ospina tells how he was carried into Congress on a campbed. Vidaurre, who was in the wings along with Cabrera's physician, Dr Rodolfo Robles, describes the seemingly moribund and pathetic tyrant as he appeared that day:

Es de evocar el día en que Estrada Cabrera tomó su tercer período; enfermo de gravedad y cubierto el rostro con blancos vendajes, en brazos de un sirviente, asistió el solemne acto. Parecía que expiraba. Yo estaba al lado de su médico el Doctor Rodolfo Robles, quien no parecía tranquilo con la situación del enfermo. Espero, un esfuerzo sobrehumano y el amor a sus amores lo salvó; su amor al Poder.

Cabrera always maintained that he had been reluctant to continue in office after 1910. In 1920 he told Wyld Ospina:

'El año 11, padecía yo de un ántrax en el cuello y estaba moribundo; no quería más el Poder, pero mis amigos me obligaron a confirmar otra vez la banda presidencial, Yo deseaba largarme a Europa, pero no me dejaron...'

...nunca lo pensó sinceramente. Si lo dijo fue como quien echa una sonda para explorar los bajos fondos de la política. Su cariño al Poder fue siempre, como ya hemos visto, entrañable, y él mismo no se concebía separado de la primera magistratura. Pero dijo la verdad en lo demás.

As Wyld Ospina predicted, many of Cabrera's circle took the bait he so calmly laid before them. Cabinet members were understandably concerned at the dictator's condition and in 1911 a group of them made political provisions should he die. This arrangement is now known as el gobiernito or el círculo. Their choice for Cabrera's successor was the lawyer Manuel Paz, the man Cabrera had chosen to investigate Reyna Barrios's assassination in 1898. He reluctantly accepted.

Meanwhile the autocrat's condition gradually improved. The death of his mother had left him without a cook who could cater for his diabetic condition. The pressures of power showed, and contemporary photographs show a balding and thinner man. By this his thirteenth year in power
Cabrera had aged considerably. Always suspicious of physicians, he was reluctant to be operated on. Even Robles, who had looked after his son Diego, could not help. Finally in 1913 he agreed to allow Dr Rosal to operate.

In 1913 he held a dinner for his close associates - Adrián Vidaurre, Felipe Márquez, Manuel Paz, Pablo Azurdia, Juan B. Padilla, Adolfo Padilla, and the journalist and witness Eduardo Aguirre Velásquez. All but Velásquez were apprehensive about this supper, possibly their last, since they recognized fellow members of el gobiernito days: these men had held a conseil de guerre after Cabrera's second re-election when his health and therefore political future had seemed so uncertain. Their presence at La Palma indicated that their activities in 1911 had not passed unnoticed. Now it was their turn to wonder about their fates.

During dinner Cabrera was to be able to drink large amounts of liquor without divulging his intentions while worming out what he wanted to know from his companions. Paz's disarming honesty that evening cleared the air as he soon mentioned why he and his colleagues had made provisions to protect cabrerismo. Cabrera reminded them that he was in good health and thanked them for the precaution. The evening ended convivially with the guests proclaiming their undying loyalty. Paz is reported to have taken his leave from the autocrat by saying: - Señor: entre usted y yo hay vínculos que nadie puede romper.  

The dictator was nevertheless disturbed at his guests' guile and conceived a cautionary plan to keep them in their places. In November 1913 an anti-cabrerista pamphlet was published in New Orleans. Cabrera's spies produced an original draft of the document which contained Paz's unmistakable handwriting. Paz was subsequently imprisoned in the
penitentiary and died under tragic circumstances on 2 June 1914.\textsuperscript{76}

It is clear that with this death Cabrera showed those nearest to him that he was still in full command of all the powers at his disposal and that he was not yet prepared to step down from office. Paz’s death also confirmed that regardless of past links and friendships the dictator felt no compunction in ridding himself of those whom he saw as enemies. He also appeared to be bereft of compassion.

By 1914 Cabrera had forced all liberals and conservatives to accept cabrerismo as the only form of political expression. After the war of 1906, the destruction of the Escuela Politécnica in 1908, and the senseless deaths of Generals Aguilar, Villela and others through poison, imprisonment or suicide, the army was demoralized. The continued intrigues of provincial politics also disillusioned many civilians. Finally, members of the upper class had lost friends and relatives after the assassination attempts of 1907 and 1908, suffered material losses, and gradually found themselves having to offer their services to the government willy-nilly. There were still nearly six years left of the dictatorship.
CHAPTER FIVE

DECLINE AND FALL OF DON MANUEL

PART ONE

THE THIRD RE-ELECTION

La verdad es que nuestro país no ha sido ni una democracia ni una república sino la más autocrática de las monarquías absolutas que en pueblo alguno existió jamás.

In 1915 Cabrera began to organize his third and final re-election, for the period of 1917 to 1923. In this election the dictator spared no effort or cost in making his candidacy seem as popular as possible even though by this time he was the only contender. Legality, too, was not overlooked, especially in a period of growing U.S. concern for constitutionalism in Latin American politics. Cabrera hoped that by being elected to a longer term of office than President Wilson, whose policy was to 'make Latin America safe for democracy', he would be able to continue his 'presidency' indefinitely. To this end he not only resuscitated former 'liberal' clubs, as he had done in his previous elections, but also created new ones.

By 1915 there were more than 500 political clubs functioning throughout the republic, and at least 200 cabrerista-inspired publications. Every citizen who was literate, especially if gainfully employed, needed to subscribe to his local Liberal club and show his allegiance to the dictator through goodwill and generous 'donations'. The workers in particular, although illiterate in the majority, became an important group.

Since his second re-election in 1911 Cabrera had recognized the value of the workers' vote, and a campaign supporting the establishment of co-operatives throughout the republic had been started. Many of these were initially founded following the recent upsurge in trade union movements in the United States and Mexico. In the founding bye-laws of many of these
early co-operatives the discussion of politics and religion was banned, but after 1912, when Cabrera was made honorary president of the largest of these associations - the Sociedad Central de Artesanos y Auxilios Mutuos - these rules were ignored. The foundation of the Federación de Sociedades Obreras led to the establishment of further co-operatives - for type-setters, printers, tailors, teachers, and musicians.

During 1915 and 1916 many workers' clubs were established in the provinces. Among these were El Adelanto, Beneficencia Obrera in Quezaltenango, Sociedad de artesanos 'El Trabajo' in Totonicapan, Minerva in Cobán, and the Asociación de Artesanos of Asunción Mita. Many of these newly organized clubs continued to function between 1915 and 1920 - a time when unions and co-operatives were being formed within areas which had traditionally been neglected. As will be seen, the participation of the workers proved a vital factor in Cabrera's downfall. Their formal politicization dates from this period.

Under the leadership of Nemesio Gutiérrez, head of the Sociedad Central de Artesanos y Auxilios Mutuos, further workers' guilds were also established. In 1915 the Club Unificación Obrera was founded, and with it a new magazine called Ilustración Obrera. A workers' paper, El Trabajo, had been in circulation since 1911. It was in the magazine, however, that Gutiérrez proposed Cabrera's re-election in 1915. In order to strengthen his popularity, the third number of the Ilustración Obrera reproduced a presidential circular in which jefes políticos were asked to pay labourers more generously. This was at a time when abuses by local government officials had reached unprecedented levels. Cabrera's pact with the workers was strengthened in October 1915 when it was announced that his government had given 10,000 pesos towards the establishment of a co-
operative society and savings bank.  

On 29 August 1915 another sort of political centre was founded in Guatemala City under the leadership of Lic. Elfego Polanco. This new club was known as the Club *Centenario de la Independencia Nacional* and was similar to the Club *2 de Abril*, which was still strong. Both clubs were principally aimed at the professional class. Even the traditionally neutral 'Foreigner's Club' found itself compromised in this election and saw itself forced to recognize Cabrera's unquestionable political supremacy. Literary clubs - such as the *Ateneo Montúfar*, founded in 1913 - which had traditionally been a target for government censorship and bullying, were replaced by new societies posing as intellectual forums but whose main aim was to support Cabrera's candidacy. This was particularly true of the Club *de Intelectuales*, which enjoyed the patronage of several wealthy citizens.

Many literary figures who had launched Cabrera's candidacy at the beginning of the century now re-appeared to reaffirm their commitment to the great man. Enrique Gómez Carrillo wrote a letter from Paris saying that although it was illegal for him to vote in the forthcoming elections he did so morally, as he viewed Cabrera as one of the greatest statesmen of the American continent.

Despite his obvious command over the electorate Cabrera continued to feel uneasy about his position. He appointed possible rivals to important posts, as in the case of the Dean of the Law Faculty, Lic. Carlos Salazar. Salazar was asked to chair the 'Liberal' Convention of 1915, much to his embarrassment. In Chapter Four we saw how, as early as 1906, Salazar's potential leadership and popularity were seen as dangerous by the dictator and how he was therefore sent to the Salvadorean front during the war as *auditor de guerra*. Upon his return from the front Salazar was assigned
further public posts in order that he should not be considered a candidate for the presidency. He was repeatedly made to demonstrate his goodwill towards, and subservience to, Cabrera. His own acceptance of his appointment as head of this cabrerista convention discredited him not only in the eyes of his students, but also in those of the general public. The students came to regard the 1915 election as a farce.

By 1915 few Guatemalans refused whatever honours the autocrat chose to bestow upon them even if often it was at the expense of a loss of face. By this time most of the literate public found themselves rewarded, like school-children at Minervalias, with expensive trinkets. David Vela remembers the silver-plated cuff-links distributed in the capital on the occasion of this last election:

A mí me toco ir a ver una elección. Las votaciones eran en un parque y las mesas parecían más de achimero o de vendedor de baratijas, sobre todo porque regalaban una mancuernilla de plata, sólo una; el que iba por segunda vez tenía las dos; entonces el ciudadano que duplicaba su voto tenía un par de mancuernillas.

Those who voted twice and wore the cuff-links bearing the dictator's bust thus advertised their unconditional adherence, but may have been simply protecting their security. In the provinces elections depended on the activities of local jefes políticos. Here the electorate was an illiterate majority of Indians who were forcibly recruited in order to multiply votes. D.G. Munro, then a student in Guatemala, witnessed how some of the 1915 elections were carried out in Alta Verapaz:

Since most of the voters were Indians attached to the coffee plantations, the authorities arranged with each finquero to send his Indians in a group to the voting place on one of the three days when the election was being held. To make the Indians realize how fortunate they were to be citizens of a democratic country, each group was met by a band, or at least by a delegation of school children carrying flags. They passed in line before
V. DECLINE AND FALL OF DON MANUEL

PART I

The techniques used by Cabrera's supporters varied, but the outcome was always the same: unprecedentedly high votes. This led to figures far outnumbering the population of entire regions. It is said that in Sololá General José Félix Flores alone acquired 800,000 cabrerista votes. Other municipal authorities may not have been as zealous as Flores but the practice of stopping travellers at every cross-roads and forcing them to vote in each community meant that the number of local votes also multiplied. Even the U.S. became involved in the re-election fever at a time when the State Department was instructing its diplomats in Central America to underline the importance of constitutionality in local politics.

The activities of Costa Rica's Minister of War, Federico Tinoco, who overthrew President Alfredo González by a coup d'état in 1917, unsettled U.S. authorities. Tinoco was used as an example and an excuse to stress the importance of constitutionality in Central American politics. To this end Minister Leavell attempted to present the U.S. government's 'hard line' during Cabrera's third re-election. It was especially difficult for him to be emphatic about the legality of such elections because, even though Cabrera had changed the Constitution to make re-election legal, these were carried out in so many illegal ways.

This re-election was so successful that it became known as the election of 'la millonada' since it is said that on this occasion Cabrera received some ten million votes. Embarrassed by so resounding a victory, Cabrera lowered the figures in order not to appear more extreme than the United States government already knew him to be. On 15 March 1916 Cabrera
was declared the popularly-elected president by a majority of 80,000 votes for the period of 1917 to 1923.

By March 1917 a committee drawn from the élite was organized in order to celebrate Cabrera's fourth election to presidential office. The membership and organization of the new cabinet was more or less unchanged from the previous one; Congress and ministers might make suggestions for new decrees and programmes, but as before, it was Cabrera alone who gave orders.

Although there had been little opposition to the dictator since 1908, two minor uprisings against his régime occurred between September 1915 and January 1916. These were led by General Isidoro Valdés and Drs Toledo López, Obregón, Salazar, and Prado. All were reportedly backed by Primer Jefe Venustiano Carranza of Mexico. Given such generous support, in terms of armament and asylum, it seems extraordinary that these forces should have made so little impact on the army. This suggests that, although Cabrera's iron hold on provincial jefes políticos was weakening, allegiance within the army remained strong. Predictably, the national newspapers hardly mentioned these incursions and little is known about these abortive expeditions.

Although little news of the Mexican revolution infiltrated Guatemala, the dictator nevertheless had been following events to the north with great interest since 1913. He recognized that, if the shouts of 'Tierra y Libertad' were to reach Guatemala, then problems might arise. He therefore forbade any news coverage of events in Mexico, but at the same time set about establishing an alliance with the most likely man to succeed. He chose Carranza. Although Carranza had once studied in Guatemala, he was no friend of Cabrera. The possible realization of the autocrat's plans for a
new republic consisting of Petén, Soconusco, Lacantún, and Chiapas did not appeal to Carranza, who suspected that this was only a ploy to regain Mexican territory.11 Border disputes were a long-standing source of friction between the two countries and guaranteed acrimony between them.

Southern Mexico was far from the centre stage of the revolution. When the region was under the control of huertista forces, Huerta's close associate, and his choice for the Catholic Party's presidential nominee, was Cabrera's old enemy, Federico Gamboa. The urbane Gamboa, once Mexican Minister to Guatemala, may have been approached by anti-cabréristas and sought support on their behalf from Huerta, but unfortunately this cannot be verified. Outside events, however, impinged upon these local squabbles and soon the effects of the European war began to dominate American politics.

The U.S. government became particularly sensitive about sympathetic and 'pro-hun' Central American republics when a telegram sent by the German Field-Marshall Zimmermann was intercepted and decoded by the British in August 1917. At that time Zimmermann proposed that Carranza attack the U.S. in order to divert that government's attention and forces to the Mexican border, while Germany strengthened its U-Boat operations in the Atlantic. This, together with growing U.S. hegemony in the region, led to increased pressure on many Latin American governments, but especially on Cabrera and his arbitrary policies. The War was used as a two-fold excuse for the Americans to discipline this dictator, and give U.S. nationals the advantages of acquisition of German-owned businesses and plantations. This will be discussed below.
The unexpected and devastating earthquakes of 1917-1918 ended whatever hopes there may have been for Guatemala's participation in the War. The capital was destroyed and the government was temporarily able only to concern itself with domestic tragedy. The camaraderie which resulted thus united the general public, and foreshadowed the temporary unity that would be experienced two years later in the fight to oust Cabrera. Furthermore, Cabrera's actions in the face of the earthquake also influenced public opinion.

At half-past ten on Christmas night of 1917 the first tremors of a powerful earthquake were felt in Guatemala City. It took the U.S. charge d'affairs twenty minutes to walk from the British legation to reach his own headquarters. Throughout the journey he felt incessant shocks underfoot and saw women praying in the streets. He found the two-storey U.S. Consulate in poor shape, and by 2 January it was almost destroyed.¹²

The capital was soon without electricity, and water was in short supply. Tremors continued throughout January, by which time the entire capital had been gradually flattened. Many familiar buildings such as the bull ring, the Teatro Colón, and the INCV were destroyed. The foreign colony remained in the gardens of their respective governments' legations prior to making the Tennis Club their base, while Guatemalans did their best to share what safe space was left.

A state of siege was immediately declared. The post office was destroyed and it was virtually impossible to send any news out of the capital. From the start, cable, telegraph, and wireless stations were all out of commission. However, some news could be despatched; it was sent to the cable port of San José by hand car, the Central Railroad station being
badly damaged.

In the provinces jefes políticos immediately set about gathering supplies, aid, and transport for the capital’s victims. In Guatemala City, General Enrique Aris was responsible for distributing whatever supplies arrived. Foreign legations notified their respective nations of the disaster, and soon tents, food, and money arrived from abroad. Thurston insisted that an executive committee from the Red Cross have absolute authority to handle all relief supplies in order that medicine, money, food, and shelter be fairly distributed. He was well aware of the graft which was still prevalent despite the enormity of the tragedy. Although critics at the time accused the government of militarizing medicine and other basic needs, the good work of the military should not be overlooked.

It was estimated that Guatemala received some U.S. $150 million in aid on this occasion and it was generally thought that Cabrera pocketed most of this. No newspapers appeared between 22 December 1917 and 21 January 1918. When newspapers re-appeared, contradictory accounts were given of the president’s activities. Many complained of the government’s exclusive concern for those closest to him - state employees and their families - cabreristas. The rest of the population, those who wished to be known for their impartiality to the régime, felt neglected and for the first time their complaints made their way to the pages of El Guatemalteco and to the newly established La Tribuna. Government publications predictably praised Cabrera’s philanthropy, whilst enemies accused him of hoarding the bare necessities.

To the superstitious this natural disaster was an omen. Subsequently they interpreted it as a sign of the beginning of the dictator’s downfall; as a punishment for the subservience and hypocrisy of a people. To the
labour leader, Silverio Ortiz, it seemed that the time of the final judgement had arrived. Henceforth the capital assumed the aspect of a graveyard, a place in mourning. Two years later HRH Prince William of Sweden wrote his impressions about the capital:

Here the dust whirls in thick clouds, penetrating everywhere - through one's clothes, into mouth and nostrils, into the eyes and the pores of the skin. One literally eats dust, sneezes dust, and weeps tears of dust...

...Here and there a cross in black paint may be seen on a wall; a mark set by the authorities to indicate that the house was unfit for human habitation and must be pulled down, and rebuilt from the foundations. A payment of some few thousand pesos to the President, however, would secure the painting of a circle surrounding the cross, to denote that the necessary repairs were considered to have been effected, and the owner could leave his ruin standing, untouched and empty as before...

...The broad boulevard, with its double row of flowering acacias and its huge temple of Minerva at the back, was once surrounded by private villas and beautiful gardens. Now it is a waste tract, the wealthy residents having built a new quarter for themselves at La Reforma...

It was the end of an era. Santos Chocano was now able to see a parallel with European battle scenes here in his native America. His declamation of poems written during this time in the northern city of Quezaltenango won him praise.

But it was no time for nostalgia. Typhus and yellow fever spread quickly, and by February the capital's water supply was undrinkable. As the months passed, little rebuilding was started and by the time the rains arrived most citizens of modest means, among them a large number of Indians who had also lost their homes, were living in makeshift structures of burlap, tin, planks and mud.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes Cabrera called off the national state of siege and proposed many new bills at the opening of the 1918 National Assembly. He took advantage of the stunned state of the nation to attempt to solve several long-standing problems. For some time Cabrera had
been keen to establish a national bank which would make agricultural credit available to farmers and which would now ostensibly make funds available to reconstruct the capital. To this end, the decree of 26 April 1919 stated that each of the established banks would issue ten million pesos and that loans would be fixed at a 4% interest rate for farmers.17 Such plans frustrated the American Department of State who had plans of their own to re-structure the economy. He named Generals Mariano Serrano and Manuel Duarte as his First and Second Designates at this time.

Although many were struck by Cabrera's indifference to their well-being in the aftermath of the earthquakes, there were still those adictos who presented sycophantic bills which had no place in these parliamentary sessions, where practical plans for the reconstruction of the country should have been a priority. The capital, however, remained in a shambles and shanty-towns sprang up in the many valleys which had been created or broadened by the earthquakes. Cabrera recognized the importance of the army in keeping order and distributing goods, and for the first time in two years made an effort to pay its officers and soldiers. Thurston saw this as an indication of the dictator's recognition of what might become an increasing reliance on their support and goodwill in a time of growing difficulties.

Despite uncontrollable inflation, the effects of the European War on exports, and the earthquake, Cabrera carried on business as usual. He insisted that subscriptions be taken in the provinces so that schools could be rebuilt. For example, workers were drafted in by force to work on the reconstruction of the Asilo de Maternidad Joaquina. This extravagant building was finally inaugurated on 26 May 1919 with the participation of 8,000 workers in a grand parade. This, together with increasingly
tyrannical impositions, resulted in a growing resentment against the régime.

THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Guatemala, like Mexico, had long-standing links with the Hanseatic cities of Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck which were difficult to break. This was one of the reasons the government remained neutral for as long as possible. German interests in Guatemala controlled the largest assets in the republic. By 1900 German capital investment was over 22,000,000 Marks and Germans owned and operated nearly half of the general merchandise and importing firms in the capital. In coffee producing areas such as Alta Verapaz, German interests held about two-thirds of the equity.10

Cabrera's relations with Germany were no less problematic than those with Great Britain or the United States. Although in 1904 he had been presented with the Order of the Red Eagle, First Class, by 1908 rumours were about that the German colony had contributed $50,000 (gold) towards the abortive assassination attempt which took place at the Escuela Politécnica that year. In 1908 a series of anti-cabrerista articles penned by Dr Hermann Prowe, a German resident in Guatemala, appeared in the Mexican press.13 While Cabrera got on well with individual Germans, like Baron Ernest von Merck, the resident German community found him difficult. In 1915, when the 1887 treaty of 'Friendship, Commerce and Navigation' between the two countries expired, nothing was done to renew it. In general, the German community banded together for reasons of protection, company, and business. Nevertheless, by the 1910s many German colonisers had not only contributed to the agricultural and economic advance of the republic, but had also assimilated local customs and become members of the
Guatemalans, particularly those living in the coffee producing areas, often encountered German settlers who made an impression on them. This was the case with the young Miguel Ángel Asturias, who never forgot his neighbours:

...En el propio Salamá nosotras vivíamos en la casa de mi abuelo paterno en la vecindad de una familia alemana que tenía un gran almacén de herramientas agrícolas. Allí tuvimos ocasión de contactar con estos almaceneros alemanes. De día, se dedicaban a su comercio. De noche - como yo pongo en Los hombres de maíz, se vestía el de frac y la señora de traje largo. Él tocaba el piano y ella tocaba el violín. Esto sucedía en un lugar perdido de Guatemala; hacia las selvas peteneras...  

Soon after the outbreak of war in 1914 the German government recognized the importance of maintaining neutrality in Latin America. Some quarters of the German government felt that it might be useful to gain allies among the Latin American republics and to this end large sums were invested in pro-German propaganda. Katz tells us that the German information service of Transozean invested some $64,000 in propaganda in Guatemala up to 1917. Pro-German publications, like the Eco Aleman, continued to appear after 1917, much to the annoyance of the U.S. government.

After the United States declared war on Germany in February 1917, Cabrera felt compelled to do the same even though up until then he had been openly pro-German. In March 1917 Guatemala protested against the German government's announcement of unrestricted U-boat warfare and this even gave Cabrera a pretext for declaring martial law in the republic. After much pressure from the British Foreign Office the State Department decided to heed British warnings of a possible Mexican-German alliance in the Americas. Rather than sending troops to Mexico, the U.S. government
preferred to give Cabrera arms and money to place 40,000 soldiers along the length of the Mexican border should any military action take place. As might be expected, Cabrera did not grant their request. 23

By 27 April 1917 Cabrera saw himself forced to declare war on Germany and ask the German Minister Curt Lehmann to leave. This caused many problems, as many Guatemalans as well as German finqueros owed large sums to German houses which they had contracted in more stable times. German stakes in Guatemala grew as many German banking houses received the mortgages they held as security for loans in default, and they generally transferred these land titles to German finqueros, thus making the number of German-owned properties high.

It was not until the signing of the Versailles Treaty that world economic conditions became more stable. By 1918 the British blockade was lifted and the end of submarine warfare allowed European markets to return to normal. The severe frosts suffered by the Brazilian harvest in 1918 also contributed to higher prices for Guatemalan coffee. By 1920 the export of coffee had been almost completely redirected from European to American markets. As we have seen, Cabrera was always aware of the U.S. government's great influence and heeded it when necessary. The end of the War brought the realization that he would no longer find it so easy to play one government off against another, since Germany would take time to recover. Cabrera needed to maintain a stable footing with the U.S. government, not only to guarantee his own position, but also to protect Guatemala's greatest asset: its coffee exports.

News of a European armistice was received throughout the republic with great popular enthusiasm. Cabrera chose to voice his professional opinion as a lawyer as to the significance of the treaty's attempt to
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provide an international legal code which would guarantee world peace. His political skill in joining the current of high idealism presented by the peace treaty convinced some of his intrinsic soundness. The French government awarded him the Cross of the Legion of Honour. Minister Chayet, however, had his doubts and found the dictator's behaviour towards the Diplomatic Corps hypocritical and dangerous: Dans ses relations avec les représentants des Puissances étrangères, le Président de la République de Guatemala suit une ligne de conduite très simple, qui consiste à tout promettre et à rien tenir...25

The end of the European War, however, brought neither peace nor stability to the economy. Since 1917 the U.S. Department of State had sought to expropriate German properties in Guatemala with a view to installing U.S. nationals in positions of economic prominence. The U.S. Minister, Dr Leavell, led the way in demanding that German properties be listed on a local version of the U.S. 'Enemy Land Act'. Mr D.B. Hodgsdon was named custodian of this act and soon lists of German properties were published in U.S. and Guatemalan newspapers.

During late 1918 coffee prices briefly fetched the high prices of 1897, which gave a little fillip to the economy. But growing pressures by U.S. citizens and agencies to reform the Guatemalan administration and take over German property were not well viewed. Cabrera was particularly obstinate, and although he went through the motions of showing interest and help, he finally saw himself forced against his will to publish lists of prime German fincas and well-established businesses, such as the Empresa Electrica de Guatemala, which were to be sold at auction. As early as March 1918 the U.S. Minister reported that some foreigners were camouflaging German properties and businesses. There was also much
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incontestable evidence of the successful evasion by German firms and coffee-growers of the 'Enemy Trading Act' throughout 1918.26

By December 1918 Edward Winslow Ames reported that 300,000 quintals of enemy coffee, about 70,000 of the 1917 crop and 230,000 of the 1918, had been sold. He estimated that this would bring German interests about five million dollars in profit, a sum he considered sufficient in itself to ensure a continuance of German commercial domination.27 Ames also reported that the entire coffee output belonged to Germans and that 1400-odd fincas were financed by German firms. He had been told, by reliable sources, that Germans owned and controlled about 80% of businesses and that their total investments totalled no less than 20 million dollars. He added that much of this consisted of loans made by Hamburg firms to nationals who had mortgaged their properties as securities.

The return of many German nationals to Guatemala, and their repossession of confiscated properties (as in Dieseldorff's case) disturbed the French and Americans. Some of these men, like Erwin Dieseldorff, had found themselves in Germany at the outbreak of the War and had been unable to return. Many travelled on Spanish passports, while others claimed U.S. nationality. Ames concluded:

"...It is fairly apparent, in short, that the President intends to take no action against German interests unless and until he has to. His policy regarding them is reputed to be this: - he has everything to gain financially and commercially from them and nothing to fear politically once they are held in check by fear of American intervention whereas, were American interests to supplant them, he would have no check on their activities for ourself.28"

By May 1919 the National Assembly had once again failed to discuss the 'Enemy Property Act'. This decree, number 747, had been submitted to the attention of the Assembly some time before and to Thurston's annoyance

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was ignored. Once again the National Assembly had served as a convenient shield for Cabrera in his refusal to accede to foreign demands. Nevertheless, the insistence of many U.S. nationals, and of a Mr H.W. Catlin in particular, on acquiring these properties, kept the issue at the forefront of Guatemala's relations with the United States.

The worsening economic climate after 1918 ultimately prompted Cabrera to consider the advantages to be gained from the expropriation of property, should his government choose to comply with the U.S. government's requests. In a desperate game of bluff Cabrera informed Thurston that he would receive $8 million dollars through the sale of German properties which the U.S. government estimated at $7 million. The dictator intimated that with this sum he hoped to buy the then depreciated U.S. Liberty Bonds and possibly use this as security for the establishment of a national bank.25

As was seen in Chapter Two the United States government had been attempting to establish a currency reform programme since 1910, without success. Now to their annoyance Cabrera had been instituting bills for a forced issue of an additional 60 million pesos which Secretary of State Polk was convinced would ruin all chances of a U.S.-based currency reform. Thurston was instructed to prevent this issue at all costs. Nonetheless, on 25 April 1919 Cabrera signed a decree making it legal. It was only after much persuasion, and the fact that there was no capital to justify such an issue at this time, that Cabrera agreed to allow the Princeton economist W.E. Kemmerer to make a study of the economy.

The Kemmerer report put forward a thorough reform that would give Guatemala a modern currency system.30 The plan was to place the currency on a gold standard whereby it would fluctuate less and offer a stronger
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economy. Kemmerer, like Keith before him, hoped to appeal to the dictator's vanity by suggesting that the new unit, a gold-based coin equivalent to one-third of a U.S. golden dollar, be called an estrada. Cabrera thanked the Professor for his excellent study but did nothing to implement it. The Kemmerer report was filed at La Palma and was forgotten until it appeared in mimeographed form in January 1920. It was not until 1921, however, that a serialized Spanish translation appeared in the Diario de Centro America.

By 1919 Cabrera was the most unpopular Latin American ruler as far as the State Department were concerned. He had not only continued a long-standing boundary dispute with Honduras which was halting operations for the U.S.-owned Cuyamel Fruit Company in that country, but had also avoided selling German properties, and dismissed the Kemmerer report. Thurston's letters to the Secretary of State are full of disbelief at Cabrera's '. . .inconceivable ignorance regarding financial matters.' Was it a pose, or an indication of 'encroaching mental incapacity'? It is interesting to note that Thurston increasingly mentioned Cabrera's mental state, even though in 1918 he had thought such rumours unfounded.

It was Cabrera's physician, Dr Rodolfo Robles, who first brought this growing malady to Thurston's attention. In January 1918 Robles, then in charge of the government's relief agencies, told Thurston that Cabrera had suffered a breakdown and was in a delicate condition. At the time Thurston found this report suspicious as he was in daily contact with the dictator and had noticed nothing unusual about him. It was Cabrera's use of feigned or real illnesses and his difficult temperament became part of his policy and thus his style. His reluctance to eat the same food as others may have stemmed from his diabetic
condition but also from his fear of poison. Cabrera's moribund appearance during the 1911 National Assembly meetings led to the appearance of the ill-fated *gobiernito* who prematurely anticipated his death.

The pressures of power undoubtedly affected the despot and the attention he received, especially at the height of his authority (1908-1912), may have exaggerated a well-developed tendency towards hypochondria. Cabrera was astute enough to find his neuroses useful for putting off meeting important dignitaries and ordinary citizens, as well as for postponing decisions.

By February 1919 rampant rumours of the dictator's ill health in U.S. publications prompted Secretary of State Polk to ask Thurston whether these reports were true. Thurston replied that Cabrera's odd behaviour seemed to be brought on by attacks of hepatic colic which left him weak and bad tempered. These dark moods were familiar to many of those who were in contact with the dictator. As his despotic nature grew so did his habit of using these policy ploys. It is possible that he became unable to control his emotions and to distinguish reality from his imagined fears, for while these bouts of play-acting might have been successful in the short term, they may nevertheless ultimately have turned on their perpetrator and taken their toll.

In May 1919 Thurston reported that a foreign newspaper had recently published 'a full page notice, with accompanying photos, stating that Manuel Estrada Cabrera was about to turn over the presidency to Sr. Luis Toledo Herrarte, Minister for Foreign Affairs...'. Toledo Herrarte was in Washington at the time and feared to return. This episode was not dissimilar to the Creelman interview which had led to Porfirio Díaz's demise in 1910.
It was under these circumstances that Thurston was instructed to discover who might best succeed Cabrera should the meddlesome despot die. The answer came not from Thurston, but from another State Department official, Deverall. Deverall's choice was premature, but prophetic, as Jorge Ubico was later to prove Cabrera's truest successor. Of Ubico Deverall wrote: '... he is, without fear of contradiction, the best of all the jefes politicos in Guatemala, and a man of extraordinary ability. He is presidential timber.'

Thurston, too, had seen the merits of this forty-year-old colonel but was too close to events to see beyond the mounting conflict. For him two political philosophies dominated the times: a continuation of cabrerismo which seemed to many the traditional mold of Latin American dictatorship, or a move towards a desired democracy. Thurston's conversations with well-educated members of the new party made him think that perhaps this new group could bring about a political change which would be more in keeping with the United States ideal of Central American government.

There can be no doubt that the United States had grown tired and impatient of the dictator's duplicitous ways and may have welcomed the prospect of a change of government. Rumours of this new anti-cabrerista campaign offered Wilson an opportunity to take action against a man who had managed to avoid following the blueprints of three administrations.

By June 1919 it was clear that Cabrera continued to confer with representatives of the Tinoco government, and even though he assured Thurston that he was offering no material aid to the Costa Ricans this was still enough to disgruntle the Americans. Furthermore, Cabrera's decision to make the accounts of private banking concerns operating in the republic available for public inspection from July 1919 was seen as an affront to
the American colony, and a reminder of similar difficulties which Carranza had caused in Mexico with his 1917 creation of 'liquidating committees'. This measure not only restricted the extent of American citizens' business concerns, but also limited the U.S. government's influence.

So outraged was Thurston at the implications of this action that he failed to see what Cabrera undoubtedly intended: a riposte to the policy the U.S. government applied to him, a dose of what he considered to be their own medicine. Just as the American government had insisted on the aforementioned measures for German properties, so now Cabrera applied the very same formula to U.S. citizens and their interests. Cabrera's miscalculation on this occasion may have confirmed whatever formulated, though as yet unspoken, plans the State Department may have harboured against him. The existence of a vocal and intelligent opposition within the country was to be nurtured. It was clear by July 1919 that the small group who had first approached Thurston in January of that year had survived the most difficult moments. All they had to do now was grow.

Some historians feel that too much has been made of the United States's rôle in Cabrera's subsequent downfall. David Vela, for one, is of the opinion that Cabrera would have fallen regardless of any aid the U.S. Legation gave to the embryonic opposition movement at this time. This may be so, but the significance of the U.S. government's insistence that the dictator observe the constitution must be stressed, since without this stipulation it is unlikely that the incipient opposition party would have been able to develop, and eventually organize itself into the Unionist Party. Until this time the sixty-two-year-old autocrat had succeeded in destroying whatever opposition (real or imaginary) appeared and threatened
his position. By 1919 it was clear that the United States government would do whatever was possible within their definition of 'non-intervention' in Guatemalan internal affairs to allow this new voice to flourish. In doing so they intended to back two horses, and see which would ultimately yield the greater reward.

A BISHOP SPEAKS

En Roma el Papa ante el altar postrado,
rinde homenaje a Dios crucificado;
En Guatemala, donde Dios no impera,
Jesús rinde homenaje al dios Cabrera.36

The origins of the anti-cabrerista movement which eventually became known as the Unionist Party can be found in the activities of José Piñol y Batres and Manuel Cobos Batres, as early as October 1917. They had much in common. They were near contemporaries, belonged to a similar set, and had travelled and lived abroad. Cobos had left Guatemala in 1906 when he was apprenticed to work with the Hamburg firm of Schlubach. After five years in Germany he went on to France where he spent another five years before returning to Guatemala. Like many of the young men of the 1907 'bomb' conspiracy, Cobos was shocked at the primitive state of politics he found at home.37

Piñol had a long history of opposing cabrerismo. After his expulsion in 1906 for criticizing Cabrera from the pulpit, he had spent several years studying at the Gregorian University in Rome. He was then named Bishop of Granada, a post he relinquished in order to return to Guatemala where he was given the in partibus title of Bishop of Faselli in the mid-1910s. In October 1917 Piñol was invited to Quezaltenango by Rome-educated Padre
Eliseo González to speak at his parish during the feast of the Rosario. Manuel Cobos accompanied the Bishop to Cabrera's home town. It would appear that they had decided to use the Bishop's sermon as a thermometer to gauge public opinion of the régime.

While Piñol tested the religious waters, Cobos investigated the general atmosphere of the highland capital. After talks with one of Quezaltenango's best-connected citizens, don Antonio Bouscayrol, Cobos learned that, although Xelajú seemed distant from the influence of central government, Cabrera's power was still strong there. Bouscayrol suggested that, if Cobos wished to begin a revolt, he should do so in the capital. Bouscayrol assured him that Quezaltenango would follow, but could not at this time take the lead. He felt it would be more efficient to strike at the heart of cabrerismo rather than at its tentacles. If the centre of cabrerismo was attacked, then its forces would rush to protect its most vital parts, momentarily neglecting its external limbs, and therefore allowing a mobilized effort in the provinces to assist in toppling the régime. This proved sound advice.

Although the Bishop repeated these 'civic-religious' talks at the Church of el Señor de las Misericordias during the early months of 1918, it was clear that neither he and Cobos nor the public were yet ready for political change. During much of 1918 Piñol and Cobos spent time at Luis Cobos's finca La Trinidad in Escuintla. Here they discussed their half-formulated plans to overthrow the dictator, and eventually drafted two open letters to Cabrera.

Both men, like Cabrera, sought to involve the United States in their activities. This was not only a safety-net in case anything were to happen to them, but was also considered a long-term insurance policy. Copies of
Cobos and Piñol's letters were deposited at the U.S. Legation in order to express their objectives. This was many months before Cabrera was intended to receive copies of these same letters, even though he was probably well-informed of the two men's activities by this time.

Cobos and Piñol's 'open letters' to Cabrera of 1919 contained all the right elements for appealing to the prevalent Wilsonian philosophy of 'making the world safe for democracy'. Wyld Ospina has described Piñol as more of a politician than a theologian. He was undoubtedly a courageous, charismatic man who combined his secular and religious convictions at an auspicious moment. His open letter shows sagacity and showmanship. Although it was addressed to Cabrera, it also appealed to an American audience, whose new role as arbitrators of world peace affected their Latin American foreign policy. Piñol could not have foreseen the outcome of his sermons, but he was perspicacious enough to recognize the important part the U.S. might play should cabrerismo begin to crumble. It was clearly time to get rid of Cabrera.

The church of San Francisco was located in one of the neighbourhoods which had been badly affected by the earthquakes of 1917-1918. Here many of the streets were still in disrepair, the houses standing derelict or patched-up. Some of them still bore the ringed crosses of black paint which were a sign of their owner's affluence, in that they were able to pay the president to prevent demolition of their homes. It was in this once prosperous neighbourhood that Piñol began pronouncing what turned out to be an insurgent cycle of preachings. Piñol had attacked Cabrera from the pulpit before, but his sermons at the Church of San Francisco in May 1919 are among the best-known episodes of Cabrera's descent from power. These should not be seen as the roots of the Unionist Party, but
rather as one of the catalysts which prompted the people out of their apathy. His homilies, which seem to have begun gently enough, were so morally and politically charged that the public was not only curious to hear his words, but also shamed by them.

Each of Pifiol's nine sermons dealt with a particular Christian evil which he correlated to the Guatemalan condition. He started from the criticism of a specific vice, and applied it with disturbing accuracy to the political scene. The Bishop's direct approach, and dissection of the by now familiar patterns of corruption, hypocrisy, selfishness and cruelty startled his complacent audience. Instead of eliciting anger or malicious gossip, the Bishop's exhortations drew grateful crowds; these grew larger each week. Vigilant as the autocrat was, he did nothing to stop these sermons.

The Bishop was not afraid to point the finger at notorious cabreristas nor to denounce the régime. In his sixth sermon, in which he spoke of theft and corruption, Pifiol criticized government officials for using public monies for their own needs, including among them a well-known administrador de rentas familiar to all those present. Worse denunciations were to follow, all linked to cabrerismo and its mentor, which he described as 'evil'.

Cabrera followed Pifiol's sermons carefully, but still did little to stop him. The dictator found it expedient to launch an anti-Catholic campaign in the official press which accused the Bishop of trying to bring the much feared and loathed Conservative party back to power. A presidential appeal was made to all good liberals-cabreristas to join in the battle against this cachureco flock, these ultra-conservatives. Anyone found carrying pencils or chalk, instruments of insurrection, was arrested. Furthermore, at
show foreign observers that he still enjoyed popular support. On 15 May
what was intended as a spontaneous cabrerista rally was assembled. Chayet
could not help commenting on the reluctant air of those parading, most of
whom were workers forced to march against their will.

The impact of Piñol's audacity in confronting Cabrera at this time
cannot be measured, but it undoubtedly gave new faith to all those who had
given up hope of the dictator's downfall. In July 1919, after delivering his
last sermon, Piñol decided to go to the countryside for a few days. He
went to the Cobos's family finca La Trinidad where the cycle had probably
been conceived. This gave Cabrera the pretext he needed for his arrest.
Gregorio González - Goyito - the despised head of the Second Police
Section, La Carcelita, was sent to arrest the Bishop. Goyito's link with the
torture cells, las tres Marias, did not bode well for Piñol. His presence at
La Trinidad seemed to many to portend the Bishop's certain death.

Simultaneously the dictator cabled Archbishop Jacinto y Riveiro to
return immediately to the capital from his highland tour. The Archbishop
was then instructed to hold the Bishop prisoner in the Cathedral's domain.
This is how Cabrera washed his hands of all blame for Piñol's arrest. Both
the Archbishop and Piñol were technically under Vatican law, but in reality
were subject to the dictator's whims.

There was a great general outcry, and soon petitions pleading for
clemency for the cleric began to arrive at La Palma. One of these petitions
had five hundred signatures, which Félipe Márquez, Cabrera's right-hand
man, put into alphabetical order. As many of the signatories were well
known to Cabrera for bearing enmity towards him, it was not difficult for
Márquez to add a running commentary to each name. Márquez described some
of the men who less than six months later were to sign the Unionist Act.
Several delegations of women and students sought U.S. intervention for Bishop's prompt release. Cabrera tried to draw attention away from the Bishop by belatedly distributing funds and goods to many of the capital's homeless, victims of the earthquake of a year before. During these days many legations received an anonymous letter suggesting that Guatemala's name be struck from the list of the recently-established League of Nations. This request, however, went unheeded.

After a month-and-a-half of confinement, Piñol was finally released on 21 August 1919. This was doña Joaquina's birthday and although she had been dead for over a decade the occasion continued to be celebrated each year. It should be remembered that it was due to her intercession that Piñol had survived his first imprisonment by her son. This time the Bishop's good fortune was not due to her, but to the combined forces of pressure from the Vatican, and demands by the U.S. government for an explanation of his internment. Throughout Cabrera's régime, the Vatican received regular reports on his misuse of the Church's power in local politics. This final abuse was unacceptable. Jacinto y Riveiro was eventually recalled to Rome to account for his position as Piñol's jailor, and although Cabrera tried to keep him back, he had no power to hold his ally indefinitely.

Bishop Piñol also left Guatemala for New Orleans. As during his first exile, many of his papers were stolen at the Customs House. Beyond Guatemalan shores Piñol met with an antagonistic U.S. press which had been primed and paid by the despot's foreign agents. On 19 June 1919, Thurston asked the Secretary of State to arrest Cabrera's agent, Diego Rubin, who was to arrive in New Orleans on 22 June aboard the steamer Coppename, bearing anti-piñolista propaganda.
Although Cabrera learned of the State Department's disapproval of this, his latest ploy, several New Orleans papers ran articles stating that the Bishop was a Bolshevik agent and should be expelled. The timely intercession of Cardinals Mercier and Gibbons saved Piñol's reputation. These two clerics championed his cause and dispelled whatever doubts Washington may have had about his political proclivities. When Piñol visited Cardinal Gibbons at the American University in Washington D.C., the former arranged for him to meet Wilson's Private Secretary, Joseph Tumulty.

This meeting came at a time when the United States was finding Cabrera's activities yet more problematic. Piñol's report of internal dissatisfaction with the régime offered the U.S. government the justification to back what was not yet an official party, but which seemed to have all the acceptable qualities required for a responsible future government. Guatemala's tyrant had disturbed the State Department not only with his plan to issue 60 million pesos, but also by his repeated reluctance to dispose of confiscated German properties. After the 1919 National Assembly session, Thurston reported that Decree no. 747, the 'Enemy Expropriation Act' had not even been submitted for discussion. Furthermore the outbreak of overt anti-American feeling by student demonstrators in 1919 confirmed Wilson's worst suspicions.

There were several such demonstrations in 1919. The first was in August 1919 when secondary students protested against the promotion of General Enrique Aris as director of the INCV, a post he had held informally for some time. Soon thereafter a group of law students decided to protest against the re-appearance of the Club Reeleccionista, which was ostensibly resuscitated for what was expected to be Cabrera's fourth re-election (1923-1929). The visit of a Honduran politician and presidential hopeful,
Dr Alberto Membreño, on his way back from Washington further compounded a growing anti-American feeling among University students.

Many of these, among them Epaminondas Quintana and Clemente Marroquín Rojas, had been meeting for some time at the pensión Renacimiento where they had decided to found a Liga Universitaria. Their Honduran leader, Oscar H. Espada, may have incited them in an attack against his fellow countryman Dr Membreño, while the criticisms of the Colossus of the North were very much in keeping with the liberal education they had received.

The anti-American articles which appeared in La Tribuna, La República, and even the Diario de Centro-América were general expressions of feelings shared by most citizens, who traditionally objected to United States involvement in the isthmus. No Guatemalan wished to see his government controlled from Washington. During August 1919 student demonstrators stoned the house where Membreño was staying and chanted slogans of 'death to the Yankees'. It is clear, however, that Cabrera had little to do with these demonstrations and that the anti-American feeling described by Thurston was genuine. It is also possible that the Mexican government was embroiled in this business.

Two main points must be underlined: firstly, that students were no longer afraid to speak openly about politics, even though they knew some of their fellow students reported on their activities to the government and they were aware of the possible consequences; and secondly, that the topic of Central American federation had been broached. When their leader, Espada, disappeared there was a nation-wide protest by students with letters and petitions demanding his release. As in previous years, Cabrera capitalized on the situation by arresting persons he considered dangerous - mainly newspapermen: F. Hernández de León, editor of La
Republica, Salatiel Rosales, director and editor of La Tribuna, and congressman Lic. Antonio Nájera Cabrera. By defying Cabrera's now familiar political machine, his secret police and their methods of intimidation, it was now the student population who provided a national sense of civic courage. The Bishop's sermons had served to raise popular awareness that it was time to bring the dictatorship to an end. The student activities, while not a full battle-cry, served as a hint of what was to come.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE UNIONIST PARTY

Piñol's talks in Washington helped the opposition in that they prompted the U.S. Department of State to ask Cabrera to respect the Constitution. This meant that for the first time during his administration his opposition was allowed to congregate. Although initially Cabrera tried to heed the warning, he soon found himself resorting to traditional methods of repression: arrests and spying. Some feel that it was still within Cabrera's power to uproot the Unionist movement in its early days, while others feel that by 1919 Cabrera's power base had begun to break up.

Piñol's imprisonment served to unite a group of people who had formerly feared to congregate and ultimately linked together unlikely factions in their battle for freedom. The Bishop's sermons had gone beyond class differences, breaking down class barriers which were rarely crossed. Just as Cobos and his group grew and worked towards the destruction of the dictatorship, so a group of workers, under the leadership of Silverio Ortiz, also aimed at Cabrera's downfall. Cobos gained adherents from prominent sectors, some of whom, like José Azmitia, had vowed their admiration for Piñol. Soon Cobos was joined by Tácito Molina, José Azmitia, Eduardo Camacho, and Emilio Escamilla, men who would form the leadership
of a new party. Ortiz's colleagues belonged to a religious fraternity known as the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They were twelve, like the Apostles, and worked towards gaining the Bishop's freedom.

Cabrera's interest in workers was genuine, and led to the establishment in the early 1900s of Escuelas de Artes y Oficios, which were scattered in the main provincial cities and which allowed many to acquire skills which gave them their livelihood. It is true that he abused many craftsmen by press-ganging them for cheap labour, as seen in the government sweat-shops where tailors were expected to produce army uniforms free of charge. After the earthquakes, masons and carpenters had similarly been forced to rebuild government buildings without receiving suitable compensation. But early on Cabrera had wooed the labour vote through the establishment of working men's clubs and specially-written newspapers, and his ostensible concern for the workers persisted.

The growing importance of trade unions affected Guatemala; the trend was imported by the autocrat himself. After the triumph of the Russian revolution, the United States government intermittently tried to encourage Latin American governments to create their own co-operatives. In 1918 the Pan American Federation of Labour (PAFL) or Confederación Panamericana de Obreros (COPA) had been founded in Laredo, Texas. The Guatemalan chapter was the moderate Federación de Obreros de Guatemala (FOG) which was represented in Laredo in 1918 and again in 1919 in New York by Ricardo León. Although the FOG's activities were carefully monitored, Guatemala's first strike took place in 1918 when railway workers of the Northern Railroad asked for higher wages. A more serious and militant strike took place a year later (December 1919), when employees of the International Railways of Central America, many of whom were U.S. citizens, demanded a
doubling of their wages. This dispute was not settled until May 1920.

Ortiz and his friends had kept on the fringe of all cabrerista-inspired workers' clubs. Their determination to gain the Bishop's freedom, however, distinguished them from the majority of their class. In 1919 Ortiz prompted his friends in the Sacred Heart of Jesus group to establish a new society which subsequently and briefly became known as el Comité Patriótico de Obreros. Cabrera's half-hearted blessing to workers provided Ortiz and his fellow members with a framework within which to work. Although limited and superficial, their experience of congregations and organization served them well. It was this opposition movement, born of a contempt for the dictator, which allowed what were once the tyrant's playthings to undergo a collective transformation.

There is no doubt that during the early days of Ortiz's party, his ideas and those of his colleagues were an authentic response to a general desire to oust Cabrera. It is not in the scope of this study to discover whether there were elements within the many anti-cabrerista factions existing at this time which might have been based on more sophisticated syndicalist premises. Their main goal was clearly to bring the dictatorship down. This was achieved through the use of classical rhetoric invoking worker exploitation, but it should be remembered that demands for regular and fair wages were representative of popular complaints against the cabrerista system.

As the Comité became better known, members of more established co-operatives began to join the ranks. By 20 September 1919 this group had grown so large that they decided to change their name to that of the Liga Obrera. Because of their growing membership the Liga Obrera was soon attracting members from the largest co-operatives. Demetrio Avila,
President of the Federación Obrera de Guatemala Para la Legalización del Trabajo, and members of the Sociedad de Auxilios Mútuos del Gremio Obrero were soon applying for Liga membership. They brought experience, membership and ideas with them. The Liga Obrera's first goal was to gain better treatment for all workers, and in order to do this they launched a propaganda campaign. By 1918 the daily El Trabajo (which Cabrera had founded in 1911) was publishing articles criticizing the exploitation of the worker. Soon the leader of the Sociedad Central de Artesanos y Auxilios Mútuos was working towards making many of his members join the Liga's ranks, and making these members more militant.  

On 31 October 1919 the Liga Obrera, which had recently been approached by Cobos's group, met with them. There was much argument among the Liga's leaders as to whether it was beneficial to join Cobos's group. Some workers saw Cobos and his associates as señoritos and conservatives. Cobos's talk on French democracy in the Third Republic swayed others to see the sense of such an alliance, despite Cobos's idealistic rhetoric. After much discussion within the Liga's headquarters a vote was taken; 28 voted in favour of the alliance while 10 were against it. Saturnino González, who headed the faction in favour of a merger, argued that such an alliance would provide their group with much-needed capital for the success of their plans. For Cobos and his associates this union meant a larger base of support, and confirmation of a bona-fide political party. Cobos recognized that the affiliation of workers to his party would give it much-needed political force.  

The fact that artisans merged with gente bien may have come as a surprise to Cabrera, since much of his success had stemmed from these very class distinctions, which had now been abandoned to aid a common cause.
The third and final component of this new party came from the ranks of University students, who were idealistic almost by definition. Students were to prove an important arm of the new party, since they served as agents and diplomats for the Unionists in the provinces, and went out into these to establish new clubs and support groups.47

Although Cobos and his colleagues originally wished to call their party the 'Conservative' party, Tácito Molina made it clear that this would not only alienate the workers, but would also force many who were traditionally 'Liberals' to ignore them. Molina therefore suggested that the new party be called the Unionist Party. This would be an acceptable alternative to cabrerismo and additionally would not be censored by the government. Central American union was a long-standing regional ideal once championed by the leading Liberal, Barrios, and more recently by the Nicaraguan, Salvador Mendieta. Cabrera himself had once founded a club for Central American union and placed Julio Bianchi in charge of it, so how could the dictator object to so appropriate a plan, on the eve of the isthmus's centennial celebration of its independence from Spain?

Thus the Unionist Party drew its support from three disparate sources. In the beginning this was a satisfactory arrangement as it allowed for a federation of distinct groups momentarily united in their desire to depose the despot. Although single-mindedness about one issue allowed the Unionist Party to weather many cabrerista storms, the party's weakness ultimately stemmed from its intrinsic political diversity.

This new party was financed mainly through public and private donations. The largest recorded sum received by the party came from one of the oldest and most wealthy families: the Aycinenas. The Banco Colombiano also kept unlimited funds for the new Party. Much of this money went
towards renting headquarters and paying for propaganda. An official headquarters was established in the Escamilla-owned house number 5 on the south-east corner of Fourth Avenue and Twelfth Street. It had the advantage of being next door to the U.S. legation. It soon became known as the Casa del Pueblo.

THE ACTA DE TRES DOBLECES

En el país de la eterna reelección había brotado una primavera de libertad...48

Protected by the cloak of Central American federation, Molina drafted the Party's founding act. This document was signed on 25 December 1919 by fifty-one citizens of diverse backgrounds. It has been called the Acta de las Tres Dobleces because their signatures were added to a sheet of paper which was folded over three times. On 29 December Pedro Luis Aguirre took a copy of this document to the U.S. Legation. This was, after all, a seditious act and in signing their names these men had effectively signed their death warrants should their plans fail. Each of them also knew that their long-term strategy was unformulated. Copies of this acta were also sent to the Minister of the Interior and to the Central American Office, while telegrams were sent assuring neighbouring countries that this new Party's aims were pacific and would in no way threaten their sovereignty.

The document did not circulate in the capital until 1 January 1920, when many citizens awoke to discover a copy of the Unionist Act under their doors. The beginning of 1920 thus brought with it a declaration of independence. Students and workers divided the capital among themselves and spent the night distributing copies of the Unionist credo. Meanwhile
Cobos and Bianchi joined celebrations at the American Club's New Year's Eve ball where they distributed copies of the *acta* and toasted the birth of a new Party.

Cabrera soon had his copy too. The following morning the capital's *jefe político* and chief of state, General Haeussler, and the dictator's barber presented him with the historic act. As always, the autocrat gave no indication of his true thoughts and is reported to have said: *...ya verán mis enemigos que soy un mal indio y que a mi solo se me saca de la presidencia con los pies por adelante.*

Since at least late 1917 Cabrera had learned of growing hostility towards his government from certain quarters, but felt this would not come to much. His informers seem to have confirmed this and convinced him that these pockets of discontent posed no risk to him and could easily be dealt with at any time.

The despot found himself in the unusual situation of having to adhere strictly to the law because he knew that if he failed to do so at this time he might forfeit what little support he had from the U.S. government. The knowledge that Thurston was not sympathetic to him made Cabrera uneasy. Although he could foresee difficulties, he was not as yet unduly concerned.

By 1920 Cabrera was surrounded by the hard core of his administration: some fifty or sixty military officers, several spies, a few lawyers, the poet Chocano, and several civilians. These men remained at the dictator's side for a variety of motives: necessity, greed, loyalty, fear, weakness, curiosity, power. As we have seen, Cabrera had few true friends, by virtue of his high position and distrustful nature. Thus no one dared disturb the patriarch. By this time most citizens had either conformed to his code, or
were in exile or in the grave. The cabrerista servility which emerged from his levelling all class differences and which stemmed from fear and subservience, was deeply ingrained.

Despite extravagant birthday celebrations for his sixty-second birthday in November 1919, which rivalled some of the most magnificent Minervalías, Cabrera had slowly been losing support. The president's suggestions, which had formerly been law, were now questioned. Now that deputies, ministers, and even generals noted a change in public opinion — owing to the rise of the Unionist Party — Cabrera's position became less strong.

His first reaction was to heed the U.S. government's demands and temporarily obey the Constitution. He began by replacing the more notorious and less loyal of his provincial appointees with law-abiding men in those towns which he knew to be loyal to him, as in Antigua; in other towns, especially those which showed an independent nature and might espouse the ideals of the new party (like Totonicapán and Quezaltenango) he maintained strong jefes políticos.

During 1919 Flores Avendaño noticed a change in local government appointees. In Antigua the Jefe Político and Comandante de armas, General José Barrios E. and Comandante Abelino Montúfar respectively, were replaced by Colonel Buenaventura Castellanos and Comandante Mariano Méndez R., who recognized that Cabrera was trying to soften the despotic nature which had characterized his government. When the first Unionists arrived in Antigua the meeting was broken up, and participants arrested, but these were treated better than ever before. Flores Avendaño spoke with the local mayor de plaza, who told him:
...al darme personalmente sus instrucciones el presidente, me recomendó mucha prudencia con los enemigos, y un estricto apego a la ley. Pero por lo que veo me doy cuenta que el viejo ya se jodio y con él los que le permanecen leales.

The appearance and widespread distribution of the Unionist Act in January 1920 nevertheless alarmed the president. The arrival of a new American Minister in January 1920, the septuagenarian veteran of Latin American politics Benton McMillin, further frustrated Cabrera's plans for destroying his enemies. Under normal circumstances Cabrera would have imprisoned all the leaders of an organization such as the Unionist Party, and made life so unpleasant for its supporters that it would soon have disappeared. With McMillin's arrival, and the belief that the new party had U.S. support, Cabrera felt himself under pressure to show the exemplary side of his régime.

ONE HUNDRED DAYS OF INK: HOW LEGALITY WAS WON

In early January 1920 the Unionist headquarters, the Casa del Pueblo, was inaugurated. From the second Sunday of January onward, the Casa del Pueblo held its weekly public meetings. These Sunday meetings became so popular that the premises were soon too small for the crowds wishing to hear the different speakers who appeared each week. By the third Sunday meeting there were more than 2,000 present. It was not long before many of Cabrera's well-known spies joined the three o'clock sessions on Sunday afternoons. These meetings were aimed at educating a public eager to oust a man whose rule they had begun to find intolerable. Spokesmen from each sector were given the opportunity to voice their ideas, and although passions were roused, discipline remained essential. When cabrerista agents
infiltrated the meeting of 18 January and tried to provoke violence by letting-off 'Chinese fire-crackers', the audience remained calm.

Cabrera's first attempt to intimidate and provoke the Unionist masses had failed. Thenceforth he became more preoccupied and fearful about his life and position than ever before. Many foreign diplomats felt he was living in a 'fool's paradise', for although they knew him to be intensely suspicious they did not believe he realized how little support he had left by 1920. Armstrong calculates that he had no more than 200 loyal followers at this time, while the Unionist Party could count on at least 1,700 in the capital alone. Cabrera's working day, which had always been long, became longer; he was now said to work from 4 a.m. to 11 p.m. He also began to distrust his officers and keep a close watch over his military high command:

...in view of the fact known to everyone that his Generals' loyalty to himself was so doubtful that he made them dress in uniform and sit in his garden from 7 a.m. until 10 and 11 o'clock p.m. so as to have them under his own eye only confirmed my view that any rising of troops would entail a pitched battle...

There is so much disaffection in his army, i.e. amongst the officials, and his entourage that all his plans have been previously known and the organ of the Unionist Party has so far been able to take some of the wind out of his sails by publishing his plans in advance."

In the meantime the Unionist Party continued to grow. La Casa del Pueblo was not only the Unionist Party headquarters and haven, but also the home of their greatest weapon, a printing press. The first opposition press, nicknamed la Catocha, had been smuggled into the country from El Salvador by workers, and was later seized by cabrerista agents. A second press, christened La Victoria - la Toya for short - proved invaluable in this new anti-cabrerista crusade. The campaign known as 'one hundred days of ink' which led to Cabrera's downfall was begun with La Toya.
La Toya's first publication was *El Unionista*, a daily and the Party's general paper. It was later followed by *El Obrero Libre* in February 1920; *El Estudiante; La Unión Profesional*; and the occasional issue of *El Instituto* aimed at secondary school students. In response to these Cabrera founded two anti-unionista publications: *El Bisturí*, and *La Mascarada*. These did not have so large a readership nor such popularity as La Toya's publications. Soon the larger provincial capitals were producing their own Unionist papers: *El Pueblo* in Quezaltenango, *Renacimiento* in Antigua and *El Patriota* in Retalhuleu.

These publications proved the cement needed to consolidate the disparate elements of the Unionist Party. Unionist newspapers and pamphlets kept morale high and encouraged those afraid to commit themselves to join. Copies were also sent daily to foreign legations in order to make the diplomats aware of the new party's plight. Each issue of *El Unionista* brought with it news of daily arrests as well as of the growing number of adherents in the capital and provinces. Former cabrerista centres were replaced by Unionist clubs: the cantons of La Libertad, Barrios, Guarda Viejo (then known as Ciudad Estrada Cabrera) changed the political map of Guatemala City and eventually of the republic. In the provinces Unionist affiliates sprung up. The first was in Quezaltenango on 5 January; the meeting took place in the office of Lic. Pedro R. Morales. Some Unionist centres were spontaneous, while others only emerged after roving Unionist ambassadors, students and workers, arrived in towns with pamphlets and speeches inciting the people to join. This led to many arrests.

During the week of 4 February the British Chargé d'Affaires heard rumours that Cabrera was planning a simulated attack on *La Palma* so that
he could justify shooting all the Unionist leaders who were then held in the penitentiary. News of this was leaked to the Unionist Party through disloyal members of the army, thus defeating his plan. Armstrong added:

The President has so far failed to cope with this situation, and this is the first time during his twenty-one years in power that he has not put down opposition mercilessly at the moment of its appearance. He seems to have lost his serenity in the treatment of dangerous events and since his handling of Bishop Piñol in March last and the students in September last it is plainly visible that he is resorting to hasty and ill-conceived improvisations... The President is still a formidable person, however, and we are not overestimating the state of affairs when we realize that we are indeed sitting upon a volcano which the most insignificant thing might bring into activity. And if he had been of the nature to yield to the inevitable he would in my opinion have already made his preparations in that direction.62

By the end of January the pages of El Unionista constituted a veritable Who’s Who of offenders, and a dictionary of cabrerista crimes. These seem both endless and changeless, because the same punishments which had been allotted to a succession of ‘political’ prisoners continued to be instituted. For the first time in many years, the sweeping of floors in barracks, and other physical tasks, was seen as pathetic, even absurd, since although no one knew with certainty, the nation seemed on the verge of an enormous change. During the early months Unionist publications were anonymous; only a small number of persons openly contributed to them.

Out of this political disorder a new underworld was born in the pages of the many Unionist publications - complete with its secret codes and secret ambitions. Anyone not familiar with the personalities on the printed page (or with their authors) cannot appreciate the powers that were at work, nor understand the impact these newspapers made on the public. It was not simply a matter of breaking the silence; there was a forum for those with literary and political ambitions.
V. DECLINE AND FALL OF DON MANUEL

PART I

When in 1919 Cabrera tried to launch the Club Reeleccionista he had faced the criticism of University students; now in late January 1920 he decided to call a Liberal Convention despite these painful antecedents. It was an unpoltic move in every sense. The U.S. had already warned him that they would not tolerate another re-election, and the students had shown that this was generally felt by Guatemalans too. One cannot guess whether Cabrera felt that by calling this convention some hidden source of support would be tapped which would capture that undefinable leverage which had brought him to, and maintained him in, power. It is more likely that his habitual belief in the power of legality now blindly reassured him that the situation was not yet beyond hope. As on previous occasions, the despot's invisible strings set the machinery of clubs, supporters and propaganda into motion.

One of the first men he called to his rescue was Adrián Vidaurre, his former auditor de guerra. Vidaurre had retired from political life in 1919 to the finca in Alta Verapaz which he had acquired during his many years service. The head of the Club 2 de Abril, Víctor Sánchez Ocaña, was also called to organize this new convention. As we have already seen, this influential group was not entirely sympathetic to Cabrera. Despite unlimited funds and a well-trained staff, Cabrera lacked the popular base which the Unionist Party now enjoyed.

Vidaurre, one of the period's shrewdest politicians, recognized that this new party would emerge victorious. He sensed it was time for cabrerismo to evolve or disappear. Santos Chocano's vision of la ley de la fuerza o de la farsa, of what government could be in tropical America, had come full circle. By 1920 Cabrera's once strong government had become unsustainable because of sudden mass awareness. It was time for it to be
replaced, the only problem being that although the people had suddenly found themselves in the midst of a new political movement which could measure cabrerismo's shortcomings with remarkable lucidity, they lacked both a leader and the proper political education to function or even prepare to evolve into what could be recognized as a 'democratic' form of government.

Vidaurre therefore suggested that the most intelligent approach for Cabrera to adopt while this new political mood lasted was to recognize openly and encourage unionism, simultaneously updating and changing the emphasis of what by now was no longer a 'liberal' party, but a cabrerista one. This would not only impress the U.S. government, but throw his opponents off balance. Vidaurre's plan was for Cabrera to make concessions to the Unionists and even give many of them token government posts until 1923, when he would complete his fourth presidential term. Cabrera, however chose not to heed Vidaurre and thenceforth viewed him with suspicion.

Vidaurre was able to anticipate the political turmoil which was to follow and for this reason chose to side with the Unionist Party leadership. This political opportunism led to his being called 'Robespierre' by many. By this time he knew his services, particularly in Congress, would be essential. Tácito Molina distrusted him but the others recognized his usefulness. Thus one of Cabrera's longest standing and most notorious associates became the link between the National Assembly and the Unionists, which ultimately led to the dictator's defeat. As Vidaurre had predicted, the Liberal Convention was an unmitigated failure.

The dictator then made plans for a 'spontaneous' popular parade to take place in the capital on 29 February. This was before the opening of
parliament and therefore significant. *Jefes políticos* had been instructed to send at least twenty representatives from each province. Unlike on previous occasions, all travel expenses were paid for by the government. The U.S. Minister noted that all boarding houses and hotels had been booked by the government during these days. Cabrera's plan not only failed, but gave many of the 2,000 *cabrerista* 'volunteers' an opportunity to visit the by-now famous *Casa del Pueblo*.

By the end of February it was clear to many Unionists that their high ideals and good cause were insufficient in themselves to bring about Cabrera's downfall. Certain militant members of the Party believed that the solution was only to be found in armed insurrection, while the Unionist directive continued to advocate pacifism. They also knew that in order for them to defeat Cabrera and have political rather than moral influence, especially in the eyes of the U.S. government, they had to be recognized as a legal party. This could only be done through the tyrant's resignation or his impeachment by Congress. The latter seemed the only viable option since this would not only give 'legality' to the proceedings, but also win the U.S. government's blessing. Wyld Ospina, the most observant critic of this new Party, sums up the Unionists' strength:

> Puede decirse que Estrada Cabrera abandonó a sus enemigos el único recinto que a la postre hubiera sido inexpugnable para él: el recinto fortificado de la ley. Mientras él obra por encima y fuera de ella, la oposición se abandera con la Carta Magna. De aquí surgió aquella célebre frase unionista, que fue toda una consigna de batalla: 'combatiremos a la tiranía a golpes de Constitución'.

While the Unionists worked on educating a public to leave fear behind - to harness the people's hatred for the dictator and simultaneously maintain order - Cabrera continued to rely on a system of arbitrary
arrests, beatings, and intimidation. The imprisonment of the principal Unionist leaders - Julio and Fridolino Bianchi, Tácito Molina, Emilio Escamilla, Lic. José Barillas Fajardo, Silverio Ortiz, and students Rafael and Luis Samaya - led by the end of January 1920 to protests. Contrary to the autocrat's hopes that the new party might collapse without its 'head', the Unionists continued to go from strength to strength. People, no longer fearful of reprisals, now openly visited their relatives and friends bringing news and food for those imprisoned in the penitentiary la Carcelleta and the numerous prisons throughout the capital.

Even secondary students were affected with the political fever of the times and during school breaks discussed Unionist advances. The first symbolic indication of the crumbling of the régime came from Cabrera's much favoured Instituto Nacional Central de Varones. Like most of the national secondary schools this building had a large portrait of the dictator in its principal patio, and early in March a group of its students decided to defy him. Their overt opposition to their patron on this occasion must have come as a blow:

El Protector de la Juventud, el inventor del opio de las Minervalías, ya no tenía derecho a seguir presidiendo el ancho corredor del Instituto. Faltaban pocos días para el 11 de marzo de 1920, pero todo respeto estaba ya perdido. En el patio ripioso abundaban los guijarros y las piedras. Todas las manos se alzaron presurosas, yo no sé quién apuntó primero. Pero en mi memoria se quedaron grabados dos brazos: el de Marco Antonio Asturias y el de Alfredo Balsells Rivera. Ellos quizás lanzaron las primeras piedras que dieron en el blanco, y llevaron guijarros sobre el retrato vulgar anenciado en ovalo plateado. Se desgarraron los bigotes y se partió la frente. Los colgajos de papel estaban allí como triste muñón de una vida, como testigos de una farsa que no podía durar más."

As the date of the opening of parliament on 1 March approached, both Cabrera and the Unionists appeared eager for the battle to start. El Unionista launched a long campaign to win over Congress by publishing
articles condemning the régime. When the Unionists learned that Cabrera had sent his private secretary, General José María Letona, to visit all congressmen and gain their written promise of loyalty during the upcoming session, the front page of El Unionista of 27 February proclaimed: 'Asamblea Amordazada y Amenazada'. The only two members known to have refused to sign this document were Lic. José María Andrade and Adrián Vidaurre.57

The National Assembly traditionally met in the building of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País on Ninth Avenue. In 1920, however, Cabrera sensed the growing polarization and decreed that the 1920 congressional sessions take place in the more remote Military Academy on the outskirts of the city, half-way to La Palma.

This structure had been built in Barrios's time and was not only a fortress in its own right, but was also surrounded by several military outposts. The Military Academy did not have a public gallery like the Sociedad Económica, but on this occasion one was improvised. The official government newspaper: El Diario de Centro América reported that never before had such great crowds been seen at parliamentary sessions.

Most of the Diplomatic Corps was present at these opening sessions and the doyen of the Corps, the Spanish Minister Pedro Quartin, could not help noticing that government forces, dressed as peasants and professionals, were effectively the only citizens present. Their presence there had a three-fold purpose: to reinforce the military surveillance of the National Assembly; to keep the Unionists out; and hopefully to fool the Diplomatic Corps into thinking that the crowds were Unionist. The second parliamentary session, on the other hand, was full of Unionists and was to prove the more important. On this occasion Vidaurre gave a speech urging

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his fellow representatives to recognize the necessity of legalizing the Union of Central America. This speech was a turning-point in the chain of remarkable events which led to Cabrera's downfall. It not only moved much of the Assembly to vote for decree 1020 on 5 March, but also prepared the Assembly for the extraordinary disclosures General Letona made to them on 8 April.

Vidaurre's speech led to the 'legalization' of what until then was viewed as an 'unconstitutional' party. His political about-turn was accepted without criticism at the time because it proved pivotal to the Party's success. Like Cabrera, he was coming to the end of his political career. His chameleon ability to survive a career marred by so many dark incidents, and his years as the notorious auditor de guerra have perhaps led commentators to underestimate his political importance.

At the close of that session Vidaurre was carried home like a hero on the shoulders of enthusiastic Unionists. The political fever was now running high and although diplomats could not predict what would happen in the coming days, they recognized the Unionists' incontestable strength and feared Cabrera's unpredictable behaviour. That evening, 2 March, a man passing in front of Vidaurre's house was shot dead by one of Cabrera's henchmen. The assassin, it was later discovered, was General Flores's son. In other times this might have served to warn Congress not to follow the political agitator and seditionist, but the event now signalled that it was just a matter of time before Cabrera fell.

By the session of 5 March the public gallery was almost exclusively filled with Unionists. At this session Abraham Orantes presented the bill (decree 1020) for the recognition of a Central American Union. Under Cabrera's instructions Congressman Salvador Girón tried three times to
alter the decree, but the motion remained unchanged. Batres Pineda
seconded the motion and was supported by Canuto Castillo, A. Beteta, and
Vidaurre. Although decree 1020 was approved on 5 March, it was not to be
enforced until 15 March; nevertheless news of this motion was met with
rejoicing. The Unionists' faith in legality had succeeded. A further victory
came when Congress failed to pass an 'anti-bolshevik' law which Cabrera
had hoped would nullify the recognition of a Central American Union; he
planned to put an end to the opposition by presenting them as bolshevik
agents on the isthmus.
Since Piñol's departure in 1919 Cabrera's propaganda machine had met with growing indifference. Unionist publications, on the other hand, flourished. At the beginning of March preparations were made to thank the National Assembly for recognizing and supporting Unionism. A popular demonstration was planned for the Thursday, 11 March. To this end the Unionist papers, particularly *El Obrero Libre*, asked any unemployed workers in the capital to present themselves at the *Casa del Pueblo*. Cabrera was also criticized at the time for having founded another *Liga Obrera*, which not only recruited ingenuous citizens but gave the true *Liga Obrera* a bad reputation.

On Sunday 7 March free *aguardiente* flowed at Unionist headquarters, although from then on drink was forbidden to Party members. Strict instructions were given on how the Unionists were to conduct themselves on this occasion. No one was to carry any sort of weapon (not even a walking stick); bars were persuaded not to serve liquor on that day; each group was to carry its own banner and march in rows of eight. It was also hoped that through their disciplined action all undecided representatives might seek Unionist membership and join their cause.

By 9 March the general consensus for Unionism was great and no one doubted Cabrera would be defeated. Manuel Cobos was moved to write: *...lo que estamos viendo y presenciando todos los días a propios y extraños parece un sueño.* By then the Unionist Party was so powerful that Cobos boasted that the combined opposition forces could bring the city to a standstill. Jack Armstrong confirmed this situation when on 1 March he
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wrote:

Business is completely stifled. The Customs House for example is filled to overflowing and merchants are clamouring for their goods; the Post Office has unopened mail bags piled ceiling high and no one to attend to either of these important branches of Government because a number of employees have been discharged for joining the Unionist Party while those ostensibly in favour of the President are marched off in the afternoon to attend Congress and make a show in favour of the Government. In all other departments of Government similar occurrences are reported; and native and foreign business houses report that their employees leave at all times without permission to visit the Unionist Party Headquarters or to take part in manifestations. *

While some saw the enormous potential future influence of the Unionist Party through its varied membership, most failed to look beyond their immediate goal of overthrowing Cabrera. The demonstration of 11 March was the culmination of the Unionist movement. For the first time in twentieth century Guatemalan history disparate social and political groups had come together for an ideal. Although the immediate goal was to oust a dictator they had all permitted to remain at the helm of government for twenty-two years, the 'dream' of a better government - a better future - was powerful and moving. The decades of political decay were to be exorcised through this act, while at the same time it would instil a sense of infinite political possibility and invulnerability in the young. The size and discipline of this procession was unprecedented in Central American civic history: it was estimated that between 30,000 and 32,000 persons marched that day.

On the night of 10 March, cabrerista forces were placed throughout the length of Eighteenth Street with a view to blocking the Unionist procession the following day. As they had been during Cabrera's first weeks in office in February 1898, entire regiments and magazines were moved to the capital in order to protect the president. Soon the capital's many
barracks and forts (Matamoros, San José, La Palma, and Aceituno) were filled with artillery and soldiers.

On 11 March the dictator decreed that his National Assembly conduct their sessions under lock and key, under the watchful eyes of his closest associates of the time, Felipe Márquez, Juan Viteri, Colonel Reynelas (head of Police), Eduardo Anguiano and Francisco Gálvez Portocarrero. Instructions were given that no deputies were to greet or witness the demonstration.

At 2 p.m. that afternoon demonstrators set off from Fourth Avenue South and Twelfth Street West for the Military Academy. José Azmitia led the procession carrying the principal Unionist banner. Azmitia, an old enemy of Cabrera, was honoured to lead his fellow demonstrators. Close behind him marched many of the recently released founders of the Party, who carried a flag of the Central American Federation. They were followed by the Liga Obrera, University students, professionals, merchants, railwaymen, craftsmen, and the general public. Even the Instituto Nacional Central de Varones’s banner could be seen, carried by Vicente Martínez Nolasco.

As the procession made its way down Sixth Avenue showers of flowers fell on the participants. This was the time of year when citizens traditionally prepared for the lavish processions of Holy Week. This year Archbishop Jacinto y Riveiro, fearing for the safety of his friend, Cabrera, forbade any Easter processions to take place. Although the rhythmic beating of drums and the plaintive sounds of chirimia-flutes were not heard on this occasion, chants of ‘¡Viva la patria y la unión!’ filled the streets. Home-made banners of different federations replaced the familiar neighbourhood statues of Christ-figures and Virgins and though the scene was not as colourful as the usual throngs of cucuruchos and women in
black lace mantillas, the solemnity of the occasion could be felt. The autocrat is said to have followed the demonstrators' progress with a pair of binoculars from the heights of La Palma, three kilometres away. Pedro Quartin, who saw the procession at close range, was impressed by the order and confidence of the marchers.

Upon reaching the Military Academy the Unionist leadership was not met by the welcoming committee it had anticipated. This was because the National Assembly found itself hostage to Cabrera's most disreputable henchmen. After much difficulty Lic. Arturo Ubico, president of the National Assembly, followed by Manuel Palomo Arriola, José A. Beteta, Mariano Cruz, Alberto Mencos, Adrián Vidaurre and Antonio Villacorta, made his way, in great danger, to the street where they acknowledged the people's courageous gesture.

Outside, an impressive and well-organized parade continued to march past. By now the diplomats had discovered that the audience of 300 men attending this National Assembly session were nothing more than a drunken group of policemen and soldiers disguised as workers, and that these and another group of men hidden in the nearby Instituto, were to be armed and instructed to shoot into the unprotected throng. When Colonel Anguiano tried to arm these men, the diplomats and representatives objected.

Anguiano then joined his official military reserves on the roof of the Military Academy and found Colonel Jorge Pedro Reynelas. Both intended to comply with Cabrera's instructions in leaving at least 'five thousand homes in mourning'. Anguiano was the first to fire into the crowd. A ten-minute period of shooting followed. Was Anguiano's first shot the cue for a massacre which should have followed? Or was it merely a warning, like the one of 18 January, to intimidate the crowd? By this time many of Cabrera's
followers had at last realized that not only his position, but their own, was now at stake.

Despite the short-lived panic which resulted from the shooting, the Unionists held their ground and maintained their composure, much to the astonishment of those deputies and diplomats who had climbed the parapet to watch. All witnesses were appalled at the scene which took place. Undoubtedly the presence of the Diplomatic Corps kept cabrerista officers and supporters from committing further atrocities. Credit must also be given to pockets of government forces who chose not to shoot into the crowds, but rather over them, in order not to hurt their fellow citizens.

Less than two dozen wounded and two Unionists dead were reported. The cold-blooded nature of the 11 March events struck Unionists, diplomats and other witnesses as proof of Cabrera's irresponsible and barbaric nature. Throughout his final year in office the dictator's behaviour had become markedly more irrational:

Todos los servidores de la residencia feudal de La Palma refirieron más tarde que jamás habían visto a su amo más enfurecido, más desorbitado, más rabioso que en las horas que siguieron la gran manifestación. Cada uno de los jefes militares y los esbirros que regresaba a dar cuenta de los sucesos, era recibido con una andanada de los insultos, de los sarcasmos, de las injurias más hirientes, A los principales abofeteaba, los pateaba, los cruzaba a latigazos, hasta que el cansancio al fin hizo su efecto y el abatimiento sustituyó su furia.

These violent outbursts were not unknown to his closest associates: Orellana, Ubico, Letona, and even Hernández de León, had on occasion seen Cabrera as if possessed. After 11 March the futility of his situation, coupled with the strains of preoccupation and paranoia affected the tyrant badly. The cabrerista repertoire, which had for so long been successful in dealing with a gamut of offenses from petty crimes to murder, now seemed
transparent and ineffectual. Despite this, Cabrera continued to find solace in the knowledge that he could still find loyal subjects willing to lie on his behalf, and thus attempt to perpetuate the counterfeit world that cabrerismo had become.

There was no doubt that Cabrera had instigated the violent events of 11 March, although he tried to place the blame on others. The spurious nature of his allegations did little to help his already weak position. He was to be further afflicted on learning that smaller Unionist marches had also taken place in provincial towns. In Antigua the local authorities were too stunned to stop the little procession which passed down the colonial city's main streets before circuiting the plaza mayor. It was clear to cabreristas that they had lost the power they had once held.

On 13 March the Diplomatic Corps was asked to be present at the National Assembly sessions. On this day a meeting of Unionists and congressmen took place at the U.S. Legation, beginning at 2:30 p.m. For the first time many of the Unionist leaders were able to voice their opinion, and on this occasion Tácito Molina suggested that a list of fourteen ultimatums be sent to the dictator. Among these demands were that the government should respect the law and free all political prisoners. By this time it was clear to everyone that Cabrera's following within Congress was quickly eroding. Many hoped, particularly the autocrat, that the U.S. Minister would take matters into his hands and dictate what was to be done. The Diplomatic Corps generally held that Cabrera should be asked to resign. Most of them said nothing, not because of the geographic distance between their home capitals and Guatemala, nor for want of an opinion, but because most of them felt that the entire situation had been brought about by the careless, even slipshod, policy of the American government.
Minister McMillin, who had been given every consideration, and whose government had demanded no less, faltered at the moment when decisive action was needed. His aloofness and unprofessional stance resulted in an outbreak of violence.

Throughout March Cabrera continued to voice his willingness to comply with the wishes of the Diplomatic Corps, but in practice he continued to arrest Unionists. It was difficult, however, to distinguish between the dictator's usual strategy - apparently random, but in reality well planned - and what were now entirely unsystematic actions.

Cabrera was beginning to realize that the people had discovered their own strength. He had rarely sought advice from anyone before, since he had always felt that he knew perfectly well what needed doing; now, when good counsel was crucial, there was none to be found. He had only to remember his recent rejection of the advice of Letona and Vidaurre. The few loyal companions who remained at his side could not help, except perhaps in temporarily deceiving him into believing that his position might yet be saved.

By mid-March there were more than 150 Unionist clubs throughout the republic. On 18 March all the personnel from the Post office and Customs Houses had decided to join the opposition party and they were followed by many telegraphers. There were also rumours that large factions of the army were Unionist sympathizers, but their names did not become known until a fortnight later. With each day that passed Cabrera was left with fewer supporters. Well-known cabreristas were now called apestados and ostracized to the extent of not being able to buy bread. Many of them went into hiding at this time for fear of their lives, while in the provinces many jefes políticos ceased to carry out orders since the Unionist majority
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had taken over most aspects of local government. Eventually Cabrera lost most of his cabinet, with the exception of Lic. Echeverría y Vidaurre and a few generals.

On 21 March a letter to the president appeared in El Obrero Libre in which Silverio Ortiz warned Cabrera that 60,000 workers supported the Unionist Party and would not tolerate his régime any longer. Ortiz asked Cabrera to step down peacefully, adding the dramatic and prophetic lines:

...ya se ha llegado la hora decisiva,
Prepárese para asistir ante el Tribunal de la Historia,
Y si aún quiere evitar la ruina de Guatemala, busque el camino de la paz
y de la sabiduría y no permita que se manche el suelo de la patria. ¡QUIZAS
MAÑANA SERA TARDE!!

But Cabrera continued to believe that no one could do his job more efficiently than he. This conviction kept him from resigning. He also hoped that through a show of force the U.S. government and the people would agree, but his earlier vacillation had cornered him in defeat. Had he not wavered at the outset the outcome might have been different. Batres Jáuregui believes that if Cabrera had not hesitated to appear before Congress on 8 April he would have emasculated the movement and completed his term. Was it his peculiar brand of cynicism and sense of self-survival which made Cabrera oblivious to the wider implications of the Unionist Party's political possibilities? After all, their financial and human resources, their political will and principles had already been tapped, even though their inherent strength had yet to find a strong enough leader to guide them through the many dangers a transition to power would bring.

To Cabrera the Unionists were nothing more than disguised Conservatives trying yet again to oust him. Although he found it disagreeable to turn to McMillin for help, he recognized that desperate
measures were required. According to Pedro Quartin the prolonged and frequent meetings between McMillin and Cabrera caused unease among Guatemalans and foreigners since they feared the possibility of U.S. intervention. The arrival of the American battleship U.S.S. Tacoma off the coast of San José and the visit of its captain and officers to the capital at this time led to further uneasiness.12

But Cabrera found little solace with the Americans. Now it seemed he found himself at their mercy in the same way many citizens, even foreigners, had found themselves in earlier days subject to his whims. When aid was not forthcoming Cabrera responded by surrounding himself with sijefios, momostecos, and canaleños, the fiercest and most loyal troops in the country. On 23 March, the eighty-third day of the 'one hundred days of ink' campaign, Cobos wrote to his sister in Paris:

Cabrera se parapeta en La Palma, Amontona indios de Momostenango que no obedecen mas que a sus sargentos y desconocen toda otra autoridad; se rodea de ametralladoras, abre tunelas, trincheras, fortines y comienza a dudar de su gente, toda minada de unionismo, pues los principales cuerpos del ejercito nos pertenecen casi por entero... El entusiasmo de toda la republica por nuestra causa es desbordante, y como es imposible encarcelar y fusilar a todo un pueblo, a Cabrera no le queda mas recurso que la huida...13

The losers did not share in this mounting sense of good fortune. For those trapped in La Palma, every day brought further misfortune. Santos Chocano described life near the dictator in terms of 'un círculo dantesco'.14 Nor was this the only hot-bed of intrigue. By this time the U.S. legation and colony were evenly divided between those who supported Cabrera and those who sided with the Unionists. To many, the activities of the U.S. government seemed to be some sort of complicated game of double-bluff, with the acquisition of Guatemala's unenviable domestic problems as
first prize. The economic situation was one of the worst in the region, even though it was potentially the richest country on the isthmus. Despite the State Department's continued attempts to offer remedy, the United States government had met with repeated setbacks. Armstrong noted:

"...Uppermost in the mind of the Department of State as regards Guatemala is currency reform, which means, frankly, the placing of Guatemalan finances on a gold basis for the furtherance of U.S. commercial interests. The sale of enemy properties whereby Americans will be given a larger hold over the country, can almost be called now an obsession of the U.S. government, although, as my friend observed, it is a very moot point as to whether it is really a benefit at all to the U.S, as far as his firm is concerned unless he was permitted to buy them all en bloc it was positively detrimental. No one, he told me, really knew why the Department of State was making such an issue of the sale of German properties but he believed that someone had started the hare and the Department was eagerly pursuing it as though their next and only meal depended on its capture. However, they were after it in full cry and it was impossible to whip them off in the heat of the chase."  

A key to this 'obsession' probably lies in the activities and presence of certain 'fortune hunters' like Catlin and Hodgson. Their belief that German properties were their due, and their influence on McMillin, who after all was a tired old diplomat who should have been enjoying his retirement and who was not familiar with the intrigues and convolutions of Guatemala's recent political life, should not be minimized. Their zeal and belief that several important German properties, such as the Empresa Electrica de Guatemala, ought to belong to Americans convinced McMillin of the rightness of the crusade.

McMillin's part in the events of 1920 has never been favourably viewed. His ambivalent stance, poor judgement, and disregard for State Department instructions led to much bloodshed and confusion. He was initially suspected of favouring Cabrera, but appears to have been strongly influenced by Catlin and Hodgson. As a result he sent misleading reports
to the State Department and did not always follow orders. Catlin and Hodgsdon may also have been working on commission for powerful American business interests such as Keith, Stahl and other New York bankers eager to gain a foothold in the region, but these allegations have never been fully investigated.\textsuperscript{12}

It has never been clear whether it was McMillin and his coterie or the State Department who adopted a policy which maintained both Cabrera and Unionists at bay, until it was clear which of the two was more likely to offer the most favourable conditions for future business ventures and a reasonable form of government. Armstrong was critical of this policy, and commented that many of the other foreign representatives preferred not to get involved, not through fear of ignoring Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, but rather 'for the pleasure of witnessing the U.S. legation get into a tangle.' Armstrong concluded:

\textit{Indeed the U.S. Government lost a golden opportunity of consolidating their relations with Guatemala by their ridiculous attempt to support Estrada Cabrera after they had tacitly urged and abetted the Unionist Party for well nigh a year to oust him. Had they only asked Estrada Cabrera to resign he would have done so two months ago and the U.S. Government would have achieved a popularity in Guatemala which it has in no other country... Their diplomacy has failed ignominiously,...\textsuperscript{13}}

The Foreign Office saw the whole instance as a very bad instance of graft and felt it would take the U.S. a few years to recover its prestige.

During the last week of March 1920 McMillin awaited instructions from Washington and promised not to commit himself either to the Unionists or to Cabrera. The Unionist Party continued to report further arrests of its members, and asked the Diplomatic Corps to serve as an intermediary between them and the president. It was clear, however, by 27 March that Cabrera had no intention of respecting the new party. McMillin himself was
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loath to admit that Cabrera had:

"...failed utterly to meet the requirements of our conditions or comply with his agreements. It would in no sense justify the statement I am instructed to publish,... I am to meet him tomorrow and will decline to carry out my instructions or make any agreements with him unless he makes his proclamations conform to his promises..." 16

By 30 March public discontent was so marked that McMillin reported that the people were determined to see Cabrera resign. His reluctance to do so only resulted in his losing what little goodwill McMillin had once had towards him. Unionist meetings were a daily event and their "...marvelous discipline and absence of lawlessness..." impressed all who saw them. 19 By this time Cabrera not only faced a general uprising without, but a revolt within La Palma. This is where most of his military high command had been held since January, and because of his growing insecurity they were badly treated. This treatment of the military élite gave rise to growing doubts among the still loyal rank and file.

Despite Cabrera's many ploys to maintain his troops in ignorance of what was happening in the city, many of them began imperceptibly to turn against him. This was not solely true in the capital. Insubordination within the army was contagious. At the end of March news reached La Palma of unrest among the troops in Jalapa. Like most provincial troops, they had not been paid in months. The jalapeños threatened to desert if this was not remedied. The acting Minister of War, General José María Letona, tried to calm them by sending funds immediately. The money, however, did not appease the troops and led to far more serious consequences, as will be seen below.

By 1919 the army had become a top-heavy entity whose large proportion of officers were kept occupied and solvent through government appointments
of all kinds: judicial, civil, military, educational, and sometimes diplomatic. Furthermore, Cabrera had increased the number of high-ranking career officers by promoting common foot soldiers to generalships because of their unmistakeable understanding of cabrerismo. This resulted in dissatisfaction among the old élite, though it meant social fulfilment for the new appointees, and also provided Cabrera with the necessary checks to keep such a large number of officers in order.

An American survey of the Guatemalan army at this time shows that it consisted of a permanent force of 6,209 men; of these 4,935 were soldiers, 643 officers, 127 military employees, and 358 musicians. In addition to this a reserve of some 5,000 men could be relied upon to reinforce the infantry. It must be remembered that there had not been much active fighting since 1906, and that a large proportion of soldiers served as coffee-pickers and peons during most of the year. These men were generally badly treated and therefore had little or no loyalty to their officers or president. In 1920 Prince William of Sweden noted that: The pay of the army rarely penetrates further than the generals; the rank and file go about in rags and beg. A soldier short of cash will not hesitate to sell his ancient gun and cut himself a wooden staff instead...

When many soldiers began to desert Jalapa and later La Palma at the end of March, Letona was blamed. Manuel Estrada Cajas, one of Cabrera's sons working at La Palma deciphering incoming cables at the time, witnessed his father's unreasonable anger against his loyal friend Letona. Soon thereafter Cabrera alluded to him as a traitor, and beat him on the head with a revolver butt. Letona then sought asylum in the British legation, leaving this letter of explanation behind:
Letona's departure deeply affected Cabrera, as did his former secretary's subsequent actions. This was not the only disappointment he was to receive during the final days of March, for he soon learned what Secretary of State Polk was thinking in Washington. McMillin's unreliability had prompted Polk to send a clear message explaining his government's stance toward the dictator via an unnamed American businessman returning to Central America. Armstrong heard it first-hand and transcribed it for the Foreign Office. Polk demanded:

"I want you to tell Cabrera that there is no truth in the report that the Department is backing the new Unionist Party... In return for this [U.S.] support you can tell that sly and slippery old Indian that he must 'come across' with his promises to the U.S. to reform his currency, sell German properties, and all the other matters which he has promised to do and so far left unfulfilled, otherwise we won't help him. But impress upon him that he must observe the constitution in all matters or it will be impossible for the Department to justify its support of him before Congress."  

Wyld Ospina hints that this was followed, or perhaps accompanied, by a written message which made clear that Cabrera was not to rely on the Americans any longer:

"Un día - me relató [Cabrera] con palabras textuales que escucharon consigo Alberto Velásquez y José Luis Samayo, presentes en la entrevista - en La Palma, tomando de mañana el chocolate en compañía de un amigo y de un hijo mío, mandó hacer una traducción; y cuando me la llevaron hecha, señor Ospina, me dío un vuelco el corazón porque comprendí que estaba perdido. No sé si en aquel momento debí pegarme un tiro, pues todo había concluido para mí.

El autócrata no quiso ser más explícito en aquella ocasión. Y es lástima.
Both Unionists and congressmen would have been glad of this knowledge, but they continued to struggle in ignorance. Congress had not met since 11 March and after much discussion by both Unionists and Cabrera with the Diplomatic Corps, it was agreed that the latter would be present at the subsequent National Assembly sessions as some sort of guarantee. They attended until terms could be agreed upon, and provided security for congressmen to reconvene on 8 April to ask the autocrat to resign.

Cabrera, however, did not step down and continued to keep many of the pro-Unionist deputies under surveillance. He was unable to stop Vidaurre and others from plotting, but attempted to rid himself of them by sending them abroad as extraordinary envoys. On 18 March Beteta, Mencos, Vidaurre, and Villacorta, who were viewed as the most dangerous elements in Congress, received notification of their appointments abroad. All refused to accept them. This ploy was not a new one - Cabrera himself had been sent to Costa Rica by Reyna Barrios in 1897 when the latter had sensed danger from his Minister of the Interior. Cabrera had left this tactic too late, since by now the opposition was so extensive that with or without these representatives, the Unionists were winning.

Nevertheless, the situation looked increasingly difficult from the Unionist point of view since they felt that Cabrera had more resources - such as ammunition, money, and soldiers - at his disposal. The majority of them could not imagine, much less reliably foresee, what was to come. General Letona's defection from La Palma was ominous. After all, Letona was
the man whom the Benemérito had sent out to collect promises of unwavering loyalty from Congress in January of that year. Vidaurre, an old childhood friend of his, visited him at the British legation in order to convince him of his duty to stay behind and tell his strange tale. Letona was further convinced when during his stay at the British legation a cabrerista agent smashed a window. Letona finally agreed that it would be cowardly to leave his country at such a time, especially under foreign escort, and to shirk his responsibility of helping his country and friends. His recent experiences at La Palma could only confirm what many had suspected for years: that Cabrera was suffering from an unstable mental condition and should no longer continue in office.

Throughout his administration, but particularly during its final years, there had been rumours about Cabrera’s increasingly unstable mental health. As we saw in Chapter Four, Dr Rodolfo Robles had diagnosed this stress-related condition in the aftermath of the 1917-1918 earthquakes so that even the U.S. Minister, Thurston, had been compelled to report on Cabrera’s eccentric behaviour. It was well-known that the dictator himself was not above feigning ailments when necessary — as in 1911 when the ill-fated gobierno tried to make provisions for the government should Cabrera expire. By 1920 Cabrera faced tremendous pressures, forcing him to seek comfort and hope through the use of magic and religion:

Fue entonces que se pasaba las horas metido en el oratorio de La Palma, de rodillas ante las imágenes del culto catolico, rezando fervorosamente con la cabeza entre las manos. Salía de allí a consultar con los brujos indios, que hiciera venir desde Momostenango y Totonicapán, y encerrarse con ellos para practicar operaciones de hechicería. Ansiba conocer el porvenir y arrancarle al destino su secreto; para ello empañabase en sacar horóscopos y auspicios. Cuando no recurria a los artes de los brujos, evocaba a los desencarnados y pretendía comunicar con el plano astral de la naturaleza.
Here at last was proof that the autocrat was not *compos mentis* and was therefore unfit to govern. Letona was persuaded to tell his story before the National Assembly. Rafael Piñol coaxed Letona and helped him write a speech which would startle all those who heard or read his disclosures.

The eighth session of the National Assembly took place in the *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País* on 8 April at 9:30 a.m. with a total of 40 congressmen — sufficient for a quorum — present. Congress appeared to carry on as usual; the minutes of the previous meeting were read and new business raised. It seemed a typical session, except that the usual cabinet which presided over parliament was absent. Cabrera had summoned them to *La Palma* that day in the hope of bringing the day's congressional hearings to a halt. This miscalculation, of thinking his orders would be heeded at such a critical moment, cost him the presidency:

Sin embargo, ni la Ciencia ni la Ley, así con mayúsculas, podían suscribir un dictamen y emitir un decreto faltos de base científica y jurídica. Pero el atentado fue bendito porque fue salvador. El maestro en argucias resultó vencido con una simple argucia. El prevenido por excelencia cayó en la emboscada más peregrina, pues a aquellas horas Estrada Cabrera retenía en *La Palma*, haciéndole amistosa compañía, a los más altos dignatarios legislativos, creyendo que así la Asamblea, acéfala, no celebraría sesión. Él, que todo lo sabía y nada olvidaba, se olvidó, en aquel día supremo, de un artículo del Reglamento Interior de la Asamblea que permite la sustitución del presidente y vicepresidente del alto cuerpo, por los presidentes de comisión.26

He had not anticipated that they would be substituted for, thus allowing the session to continue with the minimum numbers necessary necessary to make any decree legal. Among the presidents of the different boards who became members of the new commission, and who replaced the absent National Assembly hierarchy, were Adrián Vidaurre, Carlos Herrera, Arturo Ubico, and José Beteta. Among notable absences of loyal cabrerista
congressmen that day were Enrique Haeussler, Jorge Ubico, Canuto Castillo, Manuel Maria Girón, Maximo Soto Hall, and Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta.

Don Bernardino López Ruano tried to dissolve the session on grounds of unconstitutionality, but he met with heated protests. Article 100 of the constitution made clear that as long as there were two-thirds present in the house, reforms could be legally instituted. Before the session of 8 April, several now anti-cabrerista representatives met at Deputy Mariano Cruz's house to discuss their strategy for this historic session. They had now decided to unseat Cabrera, with Letona's help, rather than carry out impeachment proceedings.

During the morning of 8 April the atmosphere of expectation throughout the capital was portentous. By 9 a.m. the public gallery was full and the corridors overflowed with people. Outside the building hundreds of men could be seen crowding the length and width of the street as the sessions progressed. Those who were able climbed onto the barred window-sills, hoping to catch sight or sound of what was happening inside. Letona's speech was but the latest twist in this strange dénouement. In it he stressed that Cabrera was no longer the able administrator of past times, and that he was suffering from a strange ailment:

*Dúlame, señores diputados, tener que venir a haceros pública la seguridad en que estoy de que las facultades mentales del señor Estrada Cabrera no son ya normales...*

*Lievo mucho tiempo de estar en íntimo contacto con él..., conozco como ninguno su vida y sus costumbres y la existencia que de un tiempo a esta parte lleva no es la de una persona cuerda; casi no duerme; come poco; su irrasibilidad es excesiva y más cuando se le contradice; se ensaña contra sus propios hijos, familiares, empleados y los que se le acercan y tiene la monomanía de la persecución; práctica con brujos indígenas que trajo especialmente a 'La Palma', ceremonias de hechicerías, en las cuales cree firmemente; pasa otras veces horas enteras en el oratorio, llorando ante imágenes del culto católico y ejecuta una serie de actos del color más contradictorio, pues cambia de un estado a otro; aparece un perfecto caballero y pocos momentos antes había cometido actos que al mayor patán.*
When Cabrera learned of his former private secretary’s words, he reportedly said: ...nunca esperé eso de él, nos queríamos como hermanos y siempre le tuve la confianza ilimitada.26

Although without precedent, decree no. 1022 was soon drawn up and passed, pronouncing Cabrera to be of unsound mind and therefore unfit to rule. A medical opinion was provided by a group of deputies who were also physicians by profession, and who verified Letona’s diagnosis, even though none of them had dared to approach the patient in question. Cabrera was to be replaced by a provisional successor until free elections could be held. In the meantime he, his family, and his entourage would be given every opportunity to leave the country.

Several congressmen were then nominated for the post of provisional president: Carlos Herrera, General Francisco Fuentes, and Lic. Antonio Saravia. These were strange choices, since neither Fuentes nor Saravia was particularly popular, nor representative of current political tastes. On the other hand, Mariano Cruz and José Azmitia, who were favoured as Unionist candidates, were not even nominated. Their exclusion was the first indication of the coming defeat of this latest political movement.

As voting was about to take place, on the afternoon of 8 April, news of an advance of government troops reached the National Assembly. In other times this might have been alarming, but under the circumstances it was auspicious. As has been mentioned above, many high-ranking officers had already shown support for the Unionists, but had been unable to participate openly until this time. Not enough significance has been
attributed to the role played by the army in these last weeks of Cabrera's presidency. We have seen that there already existed growing disaffection within the officer corps and among the rank and file of the army, and their active participation in favour of the Unionists prevented much loss of life after the events of 11 March. Furthermore, without their cooperation on 8 April Cabrera's legal deposition would have been difficult.

At 3 p.m. on 8 April several high-ranking officers arrived to recognize the new government. Generals Apolinario Ortiz and José María Lima were among the first to visit the provisional president. General Calderón arrived with his son Víctor Manuel, a medical student and unionist. There was General Felipe S. Pereira, who for months had been imprisoned under suspicion of belonging to the new party, and Colonel Victoriano Sánchez, who had sought asylum with the Unionists during the last month. Finally Colonels Ramón Cáceres, Antonio Contreras, Raimundo Vásquez, and Pedro Milla also gave their allegiance. Their adherence signified the crumbling of Cabrera's other pillar of power, the loss of his army to the enemy camp.

It can be said that on 8 April, the two pillars which had supported cabrerismo for twenty-two years, the army and Congress - order and law - abandoned their task-master. It was simply a matter of time before further political tremors, the combined forces of popular opposition and the withdrawal of U.S. support, gave Cabrera his final death blow. The legality of this entire session is questionable, and indeed was queried at the time by the British and American representatives.

The general consensus clamoured for Cabrera's deposition, and so these irregularities were temporarily overlooked. Herrera won the congressional elections by 35 votes, while Fuentes received four votes, and Saravia one. It must be pointed out that Herrera was not a representative of Unionism,
neither was he a particularly charismatic or capable leader; but he was
seen by Beteta and Vidaurre as the least dangerous successor to Cabrera.
The popular Unionist choices, and worthy political successors, José Azmitia,
Dr Julio Bianchi and Mariano Cruz, were ignored. With Herrera's accession to
power the Unionist Party suffered a critical loss of impetus.

Herrera, the wealthiest man in the republic, was not representative of
the Unionists, nor was he a politician. The majority of those who voted for
him were Cabrera appointees who until recently had been considered staunch
cabreristas. Through Herrera's election, Vidaurre and others recognized that
they could keep the Unionists content while at the same time maintaining
the political workings of cabrerismo intact. Many saw in Carlos Herrera a
fair, well-educated man who would try to establish peace and not push for
too many reforms, which might lead to further bloodshed.

This political 'triumph' was too great for such a man. Few realized
then, as they do now, that the Unionists were a fully-fledged political
party with funds, supporters, and objectives. Wyld Ospina contends that the
circumstances of April 1920 required an exceptional leader who would be
able to break the moulds of cabrerismo and institute basic reforms. The
lack of such a man, and the realization that had he existed, it would have
spelt the eradication of large sectors of the civil and military
bureaucracy, meant that it was preferable to let the Unionist Party die
than to have a shake-up of the status quo. This, because no one had
escaped unblemished from the corruption and complicity of the last twenty-
two years.

It is clear in retrospect that had there been a thorough purge of the
cabrerista system, civil war would have resulted. Was this the reason why
many Unionists did not push for total reform? So many had compromised
themselves in one way or another during the régime that only a few would have been able to show themselves as 'innocent' of all traces of cabrerismo. When dictators fall - Díaz, Trujillo, Gómez - it is often not the uncorrupt who rally sufficient support to take power, but those with experience and pragmatism.

Herrera immediately chose his provisional government by decree no. 1023, and promised free elections. His first cabinet contained just two Unionists, and several ex-cabreristas. It should have been carefully scrutinized by contemporary observers, since it revealed much of the man who had been chosen to govern during this difficult period. His choice of a politically balanced cabinet showed him to be a conciliator, who wished to give everyone a fair chance. But many consider, with hindsight, that this instant was the moment when the cabrerista monopoly should have been destroyed. The changes Herrera offered were insignificant. Numerous cabreristas continued to function at important levels throughout the republic. It is true that military officers were asked to resign from civil posts, and that there was a general reshuffle of the more prominent positions, but ultimately these changes did little to alter the political balance with which the country was already familiar.

News of Cabrera's deposition was made public at half-past-one in the afternoon of 8 April. As soon as the news was known, all offices and shops closed and business came to a standstill. There was rejoicing, and shouts of 'ya cayó, ya cayó!' could be heard throughout the streets. Many thought this was the bloodless end of tyranny.

By afternoon rumours reached the public that Cabrera and his family had begun their journey to the coast. No one cared where he went, all that mattered was that he go. Despite the general order which had been
maintained by the Unionists during the 'one hundred days of ink', bars
began to open and there were several violent incidents which foreshadowed
what was to come. Jorge Galán's house was ransacked and Colonel Guayo
Anguiano, who had begun the shooting of 11 March, was lynched. In
Retalhuleu Juan Viteri, who had recently been named the new jefe político,
was also lynched at the main railroad station, after killing a man and
wounding two others.31

It was well known that Cabrera had stated that he would not leave the
presidency unless he was carried out feet first from La Palma. For this
reason many Unionists thought it prudent to prepare for reprisals, even
though they had little in the way of arms or military training. Don
Guillermo Aguirre, who found himself at La Palma at the time, tried to
convince Cabrera to accept Congress's offer of a safe passage out of the
country and offered to accompany him, with his millions, to Spain. Cabrera
might have agreed had he not learned of Colonel Avila joining Herrera's
government. Santos Chocano, who was also at his side, is reported to have
told him not to step down unless it was over a 'pool of blood'.32

Many Unionists congregated in the Plaza Central and Casa del Pueblo in
order to begin preparations. That evening Colonel Juan López Avila, head of
Garrison Number 3, sided with the Unionists and gave them access to
ammunition, weapons (some 1,000 rifles), and at least seven hundred men.
Upon hearing of this defection, Cabrera immediately ordered Miguel López,
'Milpas Altas', commander of the fort of Matamoros, to attack this barracks
in the hope of regaining it. This was impossible, since López Avila had
sympathized with the Unionists for many months, and had planned carefully.
After 8 p.m. several bombs fired from Matamoros fell in the Parque Central
and about fifteen shells landed near the Casa del Pueblo. Small military
commissions from nearby towns began to arrive at the Casa del Pueblo at dawn.

At 9 p.m. on 8 April the Diplomatic Corps was summoned to La Palma by Cabrera. By this time there was an uneasy peace in the streets. Armstrong describes that evening visit to La Palma:

As we approached we found ourselves surrounded by troops placed in a most hostile attitude with rifles pointed at us. As we neared the iron gates at the entrance to his stronghold an officer ordered us to halt by placing a revolver in our faces... On our arrival inside the gates and just when the American Secretary of Legation was stopping his car... another individual made a rush at the front of the car with a loaded rifle in our faces which went off by accident but fortunately over the top of the car... I have since learnt from a very reliable source that these incidents were due to the very nervous state which Estrada Cabrera's men were in, knowing full well that if a fight were to take place their lives were not worth a woman's purchase. 33

THE TRAGIC WEEK

On the morning of 9 April citizens awoke to the sound of gunfire coming from the eastern fort of Matamoros and from La Palma. By 10 a.m. Ortiz writes: Cabrera ya no se anduvo con chiquitas y comenzó el estampido del cañón vomitando metralla sobre la ciudad, y las ametralladoras lanzando su lluvia de balas. 34 This was the beginning of la semana trágica, the tragic week, which later was remembered as 'one week of blood'. Between 8-15 April, the people had two governments, even though most of the country functioned under a mixture of Unionist forces with Herrera supporters. Unionists and the new government became synonymous, and in the pages below each will be distinguished by the actions they took.

Fighting ensued during the following week between troops and individuals loyal to Cabrera and the population which opposed him. This latter group was divided into several sections, as Herrera's election of
the previous day gave the Unionist movement a new figurehead. Among the officers who sided with him were several key men who made up the new government's military high command. These men were Generals José María Lima, Felipe Pereira and José María Orellana. Those independent of these Unionist factions, such as workers, continued to follow their own leaders. Although this caused a great deal of confusion and disorientation to begin with, it was ultimately to the advantage of Cabrera's opponents, who lacked formal training in military warfare and few weapons. Vidaurre estimates that only 8,500 men remained loyal to Cabrera in the end and that most of these were trapped in La Palma.

Cabrera had a budget for his army of $87,000 Guatemalan pesos a day at this time, and enough ammunition to flatten the city. Lic. Héctor Blanco Zaldívar, Cabrera's last auditor de guerra, was given $2,000 pesos and $3,880 dollars to give to those officers and soldiers who remained loyal. On 20 April 1920 the Diario de Centro América reported that the military paymaster, Abraham Garavito, carried 100,000 pesos which General Reyes had asked him to bring on 8 April in order to pay still loyal soldiers. What happened to this money remains a mystery, but it seems clear that whoever could afford to buy soldiers, did so during this time.

Although Herrera seems to have played a minor part in the events of this week, his personal fortune allowed his faction to buy goodwill in difficult towns. On 12 April, for example, 600 men from Morán armed with machetes were persuaded to join his forces for fifty pesos each. Communications with the provinces were difficult, because Cabrera still controlled the central telegraph offices, which were under the supervision of Commander Carlos León Regil, a loyal and strict cabrerista officer. This meant that, although there were many pro-Unionist telegraphers who
were loyal to Saravia, the new Minister of the Interior, they had difficulty in knowing whether the news they were receiving was accurate. However, Cabrera did not take advantage of this tool to confuse his enemies, by reporting fictitious cabrerista victories over Unionists and Herrera's men.

By 8 April the capital was full of soldiers: since January Cabrera had begun to protect himself against possible revolts. The city's many forts were well-protected, and also well-endowed with soldiers at this time. Arevalo Martinez estimates that the fort of San José, under Colonel Ariza, had 300 men; while the fort of Matamoros, under Commander López, held at least 600 men. Matamoros fort, built in a star formation, had weapons ranging from little Colt machine-guns to 12 centimetre Krupps (1877 vintage) aiming down at the city. Its cellars were known to be piled high with ammunition. The barracks protecting the central telegraph office under León Régil had some 150 men. Guarda Viejo, which protected the way to La Palma, had several groups of soldiers and large stocks of arms and ammunition — rifles, machine-guns and cannon. Most of these were at least ten years old, in some cases older, with the exception of the Gatling 'rapid fire guns' dating from 1919. The famous St Jacmond cannons and other French ammunition were housed at La Palma.

The surprise attack of the night of 8 April marked the beginning of la semana trágica. From the first day of fighting, news of events was incomplete and often inaccurate. Few persons had an overview as to the development of events, since the shelling kept many indoors and telegraphers were divided in their allegiances. From the beginning of the offensive Cabrera preferred to speak with his officers by telephone. He forbade them to use it without his permission unless it was to contact
him. The only two officers he trusted completely were Generals Claro Chajón and José Reyes. The latter was considered to be illiterate. These two men operated from a base near the Central Railroad Station, where they could control all incoming or outgoing vehicles and where they had easy access to several government garrisons.

During the fighting an Intendencia de Consumos was established in the capital, so that people would have enough food and clothing. Experience of the recent earthquake gave many the advantage of being able to cope with the unexpected, and to survive under difficult conditions. The bombing damaged some of the city's water and electricity supplies and the Gran Central Hotel became a Unionist rationing centre. H.R.H. William of Sweden taught the school teacher Inocencio Nolasco how to use a machine-gun from his base at the Hotel Grace; he even set up an ambulance service with a car which he covered with a token Swedish flag.

During this time Unionists tried to muster whatever forces they could, and to assemble a makeshift armoury. Most were armed with bits of firewood, clubs, knives and strips of corrugated iron. Those with machetes and old Remingtons were in the minority. Some of the capital's ironmongeries distributed free machetes to Unionist crowds. The wooden model cannons were taken out of the Hospicio de Varones and placed on the streets in order to intimidate cabrerista soldiers and keep them from entering certain neighbourhoods. Rosa Trabanino, who later that week caused much trouble, told the Unionists to seek additional arms in Cabrera's city properties, the Customs House, and the Liquor Monopoly building. Twenty boxes of ammunition were found at the Liquor Monopoly's headquarters, while two machine guns and 200 rifles were found in Cabrera's house.²⁷⁸ On 9 April Prince William of Sweden saw how:
All Government buildings in the city were systematically ransacked and plundered, and machine guns, rifles and ammunition were produced from the most unlikely places. The barrel of a machine-gun would be discovered in a writing desk,... A high-class confectioner's shop was found to have some hundreds of revolvers hidden behind the counter, and eight large pillow-cases in a bedding store proved to be stuffed with cartridges. Everything which could possibly be put to use was appropriated: knives, machetes, saloon rifles, shot guns, axes and crowbars. And with youthful enthusiasm men fell to the work of raising barricades and digging trenches in the streets,...

On 10 April news reached the capital of the Unionist victory in the plaza of Quezaltenango. Such a victory still seemed remote to those fighting in the capital where five hours of continuous gunfire - mostly from San José fort and Guarda Viejo - kept Unionist forces in check. These two forts were causing most of the damage to the city, and although Unionist forces tried to approach San José from the penitentiary bridge and from Barranquilla, they found it difficult to advance. Opposition to Cabrera, however, continued to grow, even though ammunition grew scarcer by the hour. At 6 a.m. on 10 April a large battalion made up of men from neighbouring towns, known as the batallón 15 de marzo, arrived in the capital. They were placed down the length of Tenth Avenue as far as Eighteenth Street. At 7 a.m. Salvador Salazar, president of the Unionist Club of Canton Barrios, joined the Unionist forces with 300 workers and was asked to protect Second and Third Avenues.

A further moral victory for the new government was its recognition by the Catholic Church in the person of Archbishop Fray Julián Raimundo Riveiro y Jacinto, as well as by Antonio Batres Jáuregui, president of the Supreme Court. Later in the day the cabrerista General Claro Chajón arrived with 500 men from Escuintla. They were well armed and were commanded to advance upon the Unionists from El Calvario. A great fight...
took place in front of the atrium of the Church of San Francisco, where less than a year before Bishop Piñol had preached. The most notable success of the day in the capital was the surrender of a division of soldiers from Canales to the Unionists.

The principal business archive, the Archivo de la Dirección General de Contribuciones in Guatemala City, was burned to the ground on 10 April. Salvador Girón is generally accused of having begun this fire, though few doubt that it was Cabrera who gave the order. In this way much proof of the business irregularities of the dictator and his followers disappeared.

Throughout the 'tragic week', the Diplomatic Corps assembled frequently and discussed what action should be taken. On 9 April they demanded that a neutral zone be established, and that both cabrerista and anti-cabrerista forces respect a ceasefire. This armistice was to last until 3 p.m. on 10 April, when it was broken by Cabrera's men, leading to increased hostility towards him in foreign circles. The diplomatic district was located just a mile from El Zapote, the Castillo family finca which was thought to house the Unionist leadership. This location caused many legations to be frequently hit by shells, the British and Brazilian legations being nearest to the line of fire. Until recently the Diplomatic Corps had been willing to act as mediators between the new government and Cabrera's representatives, but now felt it was primarily the U.S. Minister's duty to sort out the mess: McMillin has generally been regarded as the 'moral culprit' of the whole business. On 10 April Secretary of State Polk instructed McMillin to offer his good offices to both Cabrera and the Unionists so that an armistice could be reached. 10

It was clear by 10 April that though the Unionists had control over much of the capital - Pamplona, El Calvario, and Guardia Viejo - Cabrera's
men still held the most important strongholds in the city: La Palma, Aceituno, San José and Aurora. Charles Overall, an Englishman who had experienced fighting in the trenches during the First War, thought this 'children's play', but to most people, who had never experienced war first-hand, it was terrifying.

On 11 April the Diplomatic Corps declared Cabrera's bombardment of the capital unacceptable. It put many of their nationals, as well as innocent citizens, in danger and they openly complained. Among badly affected neighbourhoods were the cantons Barrios, Barrillas, and Ciudad Vieja. The entire Corps threatened to cut off diplomatic relations with Cabrera's government if he did not bring about a cease fire immediately.

Fighting continued to be fierce on the streets, especially on Tenth Avenue and Eighteenth Street. Luis Fontaine, the once celebrated architect, and his wife took pot shots at all those wearing the Unionist emblem on their hats who passed below their house near the plazuela la Concordia.47

The day ended with a meeting between Cabrera's representative, Lic. Manuel Echeverría y Vidaurre, Unionist representatives and diplomats. At this time Echeverría y Vidaurre proposed that all the recent decrees passed by Congress be declared null and void and that General Mariano Serrano Muñoz, Cabrera's First Designate, replace Herrera and be authorized to choose his own cabinet. Cabrera, his family, officers, and friends were to be respected and given guarantees for their safety. These terms were temporarily accepted in the hope that during the cease fire, Unionist reinforcements would arrive. By 12 April, no one was prepared to accept any of Cabrera's demands, especially if they gave him a chance of returning to power.

Unionist reinforcements arrived at 8 p. m. on 11 April from Antigua.
They had already taken the plaza at Chimaltenango, and were eager to surround La Palma so that it could be stormed. At 3 a.m. on 12 April Cabrera's forces, led by General Claro Chajón and Colonels Juan B. Alonso, Vicente Menéndez, and Rafael Sánchez, began a vicious bombardment of the city. This was, it turned out, a final gesture of bravado marking the beginning of their defeat.

Although Generals Reyes and Chajón commanded cabrerista troops on the heights of Santa Cecilia, effectively closing the way to Guarda Viejo, Unionist troops were able to take the barracks with the central telegraph office under Commander Régil sometime after 7 a.m. on 12 April. This marked a milestone in the fighting, since it not only gave them control of the telegraph network, but also gave them an ideal position from which to attack the forts of Matamoros and San José, before taking on Cabrera's final stronghold in La Palma.

**INSURRECTION IN THE PROVINCES**

Within a few days of Congress's deposition of Cabrera from the presidency official proclamations were read throughout the provinces pronouncing Carlos Herrera provisional president. The general reaction to the news of Cabrera's fall was one of joy. This was not solely because the dictator was being ousted; many citizens, especially Indians, hoped this would mean the end of the reign of the *principales*, the *ladinos* who dominated regional politics and monopolized government posts for their friends and family, and exploited local citizens.

In some towns, particularly those with strong Unionist contingents, Congress's decree that Herrera was the new provisional president was readily accepted, and government posts were transferred to Unionist
leaders without much protest. In other towns, like Sololá, Huehuetenango, and Zacapa, where strong cabrerista jefes políticos like General Flores, Lic. Antonio Girón y Girón, and General Manuel Duarte were reluctant to step down, fighting invariably broke out. Here Unionists had to use differing combinations of initiative, surprise, bluff, numbers and determination in order to take over local garrisons. Each Unionist victory added to the demoralization of Cabrera's troops.

Carmack has documented the effects of Cabrera's downfall in the province of Momostenango. This was the homeland of Cabrera's private guard, General Teodoro Cifuentes, ese general indio, one of his most loyal officers, who had succeeded in installing friends and relations in various important government posts. As we saw in Chapter Four, he proved an ideal cabrerista employee, as General Enrique Arís had predicted as far back as 1899. In Totonicapán, as in Quezaltenango and Sololá, the situation looked precarious as there was fierce division between cabrerista and unionista forces.

In most provincial towns, makeshift armies were assembled by local finqueros who turned their mozos into soldiers overnight. In Chimaltenango a Unionist contingent was led by don Carlos Cobar (of Yepocapa), in company with the local Unionist Party secretary, Rubén Flores A. and Carlos Solórzano, the Unionist representative from the capital who had found himself there at the outbreak of fighting. Cobar and his companions were soon joined by several local finqueros with their respective workforces. 42

Even the far-flung eastern corners of the republic, towns such as Cabañas and Teculutlán, became involved in the Unionist take-over of government outposts. In Teculutlán, the cabrerista commander was killed when Francisco Javier Aragón, Daniel Paz, and Jorge Cordón Paz took the
local garrison. This sparked off a rebellion in nearby Cabañas, Teculatán, Usumatlan, and finally Zacapa.

It must be stressed, however, that many government officers, civilians and army officers who fought during the 'tragic week', did so without realizing what had transpired in Congress on 8 April. It is true that the main object of Unionism had been to rid the nation of a tyrant, but Unionism had also instilled new hopes in the people which Herrera's government could not meet, as will be seen below.

After the plaza of Quezaltenango was taken on 10 April, Unionists in the provinces were instructed to take other plazas and make their force known. The plaza of Chimaltenango was taken by troops from Sacatepequez under the command of Colonel Ramirez Valenzuela. He then proceeded to march on the capital. By this time many officers previously loyal to Cabrera had begun to desert him and join the enemy camp. General Calderón was among the first, and Ramirez Valenzuela soon followed. Their troops then attacked Generals Reyes and Chajon's infantry. Upon the arrival of troops from Palencia, the Unionists succeeded in gaining the outpost of el Aceituno, which gave them a further strategic position from which to attack La Palma.

Politics in the provinces had hitherto often functioned in a Cabrera-designed balance between two potential strong-men, who checked one another's power. In some instances, as in the department of Totonicapán, this system now began to fall apart. Here a local commander in arms differed in his allegiance from the regional Jefe político. Colonel Manuel Cifuentes, General Cifuentes's son and local commander of Totonicapán, chose to back the Unionist contingent which arrived from the capital on 14 April, and which was so warmly welcomed by the people. The Jefe Político
of Totonicapán, General Salvador Alarcón, however, openly opposed the Herrera government. When he asked the momosteco troops under his command whether they preferred to fight on the Unionist side or remain loyal to Cabrera, the overwhelming majority voted for the latter. Carmack analyses this complicated political phenomenon which was taking place throughout the republic, but particularly in those towns where there was a high Indian population:

Para ellos [los indígenas] debió haber sido muy claro que sus líderes ladinos locales se habían convertido a la causa unionista. El comandante Cienfuegos [Cifuentes] había anunciado ese hecho con su ofrecimiento de atacar a Alarcón en Totonicapán, y la subsiguiente disposición de entregar sus fuerzas a los unionistas. Cienfuegos también formuló fuertes declaraciones contra la 'tiranía' de Estrada Cabrera, aunque tal cosa pareciera increíble viendo de un hombre cuyo poder y autoridad considerable provenían directamente de aquel hombre corrupto. En el juego político que discurría, los líderes indígenas debían de haber comprobado que si apoyaban a los unionistas, los ladinos podían continuar su dominación sobre ellos. Sin mayores cambios, si, por el contrario, apoyaban a Estrada Cabrera y salían triunfadores, los ladinos quedarían como traidores y los indígenas les reemplazarían como los servidores dominantes del gobierno central en Tecpanaco. Se trataba de jugar una carta muy peligrosa, pero el hecho de jugarla demuestra tan solo las condiciones políticas de explotación bajo las cuales vivían.  

There appears to have been much goodwill and genuine affection for the dictator among many sectors of the Indian population, although the Unionist Party was also popular in some towns. By 12 April the plazas of Sololá, Mazatenango, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Escuintla, Amatitlán, Antigua, Ayutla, Ocos, Zacapa, Chiquimula and Coatepeque declared in favour of Herrera's government. The only plazas where the political outcome was uncertain were in Quiché, Alta Verapaz, and Petén. Here distances from the capital were great and communications often difficult.

At 5 p.m. on 12 April, the fourth day of fighting, Colonel Villagran Ariza decided to surrender the fort of San José, the largest in the
capital, to the new government. This was a critical moment during the week's fighting in determining whether conflict would cease or escalate. Ariza's surrender provided the opposition forces with weapons and badly-needed supplies of food and ammunition. Most importantly, it gave them an important strategic position which completed their circle around La Palma. This acquisition guaranteed Cabrera's surrender, with or without diplomatic intervention. It was reported that by this time the Unionists had succeeded in occupying many of the houses neighbouring the fort, as well as the prison El Cielito. It would have been a bloody and long-drawn-out business taking San José.

Much has been made of the reasons for Ariza's surrender. His troops could not have been hungry, but a growing spirit of mutiny among the ranks may have influenced his actions. Some attribute his surrender to a note, presumably sent by his family, who claimed to be held hostage by Unionist forces. A priest, one Padre Solares of El Calvario, is also prominent in Arévalo Martínez's account. Solares is said to have visited Ariza in San José Fort and persuaded him to see the sense in surrendering. In May 1920 Ariza told his own story, as did so many heroes of this latest battle, to the Diario de Centro América. His were by far the most interesting and plausible of explanations:

El día 12, como a las 10 a.m., se presentó un oficial, acompañado como de ocho particulares, con una comunicación de 'La Palma', firmada por el GENERAL TEODORO CIFUENTES, en donde se me pedía informe del número de fuerzas que atacaban; entre estos particulares que acompañaban al oficial, uno de ellos indicó que en la garita próxima a la entrada había una carta botada, y habiéndole encargado que fuera por ella, resultó ser una comunicación esta firmada por los señores Generales don JOSE MARIA LIMA, JOSE MARIA ORELLANA, FELIPE S. PEREIRA, AURELIO F. RECINOS, Y FLAVIO OVALLE, en donde se nos hacía ver que estabamos defendiendo una causa injusta, y que para mayor convencimiento nuestro, nos adjuntaban cinco alcances, entre los cuales encontré uno en que la Honorable Asamblea Legislativa, desconocía del Gobierno de Estrada Cabrera y nombraba a Herrera...
If this is true, it provides an example of how one of Cabrera's high-ranking officers was successfully kept in ignorance of events around him. It is difficult to know whether this was really the case, but it is possible since after the National Assembly declared Cabrera insane, events happened so quickly that few realized what had occurred. Also, Cabrera had been keeping such a close watch on his officers since January that it is possible that Ariza had also been unaware of Unionist Party success, as there were so few publications and reliable sources of information available. During 1920 most career officers were kept under the command of Cabrera's two most trusted Generals, Chajón and Reyes, and these, as Ariza writes, kept checks on him throughout the outbreak of fighting. Furthermore, if accounts of Reyes's inability to read are true, then it is not difficult to understand how it was possible for him to repeat and follow what he was told by Cabrera and ignore all rumours. It seems, however, that Reyes was aware of the latest developments but preferred to remain loyal to his master.

It is difficult to believe that Ariza had not known about the circumstances in which Cabrera was deposed from power four days earlier, but then again he had been surrounded and carefully watched by Generals Reyes and Larrave. Cabrera's strategy consisted of a combination of keeping many of his high-ranking officers ignorant of the facts, and attacking the city unsystematically, because not all garrisons were loyal or willing to obey his commands. This resulted in what to many appeared to be a half-hearted military attempt to destroy the city.

Colonel Ariza's account confirms what had generally been the case in the military high command, especially true of those men who had been kept
prisoners at La Palma throughout March. He must have quickly realized that he was on the losing side and preferred to surrender. Charles Overall was present when the Unionists took over the command of San José:

It was an interesting sight to see the Unionists enter this Liberal stronghold, and to hear the burst of cheering and then to see the Liberal troops being marched away. They came down the 6th Avenue, and we hurried out to see them pass. It was a weary gang of Indians that marched between Unionist guards, but it was a great sight to see the splendid way in which the latter behaved towards them, handing them cigarettes and fraternising with them. Excitement was running high by this time and the ‘vivas’ rent the air on all sides.46

By this time Unionist forces were arriving in the capital in great numbers, and political converts were being gained by the hour. Many of the soldiers from the Fort of San José remained in their stronghold to fight alongside the very men they had been fighting against a few hours before. The Penitentiary fell into Unionist hands, and with it the anti-cabrerista forces found 250 more supporters. Cabrera’s troops under Valenzuela, who had reached Fifteenth Street and Sixth Avenue, were repulsed. Fighting continued near the Church of Santa Cecilia, where General Reyes and his men had set up camp. When Unionist forces finally drove Reyes and his men from this neighbourhood they found the parish priest, Padre Castañeda, tied up. They learned how Reyes’s men had killed the verger and raped many women.47

From 12 April when Commander Régil was defeated the Unionists had access to all telegraphic communication entering or leaving La Palma. On 13 April communications were re-established with Antigua, Chimaltenango, Patzún, Chichicastenango, Quiché and other western towns. By Thursday 14 April Unionists reached the heights of Santa Cecilia and El Bosquerón, and General Reyes and his men were defeated. On 15 April more Unionist troops
arrived in the capital. The majority came from Amatitlán, Villa Nueva, and Santa Rosita.

During the week an estimated 800 persons were killed, and some 2,000 wounded. Among the casualties were U.S. citizens, an Argentine Vice-Consul, a Dutchman, and a Frenchman. Hospitals were established throughout the capital and in the provinces. Dr Rafael Mauricio was named Director of the General Hospital, but makeshift hospitals were more common, since travel across the city was dangerous. Red Cross nurses were later commended for their bravery in rescuing and looking after the many casualties. Many private residences and schools were converted into hospitals during the 'tragic week', since it was sometimes impossible to reach the principal hospitals.

With the surrender of the Fort of San José on 12 April and the allegiance given by the Battallón Canales to the Herrera government, an uncanny stillness settled over the city. A diary found at La Palma shows that since Palm Sunday Cabrera had been keeping a brief account of the events of each day. On 13 April he quickly scribbled this almost illegible entry:

"... Después de 5 días de resistir y defender nos en La Palma, cuando vi que las esperaba [a los Unionistas] un triunfo, ... y para evitar una enorme matanza acepté el arreglo...""

By 14 April Cabrera recognized that the end had come and he knew that if he remained any longer at La Palma the mobs would kill him. He therefore sent his last most trusted advisers, Lic Echeverria y Vidaurre, General Haeussler and Congressman Castillo, to negotiate the terms of his surrender with Herrera's representatives at the Spanish Legation. Lic. Marcial García Salas, Ernesto Zelaya, and Manuel Valladares Rubio were
Herrera's representatives. They stated clearly that after the events of the previous week, it was no longer possible for them to guarantee the dictator's safe passage with his family and friends to the coast, even with an armoured train, an escort of Unionist soldiers and U.S. marines; they could only guarantee their lives.

Pedro Quartin found the discussions difficult, since Lic. Echeverría y Vidaurre initially refused to accept many of the demands made by Herrera's representatives. It was clear that Cabrera would only be safe in the penitentiary, and Echeverría found this an unacceptable solution until Quartin suggested the Military Academy as an alternative. This was finally approved because it was nearer to La Palma and well protected.

The ultimatum Cabrera received stated that he must capitulate to Herrera's government and disarm all his troops. The ex-president would be fetched from La Palma at 5 a.m. on 16 April, sign his resignation, which would then be deposited in the U.S. legation, and be escorted to the Military Academy where he was to be held until further decisions were made. Although he had twenty-four hours in which to accept, Cabrera asked to be fetched on 15 April as he feared for his safety and those around him. His only proviso was that he leave La Palma at noon instead of dawn, for it was not dignified for a former president to leave his home in darkness. The Diplomatic Corps arrived at ten o'clock that morning.
Cabrera’s departure from La Palma was a solemn occasion. All those who attended were asked to wear their best clothes, sus trajes de ceremonia. McMillin asked the entire Diplomatic Corps to accompany him and Carlos Herrera. The latter was joined by Lics. Garcia Salas, Valladares, Zelaya, eight military officers, several marines, and ten Unionists. As the Diplomatic Corps made its way to La Palma shouts could be heard through the streets: ¡Aquellos van a cazar a la fiera! ¡Por Dios que no se les escape! A white flag hung outside the entrance to La Palma and soldiers and on-lookers lined the driveway. La Palma was by now a scene of eerie desolation:

La Palma was a large enclosed area with roads crossing both ways, some disordered banana plantations, some fine groups of acacias, but otherwise without any real aspect of park or garden arrangement. Tumbled together in a group were some small, insignificant-looking buildings painted in the crudest colours. Each house appeared to be built for some particular purpose; one contained dining-rooms, another kitchens, a third reception room, a fourth writing room, etc. The rooms were small and low, the furniture simple and in bad taste, etc. [In the soldiers’ quarters] the furniture consisted solely of a broad bench serving as a dining-table and bed-place combined.

On an open space the entire park of artillery was drawn up; modern French field-howitzers and machine guns in great numbers. The ground was simply covered with empty cartridge cases, showing plainly enough that the pieces had been hard at work. Roughly erected sheds close by still held rows of unopened ammunition boxes. There seems to have been no shortage in this respect.
In the recent past Archbishop Jacinto y Riveiro had arranged for Easter processions to come all the way to La Palma so that the dictator could watch these after attending mass in his private chapel. Now the scene was reversed: those who could, came to see the final procession of a man whose powers had become legend. Most of those who saw Cabrera leaving his home for the last time saw an ordinary old man. McMillin, who knew him less well, saw only the calm and collected don Manuel of other times:

... we found him waiting to receive us as calm and unperturbed as I had ever seen him. He greeted us in his usual quiet way and invited us to seats, taking one himself. He made the usual inquiries concerning our health, etc. The officials of the new Government and he transacted in a very brief time the formalities they had arranged, and all started for the Military Academy a mile distant, where he was to be incarcerated. 

Prince William of Sweden reports that when Cabrera first came out of La Palma he was wearing his usual black frock coat, with a medal for bravery 'glittering on the lapel, a decoration he had accorded himself on some occasion or other, but on being relieved of his money, and a silk handkerchief, he was offended, and going back to his room, reappeared after a while in a tailcoat.' The sum of $45,000 dollars and a revolver were found on the dictator's person, and had to be taken from him. Several of his friends who were also there had to relinquish sums in their possession. Hernández de León, who knew the autocrat better, observed:

Don Manuel se colocó en medio de los señores ministros de España y de los Estados Unidos; yo salté a situarme a la espalda del mandarín caído, A la cabeza de la comitiva iban Humberto Reyna Barrios...y Rogelio Flores, Caminaba don Manuel a pasos cortos, con la presencia serena de un viejo que sale a tomar el sol, vestido de 'chaquet' negro, sombrero calafle's y zapatos de charol, Me fijé en sus manos y noté que se metía nerviosamente la uña del dedo gordo en los otros dedos, para mantener así la cómica serenidad que estaba muy lejos de sentir.

As Cabrera began to make his way to the car General Enrique Arís shouted:
Soldiers present arms to the señor presidente. Rogelio Flores, however, countermanded his order by saying: Aquí no va un presidente; va un prisionero del pueblo.5

The scene made an impression on all those present but especially on those who had known him as a willful and self-possessed man. A procession of seven cars made their way down to the Military Academy. Cabrera went in the first car accompanied by the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Quartin, U.S. Minister McMillin, and a Unionist General. The rest of the party followed. Silence characterized this journey and McMillin noted that 'Neither taunts, jeers, or other hostile demonstrations greeted the fallen executive'.10 The Diplomatic body had come to La Palma not only to protect Cabrera, but also to guarantee the lives of all those who found themselves with the dictator during his final week in power. His entourage seemed enormous. Hernández de León caught sight of them as they were about to leave:

Later, when Hernández de León interviewed Cabrera, he told the journalist how his fourteen children and extended family had supported him throughout the fighting, and how in the end their loyalty had made him decide to
surrender. He also added that he was a man of *ñeque* - of vigour and courage - and this had also made him decide not to commit suicide and face the consequence of his acts instead.  

Cabrera's arrival at the Military Academy was a moment of ignominy for him and of triumph for his jailors. Less than three months before Cabrera had inexplicably collapsed and passed out for several minutes before Arturo Ubico and Antonio Batres Jáuregui while en route to a prize-giving ceremony in this building. A few yards before reaching the main reception hall Cabrera collapsed and:

...como herido de un rayo, don Manuel se desplomó, cayendo de bruces, arrojando sin querer el sombrero del pelo, los guantes y el bastón, Yo lo levanté, tomando del pecho; y pude ver que tenía los ojos en blanco y la cabeza sin fuerza para sostenerse: pero también esto fue instantáneo; luego se recobró, aunque sumamente pálido y sin pronunciar una palabra, llegamos al salón de actos; y se fue recuperando. Pocos notaron el percance, fuimos contados los que presenciámos aquel vértigo terrible. Al concluirse el acto, salimos; entonces Cabrera parándose un momento, me dijo: 'No pude, don Antonio agradecer su auxilio, por que no podía hablar', 'Bien lo comprendí; pero no se hizo daño por fortuna', le contesté, 'Sí, más esto es de muy mal augurio. Algo grave me amenaza.' A los pocos meses, quedó preso en el mismo edificio, a la misma hora; y para no recuperar su libertad, le fueron ilegalmente confiscados o intervenidos, todos sus bienes y sus sufrimientos debían de haber sido profundos.

Cabrera interpreted this as a presage and told Batres Jáuregui so. Was this a minor stroke he suffered or just a dramatic premonition of what was to follow? In any case, the next time he arrived at the Military Academy it was as a prisoner.

Whether this account is true or exaggerated, it adds to Cabrera's reputation for superstition and suggests that he may have had premonitions about his downfall. His months of confinement in the Military Academy were desolate and difficult ones for him. Most of his entourage was put into the penitentiary which only months before Cabrera had ordered to be
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expanded since the number of Unionist arrests was growing every day. Hernández de León could not help thinking it was ironic that all those men who had terrorized Guatemala for so long should now find themselves imprisoned here.¹⁴

These early days in the cramped and dark quarters of the Military Academy must have been terrible for Cabrera since he must have seen the state his politics had come to with the lucidity of defeat. He must also have found this state of limbo disturbing since he was a man who was fond of controlling his environment. The only thing he knew and which distressed him was that the American government had abandoned him. In the years that followed he was to have much time to reflect on the many betrayals he faced by friends and governments.

As the people were not able to get their hands on the man whom they felt had caused them so much unhappiness and difficulty in the past decades, they pillaged his property instead. His city home was plundered, but more dramatic was the sacking which followed his departure from La Palma. Several eye-witness accounts exist and each provides striking details which reveal much about the former president and his people.

Prince William tells of the curious sign which went up almost immediately: 'No weapons or fixtures to be taken away; otherwise gentlemen may help themselves.'¹⁵ Jack Armstrong's description is one of the best for including the variety of things which were taken at this time:

The day after Estrada Cabrera's capitulation I visited his residence 'La Palma' and there found that the people had entered the grounds and houses and were looting the place. A bare footedpeon passed me and I saw in his hand a very fine gold cigar case. Persons obviously respectable were carrying away chairs and tables, pictures, provisions from the pantry. Some men of the artisan class were dismounting beds and carrying off pianos. A pair of dogs were being led away on a leash. Two cows and calves were being driven off over the boundary fence which had been broken down for the purpose. But the most interesting of all was the loot of His
Excellency's archives which he had kept in such perfect order and with such consummate completeness and care that even 'billes doux' from ladies of society who were not suspected of any intimacy with H. E. are being offered on sale on the streets. Enough material for twenty years of blackmail has thus been placed in the hands of the unscrupulous. With regard to the Secret Service there are written and signed denunciations by friends and even relatives against one another. The Unionist Party too are not entirely unscathed for one of the members of the original committee was apparently a spy for his reports to the President have now come to light. Another awkward feature of the discoveries are many thousands of dollars of uncashed cheques and drafts found in H. E.'s pocket and writing table given to him by certain Americans who have lately been doing business here. These amount it is said to several hundreds of thousands of dollars...

Charles Overall, who was there on the same day, describes the contents of bed mattresses which had been torn open in the hope of finding jewels or banknotes. He also saw the letters and documents strewn about and noticed many of the books which had been left behind: 'Most of the books dealt with the progress and development of Guatemala directly due to the administration of Cabrera, which apparently used to afford him great satisfaction and comfort. Some of them were in English and had been published in the U.S.A.'

There are few accounts of what the Intendencia in charge of Cabrera's possessions did with his wealth; nor has it ever been established what his estate was worth. Few inventories exist of his extensive holdings and of what became of these after his fall from office. This may be because he was not always straightforward about money matters. Throughout his years in office Cabrera kept properties and sums in other people's names. It was also well known that he hardly bothered to cash cheques since many believed that he considered the National Treasury at the Banco de Occidente his personal bank. Indeed there are many reports that when La Palma was sacked money was found stuffed in drawers and books.

Cabrera was no thief but a miser, and his childhood years could not
make him otherwise. His family always lived modestly and indeed, none of them showed signs of great wealth after his death. It was known that he had recently sold his part of the Empresa Eléctrica de Escuintla to an American party for $40,000, but he had not yet received this payment. 

After his fall La Palma was abandoned for many years. It was not until Ubico's presidency that it briefly served as a telegraph station, and later as a school. During the early 1950s President Juan José Arévalo ordered that the giant templo de Minerva in the barrio Jocotenango be dynamited and La Palma demolished. The land was then converted into an olympic stadium which was originally known as 'Revolución', but has since been renamed after the athlete, 'Mateo Gálvez'.

THE LYNCHINGS OF 15 APRIL.

Although Cabrera and his close associates at La Palma had been guaranteed their lives, many other cabreristas lost theirs in the aftermath of his resignation. Much has been made of the scenes which took place outside the Colegio de Infantes and Cathedral on 15 April. Sofía Saíden and Rosa Trabanino have often been called the catalysts of the lynchings which followed Cabrera's capitulation. La Trabanino was rumoured once to have been one of Reyna Barrios's mistresses, and when she fell on hard times, she turned her talents to espionage. Saíden was equally passionate in her motives and is said to have offered 10,000 pesos for Gerardo Márquez's head because he had killed her lover. The brave Red Cross nurse, Julia Quiñonez Ydígoras, otherwise known as La Masiste and a cousin of Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, also became another ringleader inciting the frenzied anti-cabrerista crowds.

These were intoxicated by their victory and had forgotten all the
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discipline of the past months. A good number of Unionists were also drunk. Many of those calling for revenge forgot that many of the officers who had fought on Cabrera's side were only doing their duty and did not deserve to be abused in this way. Among the first who were beaten and torn apart were Lic. Francisco Gálvez Portocarrero, Mico Ponce, and Miguel López, Milpas Altas. The cadet Mico Ponce was especially hated because he was known to shoot on sight anyone who spoke a word against the Benemérito. His latest outrage had been the desecration of the atrium of the Church of la Candelaria when he entered it on horseback and shot a man.20

The chanting in the streets fed the crowd's anger and resulted in a demand for further violence. Eduardo Miguel Jiménez Castillo, son of a cabrerista careerist, was present at the Colegio de Infantes on this occasion and remembers:

...La gente estaba esperando en la calle con cuchillos, alfileres grandes de sombrero, machetes y palos. Era una turba o plebe, y al salir los militares y expolicías los descuartizaban. Me di cuenta que habían descuartizado al coronel de artillería de apellido García del Fuerte de Matamoros, y 'Milpas Altas', que le decían al coronel Miguel López. Vimos cuando sacaron al jefe de policía Felipe Márquez.21

At that time Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, then a captain, found himself imprisoned in the Colegio de Infantes with several apestados. The former First Designate, General Mariano Serrano Muñoz, José Santos Chocano, and several others, including Portocarrero and Mico Ponce, were also there. This building had become the new government's temporary Comandancia de Armas. From the room where he was placed he remembers being able to see Juan van de Puit's shop sign: 'El Cazador'. Outside they could hear shouts of: ¡queremos más!, ¡traigan otro!, and the famous ¡queremos otro toro!
Although this building was next door to the Cathedral, thirty soldiers guarded the prisoners from escaping and from being attacked. Following the earthquakes, the Cathedral was still covered with scaffolding, which many citizens tried to climb.

Ydígoras Fuentes's escape reads like an adventure out of a Dumas novel. Father Jorge García Caballeros, who was later to become the Bishop of Quezaltenango and give Cabrera his final rites, saved this future president by giving him a cassock, cap and spectacles. Ydígoras Fuentes escaped and although he was able to remain underground in the capital for several weeks he finally fled to his family finca Pueblo Nuevo near Retalhuleu. He remained there until the Herrera government was officially installed in office. He must have been surprised to discover that his old teacher, General José Maria Oreilana, was now Minister of War and asked him whether he would join the new government's *Estado Mayor.*

The many lynchings of 15 April were brought under control through the leadership of José Azmitia, Lic. Francisco Villagrán, Eduardo Mayora, and Miguel Tizón who scolded excitable crowds in different parts of the city for their disgraceful behaviour and sent them home. Azmitia's speech to the crowd from a balcony at the Colegio de Infantes is well known and shamed all those who had participated in the killings.

In other parts of the city well-known *cabreristas* were dragged out of their homes and hiding places to be escorted to the penitentiary. Hernández de León, once a prisoner there, wrote about its new inmates in May 1920. General Aris tried to ingratiate himself with this journalist by offering to write an article for his newspaper on the economic situation of the nation. Most of the inmates allowed the press photographer to take their portrait, except for General Mauro de León, who said: *No me dejo*
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retratar. Yo no soy criminal, porque no creo que sea criminal el ser fiel a
su jefe y yo estoy aquí por eso. When Hernández de León saw the much
hated spy Felipe Márquez he asked him if it were true that the crowds had
tried to lynch him. He received this reply:

- Callese, por dios; me machetaron y golpearon horriblemente, Diga ud, que
ya en la Plaza de Armas y en donde iba a dejar el pellajo de echada seguro,
se aparecieron mi salvación, don José AZMITIA, al DR BIANCHI, y aquel
LICENCIADO BARRILAS FAJARDO, Don JOSE AZMITIA me cubrió con su cuerpo y
arango al populacho, que le obedeció inmediatamente. A ellos les
debo la vida, Lo mismo le contarán mi hijo y MANUEL MACHADO, que fueron
salvados por esos hombres, 24

A final flush of anti-cabrero feeling took place in Quezaltenango
two days later when General Aguilar, his son, and twelve other cabreristas
were killed even though under guard. Popular hatred for Cabrera continued
to run high, but business and life had suffered long enough with the
latest disruption and most citizens only wished to return to routine.
Nevertheless, there were many who, like Cobos and Escamilla, continued to
believe in their mission to alter the political life. Ortiz, Tizón and
others continued to work on changing the nature of workers' unions and the
press found new life in this unusual interregnum.

The appearance of three new publications, El Democrata, La Patria, and
El Exodo best demonstrate that the winds of political change had not yet
settled. El Unionista was by this time a well established and widely read
daily, while many aspiring young journalists and writers, like David Vela
and Clemente Marroquín Rojas, moved on to establish or improve other
papers. Hernández de León's editorship of El Diario de Centro América
changed its official cabrerista nature to make the paper a vehicle for
criticism of the past régime and for suggestions for the future.

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HERRERA'S GOVERNMENT OF TWENTY MONTHS: THE DEATH OF UNIONISM

Parte primordial del fracaso en que caían envueltos gobierno y revolución fue la torpeza con que unionistas prominentes quisieron imprimir sus teorías de gobierno, que yo califico de quiiserismo político. Se pretendió gobernar con la ley, únicamente con la letra obtusa de una mala ley, un país que siempre ha sido gobernado con el orden.

La legislación guatemalteca - creo haberlo dicho ya - es un incoherente farrago de disposiciones y preceptos a menudo calcados de legislaciones exóticas, y ha servido admirablemente para que la malicia abogadil haga condenar al inocente y salvar al culpable. Pues bien: el puritanismo unionista, por no infringir la ley escrita, infringió la ley histórica. Porque la ley histórica es el fracaso de las transiciones bruscas de régimes despóticos, mantenidos por siglos, a régimes intransgentemente legalistas, copiados de democracias extranjeras.

It must be pointed out that the events of January to April 1920 do not constitute a thorough political or social revolution nor were they radical in any way, even though many students of Guatemalan history usually refer to the events which led to Cabrera's downfall as the 'revolution of 1920'. To many it was clear that the Unionist Party was doomed from the beginning, although it was its impetus which made Cabrera's downfall possible. As we have shown, one of the flaws of Unionism was its hybrid nature. This became more apparent in the aftermath of 15 April 1920. From the beginning several Unionists opposed Herrera's nomination as provisional president because it was apparent that this well-meaning and well-to-do citizen had neither the will nor the conviction to uproot the institutions of cabrerismo.

By the beginning of March there had been an attempt by certain sectors, including artisans led by Silverio Ortiz and Gregorio Cardoza, to break away from the main body of the Unionist Party in order better to achieve their ideals. This group consisted mostly of professionals and artisans who felt excluded from the principal meetings and directive which took place behind the closed doors of the grandes señores. One of the few
señoritos to agree with the artisans at the time was Lic. Tácito Molina Izquierdo, who had christened the Unionist Party. Herrera continued to serve as provisional president until elections could be held. During his five-month interim period he began to rearrange the army and to learn the problems which faced anyone willing to undertake the business of governing Guatemala.

The traditional parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, surfaced once again in order to participate in the political convention of 4 May. This would give them an opportunity to present their candidates for the August elections. The new political awareness which had emerged during the recent political upheaval made both parties cautious. The Unionist Party had given many sectors of the population a taste of power and a platform from which to function and grow. The optimism which came with the end of an era - Cabrera's twenty-two-year long rule - and the forthcoming independence centennial celebrations was not to last long. Nevertheless, it affected all participants since they had to appeal to all those new politically aware sectors which now felt they had a voice in national politics. At the same time they also had to appear to be in keeping with their original philosophy so as not to alienate their most powerful supporters and to ensure Herrera's installation in office.

Many, however, felt that once Cabrera had fallen, the Unionist Party ceased to have a raison d'être. Many liberals and ex-cabreristas thought they could re-organize themselves under the Liberal Party banner. But Barrios's original party had been transformed under Cabrera's personalist rule and could not be the same again, and as a result many were reluctant to use the Liberal Party's name. The cloak of democracy was used to revive the Party. An attempt was made to include students, workers, and
professionals in a newly-baptized Partido Democrático, but it was soon clear that this party was nothing new in its aims and style. Three relatively unknown citizens were chosen to head this new Liberal Party, Lics. H. Abraham Cabrera, Bernardo Tello, and Dr Ricardo Alvarez. They were eventually replaced by the more experienced and better-known Mariano Cruz, who offered a more advanced programme.26

By May 1920 several new political parties appeared which disguised both liberal and conservative tendencies: the Partido Republicano de Occidente, allied to the Partido Liberal Constitucional de Guatemala, and the Partido Republicano. Although quite different in their membership and ideas, the Democratic and Unionist Parties chose Carlos Herrera as their candidate. The Republican Party chose José León Castillo, who twenty-five years before had been Montúfar's choice as Liberal successor to Reyna Barrios, while General Francisco Fuentes became the joint candidate of the Western Republican and Constitutional Liberal Parties. A final candidate was Colonel Rafael Ponciano, who was backed by a group of friends. Before elections the Partido Republicano de Occidente merged with the Partido Democrático and became known as the Partido Liberal Federalista under José León Castillo's command.

What remained of the Unionist Party was not successful in presenting a candidate. Táctito Molina, who was Salvadorean by birth, refused the honour of leading the Party because he felt that his knowledge of politics was too theoretical and he might therefore 'prove a Dr Francia', too severe in his approach.27 Manuel Cobos and José Azmitia were considered too Catholic; they would only damage the Party by confirming many people's suspicions that it was just another disguise for the Conservative Party. Julio Bianchi, the only man who might have succeeded in leading the
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Unionists to the presidency, himself saw little hope for Unionism and for this reason decided to cede his place to Herrera. This refusal, he well knew, was the end of the Party. On 4 May 1920 Bianchi asked Molina to make a sign to read: 'This is where the Unionist Party met'. Arevalo Martinez feels it would have been more apt if it had read: 'Today liberty died in Guatemala'.

Herrera was recognized by the United States government on 24 June 1920, and subsequently by the other accredited legations in the republic. His interim government remained ill-defined and ambiguous as it represented neither the Unionist Party nor the traditional oligarchy. Many political entities which had come into existence during the last six months continued to function under his benevolent rule. A rally of workers protested on 4 July against the non-trial of imprisoned cabreristas. Their demonstration, though neither large nor violent, alarmed many officers, who sought Herrera's permission to quell such discontent immediately. He refused to give it and asked them to respect the workers' right to assemble.

That calm and fair reaction is an example of Herrera's own brand of bravery which many failed to see. Herrera supported neither the Unionist Party nor the army, but respected both and tried to create and maintain a neutral atmosphere in which factional and social conflicts could be resolved. This stance naturally provoked anger and fear in all parties concerned. Many viewed his stance as apathetic and weak, while others could only attribute it to his lack of foresight.

Despite this Herrera took several bold decisions during his twenty-month rule. Some were correct, while others assumed too much from the people. In early July he transferred the by now unpopular Adrián Vidaurre
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from his post as Minister of Hacienda to a diplomatic position in Havana, where he could not cause further harm to the nation. He also began to reorganize the police force and the hierarchy of provincial politics. This he did by appointing new citizens to important posts and reshuffling others, always taking care to separate all military appointees from civilian positions and placing civilians back in traditional posts. Henceforth each town had at least two governors: one dealt with the military aspect of local rule and the other with the legal and bureaucratic side. Finally, civilians were no longer expected to show certificates to local authorities for the purpose of importing or exporting goods. It was no longer illegal to sell abroad basic foodstuffs, such as meat and wheat, as it had been in Cabrera’s time.

As elections approached many were sure that Herrera would continue to protect the interests of coffee growers and attempt to maintain political and economic stability.30

THE ELECTIONS OF AUGUST 1920

Herrera emerged victorious from these elections with a total of 246,976 votes while Castillo received 7,948, Fuentes 5,983, and the rest 204.31 Many now viewed Herrera's victory as a sign that cabrerismo was not yet dead. His cabinet included many of the same men who had operated under Cabrera's rule, and his lack of forcefulness and policy meant that no beginning would be made in dismantling the machinery of cabrerismo. Herrera covered up the foundations and continued to build his 'new' government with many veterans of the last government as well as with token Unionists. Nonetheless, he menaced the army. In the beginning he improved salaries, living quarters, and made sure that the rank and file
were appropriately dressed. As his administration wore on, however, it became apparent that he had plans to abolish the army and replace it with a guardia civil.

This understandably made him highly unpopular with many high ranking officers, who began to make plans for a coup now that their positions seemed to be under threat. Those officers whose loyalty and friendship he should have cultivated only felt alienated by his actions. The roots of the 5 December 1921 coup were put down here.

On the other hand, Herrera trusted the National Assembly too much. It was here that the last pockets of Unionists could be found working in their attempt to alter Guatemala's political system. Cobos Batres led this movement with such fierceness that a British observer was moved to remark that he '...excercised a tyranny as absolute as Cabrera's had been.' Cobos Batres demanded a total reform of Montufar's 1879 Constitution since he felt this would alter the behaviour of future governments. By the end of 1920 Cobos and his supporters - who outnumbered the former Liberal deputies by forty-nine - succeeded in declaring numerous articles of the Constitution 'reformable'. Rafael Montufar, the son of the man who had written the original Constitution, criticized their alterations. He felt that, rather than shutting the doors on the powers of the Executive, the reforms widened them.

A CENTRAL AMERICAN FEDERATION?

Herrera's official term began on the eve of preparations for the centennial celebration of Central America. It was hoped that it would culminate on 15 September 1921 with federation. Many Central Americans of the more intellectual type believed that such a federation would bring an
end to the endemic tyrannies of the region. The first Central American Unionist meeting took place in Antigua in late 1920 where principal Unionists from all Central American states gathered together to discuss the terms of such a union. The auspices of the Washington offices of the International Central American Office (founded in 1907) were rejected on grounds that this was to be a wholly Central American venture.

A meeting in Costa Rica followed in January 1921 and produced the Pact of San José. Contrary to all expectations, the meeting was a failure. Nicaragua refused to join because she said it went against the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. Furthermore, though the delegate signed the treaty, Costa Rica failed to ratify it, leaving only three of the five states supporting such a union. Despite this, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador went ahead with establishing a provisional assembly which was to meet in Tegucigalpa later that year. Tegucigalpa had been decreed the new capital of the Federation because of its relatively central geographic location. Nevertheless geography and differences in national character continued to create friction. Though transportation was quicker and more efficient, strong national characteristics had developed in the last hundred years.

On 15 September 1921 a Liberal Central American Congress met in Tegucigalpa. Here Herrera was nominated as the man capable of uniting the region. Few saw that he was neither interested nor had the capacity to lead such an ambitious project when he was facing great difficulties at home. In a moment of solidarity and bonhomie, Herrera announced on 1 October that he was no longer the constitutional president of the republic, but Chief of the Federal State of Guatemala. In November 1921 Central American elections were held in order to establish a definite Unionist council, senate, and assembly with a view to installing a Federal
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government on 1 February 1922. This, however, never came to pass.

On 15 September 1921 Guatemala provided the centennial celebrations. Herrera was criticized for spending $350,000 dollars and not showing more business acumen or demanding that each state pay its share in the extravagant festivities. Herrera was also finding it increasingly difficult to control and satisfy those very elements upon which he relied to survive: the army and the U.S. government.

From the beginning of his government Herrera voiced an interest in reforming the economy and putting it on a gold standard. The economy, however, was undergoing difficulties. The price of coffee had fallen from a boom rate of $20.00 per quintal in 1920 to $8.00; sugar had also fallen to new lows. The newspapers, particularly El Unionista, found much to criticize in the government even though Herrera himself continued to enjoy a great deal of popular support. Certain dissatisfied factions of the army under General Valdés attempted a coup in June 1921, but were easily thwarted. Herrera was reluctant to punish the culprits, much to the disgust of ministers and citizens.

When a more dangerous revolt followed in July 1921, Herrera again refused to punish the ringleaders. This time his Minister of War, Emilio Escamilla, resigned. He was briefly replaced by General Pereira, who was promptly dismissed for showing too severe a hand, and succeeded by General Mendoza. Five months later he betrayed Herrera when General Valdés and friends again decided to overthrow the government. Herrera’s handling of coups and those parties which were normally considered troublemakers had led large factions of the army, and perhaps even the U.S. Minister, to distrust his political judgement and his capacity to rule. Gaisford also criticized the president:
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Herrera was unable to make up his mind, moreover a certain strain of obstinacy prevented his allowing his ministers to make up his mind for him. He was quite incapable of severity, even in cases where guilt was palpable and castigation essential. If an official was unsatisfactory, his way out was to dismiss him with a lump sum to keep him quiet. His government was nominally Unionist, but in point of fact the main part of his cabinet and of the state officials belonged to the Liberal Party. He was furthermore greatly influenced by his brother, an acknowledged adherent of the party in opposition and a person whose reputation is most suspect.37

The cuartelazo of 5 December achieved several goals: it ousted a lenient president, thus giving the final deathblow to Unionism and completing the disintegration of the embryonic Central American federation. More importantly, it rescued the army from possible annihilation. The U.S. government accepted the coup d'état with such complacency that many, like Batres Jáuregui and Gaisford, were convinced that McMillin may have known more about this cuartelazo than was generally believed. As early as March 1921 University students had foreseen Herrera's downfall. During their traditional huelga de dolores they sang José Luis Balcarcel, Chocochiqué's, lyrics to the tune of 'Ana':

En una casa en frente del Cuartel General
encerrado vive 'Sugar' Jefe Constitucional,
Cerradas las ventanas
y sin poderle ver,
bayonetas a la entrada,
chocolate por doquier,...
Charles, te van a derrocar,
Charles, peligra tu poder,
Charles que tú eres bueno
pero hay perfidia en derredor.38

Herrera's twenty-month long government was over. Unlike Carrera, Barrios, and Cabrera he had no talent for politics or love of power. Although he might have been a good administrator, his willingness to trust
everyone proved fatal in the ruthless business of politics. Although Herrera had been unable to meet all Unionist demands, he had at least tried to comply with many of them and this was perhaps his greatest mistake. Cabrera's true successors were to be products of all of his schools - his military academies, his army, his personal office. One was a personal favourite, another a product of the Politécnica and his departmental school of local government, while the third had always been noted for his abilities as student, administrator and disciplinarian. They were José María Orellana, Lázaro Chacón, and Jorge Ubico. All participated in, or were aware of, the Cuartelazo of December 1921. Of the three, one had presidential ambitions and the capacity to fulfill the 'strong-man' rôle. His talents had already been recognized by the State Department in 1918, but he had to bide his time until his turn came.

The brain behind the cuartelazo of 5 December 1921 has never been identified, even though it was known that there was much dissatisfaction among the military. Three Generals - José María Lima, José María Orellana, and Miguel Larrave - emerged victorious. All were products of the Liberal heritage. Orellana, a Freemason, may have had links with well-known enemies of Herrera and it is possible that they instigated this coup. The United States, as we have seen, did not like the idea of a Central American Federation and like many Guatemalans may have thought that a stronger, better-defined government was needed.

After this military triumvirate came to power, Cabrera himself thought he might be set free. All three generals had served under his government. He staked his hopes on Orellana, who for years had been his protégé. Orellana had been with Cabrera and his son the day the bomb of 1907 went off under his carriage. After this Cabrera had rewarded him by making him
director of the Instituto Central de Varones, and later by giving him the Ministry of Education and numerous promotions. Despite this proximity, Cabrera never permitted Orellana to hold any important military posts. During the 'Tragic Week' Orellana sided with the Herrera government and later in 1922 when Orellana emerged victorious from the presidential elections, Cabrera realized that his freedom would not be forthcoming. As in other times, Cabrera was surrounded by guardians, but now instead of awaiting his orders, they appeared only to be waiting for him to die. At the time Wyld Ospina, a frequent visitor, noted:

Se retiró la escolta (que guardaba al prisionero [Cabrera]), pero llamaba la atención el celo de la policía. Cada vez que se abría el portón, especialmente de noche, un guardia le espetaba a usted esta pregunta: ¿Y cómo sigue el señor? Militares vestidos de paisano, agentes de la policía secretos rondaban la manzana de la casa. Este interés, esta ansia por su muerte, no se ocultó a la penetración de Estrada Cabrera, Y dijo: 'Orellana se salió con su gusto'.

The truth was that Cabrera was still greatly feared. Although Orellana did not visit him or procure better treatment for his old master, he nevertheless applied many of the techniques Cabrera had used during his long administration. Many former cabrerista administrators were sought out and placed in important government posts in the capital and countryside. Ydigorás Fuentes and Chacón were brought back in order to help maintain peace and order. In August 1922 an attempted coup by Francisco Lorenzana, a farmer from San Lucas, ended in his death. Orellana wished to give an example of what would happen to anyone who dared to attempt to replace him. The press once again began to feel the pressures of repression. In 1924 Cobos led the final silent vigil for Unionism before it faded into obscurity. The recently established El Imparcial was shut down on 26 May 1926 and was not to reappear until after Orellana's death.
Orellana suffered a fatal heart attack while he was staying at the Herrera-owned Hotel Manchén in Antigua on 26 September 1926. He was at the time accompanied by the artiste Matilde Palou. His body was rushed back to the capital where he was given a military burial a few days later. General Lázaro Chacón, his First Designate, organized elections for December 1926.

During Orellana’s four year term many material advances had been made. Not only were roads and bridges built, but the railroad line from Zacapa to El Salvador was almost completed. More importantly, a national bank was founded and the currency finally reformed. This satisfied the U.S. government and placed the newly baptized Guatemalan quetzal on a par with the U.S. dollar.

Chacón was another career officer, like Ydigoras Fuentes, whom Orellana rescued from Unionist danger in the aftermath of Cabrera’s downfall. Chacón had proved loyal to Cabrera in April 1920 by remaining at his post at the plaza of El Progreso throughout the fighting. He was able to flee to his father’s finca, La Cajeta, which his family had bought many years before, in the hope of being forgotten. He was found there and imprisoned, and it was not until December 1921 that he was freed. Orellana first made him Commander in Arms of Antigua, and eventually Chief of the Guard of Honour, a post he held from 13 April 1922 to 25 Sept 1926. He was by this time a Brigadier General and First Designate.

Elections were held. As always there were obscure candidates and others whose names are familiar. Among the lesser known candidates was the rector of the University, Lic. Bernardo Alvarado Tello, an intellectual who had already participated in the first post-cabrerista elections in 1920. Alvarado Tello was popular among students and workers, but had
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little support elsewhere. Chacón's candidacy was put forward by the Liga Nacional, the Unionist and Federalist Parties, which consisted of the traditional Liberal Party and a number of workers. Finally, General Jorge Ubico Castañeda returned to politics after a three-year hiatus as a finquero. He headed his own political party, the Partido Liberal Progresista. Although Ubico was popular among students because of his reformist ideas, Clemente Marroquín Rojas, editor of La Hora, saw him as a potential tyrant.

Much to Ubico's disappointment, Chacón won these elections and began his term on 10 March 1927. His cabinet contained a few ex-cabreristas who were duly accepted by the public. General Larrave continued to function as Minister of War and Dr Luis Toledo Herrarte, Cabrera's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, returned to his old post.

Chacón faced some of the most difficult economic moments since Reyna Barrios's time. He was unable to complete his first term because he suffered a stroke in December 1930. Chacón, however, did not die and temporarily appointed his more malleable Second Designate, Lic. Baudilio Palma as provisional president until he could resume office. General Mauro de León, Minister of War and First Designate, felt cheated and soon organized a military revolt. This was led by General Manuel Orellana who toppled Palma's government within four days of its inauguration. When de León was killed in the fighting, Orellana assumed control.

This was badly viewed by the U.S. government, which hoped to stop coups in the region and in 1923 had instituted a Treaty of Peace and Amity which forbade Central American governments to recognize any régime which came to power through violent or unconstitutional means. Orellana saw himself forced to resign and José María Reina Andrade replaced him as
provisional president until elections could be held in February 1931. At this time the old U.S. favourite, General Jorge Ubico, was able to win because of his experience, reputation and superior organization.

Ubico’s notoriety came from his days as *jefe político* and *comandante en armas* of Alta Verapaz (1907-1909) and Retalhuleu (1911-1919). Between 1921 and 1923 he served as Orellana’s Minister of War and was promoted to *General de División*. His ascent to power in 1931 took place in a system which had not changed in its essentials from his days as *jefe político* and commander in arms under Cabrera. In 1921 Gaisford had described him as:

...a progressive, enlightened man whose honesty has never been questioned. He is cruel to a degree that is hardly credible and for that reason he is execrated. He is a dangerous element for he holds and controls the army and is also ‘Primer Designado’ and as he is reputed to have great personal ambition it is clear that the distance between him and the supreme power is not very great.

These qualities were to make him the most able as well as the most powerful man in the country between 1931 and 1944. In his years outside politics Ubico had learned much of what was needed to improve the country. More than a decade passed from when Cabrera was ousted from office until his true successor took up the reins of autocratic rule once again. Unlike his master, Ubico came from a family of wealth and privilege, which gave him the ease of a Herrera, but the drive and ambition for power of a Cabrera. His experience as Commander in Arms, *jefe Político*, minister, and finca administrator between 1907 and 1930 gave him first hand knowledge in government and business matters, which was to serve him well during his thirteen year dictatorship.

Ubico’s rise to power marks the culmination of the Liberal Party as envisaged by Barrios. Although he had not known the *Reformador* personally,
his father, Lic. Arturo Ubico, had. As one of the signers of the 1879 Constitution and one of the wealthiest men in the country, Lic. Ubico had definite views on the rôle of government. These, and his travels to American and European capitals as ambassador and tourist, must have been inculcated in his only son's political outlook. Jorge Ubico's brief studies at the Escuela Politécnica and his long training in the ways of provincial politics in Cabrera's time prepared him for his rôle as the twentieth century successor of Guatemala's tradition of liberal dictators.

Ubico has been praised for perfecting the republic's infrastructure and using this not only to improve Guatemala's international standing, but also to include those sectors of the population which had formerly been on the fringes of national politics. This is not entirely accurate, and the roots of the politicization of peasant sectors, as well as the emergence of middle sectors, are to be found in the late nineteenth century when the impact of coffee production and modernization began to affect the socio-political structure of the republic. One matter remains clear, that even well into the twentieth century, coffee production continued to be a chief administrative concern.

Ubico faced the economic difficulties brought on by the world depression of the 1930s, and despite these was able to maintain stability and peace. His biographer, Kenneth Grieb, has argued that his inability to cater for the growing middle-class led to his downfall in 1944. Though not the last product of Cabrera's schools - Juan José Arévalo (1945-1950) and Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes (1958-1963) were to follow - Ubico came to personify, better than Cabrera, and perhaps even Barrios himself, the quintessential Latin American caudillo.
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DON MANUEL'S FINAL YEARS

Pasaron los días; corrieron los meses y han transcurrido los años; mientras tanto se me levantaron procesos por y para todo cuanto ocurrió en los días aciagos de la contienda armada. Tres años no han sido bastante para su finaciamiento, pero al fin les llegará su turno en el reloj del servicio judicial.

Cabrera ended his days a prisoner. He always said: ...a mi me abandonaron los yanquis... and this was probably true. He also argued that Herrera's government betrayed him in that he and his family were never allowed to leave the country. Cabrera must have known, or certainly come to learn, that the people's hatred for him was such that it would have been unpoltic for either the Herrera or the U.S. government to let him leave. In any case, it seems unlikely that he would have left, since there was nowhere for him to go and he so identified himself with the welfare of the nation. Another blow must have been the discovery that so many of the persons he had considered friends, many of whom he had made rich, now avoided him. This realization not only haunted him, but added to his sense of persecution and bitterness.

Ernesto Viteri Bertrand, a young law student, was initially chosen to look after Cabrera's accommodation and diet. Viteri's two uncles had been shot by Cabrera for suspected complicity in the 1908 assassination attempt and they had been tortured and killed in front of Viteri's father, who had also been tortured. Viteri agreed to accept this post on the condition that Cabrera did not know his identity. He found the dictator a civil and soft-spoken man, though others reported that Cabrera sometimes lost his temper and broke many of the wooden furnishings of his room. Arévalo Martínez also tells that he lost a manservant in this way. During his time Viteri never noticed such irascible behaviour from the prisoner, and indeed those
curious enough to visit him and criticize him met only with silence.

Viteri told the author that initially Cabrera's food was prepared by a chef from one of the capital's best hotels, and it was hoped to cater for his diabetic condition in this manner. This did not last long, and soon a woman Cabrera trusted was given the task of preparing all his meals. Under this new régime Cabrera's health improved, much to the disappointment of the U.S. Minister. Instead of growing weaker and greyer, Cabrera now seemed to thrive even though he lived in an unhealthy atmosphere of isolation. Nevertheless complaints were heard in U.S. papers that Cabrera did not receive sufficient sunlight or exercise and to this end he was moved from prison to prison. A whole mythology arose around the figure of Cabrera, who to many still appeared as a sorcerer. One of the earliest myths, and this was while he was still at the Military Academy, had to do with his building a secret underground tunnel through which to escape. Most of these rumours were untrue, and even though Cabrera was impoverished and under guard some found it difficult to rest until he was dead.

Most of Cabrera's final years were spent in writing his defense against several hundred lawsuits. He was also interviewed by numerous journalists and students, and read a series of vituperative articles against himself which were in vogue during his first year as prisoner. It is remarkable that the majority of lawsuits which were brought against him stemmed from the same accusation, the violent end of Commander Antonio Gutiérrez during the 'tragic week'. This little-known military officer and his story are of minor importance, but were used as an excuse to hammer Cabrera with concrete evidence against his endless series of crimes. These were rarely mentioned and only the demand that he should be brought
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to justice remained clear. Gutiérrez, an officer at La Palma turned Unionist, had betrayed his troops in order to help the anti-cabrerista forces take the president's stronghold. He failed and was unmasked by General Cifuentes, who had him tortured and killed as an example of the fate which would befall anyone trying to do the same. Perhaps it was felt that there was more evidence with which to convict Cabrera here, but the sentences of the few trials he received already far out-numbered the years of life he had left. They only confirmed his helplessness.

It is odd that so little mention was made of all those other ills citizens had suffered during his twenty-two year long rule. Why were they not mentioned? What did Guatemalans expect to happen to Cabrera? He undoubtedly suffered physical hardships during this time, but more damaging to him was the realization that he had been forgotten by men he had once helped, and that he had so few friends. An early disappointment came when Orellana came to power in 1922 and refused to change his location or improve his situation: it had been Ubico who spoke out on behalf of the former master, and demanded that he be moved from the Second Section of Police to a proper house, and be allowed to receive visitors:

... no es justo que don Manuel vaya a morir en ese calabozo, cuando todos los militares le debemos en parte lo que somos. Yo no pido que le dejen en libertad, porque tiene cosas pendientes, pero que el aclaré su situación. Ante todo cambiemosle de lugar.\textsuperscript{44}

Through Ubico's intercession Cabrera was moved to his final home, a house on Tenth Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues. Here he had more light and was able to take strolls in a garden, and receive visitors in a small sitting-room.
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Years passed. Cabrera continued to live, and articles would ask whether Cabrera would be brought to justice or whether he would ever be freed. On 30 October 1923 the Diario de la Tarde announced a scoop: Cabrera had been asked to write his memoirs for an American publishing house for $20,000 dollars. This was nothing more than a rumour, since Cabrera had no time to write anything more than the 83 defenses for himself. Regarding these he wrote:

No encuentro en verdad, señores Magistrados, qué decir o hacer en estos famososísimos procesos que, - con notoria malevolencia, - se iniciaron contra mí; no propiamente para pesquisar y juzgar hechos criminales y punibles; cuanto por velar - el manto de la humana ley, - la satisfacción de las terribles pasiones del odio y rencor comprimidos, y de mezquina venganza, presentada al estallar la tempestad de aquellas desbordadas pasiones que se desató sobre mí,...

There were also hundreds of complaints against him which appeared in the form of articles in large and not-so-large newspapers. In composing his defense Cabrera had to relive the terrible days of his last week in office and reflect upon the many years he had held Guatemalans under his rule. Although he never sought to explain his long administration or discuss Guatemalan politics, he was now fulfilling his destiny as small-town lawyer, the man of whom so often it had been said that he had won the tinterillo del poder. His writings do not sparkle with style, but show that he still had an astute grasp of Guatemalan law:

Cabrera se puso fuera de la ley y nadie fué capaz de alcanzarle, ni siquiera los proyectiles que suele decirse que tienen guía en el Destino; Cabrera, maniatado por un convenio, entra al cauce jurídico, y entonces todos son a dilapidarle la fortuna y no a lapidarle la persona,...

¿Qué harán sus jueces, que no son jueces de conciencia, sino simples jueces de derecho? Autos a la vista y códigos escritos conforme a una cifra cuya clave conoce mejor que nadie el reo, fallaran sobre una obra auerta, propicia al enjuiciado,...
His final years were lonely and bitter ones. His memories of the days when persons would wait for weeks on end for a signature or a message must have made him wonder about the nature of power and of the people he had ruled. To the public, this imprisonment made up for the hundreds, if not thousands of arbitrary arrests he had made. An anonymous source describes the desolation the former dictator faced from his prison:

Muy pocos amigos le hablaron. Llenas las galerías, frecuentemente pedía la lista de los concurrentes, y cuando alguien entraba era necesario anunciarlo previamente. Cuando él quiso ver a amigos determinados, les mandó buscar a sus domicilios. Se percató perfectamente de que los que ahora le visitaban y velaban, eran precisamente los que nunca o menos le solicitaron audiencia en sus días de poder. Los de los honores, los de los grandes puestos lucrativos, los de las finquitas cultivadas y los terrenitos baldíos... esos no se deshonraban visitando al tirano y menos dándole un trago de agua en su lecho de muerte,...

Enrique de León Cabrera, whose father had been Cabrera's Director General of Customs, and whose mother had also enjoyed a post as headmistress of a school near la Candelaria, remembers visiting Cabrera with his mother when he was seven years old:

El salió y no me olvido de la impresión que me causó ver la cara demacrada y de amargura y sufrimiento que tenía el Licenciado Estrada Cabrera, con su barba crecida, de no rasurarse en varios días. Su cara era de dolor; a mí, a pesar de lo chiquillo que era, se me grabó, y hasta la fecha, recuerdo perfectamente esa amargura que se veía en sus ojos y rostro.

En esos días, era pavoroso ser cabrerista, o tener contacto con él; era una cosa terrible, porque había un odio profundo hacia él y hacia todos los que habían servido al Presidente Estrada Cabrera. Mi familia estaba fichada como cabrerista y esta fue la razón por la cual mi padre no lo visitó con nosotros; pero mi familia, mi madre; le envió los saludos de mi padre para él.

In May 1924 his daughters - Luz Estrada C., Joaquina Estrada C., Laura Estrada C., Zoila Estrada C. and Marta Estrada C. - presented several letters to the highest courts in the country begging them to free their father:
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Hemos presenciado señores Diputados, la terrible lucha de nuestro padre, solo, contra tantos y tan grandiosos enemigos, le hemos acompañado, con nuestra pena y angustia en el camino interminable de su desgracia, pero ya no es posible suprimir la querella, callar el derecho y contener los latidos del corazón herido por tantas torturas, por tantas burlas, y por tantas calumnias. 49

Nothing, however, was done and Cabrera and his family continued to live simply. In 1924 an article appeared in the paper Voz del Mundo in which Cabrera was quoted as saying that his fortune had disappeared and that the Intendencia in charge of his finances had done little to help him. He was quoted as saying: Con sacrificios... Gaste $9,000 moneda nacional en alquiler de la casa donde vivo recluso, y $3,000 m. n. en alimentación. Durante los cuatro años y medio que llevo de estar recluso, mis gastos ascienden a una suma enorme para mí. 50

Furthermore, Cabrera told his interviewer that he had hardly received any of the guarantees which had been promised him in April 1920. When asked whether it was true that he would not go free because he did not wish to, the ex-president replied that this was not quite the case. When the interviewer concluded with the question: - ¿Y las leyes para qué sirven en el caso de usted? - Cabrera is said to have replied: - A preguntas de ese género no puedo ni debo contestar. Excúsemelo usted, por favor. 51

On 6 September 1924 Cabrera caught flu, but it was not until the 12th that the illness became a source of worry. It seemed that the mental hardships of these last years had at last taken their toll on the old statesman. His physician, Dr Lisandro Cabrera, realized that this flu was aggravating his diabetes and he assigned a nurse to look after him twenty-four hours a day and give him a serum. Cabrera made his confession
and took the last rites from Monsignor Garcia y Caballeros. He died less than a month before his sixty-eighth birthday. The cause of his death has generally been thought to have been a stroke. The hour was just after 3:00 a.m. on 24 September 1924.

A barber of many years shaved the dead man, while Cabrera's older sons dressed him for the funeral in the clothes he had chosen especially for the occasion. Dr Rubén Rodríguez Castro, Dr Lizardo Estrada G. and his immediate family were among those present. Permission from the Minister of the Interior was granted to take the ex-president to the highland capital of Quezaltenango. It had been Cabrera's last wish that he be buried next to his mother in his home town of Xelajú.

The funeral cortège left the house at 10:30 a.m. and made its way down Sixth Avenue towards the central Railroad station. News of Cabrera's death spread quickly. It being a Wednesday, many beatas and religious people were making their weekly visit to the Señor de las Misericordias, the chapel of the nearby hospital on Tenth Street. They saw an ordinary hearse leading the funeral cortège towards the railroad. Several carriages rented from the Alvarez stable followed, as well as a few automobiles. When the funeral party arrived at the junction of Fourth Avenue and Tenth Street, all the traffic which had been using this, the principal route towards the train station, disappeared and went a different way. The only persons left on the street were workers on their way to work, who stood silently as this group of cars and carriages passed.

At 10:55 the funeral procession arrived at the station where they were met by the Minister of the Interior, Abraham Cabrera. Many floral tributes were put into an extra carriage, the only honour done to the former president. There were no troops present and silence predominated. As the
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Train pulled out some three hundred persons were left standing behind. Cabrera’s immediate family and close friends travelled in two separate carriages. The train was due to arrive at Mulúa at eight that evening and at Quezaltenango between two and three the following morning. His daughter, doña Joaquina Cabrera v. de Porras, continues the narrative:

Le quiero contar cómo fue su entierro en Quezaltenango. Por eso digo que el pueblo la tenía cierto cariño. Llegó el entierro de mi padre [a Quezaltenango] como a las cuatro de la mañana...
Fueron comisiones de inditos a recibirlo. Una amiga de él, muy sincera, que se llamaba Nicolasa de Gutiérrez, quería que lo velaran en su casa y para ahí se dirigía el féretro, pero en eso llegó el alcalde que era un señor Villagrán, y todas las comisiones de inditos, y dijeron que él debía estar en el Palacio Municipal. Entonces lo llevaron al Palacio Municipal, lo colocaron en una cosa en alto y pusieron unos cortinajes negros. Llegaron todos los inditos de las montañas, con flores. Las cortinas y las flores eran una cosa conmovedora.

Only one man violently opposed the idea of Cabrera’s body being put on display in Quezaltenango and this was Enrique Haeussler, who failed in his attempt to have the dead dictator burnt so that no trace would be left of him. The obituaries which filled every newspaper during the following days were more charitable. Although some were tainted with hatred, all recognized that Cabrera had been no ordinary man. The Diario de Guatemala of 26 September 1924 concluded:

...Y nadie necesita más que esa alma complicada y misteriosa que Dios debe estar juzgando y la Historia revelará tal y como fue cuando se apaciguen las montañas de odios que provocó la extraordinaria odisea de ese extraño ser humano, desaparezcan los enrenques que sembró con sus errores y se calmen totalmente las pasiones que, en uno u otro sentido, fueron tan funestos para Guatemala.

¡Paz a los muertos! Los cadáveres, sean de quienes fueren, necesitan oraciones, perdón, paz y olvido. Tiempo habrá para juzgar serena y imparcialmente al hombre y a sus obras. Por hoy, en bien de todos y por dignidad patria, no debemos sino descubrirnos ante esa tumba apenas cerrada, y por simple deber de humanidad, dejarla en paz.
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CONCLUSION

On 21 November 1857, the day Cabrera was born, La Tribuna of Buenos Aires published a letter of defense and refutation by the then exiled former Argentine dictator, Juan Manuel Rosas (1829-1852). In it he rejected all legal proceedings against his person and régime and wrote: 'Judgement is reserved to God and History'. Whatever the divine view, it is not easy for the student of dictatorships to decide whether such governments, and their rulers, have done more harm or good to their countries.

As we have seen, Cabrera was a complicated and idiosyncratic individual who came to the presidency through a series of extraordinary circumstances. He was not a charismatic or popular caudillo like Rosas, but was an equally shrewd and able politician. Like other Central American dictators, notably El Salvador's General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez (1931-1944), he was a socially resentful person whose tastes and superstitions were grounded in the local folklore, and yet he was ruthless when it came to maintaining himself in power.

Although Cabrera was not a military man, he used the army to militarize most aspects of his administration, including education. This kept the population obedient, the landowners satisfied, and the army quiet. Despite this the army did not advance notably as an institution during this twenty-two year period and was kept in order through a series of checks and balances. Nevertheless, many future presidents of the republic - Orellana, Chacón, Ubico and Ydigoras Fuentes - were educated here in the repressive ways of cabrerismo.

One may well ask what the base of support of cabrerismo was, if no one liked its source. Throughout his two decades in office Cabrera succeeded in effectively removing both liberals and conservatives from
national politics and making all citizens *cabreristas* irrespective of sex, age, or class. Even though the economy faced serious difficulties throughout the length of his administration, powerful groups benefitted from the artificially sustained mono-exporting economy. This arrangement had worked for many years because Cabrera had been able to provide benefits for certain sectors, especially the most powerful - the coffee-growers and land-owners. *Cabrerismo* exploited both their self-interest and their fear of the tyrant.

The mechanics of Cabrera's precariously fashioned political machine teetered when a series of unprecedented circumstances arrived simultaneously. While Cabrera had been able to stall foreign creditors with a miscellany of tricks and inactivity, he found it more difficult to cope with a series of extraneous crises which were beyond his control. The effects of the First World War redirected Guatemala's vulnerable coffee economy, and the earthquakes of 1917-1918 demoralized the despot. The clear hegemony of the United States over Central American matters after 1918 also weakened his strategies as he no longer found it so easy to play different powers off against one another; furthermore, the geographic proximity of the United States also weakened his position. Finally, the servility which had given him his strength began to disappear with the worsening of the economic situation, and with a growing realization that Cabrera's government machine could be better run by someone else. This cognizance even affected Cabrera himself and took away his former nerve, though not his taste for power.
NOTES

CHAPTER ONE FIN DE SIÈCLE GUATEMALA
Pages 1-45.


4. Juan Olivero quoted in Pinto, 1981: 40

5. Ex. Inf. don Rodolfo Sandoval, Guatemala, 1896.


11. Wilson, 1938: 76.


17. Cachurecos were those members of society who took religion so seriously as to be considered fanatics.

18. It is well documented that Cabrera was a diabetic and that his mother prepared all his meals for him until her death in 1908. She was known to use many popular remedies.

19. See Anon. La Sociedad de Guatemala y el Señor Licenciado Don Manuel Estrada Cabrera (Guatemala, 1911).


25. Ibid.


NOTES

35. Ex. Inf. Dr Juan José Arévalo, Guatemala, 1986.
37. Only the larger provincial towns like Alta and Baja Verapaz, Chiquimula, Sacatepéquez, Quezaltenango, Sacatepéquez, San Marcos, Sololá, and Totonicapán were able to offer these years.
38. Quintana, 1971: 54. The chuchines Quintana refers to here is the hispanization of 'Eugene' for Eugenio Silva Falla; while píloros comes from the word píldoras or pills because the Beltranenas were hard to swallow.
42. Arévalo, 1980: 286.
48. Ibid.
49. R. Arévalo Martínez, Honduras (Guatemala,1947): 75.
50. Dr S.A. Andreut quoting Miguel Ángel Asturias in his article 'Sobre Cara de Ángel' in Coloquio con Miguel Ángel Asturias ed. by H. C. Dardón, USAC, (Guatemala, 1968): 12.
52. See Martin, 1986: 462.
56. Ex. Inf. Teresa Arévalo.
58. Barba Jacob is quoted speaking with the student Alfonso Celada in Arévalo Martínez's 1947 novel, Honduras: 104.
59. Ibid.
61. Sabartés dedicated Son Excellence to Picasso, and their mutual friend, Genevieve Laporte translated this and Don Julian into French during the 1940s. To date these two novels have never been published in Spanish.
CHAPTER TWO

THE GUATEMALAN ECONOMY, 1898-1920

Notes


5. Young, 1925: 33.

6. French Diplomatic Archives, N.S. vol. 1, No. 12, 2 October 1897.

7. Ibid.

8. French Diplomatic Archives, N.S. vol. 6 'Finances', 28 May 1897.


10. French Diplomatic Archives, N.S. vol. 6 'Finances', 28 May 1897.


17. Ibid.


22. Munro, 1919: 11.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.


27. Munro, 1919: 3.


30. Jones, 1940: 211.


32. N.S. vol. 6, Challet à Hanotaux, 3 September 1895, no. 24.


34. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Madrid, Guatemala: No. 6, November 1903, Legajo 2521.


NOTES

40. N.S. Vol. 8, Avril à Pichon, 2 March 1908, folio 84.
42. Rippy, 1947: 139.
44. N.S. Vol. 8, 6 March 1898, folios 56-58.
46. J.W. Bingham, 'Guatemalan Agriculture During the Administration of President Manuel Estrada Cabrera' (M.A. Thesis, Tulane University, 1974): 41.

49. Ibid: 82.
50. Ibid: 133.
51. Anon. from the Newspaper Cutting files of the Council of Foreign Bondholders, reel 1.
52. Ibid.
53. British Foreign Office 15/280.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. French Diplomatic Archives, N.S. Vol. 7, 19 August 1901, annexe to No. 45.
57. F.O. 15/355, 5 May 1899.
58. F.O. 15/355, 26 August 1899.
59. Ibid.
60. F.O. 15/335 and N.S. Vol. 7.
61. F.O. 15/335, 15 June 1899.
62. F.O. 15/335, 4 May 1899.
63. F.O. 15/335, 13 December 1899.
64. Ibid.
65. F.O. 15/348, 12 November 1902.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Young, 1925: 54-5.
69. State Department Central American Despatches, 11 January 1905.
70. No. 6, Legajo 2521, November 1903.
74. Ibid: 12.
78. Munro, 1964: 239.
NOTES

80. Dodge to Wilson, 30 December 1910, Decimal File 714.62/5.
81. 23 December 1911, Decimal File 814.51/150.
82. Carden to Knox, 30 March 1912, Decimal File 713.41 and 815.51/331.
83. Decimal File 814.51/177.
84. Ibid.
85. 7 February 1913, Decimal File 814.00/200.
88. Munro, 1964: 437; also RG 84, Vol. IV, 12 February 1917, 800/1.
89. Munro, 1919: 9.
91. Thurston to State Department, 30 October 1919, Decimal File 814.51/308.
94. U.S. State Department, Decimal File 763.72113/1084, 23 July 1919.
100. Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE
CABRERA'S RISE TO POWER
Pages 102-128.
1. Xelajú is the Indian name for the capital city of the province of Quezaltenango and it shall be used alternatively to refer to this city's name throughout this work.
2. French Diplomatic Archives. N.S.I. Letter from Marcellin Pellet on 1 July 1898.
4. M. Estrada Cabrera, 'Mi tierra. Un Artículo Inédito' in El Imparcial, (Guatemala, 6 December 1925). The name of the priest varies in the accounts: Arévalo Martínez calls him Herrarte in ¿Ecce Pericles!, (San Salvador, 1972), I: 16, while Pinto names him España in 'La Presidencia de Manuel Estrada Cabrera, 1898-1920', (Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala, 1981):5. There is no mention that this priest's interest in young Manuel may have had some connection with the possible clerical ties his father (either Raimundo Estrada or Pedro Estrada Monzón) had with the religious community in Quezaltenango.
7. F. Hernández de León, De las gentes que conocí, (Guatemala, 1958): 85.
8. Many of the persons the author spoke with during 1986 in Guatemala feel that many of the reports dealing with Cabrera's half-brothers and half-sisters must be regarded with caution until the true nature of these relationships have been established.


10. Among those worth mentioning here are Decree numbers 460, 461, 471, and 527. Decree 461 dissolved the country's judicial power and named Barrios's right-hand man, Lie. Antonio Batres Jáuregui, president of the Supreme Court, thus ensuring that all presidential decisions would be approved and carried out. The so-called Ley de Zapadores (Decree 471 of 23 October 1893) effectively gave the government unlimited man-power for building roads and public buildings and perpetuated the system of mandamientos left from colonial times.

11. French Diplomatic Archives, Nouvelle Série 1, 2 October 1897, despatch no. 12.


16. This is further substantiated by the French Minister's account in his letter of 26 July 1898, Nouvelle Série 1, No. 27.


18. On 19 March 1897 a loose sheet appeared on the streets of Guatemala entitled 'El Pueblo' with the article 'Abusos Incalificables, La Policía', which criticized Roque Morales at that time.


21. M. Pellet, French Diplomatic Archives, N.S. 1, despatch of 26 July 1898.

22. Ibid.

23. J. L. Castillo's article 'Una página de la historia de Guatemala. Origen ilegal de la Presidencia del Licenciado Cabrera en Guatemala', published in Choza (ed.), (1920: 28) mentions that in 1897, the Sub-Secretary of the Interior, Rafael Spínola, suggested that Cabrera be chosen as First Designate to the presidency. Cabrera was duly elected, but Castillo argues that those who voted for him were public servants rather than congressmen, and that many did so against their will. Castillo also felt that with the dissolution of the National Assembly in 1897 that Cabrera was no longer entitled to his post as Vice-President as all other decisions were annulled.


25. In April 1909 an article entitled 'A Son's Defense of His Father. President Cabrera of Guatemala and His Career' in the San Francisco Overland Monthly (no.4, vol. LIII) in which Diego Estrada Cabrera describes the events of this evening in some detail.

26. He named Francisco Anguiano, Minister of the Interior and Foreign Relations; Antonio Barrios, Minister of Public Works; Rafael Salazar, Minister of Agriculture and Domingo Morales as Minister of Education. General Salvador Toledo was named Minister of War. José Antonio Mandujano became the new jefe político de Guatemala and Licenciado
Feliciano Aguilar was named his First Designate while General Felipe Cruz was named Second Designate.

27. 'Barbaroux', 1899: 43. Also see French Diplomatic Reports, N.S. 1, 12 February 1898, no. 7.


29. Cited in Arevalo Martinez, I: 55. Other anti-cabraerista publications were: La Guillotina directed by J.R. Gramajo and pro-Fuentes-Barrios; La Campaña directed by J.M. Morales y Morales; El Liberal directed by Canuto Castillo and pro-Castillo; El Heraldo directed by Julian Arriola C., and pro-Castillo; El Girondino the newspaper of the castillista club of Totonicapán.

30. As early as July 1898 articles on Cabrera had appeared in several French newspapers, including the 'Nouvelle Revue', Le Nouveau Monde, and Le Revue Diplomatique.

31. N. A. González, Desde el Llano, 1908: 22.

32. Hojas Seltas, Hemeroteca Nacional and Archivo General de Centro América [AGCA], Guatemala City, 9 July 1898.

33. Ibid. This one is dated 30 June 1898.

34. French Diplomatic Records, N.S. 1, 1 July 1898.

35. French Diplomatic Archives, N.S. 1, 6 August 1898.

36. Ibid.

37. Anon., Junta Libertadora, Via Crucis Over Guatemala, (New York 1914): 5. This mentions that General Mendizabal died after having a 'cocktail' with President Cabrera.

38. French Diplomatic Reports, N.S. 1, 6 August 1898.

39. This was the first Indian uprising to occur during Cabrera's administration. The next uprising took place in Totonicapán in July 1905. See Hernández de León, El Libro de las Efemérides, (Guatemala, 1925), II: 145 and Valladares Rubio, 1962: 467. For background see R. J. D. Una Rebelión Indígena (Guatemala, 1951).

40. French Diplomatic Reports, N.S. 1, 2 October 1898.

41. Rosendo Santa Cruz was the only one to remain behind and posed the greatest threat to Cabrera as he was the most progressive of the Liberal politicians alive in Guatemala at the time. Even though Santa Cruz retired from politics to farm in the remote province of Alta Verapaz Cabrera had him framed and arrested. When Santa Cruz appealed to be tried before the National Assembly in Guatemala City he was given a safe conduct by the president, but was brutally murdered at the prison of Tactic where he stopped on his journey to the capital. Licenciado Juan Barrios M. was considered the author of this crime and in 1914 was reported to have said: 'Sin la muerte de Santa Cruz don Manuel no hubiera podido permanecer mucho tiempo en la presidencia.' Cited in Wyld Ospina, 1967: 160.


43. Ibid: 20-2; also see V. Solórzano Fernández, Evolución Económica, (Guatemala, 1963): 261.


45. Many anthropologists have noted how coffee cultivation led to demographic changes in the republic and to cultural changes through...
NOTES


50. See the Spanish Consular Reports, especially Carrere Lembeye's no. 6 of 1903 in Legajo 2521; also the French Diplomatic reports in N.S., vol. 6.


54. See French Diplomatic Reports, Avril to Pichon, N.S., vol. 8, 2 March 1908, no. 8 for a description of Keith's banana operation.


57. See French Diplomatic Reports in Série Amérique, vol. 35, 17 November 1920, folio 49. Here Chayet reported that it was cheaper to transport a bag of coffee from the port of San José to San Francisco California, than it was to send the same bag from the interior of Guatemala to the Pacific coast.


59. Jones, 1940: 211.

60. Bingham, 1974: 36.


64. See Young for discussion.

NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

EL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE

PART ONE

Pages 129-169.

4. David Vela told the author that many years later he was able to buy basketfuls of such letters. Dr Julio Bianchi, who was present when Cabrera stepped down from office, also took some papers, including an official copybook for 1917-1918 which his son, Otto, showed the author in his home in 1986. His father also photographed the final entries of Cabrera's diary for those last weeks he remained in office.
8. Adrián Vidaurre was expressly sent to San Marcos on this occasion to pass judgement on Plutarco Bowen. By 15 March 1899 Vidaurre had been named Auditor General de Guerra, a post which had not previously existed.
   Concerning the Bowen case Vidaurre wrote: 'No fue laborioso el sumario instruido'. This is probably because Bowen was forced to write and sign his own confession and was condemned and duly executed. See Vidaurre, *Los últimos Treinta años de la vida Política de Guatemala*, (Guatemala, 1921): 29.
17. Ibid: 162.
19. Hall cited in Arévalo Martínez, I: 165-6. Few government employees knew how long they would remain in their positions. This was especially the case in the prisons where officials could at any time be reprimanded for either carrying out or failing to carry out orders. The only men who had any certainty of remaining in the prison hierarchy were the segundo encargados generales. Also see Montúfar, 1908: 50; Flores Avendaño, 1974: 231; Pinto, 1981: 188; and Valladares Rubio, 1962: 481.
NOTES


22. U.S. State Dept papers, special file on Divisa de Monteforte. The U.S. State Department investigated Monteforte's background during the First War because they did not like his 'pro-hun' activities. The secret report in his file reads better than any fiction. After serving as valet to the Archbishop of Mexico Monteforte decided that better opportunities lay in the United States. He stole some jewels from the Archeepiscopal palace, pawned some of them and began his journey northwards. His conspicuous behaviour in a first-class railway car led to his subsequent arrest and trial at the Superior Tribunal of Criminal Justice in Mexico City. He was found guilty of theft and safe-breaking and sentenced to seven years hard labour. Having completed this sentence, Monteforte arrived in Guatemala armed with forged letters of introduction in October of 1909. The Italian Ministry in Guatemala warned the government of this subject's criminal past. For a full account see Chargé d'affaire Scotten's report to Captain Macduff, 31 May 1919, no. 166 of U.S. State Department collection.

23. Ibid.


26. G. Joseph, Memorias de la Dirección general de Policía, 1899, n.p. Nevertheless in 1904 Rosario Vielman, the director of one of Guatemala City's prisons was moved to write: 'Con gran pena molesta la alta atención del Señor Presidente para ponerle en su conocimiento que materialmente hoy no tengo dinero para dar los alimentos a los presos en las secciones de policia a causa de que no se me han pagado cinco meses y en la Tesoreria de la misma policia no se me quiere cubrir, siquiera los meses de junio y julio pasados.' 12 August 1904, Archivo Particular de Estrada Cabrera, AGCA: Box 115.

27. This was also confirmed by many of the persons this researcher spoke with during 1985-1986.


31. Arévalo Martínez, I: 156.

32. F.O. 371, 16 February 1906.

33. Ibid.

34. Arévalo Martínez, I: 179.

35. F.O. 371, 16 February 1906.

36. R. Montufar, Caida de una Tirania (Guatemala, 1923): 71-3, 78.

37. See Rodas, 1939: 69.

39. For the full account see *El Diario de la Tarde*, (Mexico) 2 September 1907, no. 106. Also worth investigating are the cases of journalists Agustín Barreda and Carlos J. Valdés (Nicaraguan) who suffered during Cabrera's early years in office.

40. A. Batres Jáuregui, *La América Central Ante la Historia*, (Guatemala, 1949): 667-8. Cabrera allowed Piñol y Batres to leave Guatemala because of his high esteem for his family and asked him what port he would be leaving from. At Puerto Barrios Piñol's suitcase was replaced by another which looked exactly like his own, but which did not contain his belongings. The original suitcase was later found at *La Palma* in April 1920. See Pinto, 1981: 167.

41. Ex. Inf. David Vela.

42. Lainfiesta, 1980: 636.

43. *Memoria de la Guerra*, (Guatemala, 1901), n.p..

44. Ibid.


46. R. Flores to Cabrera, 18 January 1903, Archivo Particular de Estrada Cabrera, AGCA: Box 90.

47. Rodríguez, 1920: 81.


49. Enrique Aris to Cabrera, 23 March 1899 in the Archivo Particular de Estrada Cabrera, AGCA: Box 39.

CHAPTER FOUR

EL SEÑOR PRESIDENTE

PART TWO

Pages 170-217.


2. *Hoja Suelta* of 10 May 1871 in AGCA.


5. Anon., *Hoja suelta*, from San Marcos, 1904 in AGCA.


9. *Hoja Suelta* published in Nicaragua, AGCA.


11. Ibid and Arévalo Martínez, I: 289.

12. Hernández de León, 1958: 55-6, also see Arlot to Pichon for a further description of Aguirre in the, French Diplomatic Archives, N.S., vol. 5, letter of 30 August 1907.


14. French Diplomatic Archives, Guiot to Declasse, 18 August 1904.

15. Hernández de León, 1925: 89.


NOTES

19. Ibid.
21. C. Salazar, La Muerte de Regalado (Guatemala, 1953): 53.
23. According to General Chajón who spoke with Díaz in 1962 some of Salazar's military observations are incorrect. See 174-5.
24. Marroquín Rojas, n.d.: 4, also see Hernández de León, 1925: 59 for details.
32. Salazar, 1953: 60.
33. Ibid: 49.
34. To this end Colonel Duarte managed to take his girlfriend a pair of the dead general's silk socks. See Salazar, 1953: 72.
35. Gamboa as quoted by Arevalo Martínez, I: 196.
36. Memoria de la Guerra, 1907, n.p..
37. An examination of the Memoria de la Guerra of 1907 shows that many military officers were rewarded with land before the war of the Totoposte and afterwards. Many officers, like General José Félix Flores, were able to buy tierras baldías at much reduced rates. For details see Memoria de la Guerra, 1907, Decree no. 25 of 15 February 1906. Others like General Doroteo Recinos had already received lands as a reward for their good work. See Decree no. 24 of 27 February 1906. After the war many more received land grants, and in some cases gifts of fincas. This is how General J.F. Flores received the prize property of Hacienda San Jerónimo in Baja Verapaz. See Decree 84 of 9 November 1906. Most properties, however, were not as rich as this one and often officers were rewarded with large tracts of land in inaccessible and unhealthy regions.
39. Cabrera was not present, but was represented by Arturo Ubico, president of the National Assembly; José Pinto, president of the Supreme Court; Juan Barrios M., Minister of Foreign Relations; and the writer Manuel Cabral.
41. Cosío Villegas, 1983: 658. At the same time, the Guatemalan Minister to Washington, Sr. Toledo Herrarte, was instructed to make arrangements with the associated press or with several national papers to promote Guatemala’s good name. Finally, during the war of 1906 Cabrera asked the Cuban and ex-school master, Anselmo Valdés, the then Guatemalan Minister to El Salvador, to publish articles against the Guatemalan revolutionaries in El Salvador. For details see Hernández de León, 1925, II: 60.
42. Minister Lee was sent back to the United States where he was treated by the celebrated neurologist, Dr Silas Wier Mitchell. For a further discussion see Sands, 1944: 75.

43. In January 1920 as Vidaurre made his way to the capital from Alta Verapaz he stopped near Salamá at Arcadio Izaguirre’s finca, ‘Pansal’. Here he met a man who told him he was related to Morales and Mora, the men who had been tried and found guilty for Barillas’s death in 1907. Vidaurre reports that Juan Barrios M., Cabrera’s trusted aide, had made the arrangements for this assassination, and that Cabrera still paid Morales and Mora’s families compensation. For details see Vidaurre, 1921: 113-5.

44. Hernández de León, 1925, II: 322.

45. Cabrera had forbidden the sale of dynamite in the country, except for railroad building work. Several U.S. citizens were later accused of involvement in this plot for allegedly passing such explosives to the conspirators. They were J.S. Wilkinson, A. Hill, and Alfredo de Ham. The latter being a member of the ‘Tropical Trading Company’ of New Orleans and married to a daughter of the Valenzuela family. This family were old enemies of Cabrera.


47. Ibid: 46.


50. Ibid: 56.


52. The government archives for this period are full of accusations. Many of these came from as far as Zacapa, Cullapa and Alta Verapaz where jefes políticos like Colonel E. Aris, General J.F. Flores, and Colonel J. Ubico sent information, prisoners and their sympathy to the capital.


54. Ibid: 85.

55. Hernández de León, 1925, II: 319.

56. A council of war and a judicial tribunal were established to judge all suspects. For a list of those assigned to work on these see Marroquin Rojas, 1974: 129, and 131. For more on Piloña and Paz see Vidaurre, 1921: 237.

57. Hernández de León 1925 citing anonymous source: 184.


59. Ibid for a list of victims.

60. Marroquin Rojas, 1974: 11.

61. Salazar, 1953: 89.

62. Cucuruchos are religious brotherhoods which participate in the processions of Holy Week every year. They wear a distinctive purple or white robe with a pointed hat with veil, of the same material, which covers their faces.

63. Arevalo Martinez, I: 256.

64. One has only to look at the newspapers of this period to see daily examples of this sycophancy. See Vidaurre, 1921: 59-63.

65. French Diplomatic Reports, Arlot to Hanotaux, N.S. II, 13 April 1908.

66. Hernández de León, 1925, II: 126.

NOTES

68. Hoja Suelta, April 1911, in AGCA.
71. Ibid.
72. More recently his brother Ángel, the late head of the first section of police, had been shot dead by the engineer Rubio y Pilóña and this may account for his reluctance to accept this position.
73. Arévalo Martínez, I: 329.
74. For a full account of Paz's imprisonment and death see Arévalo Martínez, I: 329-331.

CHAPTER FIVE DECLINE AND FALL OF DON MANUEL
PART ONE
Pages 218-259.
3. For a list of the more distinguished members of this club see Vidaurre, 1921: 78.
8. Arévalo Martínez, I: 343; and Vidaurre, 1921: 7.
9. See Ortiz's account of this election in Arévalo Martínez, I: 343.
13. Ibid.
17. See Bingham, 1974: 72, and Arévalo Martínez, I: 389.

See Série Guerre, Vol. 198, folio 113 for list of token expropriations of German properties. There also appears to be a rather curious connection linking Guatemala and Mexico at this time which may have given Germany extra leverage with Carranza's government to comply
with their plans for the region. It appears that in 1913 Carranza sought aid in ousting Madero through the Garcia Granados family of Guatemala. Letters between the two men were exchanged and whatever plans they had were foiled when Félix Díaz effected his cuartelazo in February 1913. Some time later Garcia Granados gave these letters to the German Minister von Eckhardt rather than returning them to Carranza. See Thurston to State Department, 4 November 1918, No. 540:800.

22. Nuestro Diario, 19 March 1927 gives a full account of the death of La Tribuna. This newspaper was finally forced to shut down on account of U.S. Minister Leavell’s complaints to Cabrera.


24. Bingham, 1974: 80. Also see Chayet, Série Amérique of the French Diplomatic Archives, vol. 6, 24 November 1918, no. 88.


26. U.S. State Department Papers, R.G. 84. No 519 Leavell to Lansing on 18 May 1919, no. 711.3. Although most crops belonging to German plantation owners were confiscated from 1917, and formally Germans were strictly forbidden to sell their goods, many of them nevertheless managed to dispose of their crops through American and European intermediaries. One of the more unusual of these was Jane de Nevers, alias for a Mademoiselle Ruisseau, mistress of Guatemala’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Guillermo Aguirre. This is what Chayet had to say about her: *J'ai appris, en effet, de bonne source, qu'elle avait il y a quelques temps, obtenu du Président ... une licence spéciale pour l'exportation de dix mille quintaux de sucre du Mexique, à une époque où les propriétaires allemands étaient supposés ne pouvoir vendre les produits de leur propriétés, et ou l'exportation du sucre était formellement interdite.*

   *Mlle Ruisseau aurait réalisé, par cette opération, un bénéfice de vingt mille dollars.*

   *J'ajoute que M. Aguirre étant l'ami de Schwartz, de Vogl et consorts, il est logique d'admettre que tous ces gens, fréquent sa maîtresse, ce qui ferait de la 'Conte de Nevers', comme on appelle cette fille à Guatemala, une personne particulièrement suspecte.*

   In the French Diplomatic Archives, Série Amérique, vol. 21, no. 24 of 13 May 1919.


28. Ibid.

29. Telegram from Thurston to Secretary of State on 3 November 1919.

30. See Thurston to State Department, 30 October 1919, Decimal File 814.51/308.

31. See his cable of 3 November 1919.

32. See Despatch of 21 January 1918, no. 447 (800/10).

33. To Department of State on 15 May 1919.

34. See no. 22 (800) of 31 March 1919 from Deverall to War Trade Board, U.S. State Department.

35. See Thurston’s letter of 19 July 1919.


37. See Arévalo Martínez, I: 337.
NOTES

38. For a list of these sermons see Marroquin Rojas, 1929: 17-35, 55 and Chayet, Série Amérique 19 May 1920, no. 26.
39. To date little use has been made of the ecclesiastical archives in Guatemala City but Dr Luján Muñoz told the author that these are a mine of information regarding this period. Lic. Ramiro Ordoñez Jonoma, the new keeper of this archive, has also confirmed the wealth of material in this archive regarding the Cabrera years and has offered to make these available to students of the period.
40. On this occasion Cabrera's employee, Federico Coronado is said to have seized Piñol's belongings. See Marroquin Rojas, 1929: 71.
41. Thurston to Secretary of State, RG 84, Cable of 19 June 1919, no. 72.
42. Thurston to Secretary of State, RG 84, Cable of 28 August 1919.
44. See Marroquin Rojas, 1929: 58.
45. See Arévalo Martínez, II: 49.
46. Ibid.
47. David Vela and Ernesto Viteri spoke to the author about their experiences in funding Unionist clubs throughout the provinces. For a detailed written account see Arévalo Martínez, II: 180-4.
49. See Martínez, I: 93.
50. 1974, I: 239.
52. F.O. 371/3170, letter of 9 April 1918.
53. Vidaurre, 1921: 112.
54. U.S. Minister
57. Fearing reprisals, Vidaurre took out two life insurance policies with El Sol del Canadá. See 1921: 113.
59. As early as 15 January 1920 an inspired article had appeared in the New York Herald describing Guatemala's new party as 'red agents of bolshevism'.

CHAPTER FIVE DECLINE AND FALL OF DON MANUEL
PART TWO
Pages 266-304.
4. For the rest of his life, every 11 March, Azmitía displayed this very banner in his shop window in downtown Guatemala. Ex. Inf. don Rigoberto Bran Azmitía, 1986.
6. Arévalo Martínez, II: 194.
7. One of the victims was the barber Benjamin Castro of the Peluquería Londres, whom Cabrera tried to convert into a martyr of his camp. As in the funeral of the coachman Monterroso, the victim of the foiled
1907 'bomb' attempt, so again loyal cabreristas were asked to act out scenes of lamentation for an enemy of their tyrant. Outraged relatives and fellow Unionists retrieved Castro's body from this abduction and buried him quietly.

8. Arévalo Martínez, II: 166.
11. Cited in Arévalo Martínez, II: 188.
12. See Pedro Quartin, Spanish Diplomatic Reports, Legajo 1610, no. 9 of 29 March 1920.
21. See his 1922: 163.
27. Ibid. 187; and A Vidaurre, 1921: 190-1.
30. See McMillin to Secretary of State, Guatemala, 20 April 1920, no. 45.
31. See Rodríguez, 1920: 49.
34. Cited in Arévalo Martínez, II: 252.
35. See *El Unionista*, of 30 March 1920 and Vidaurre, 1921: 213.
36. Vidaurre, 1921: 208; also see Arévalo Martínez, II: 257 for officers who joined Herrera.
37. From U.S. State Dept RG 84, No. 76, 820.
40. Telegram of 11 April 1920 814.00/ 394.
41. See Arévalo Martínez, II: 284-5 and Ex.-Inf. Rodolfo Sandoval.
42. See *Diario de Centro América*, 4 June 1920, XL, No. 11,176.
44. See his article in the *Diario de Centro América* of 4 June 1920
45. Ibid.
NOTES

46. 'The Revolution in Guatemala', 1920: 5. From the collection of Mrs. M. Meldrun.
47. Ortiz cited in Arevalo Martinez, II: 289.
48. The Ogarrio residence on Sixth Avenue North (no. 49) and the Maternity Asylum on the Reforma Boulevard became blood banks. The school 'La Sagrada Familia' on Twelfth Avenue South also served as a hospital as did Felipe Márquez's picture palace, Teatro Variedades, and the Teatro Rex.
49. These final pages of Cabrera's last weeks in office are in possession of Mr Otto Bianchi whose father found them at La Palma after Cabrera had resigned from office. Guatemala, 1986.
50. See Spanish Diplomatic Reports, 17 April 1920, No. 13 Política.

CHAPTER SIX

Pages 305-339.

2. Silverio Ortiz was barred from attending because his hatred for Cabrera was so great that many thought he might jeopardize the opposition's position. See Beltranena Sinibaldi, Como se produjo la caída de Estrada Cabrera (Guatemala, 1970): 47.
3. Arevalo Martinez, II: 337.
5. U.S. Diplomatic Reports, McMillin to Secretary of State, 24 August 1920.
9. Ibid; 337.
11. See Arevalo Martinez, II: 339.
12. In his Diario de Centro América interview with Hernández de León on 19 May 1920 Cabrera said: Ud. no se imagina todos mis esfuerzos por contener aquel derramamiento de sangre. Yo tenía gente arrojado, obediente y sumisa a mi mando; gente de Momostenango, de Sija, de Salama... A una voz mia se hubieran lanzado como lobos sobre la ciudad. Sin embargo, yo traté de contener su impetus. Personalmente quite las cuñas de los cañones de sitio y destruí las espoletas de los 'charneles'. Mandé recoger balas de grueso calibre al fuerte de San José; después ordené que se recogieran las del Fuerte de Matamoros, pero ya el fuego era nutrido... Pero cuando estaba más afanado en detener el avance destructor, noté que los que me rodeaban, trataban de huir y de colocarme en una situación desesperante. Mi decepción llegó al colmo cuando me vi perdido. 'La Palma' estaba completamente rodeada, y yo alcanzaba a ver el anillo de hierro que me circundaba, ¿qué me quedaba? Pégarme un tiro y encontrar en la muerte la calma de tantas fatigas? Pero soy
creyente, si señor, soy creyente, y sé que Dios no me perdonaría el que me arrancara la vida en un momento de desesperación. Entonces llamé a mis hijos, a mis catorce hijos que estaban conmigo... Porque, para que usted lo sepa, yo soy hombre de 'ñeque' y a mi lado tenia catorce hijos...

Les pregunté: ¿Quieren morir conmigo?

- Con ud. morimos me respondieron y decidi mi rendición.

13. See 1949: 672-3 for a full description of this incident.
14. For a list of prisoners see Diario de Centro América, 15 April 1920 no. 11, 135.
17. 'The Revolution in Guatemala' 1920: 7. Also see Batres Jáuregui, 1949, III: 674-5.
24. See Diario de Centro América, 12 Mayo 1920, #11,158, año XL.
31. Montúfar, 1923: 68.
33. F.O. 371, 'A report on the political conditions in Guatemala during the years 1920-1921' by Mr Gaisford presented to James Ramsay MacDonald (MP) in 1924, Confidential No. 35.
34. Montúfar, 1923: 69.
35. At the time Tegucigalpa was 150 miles from El Salvador - one and a half days' journey by steamer and train - and at least a five day journey from Guatemala.
36. See Gaisford, F.O. 371, 1924, Confidential no. 35.
37. Ibid.
38. From an anonymous hoja suelta from the AGCA Collection. At this time Unionist soldiers were referred to as chocolate soldiers, not because of the colour of the uniforms but because they disappeared or 'melted away' when needed. The image of chocolate soldiers picked up the theme from the Franz Lehar operetta which was popular at the time. Finally, 'Sugar' was a nickname used for Herrera as his family owned one of the largest sugar refineries, 'Pantaleón', in the country.
40. See F.O. 371, 1924, Confidential no. 35.
41. M. Estrada Cabrera, Escrito de Defensa Presentado ante la Corte Suprema, La Corte de Justicia ... de los 12 juicios acumulados y
seguidos contra él por la muerte violenta de varias personas con motivo de la lucha armada que hubo entre los partidos políticos, en esta capital, en los días del 8 a 14 de Abril de 1920. (Guatemala, 1923).

46. Diario de la Tarde, 30 October 1923.
49. Peticiones presentadas a los Altos Poderes de la Nación por las hijas del Ex.-Presidente Estrada Cabrera (Guatemala, 1924).
50. 15 May 1924.
51. Ibid.
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