

Epilogue

BETWEEN FEAR AND HOPE

In a lucid editorial, published in the fall after the last Spanish soldier left, a writer for the Puerto Plata newspaper *La Regeneración* proposed a lofty plan to unite Haiti and the Dominican Republic, “born and rooted in the same soil.” He called for the tightest relationship between the two republics since the Boyer administration. “Independence and freedom for both peoples are irrevocable,” he wrote, discussing a new military alliance. “God has separated son from father, brother from brother, *pueblo* from other *pueblo*. But . . . can we not form an offensive and defensive alliance to conserve the integrity of our common territory, to avoid what just happened to us?” The alliance would bring security, he argued, observing, “The foreign [power] would not be able to tell which hand struck it.” He suggested that the political federation include a pragmatic economic element of trade and barter for mutual benefit, “generous commerce treaties” of free trade within the island for a variety of products. Finally, the collaboration should extend to deepened diplomatic relationships and, most radically, to dual citizenship. “Can we not make the ties that must unite us tighter,” he argued, “to declare that those born in the territory of the island be citizens of both independent states?” Peace, profit, and external security would result, he promised. “Let us love each other as brothers,” he urged. “We will wave one flag with these words: Union, fraternity . . .” Working together, he concluded, “[we can] build between us an epoch in which man is truly a brother to fellow man.”¹

In towns throughout the territory, idealists emerging from the Restoration struggle supported a range of ambitious political reforms. They echoed wish lists from previous decades: rule of law, reduction and regularization of

the army, amortization of paper money, and responsible national credit.² As an antidote both to the authoritarian political culture of previous regimes and the recent violence, abrogation of the death penalty was an easy target.³ Authors of the November 1865 Constitution, drafted in Moca, aimed for all these objectives. In addition to three branches of central government, the constitution recognized municipal power, represented by local delegates throughout the territory. Perhaps its most radical clause—one that would last through numerous constitutional changes, all the way until 2004—was the provision of *jus soli*, or birthright, citizenship. The *jus soli* provision represented part of an ambitious redefinition of the nation. Anticipating political rivalry, reformers proposed a single-party system. “The Republic is starting a *new life* and needs to be regenerated by *new ideas* that *new men* determine,” one writer eagerly urged. “We dream together.”⁴

Dominican anticolonial activists threw themselves into regional organizing, in familiar foreign ports and on Dominican soil. Puerto Plata emerged as a strategic and ideological center. Freemasons returned to organizing openly within months of the end of the fighting; “meeting again with frequency and enthusiasm,” they founded a lodge with a singularly ambitious title: the Cradle of América.⁵ Much closer than New York for Cuban and Puerto Rican activists, Puerto Plata was also out of reach of the Dominican capital. Enthusiastic Cuban émigrés arrived in the town in such numbers that its population almost tripled in size.⁶ After independence fighting began in Cuba, Puerto Plata journalists openly ridiculed the idea of neutrality and called on the Dominican state to protect anti-Spanish revolutionaries from Cuba, in the interests of a sovereign Caribbean.⁷ The town was full of inveterate anticolonial activists, who spoke of Caribbean unity in affective and military vocabulary equally.⁸ The opening lines of a *Regeneración* editorial offered solidarity and optimism, “When oppressed peoples throw off the heavy and disgusting hand of despotism and awake from their lethargy . . . they discover in the distant horizon the outline of these fiery letters: *we are all brothers, made by the Almighty, from the same mass, from a soul made in his image: we are to love and help each other mutually, live united at all times, and we will be strong, we will be free, and we will be happy.*” Revolution was a “new existence . . . working between fear and hope,” the writer began.⁹

Meanwhile, Spanish authority was collapsing. In an effort to mediate the rising *independentista* sentiment in the wake of their embarrassing defeat, Madrid authorities enacted stopgap measures—the promise of greater representation in both islands, the return of the whip in Puerto Rico—with little success.¹⁰ Island elites called for identical rights as Spaniards, but they also wanted more autonomy, not greater integration.¹¹ Abolitionist lobby-

ing grew stronger, too. “We reformists . . . want a single and identical Spain on both sides of the ocean without dictators, without monopolies, and without slaves,” the leader of Spanish Abolitionist Society announced in 1865.¹² From New York, the Revolutionary Puerto Rican Committee called on Puerto Ricans to follow the Dominican example immediately.¹³ “Everything that has happened in [Santo Domingo], and the reasons for which it has happened, are identical to what produced rebellion in the rest of Hispanic America, and the same that might, not too long from now, cause uprising in Cuba and Puerto Rico,” an observer had predicted during the fighting.¹⁴ He was right. Just more than three years after the last troops retreated in defeat from Santo Domingo’s southern coast, rebellions flared in both neighboring islands. In the interior town of Lares, far from the locus of Dominican activism in Puerto Rico’s western towns, rebels raised a flag for abolition and independence modeled precisely on Dominican colors. Troops managed to crush the mobilization, but authorities conceded a path to gradual abolition at last.¹⁵ Cuba exploded into a decade of war. Dominicans were everywhere in Cuba’s rebel ranks; a few were loyalists, too.¹⁶ Authorities invoked the specter of race war endlessly, and wealthy citizens warned each other about “the fate of Haiti and Santo Domingo.”¹⁷ French occupation in Mexico collapsed, as rebels there exulted in their own revolutionary republicanism.¹⁸ Spanish liberals and military figures fought with, and against, each other. The queen fled the country. Everywhere there was ferment.

Following the Restoration fighting, however, old hierarchical political networks returned to the devastated landscape like a flood. In the ashes of Santiago, the Cibao-based government did not last six months. First, southern politicians challenged it, and then, after a series of intrigues, Buenaventura Báez returned. His clique relied on armed supporters, an exhausted country, and a ritual of legitimation in the capital city press. Allies at *El Monitor* announced his return gingerly; he was returning, but not as president, they claimed. As his networks solidified, editors published statements from towns across the territory with prominent citizens announcing their fidelity to the returning figure.¹⁹ Generals signed: former president Pimentel, who had unseated Polanco’s radical administration, wealthy rancher General Santiago Rodríguez, a Restoration hero, and others like him. Revolutionary words lost their meaning. Redubbed “Great Citizen,” Báez assumed power as a man without rival.²⁰ Isolated protests occurred in towns across the country, but armed partisans of Báez praised him as the “Angel of Peace.”²¹ Military authority grew to be more predominant than ever—even those who had served the Spanish invoked their rank and prestige—but these networks



Fig. E.1 The Flag of Lares, modeled after the Dominican flag, first flew in October 1868. Calle Sol, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Photo by Tito Román Rivera, December 2015.

were intensely regional and fractured. Soldiers had local loyalties, and high-ranking officers made a multitude of claims.²² “Those who were decorated with the rich crosses of Carlos III, Isabel 2 . . . ; today are called citizens instead of Sirs,” one journalist observed with disgust.²³

Social contests surrounding the island were intense. Colombian politicians explicitly attacked emancipation, and they moved to restrict suffrage.²⁴ In the wake of protests in the fall of 1865, known by authorities as the Morant Bay Rebellion, the Jamaican governor’s forces killed, arrested, and burned homes indiscriminately. Then, in measures precisely opposite to policy in Canada and Australia, legislators dismantled Jamaica’s self-rule. In Bar-

bados, some felt that real freedom might be “put off for another time,” or perhaps across the Atlantic, and a small number of Barbadians and others chose to migrate to Liberia.²⁵ Some left the island to indenture projects elsewhere, as intra-Caribbean migration increased.²⁶ As fighting began in Cuba’s Oriente, exiles desperately made their way to Jamaica and Haiti to regroup.²⁷ On Hispaniola, the same colonial diplomats stuck around, deleteriously, immune to metropolitan political transitions. They maintained the same enduring hostility toward the island’s residents that they always had.²⁸ Britain bombarded Cap-Haïtien in 1865. European financiers offered loans on equally interventionist terms. Their competitors were back, and stronger than ever: U.S. politicians emerged from Civil War disunion with their eyes trained, once more, on the Caribbean. As the importance of naval steam power became increasingly clear, they joined other powers that hoped for coercive territorial cessions of strategic ports and peninsulas.²⁹

Aggressive foreign interest loomed over the Dominican Republic again. “The country suffers a terrible monetary crisis,” a journalist observed with foreboding. Eagerly awaiting collaborators, foreign industrialists and merchant houses stood at the ready to make deals with unscrupulous heads of state.³⁰ “Country sellers [vendepatrias] still want to have their way with this people,” critics remarked, in alarm.³¹ In 1869, Báez very nearly managed to annex the Dominican Republic to the United States, galvanizing a new round of radical anticolonial activism on the island and in diaspora. His financial imperatives were clear: customs, coal mines, state lands, even the guano deposits offshore had been mortgaged, paper money printed and devalued multiple times.³² Báez enjoyed support from prominent collaborators, many of whom had opposed Spanish annexation only years before.³³ The old annexationist arguments of *hispanismo* and anti-Haitianism could not serve him; his own collaboration with the incumbent Haitian president, Sylvain Salnave, was simply too close. Only political ambition and economic imperatives remained. Although the annexation measure fell well short of the two-thirds majority it needed in the U.S. Senate, Báez’s opponents, and the public, were incensed and fearful.

Unlike in previous decades, however, Báez’s most radical opponents were already armed, and they mobilized new alliances quickly. For the next six years, the Dominican Republic faced almost constant political unrest.³⁴ The U.S. threat reinvigorated activism for a defensive Caribbean alliance, and it threw prominent opponents into unrelenting military campaigns. Luperón and his allies hoped for a federation of the four states across the three islands: Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.³⁵ His

close friend Manuel Rodríguez Objío traveled to New York to help organize supplies; Betances joined him there, with ambitious proposals of his own. Betances saw the embattled republic at the center of an ambitious plan of “Antillean Nationality” and hoped for a Caribbean parliament with its seat in Santo Domingo. From Haiti, where he took up residence, he urged collaboration, and he met with the British prime minister and others to rally support.³⁶ Luperón remained in constant motion back and forth from Saint Thomas, Grand Turk, Jamaica, and the northern coast, allied with a leader of liberal political opposition in Haiti, Jean-Nicolas Nissage-Saget, to seek the simultaneous ouster of both of the island’s presidents. Nissage-Saget—like Luperón himself, “profoundly anti-yankee”—authorized Luperón to impress Haitian soldiers into his anti-imperial efforts and allowed him to organize freely along the border. They fought relentlessly against the cession of coaling stations on both sides of the island.³⁷ “The whole republic is in a state of insurrection,” observers wrote in concern.³⁸

Given the unrelenting imperial climate—foreign sugar capitalists arrived within the decade—these actors’ consistent, unrelenting anticolonialism was simultaneously a radical and stable philosophy. Their opposition to large-scale outside intervention, furthermore, reflected the sentiment of most of the island’s residents. The interests of cottage industry producers coincided with these activists’ steadfast aversion to aggressive foreign capital. “Each Dominican is a soldier and a hero,” one antiannexationist wrote hopefully.³⁹ As citizens returned to their homes, many disappeared, once again, from historical record. Others remained mobilized, in the highlands of the Baoruco mountains, in the Cibao valley, and other sites, to fight in united bands opposing U.S. annexation.⁴⁰ From Grand Turk, a journalist marveled at the scene in Puerto Plata. “‘Liberty’ and ‘we have beaten the whites,’ these words are heard day and night,” he wrote. “They despise all governments and consider themselves eminently powerful to whip them all.”⁴¹ Despite limited means, ordinary citizens offered revolutionary solidarity. Officials and town residents sent a vessel to neighbors in Grand Turk, after a hurricane, offering a ship full of aid, proposing tariff reductions, and sending well-wishes to “fellow beings in distress and want.”⁴² “Dominicans and Haitians, we are all brothers, brothers in origin, brothers in the days of trial,” a rebel official in southern Haiti effused.⁴³

Domestically, rebel efforts stood on shifting sand. Regional military loyalties, political patronage, and economic necessity frustrated stability in the capital. Each administration hoped for “a small loan, from a trusted lender,” but inflation and terms were desperately unfavorable.⁴⁴ Political opponents

considered armed mobilizations the only recourse. Rodríguez Objío, indefatigable friend and ally of other Restoration fighters, and poet, biographer, and historian of the Restoration fight, lost his life opposing Báez's annexation plan. Domingo Ramírez, the general who had bedeviled Santana with his reunification schemes, never returned to Dominican soil. He lived the rest of his days in Haiti, receiving and welcoming fellow travelers but never returning to another battle.⁴⁵ Years of political turmoil weighed on politicians of every political orientation. One famous old annexationist, Tomas Bobadilla, had been born a Spanish citizen. After decades of collaboration at the highest ranks in many administrations, he changed his mind in later years, after his own son defiantly opposed foreign occupation. Out of favor, he spent the last year of his life in Cap-Haïtien.⁴⁶ Poet Salomé Ureña wrote verses lamenting the "lakes of blood" spilled in her country as coups proliferated.⁴⁷ Still, fighting continued.

Even as it could no longer sustain annexationist logic, conservative anti-Haitian rhetoric emerged in Dominican politics once more. Summoned in the service of power seekers, of the "Civilized," of the cynical, those who invoked anti-Haitian discourse used it for facile patriotism where political unity flagged. The narrative reemerged among the reactionaries who struggled adamantly to regain power in 1864; they accused Gaspar Polanco of being "pro-Haitian," and they clearly understood it as a slander.⁴⁸ Writers for *El Tiempo*, which served as Báez's primary mouthpiece in the capital, distorted stories to meet their needs, pillorying the Haitian president until he was the caudillo's ally, for example. As ever, journalists and authorities spoke obliquely about popular Dominican-Haitian collaboration on domestic soil, dismissing all of the popular opposition to U.S. territorial cessions as the machinations of peasant rebels (*cacos*) who had no platform.⁴⁹ Privately to U.S. officials, Báez's aides added additional commentary, claiming the anticolonial opposition hoped "the African race [will] dominate the island."⁵⁰

Thus diverged two histories—and two futures—for the republic. As *La Regeneración* wrote one history, *El Tiempo* wrote another. Where the journalists from the first hoped for dual citizenship born out of the collaboration of 1863–65, writers in the latter remembered Haitian collaboration of the previous period as nothing but venal self-interest. Where the first sought to foster markets in the center of the island, the second saw contraband. "The Government will take it upon itself to dictate energetic measures to repress this

abuse, and it is strange that local authorities have not taken steps to prevent this problem,” *El Tiempo* complained.⁵¹ Luperón was “a conspirator . . . perverse and antinational,” a writer accused, with “something mysterious and contrary to the true Dominican spirit.” Of the rebels’ desperate collaborative efforts to save the country from U.S. annexation, the journalist concluded, “The Puerto Plata movement is nothing other than an attempt to destroy national independence in favor of the Haitians.”⁵² In Puerto Plata, meanwhile, *La Regeneración*’s writers pleaded for a different interpretation. “It is past time to close the disastrous period of our conflicts and begin a new era of peace and union,” one urged. Hope and pessimism intermingled: “The political generation who bring with them ideas, passions, hate and rancor is disappearing. . . . [After] a foreign power’s interference, a bloody revolution, a total victory, frequent bonds between the two peoples long separated, a community of ideas in the struggle, a unity of aspirations, signs of friendship, help and compassion amid the trials, must we revive old hates that should be extinguished, never to be reborn?”⁵³ Organization and outrage continued in the town, in the center of the island, and all across the territory. “For how long will parties toy with the destiny of *pueblos*?” another asked, demanding, “When will these wicked idols fall from their pedestals?”⁵⁴